

From Competition to Collective Success

Building a Collaborative Pre-Award Culture from Chalk Talks to ERC Interview Preparation

ERC STEP 2: WHEN THE WHOLE FACULTY BECOMES THE TEAM

30–40 colleagues preparing one candidate

- mock panel members
- disciplinary experts
- non-specialist challengers
- previous applicants / grant holders
- presentation feedback
- rapid-fire questioning
- repeated mock interviews

1 candidate → 30–40 colleagues involved

Success is no longer perceived as “their ERC”,
but as “our collective effort”.
We had 3 candidates in the 2nd round last year.

WHAT CHANGED?

From competition to collective success

Cultural change

more willingness to share early ideas
increased interdisciplinary interaction
peer feedback becoming normal practice
stronger trust between researchers and RMAs
RMA increasingly recognised as strategic research partner
unsuccessful applicants remain part of the community and transfer learning

Tangible outcomes

2 ERC grants plus 1 still in reserve list
increasing participation in preparation activities
growing pool of internal reviewers and mentors

Research excellence does not grow from isolated trees.
It grows from the connections between them.

CHALK TALKS

Ideas become stronger when they are exposed early
(60 minutes: 10 minutes presentation,
5 minutes challenges, 45 minutes discussion)

- Early-stage ideas, not polished proposals
- No disciplinary “performance” expected
- Researchers explain the core problem and ambition
- Peers ask naïve, difficult and interdisciplinary questions
- Researchers learn from each other’s projects

VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL LEARNING

Excellence becomes visible and transferable

Vertical learning

early-career ↔ senior researchers
applicants ↔ ERC holders
newcomers ↔ experienced RMAs

Horizontal learning

discipline ↔ discipline
project ↔ project
local ↔ international participants

Tacit knowledge stops belonging
to a few individuals and becomes
institutional capacity.

Building a shared pre-award infrastructure

7 months every Friday, cca 30 researchers per year

- recurring preparation rounds
- hybrid participation
- shared templates and milestones
- involvement of researchers across disciplines and career stages

Collaboration starts before the proposal exists.
Creating the conditions for collaboration

- Every Friday meetings
- Psychological safety
- Trust before evaluation
- Early sharing of unfinished ideas
- RMA as facilitator rather than gatekeeper
- Permission to challenge, fail and rethink
- Regularity and continuity instead of one-off training

“Why should I show my idea to others?”

From individual excellence to a shared challenge

- Strong researchers, but fragmented preparation
- Knowledge concentrated in individuals
- Limited trust and fear of exposing early ideas
- RMA perceived mainly as administrative support
- Widening context: limited access to tacit knowledge and experienced peers

CONTACT



Author:
PETRA
VACULÍKOVÁ
petra.vaculikova@upol.cz



Palacký University
Olomouc



Faculty
of Arts



GRANT
office

