

# Guidelines

## on the Positioning of Research Training Groups in the Context of Other Doctoral Programmes



Disclaimer: The English translation of this document is provided for informational purposes. In the event of a discrepancy between the English and the German versions, the German text takes precedence.

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In recent years, an increasing number of institutions and programmes have been established in addition to Research Training Groups to promote doctoral researchers. These range from inter-university programmes to faculty- or department-based programmes to subject-specific programmes (some of which are called doctoral programmes). The coexistence of different programmes within one department or university calls for differentiation of these programmes from each other and for definition of the individual programme profiles.

Accordingly, the guidelines for proposals to establish or renew Research Training Groups include the following questions, instructions and explanations:

[www.dfg.de/gk/formulare](http://www.dfg.de/gk/formulare)

- How does the Research Training Group fit into the university's research environment and medium-term research priorities? How is the Research Training Group scientifically unique compared to other local research projects with related topics?
- Within this context, describe the university's research environment and infrastructure, e.g. cooperative arrangements with other coordinated projects such as Collaborative Research Centres and Research Units, Clusters of Excellence and graduate schools, and projects funded by federal, state, and EU programmes.
- To what extent does the Research Training Group fit into existing academic structures? Is it compatible with current exam regulations or will the regulations need to be modified? Are there other programmes for promoting researchers in early career phases, e.g. existing structured doctoral training programmes (also including those within Clusters of Excellence and Collaborative Research Centres) or graduate schools? Are specific collaborations planned? Are there plans to integrate the Research Training Group into a graduate school?
- What constitutes the added value of the Research Training Group compared to other locally established forms of doctoral training and, if applicable, current local structured doctoral training programmes, in particular graduate schools established under the Excellence Initiative? What structural innovations can be expected from the Research Training Group?

The following points provide guidance for discussing these issues in review panels and committee meetings:

- The combination of a time-limited, topic-focused research programme and a research qualification programme that dovetails with it is the distinguishing characteristic of a Research Training Group.
- As smaller, topic-focused units, Research Training Groups ensure that all doctoral researchers who work under the umbrella of the group's shared topic can regularly exchange information and network easily.
- A Research Training Group must have its own qualification programme. With this programme and its unique components, added value must be achieved compared to programmes already available at the location. The elements of the qualification programme can therefore not consist exclusively or predominantly of existing courses and events.
- Classes on soft skills or other non-specialised topics that are offered by a higher-level entity such as a graduate school may be included in the Research Training Group's training programme in order to use resources efficiently.
- Quality standards prescribed by higher-level entities, e.g. standardised selection procedures and supervision standards (supervision agreements, etc.), are welcome as they promote general quality assurance and efficient use of resources, and may be adopted by Research Training Groups as they are. Modifications specific to the Research Training Group are welcome if they are appropriate and suit its programme, but they are not required.
- Research Training Groups must have a structuring effect at the location and/or in the subject area.
- Research Training Groups offer the opportunity to pioneer new, time-limited training paths tailored to the research programme (e.g. fast track).