

Guidelines

for the Review of Proposals to Establish or Renew Research Units



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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I Programme Information

Funding for a Research Unit enables outstanding researchers to collaborate closely on specific medium-term projects whose anticipated findings could not be achieved within individual grant programmes. A Research Unit typically has fewer than ten projects which are coordinated to enable work on a common research topic. The majority of the research projects should be university based.

A Research Unit is made up of project leaders and project members. One researcher assumes the role of spokesperson. This person should be a full-time university teacher.

Applicants must first submit a draft proposal to the DFG, which then undergoes review. If successful, the DFG will invite the applicants to submit an establishment proposal.

For proposals based on draft proposals submitted prior to 1 October 2018, note the following: The total duration of funding is generally six years, or eight years in exceptional cases. The first funding period is usually three years. Continued funding may be applied for with renewal proposals.

For proposals based on draft proposals submitted after 1 October 2018, note the following: The total duration of funding is generally eight years; the first funding period is usually four years. Continued funding may be applied for with a renewal proposal (see the Guidelines for Research Units programme – DFG form 50.04).

www.dfg.de/formulare/50_04

Please note:

General Guidelines for Reviews (DFG form 10.20) are available at:

www.dfg.de/formulare/10_20

The review should not exceed two pages in length.

II Structure of the Review (Research Unit as a whole and individual projects)

1. How would you assess the **quality of the project**, especially with regard to originality and the anticipated contribution to knowledge?
 - For the Research Unit as a whole: Is funding as a group likely to produce a significant benefit compared to the funding of individual projects? Does the research question require a funding horizon of at least eight years?
 - For the individual projects: How does the project contribute to the overall research task of the Research Unit?
 - For renewal proposals: How has the quality of the project developed, also in relation to the development of the wider research field?
2. To what extent do the **objectives and work programme** of the unit as a whole as well as those of the individual projects convincingly reflect clear working hypotheses and an appropriately distinct topic? Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the planned investigations. Are the methods and timetable appropriate, and is there a suitable concept for handling research data?
 - For renewal proposals: What scientific progress has been achieved in the previous funding period?
3. How would you evaluate the soundness of the preliminary work, the quality of publications (please refer to the Guidelines for Publication Lists – DFG form 1.91) and the **qualifications of the applicants** – in general and in relation to the project as a whole and the specific individual projects?
 - For the Research Unit as a whole: Please also comment on the extent to which the spokesperson of the Research Unit meets the requirements in terms of his/her scientific track record, experience in leading projects, including third-party-funded projects, and integration and leadership skills.

4. How would you assess the **work and research environment**?
- Is/are the host institution(s) suitable for the implementation of the project, particularly in terms of the necessary equipment and facilities?
 - Please also comment on the following aspects in relation to the Research Unit as a whole:
For single-location Research Units: Can structural effects be expected in the local area? For multi-location Research Units: How is the collaboration between the participants to be supported and organised?
5. For the Research Unit as a whole: How would you evaluate the **measures to support researchers in early career phases**? Are there doctoral programmes within the department?
6. For the Research Unit as a whole: Are **diversity and equal opportunity in the research system** taken into account? For the individual projects: What measures are envisaged to integrate women researchers and/or to provide funding opportunities for participating female researchers? What family-friendly provisions are available?
7. Please provide a **clear recommendation** as to whether the proposal should be approved. If so, comment on whether the requested funds are justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project, making recommendations for adjustments to the budget as necessary.
8. Other aspects
- If the proposal relates to a cooperation with developing countries, please note the following:
 - In the funding measure “Cooperation with Developing Countries”, researchers who are eligible to submit proposals to the DFG can propose a transnational research project designed jointly with researchers from developing countries. The goal is to promote cooperation between researchers in Germany and developing countries within the context of ambitious projects. If approved, the grant is awarded solely to the researchers based in Germany, who are formally

considered to be the applicants. They then transfer the funds allocated for the international component of the proposal to the international project partners.

- Collaborations with developing countries are subject to the DFG's standard quality criteria. Project components in developing countries can be funded directly if the contribution of the cooperation partner in the developing country is essential to the research project. Work should be planned and carried out as far as possible with equal participation by the German and foreign project members. This participation should provide recognisable added value for all those involved. In addition, the research capacity and scientific performance of the participating researchers in the relevant countries should be enhanced. Please state explicitly whether you believe these objectives can be achieved with the proposal.

- If the project is a D-A-CH, D-LUX- or D-Süd proposal in a lead agency procedure, please note the following:
 - In these procedures, which the DFG conducts with partner organisations in Austria (FWF), Switzerland (SNF), Luxembourg (FNR) and the Autonomous Province of Bolzano (South Tyrol), transnational projects with research components in the different participating countries are reviewed by one single lead funding organisation only. In the event of approval, each national component of a D-A-CH, D-LUX and D-Süd project is funded separately by the responsible funding organisation. Reviews solicited by the DFG as the lead agency and the opinion of the DFG review board are made available to the participating partner organisations abroad as a basis for their final funding decision.

 - In your review, you should therefore comment on all national components of the proposal (including requested funds), the international joint proposal as a whole, and the coordination of the various components.

- If the requested funding measure is a Middle East collaboration, please note the following:
 - The “Middle East Collaboration” funding measure enables researchers who are eligible to submit proposals to the DFG to propose a transnational research project designed jointly with researchers from Israel (bilateral project), or Israel and Palestine or the following neighbouring countries of Israel: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria (trilateral project). The goal is to promote cooperation between these researchers within the context of ambitious research projects. If approved, the grant is awarded solely to the researchers based in Germany, who are formally considered to be the applicants. They then transfer the funds allocated for the international component of the proposal to the international project partners.
 - Funding decisions on scientific cooperation in the framework of a Middle East collaboration are subject to the DFG’s standard quality criteria.
 - Work should be planned and carried out as far as possible with equal participation by the German, Israeli and, if applicable, Palestinian or Arab project members. The participation should provide recognisable added value for all those involved, which for the Palestinian/Arab partners may also consist of expanding research capacity. Please state explicitly whether you believe these objectives can be achieved with the proposal.

- If the proposal is for a part-time temporary position for a principal investigator, please note the following:

In accordance with regulations on the promotion of equal opportunity and diversity in research, it is possible for an individual to take up a part-time (at least 50%) temporary PI position for family reasons (childcare, relatives in need of care) or in cases of disability or chronic illness. Such proposals will be treated as full-time proposals by the DFG with the goal of equal assessment of project proposals involving a temporary PI position.

- If the proposal involves requests for specialised literature, please note the following:

Funds for purchasing specialised scientific publications may be granted in exceptional cases where the publications in question must either be permanently available to the project but are not purchased by the institution, or when they are not available through interlibrary loan. With this in mind, please state explicitly whether you believe the funds for procuring the specialised literature listed in the proposal should be approved.