Proposal Preparation Instructions

Proposals to Establish Clinical Research Units
I General Instructions

1 Applicants

Funding proposals are to be submitted jointly by all researchers involved in the Clinical Research Unit. They are jointly responsible for the scientific conduct of the project. One of the applicants assumes the position of spokesperson and represents the Clinical Research Unit in dealings with the DFG and other bodies. The proposal is submitted by the spokesperson in consultation with the lead medical department(s). Once the Clinical Research Unit has been established, the person designated for the research professorship assumes its scientific and administrative leadership as research coordinator. If the research coordinator holds the research professorship at the time the renewal proposal is presented, he/she is responsible for submitting it. In exceptional cases, the spokesperson of the Clinical Research Unit may also serve as its research coordinator and hold the research professorship.

2 Proposal process

The proposal process takes place in two stages:

Stage 1:
- In the first stage the participating researchers submit a draft proposal. This approximately 10-page text should outline the Clinical Research Unit’s research programme in accordance with the questions set out under item 3. and include a summary (about 1 to 2 pages in length) for each of the proposed individual projects.

To illustrate and enhance your presentation you may refer to your own and others’ publications. Indicate whenever you are referring to other researchers’ work and explain your own preparatory work. Please list all cited publications in your bibliography. This reference list is not considered your list of publications. Any unpublished work must be included with the proposal. However, note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite. Reviews will only be based on the text of the actual proposal.

Please note that the DFG may reject any proposals not in compliance with these rules.

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¹ The language in which the funding proposal may be submitted should be agreed upon with the relevant programme division prior to submission.

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Furthermore, the draft proposal must include information on the project leaders (for each project head, submit a CV, a list of up to ten of his/her most important publications, a list of third-party grants he/she received within the last three years, and one project-specific list of publications per individual project). Follow the Guidelines for Publication Lists.

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

Also include

- a cost estimate;
- a statement by the department of medicine regarding questions 3.e) and g);
- a written declaration regarding all relevant aspects of co-financing (see III. 1. of the programme guidelines) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, medical department, in some cases the state).

The draft proposal, which may be submitted at any time, will be sent to reviewers. On the basis of these reviews, a comparative evaluation of the draft proposal will be carried out by review board members. If the draft proposal is approved, the applicant may submit a full funding proposal.

**Stage 2:**

The full proposal should particularly describe the proposed research work, the structural aspects, relevant preliminary work and the type and nature of the cooperation between the applicants, in accordance with the questions set out under 3 and in a format suitable for peer review. The framework proposal can only be submitted by the Research Unit’s spokesperson or research coordinator via elan

https://elan.dfg.de

The coordination proposal, too, may only be submitted via elan by either the spokesperson or the research coordinator. Please use the relevant template in elan, available in German or English, for the framework proposal’s project description and to justify funds as part of the coordination proposal.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_16_elan
www.dfg.de/formulare/53_04_elan

Individual project proposals within the Clinical Research Unit should be submitted in accordance with the instructions on preparing project proposals.

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The proposal must be submitted along with a written declaration regarding all relevant aspects of co-financing (see III. 1 of the programme guidelines) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, department of medicine, in some cases the state) as well as a statement by the medical department regarding items 3 e) and g) below.

A review panel will evaluate the proposal to establish a Clinical Research Unit, usually at the site of the proposed unit, and formulate a funding recommendation for the appropriate decision-making bodies at the DFG.

3 Key questions

The following questions should be answered regarding the Clinical Research Unit as a whole:

a) What is the specific relevance and topicality of the joint research project and what are the objectives? Is the collaboration based on an innovative and coherent concept? Can the stated objectives only be achieved through the proposed cooperation? Do you intend to involve all of the relevant disciplines necessary to work on the topic?

b) What key results do you expect in the short to medium term? What long-term results are anticipated?

c) What are the specific areas of qualification of the participating scientists/working groups with regard to the project? What preliminary work has contributed towards this? If applicable, why is a working group from another European country or a commercial or industrial company involved, and how is this of particular importance to the Clinical Research Unit as a whole?

d) What are the expected benefits of collaboration within the unit, particularly between clinicians and basic researchers? How will the collaboration be structured?
e) Do the Clinical Research Unit’s topic, the projects chosen and the participating disciplines provide a suitable basis for the department of medicine to further develop its chosen priorities? Please describe the scientific priorities and the research structure at the institution(s) involved in the proposal. The draft proposal should include a statement by the department of medicine confirming that the Clinical Research Unit’s topic fits its prioritisation.

f) What are the plans for appointing the head of the Clinical Research Unit to the research professorship? If a specific person is being proposed for this leadership role, he/she should be involved in the creation of the concept. In this case, his/her special expertise should also be documented in a CV and publication list. In all cases, appointments to research professorships are subject to the respective state’s higher education laws. Should the individual be selected through an (international) announcement procedure following establishment of the Clinical Research Unit, the DFG must also be included in the appointment process. The DFG is strongly committed to gender equality in science and research.

g) What are the modalities by which performance-based government subsidies for research and education are allocated at the host university’s department of medicine? Are funds for scientific projects distributed by a research commission? If approved by the DFG, will the Clinical Research Unit be guaranteed space and equipment? Will the teams be close to each other (with the core group’s clinic and laboratory preferably located in the same building)? Will space be allocated based on performance?

h) If applicable, how will information and communication technology be used within the research work itself, other than for communication between the participants? (Examples may include interactive planning and conduct of experiments, data sharing for division of work or comparative analysis, etc.)

i) How do you plan to integrate and promote early career researchers? Describe any training programmes and special measures to advance young scientists. Is there an option to release research clinicians from patient care obligations (rotation programmes)? Are there plans for doctoral programmes for medical scientists?
j) Gender equality measures
How will female researchers be integrated into the network and what funding opportunities are envisaged? What kind of family-friendly options do you have?

4 Special provisions for renewal proposals

A renewal proposal should describe shared goals that have been accomplished by the group and any joint events held (seminars, lectures, workshops, symposiums, etc.). It must also explain why any new projects are being proposed or why any previously funded projects should be discontinued. A final report must be presented for any projects that are terminated early. In addition, the renewal proposal must include the responsible state agency’s pledge to provide matching funding for the second funding period, as well as renewed guarantees to lift the time limit on the research professorship at the beginning of the fourth year of the Clinical Research Unit’s duration, and to provide the necessary core support after DFG funding expires. After the research professorship has been made permanent it must be funded by the department of medicine (from the beginning of the fourth year of DFG funding for the Clinical Research Unit).

II Obligations

In submitting a draft or full proposal to the DFG, you agree to:

1. adhere to the rules of good scientific practice.\(^2\)

   The general principles of good scientific practice include, among others: maintaining professional standards, documenting results, rigorously questioning all findings, and attributing honestly any contributions by partners, competitors and predecessors.

   Scientific misconduct is defined as the intentional and grossly negligent statement of falsehoods in a scientific context, the violation of intellectual property rights or impeding another person’s research work. The circumstances of each case will be considered on an individual basis. In cases where scientific misconduct has been established, the DFG

\(^2\) The rules of good scientific practice are presented in detail in the white paper entitled „Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice“ and in the Funding Guidelines - General Terms and Conditions of DFG Grants (DFG form 2.00).
may impose one or more of the following sanctions, depending on the nature and severity of the scientific misconduct:

- issuing a written reprimand to those involved;
- exclusion from the right to apply for DFG funds for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;
- revoking funding decisions (complete or partial cancellation of the grant, recalling granted funds, demanding repayment of funds spent);
- demanding that those concerned either retract the discredited publications or correct the falsified data (in particular by publishing an erratum), or appropriately indicate the DFG’s retraction of funding in the discredited publications;
- exclusion from acting as a reviewer or from membership in DFG committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;
- denying voting rights and eligibility in elections for DFG statutory bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct.

By accepting funding, the recipients agree to:

2. use the grant exclusively and in a targeted manner to realise the funded project. The use and accounting of funds must conform to the relevant regulations of the DFG.

3. submit progress reports on the research according to the dates specified in the award letter and to present financial accounts to the DFG detailing the use of funds.

The DFG expects that the findings of the projects it funds be made available to the public.