

Guidelines

for Reviewing Proposals in the Collaborative Research Centres Programme

Introduction

When conducting an **on-site review** of a proposal to establish or renew a Collaborative Research Centre, we ask you to consider the following criteria and questions. Please note that a written assessment is not required in conjunction with the on-site review.

If you have been asked explicitly to provide a **written review** on an individual project without participation in the on-site review, only sections I.2. (Research Project), I.3 (Service Project) I.5. (Information Infrastructure Service Project), I.6. (Public Relations Project) or I.7. (Transfer Project) are relevant.

Please note the formal aspects of the review as stated in section II. Information on the on-site review and the decision process can be found in section III. If you have any questions, please contact the officer responsible for the Collaborative Research Centre at the DFG Head Office, Research Centres Division.

I Criteria and Questions

1 Collaborative Research Centre as a Whole

How do you assess the Collaborative Research Centre as a whole considering the following criteria?

1.1 Research

1.1.1 Research quality

Scholarly significance and timeliness of research topic

Originality and openness to risk

Research aspiration and long-term prospects

Preliminary work / results achieved

International visibility of the Centre

1.1.2 Coherence and synergies

Conclusiveness of project structure

Cooperation across disciplines

Added value through cooperation

1.2 People

1.2.1 Qualification of people involved

Relevant expertise

Publication output

International visibility and networks

1.3 Research Profile of Applicant University/Universities

1.3.1 Core support

Staffing situation

Research infrastructure

1.3.2 Strategy and planning

Role of Centre in strategic planning at applicant university/universities

Targeted personnel planning

Where applicable: cooperation with other research institutions

Where applicable: impact on teaching

1.4 Support Structures

1.4.1 Early career support

Participation of early career researchers in the Centre

Opportunities for professional development at the doctoral and postdoctoral level

1.4.2 Equal opportunities in research

Participation of women in the Centre

Measures to promote gender equality and to help researchers combine career and family

1.4.3 Management and dissemination

Management structures of the Centre

Quality assurance and project selection

Management of data and knowledge

Where applicable: public outreach / knowledge transfer

Finally, we ask you for your overall assessment of the Collaborative Research Centre based on the following criteria and grades:

	6	5	4	3	2	1
Research						
People						
Research Profile of Applying University/Universities						
Support Structures						

- 6 = Excellent: Meets all requirements in an exemplary manner. Internationally leading. Groundbreaking results achieved / expected.
- 5 = Very good to excellent: Meets the requirements to an exceptionally high level. Internationally in the top tier. Many significant results achieved / expected.
- 4 = Very good: Meets the requirements to a high level. Internationally competitive. Significant results achieved / expected. Minor shortcomings.
- 3 = Good to very good: Meets the requirements to an adequate level. Internationally visible. Many relevant results achieved / expected. Moderate shortcomings.
- 2 = Good: Meets most requirements to a satisfactory level. Relevant results achieved / expected. One or more major shortcomings.
- 1 = Unsatisfactory: Does not meet the requirements to a satisfactory level. Not fundable.

2 Research Project

2.1 How do you rate the scientific quality considering the following criteria?

- Originality, innovation and risk
- Coherence, feasibility and long-term prospects

- Awareness of the current state of research
- For renewal proposals: Results to date, handling of unexpected developments
- Qualifications, preliminary work and publication output of the project leader(s)
- Differentiation from other projects by the project leader(s)

2.2 How do you rate the integration of the project within the Centre?

- Does the project relate closely to the Centre's research programme?
- To what other projects in the Centre do close relationships exist? How do the projects collaborate?

2.3 If the project deserves funding:

- Is the requested funding amount appropriate considering the available core support?

2.4 How would you rate the project based on the following grade definitions?

Excellent:	Meets all requirements in an exemplary manner. Internationally leading. Groundbreaking results achieved / expected. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is excellent.
Very good to excellent:	Meets the requirements to an exceptionally high level. Internationally in the top tier. Many significant results achieved / expected. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is very good.
Very good:	Meets the requirements to a high level. Internationally competitive. Significant results achieved / expected. Minor shortcomings. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is at least convincing.
Good to very good:	Meets the requirements to an adequate level. Internationally visible. Many relevant results achieved / expected. Moderate shortcomings. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is at least good.
Good:	Meets most requirements to a satisfactory level. Relevant results achieved / expected. One or more major shortcomings. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is at least satisfactory.

Not fundable: Does not meet the requirements to a satisfactory level. Not fundable. / Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is not satisfactory.

3 Service Project (if proposed)

3.1 How do you rate the quality of services with regard to the following criteria?

- Quality of methods and infrastructure to be used
- Viability of the work programme
- For renewal proposals: results obtained, contribution to the success of the Collaborative Research Centre
- Qualifications, preliminary work and publications by the project leader

3.2 How do you rate the project's integration within the Centre?

- Which projects benefit from this service project, and how do they profit from it?
- How do you rate the overall significance of this service project to the Centre?

3.3 If the project deserves funding

- Is the requested funding amount appropriate considering the available core support?

4 Integrated Research Training Group (if proposed)

4.1 How do you rate the training strategy with regard to

- the quantity and quality of the qualification programme and other training opportunities?

4.2 How do you rate the organisation and supervision strategy with regard to

- the announcement and selection process?
- structured, transparent and speedy doctoral qualification?
- the scope and the intensity of progress checks?
- the definition of rights and obligations?

4.3 How do you rate the integration into the academic and scientific environment?

- How do you rate the integration into the university (and non-university) environment, especially the existing study structure at the location and established forms of doctoral training?
- How will the university contribute to the success of the Integrated Research Training Group?
- For a CRC/Transregio: Does the strategy for training, supervision and organisation take into account the multiple locations?

4.4 If the project deserves funding

- Is the requested funding amount appropriate considering the available core support?

5 Information Infrastructure Project (if proposed)

5.1 How do you rate the quality of the project and its integration within the Centre?

- Is the work programme convincing?
- Are there unique, novel ideas for handling data (all information sources and results of the research process) that are gathered, analysed or developed in the Centre? Do plans justify the expectation that prototypal developments will occur?
- How are existing subject-specific standards for data contents and formats implemented in the work? How do you assess the alternatives provided where standards do not exist?
- What is the relationship of the project to the relevant information infrastructure that exists outside of the applicant university (environmental analysis)? Are persuasive explanations given on how the project is designed either to link up with other developments, or to set itself apart and develop independent solutions?
- Is it ensured that data from the research projects will be treated appropriately by the information infrastructure project in terms of their scientific content? How will these data be processed using information technology?
- How do you assess open access to the research data? Are there provisions for subsequent and further use by third parties (e.g. licensing, copyright, data protection)?

- How do you assess the strategies and rules for archiving of research data, and for their reusability and dissemination (possibly even after funding expires)?
- Do the project leaders have the necessary scientific and IT expertise? How are skills in handling research data conveyed in the CRC, and how are early-career researchers trained in this area?

5.2 How successful is the integration into the local environment?

- Is the project networked with relevant local information infrastructure facilities?
- Is the long-term availability of the information infrastructure to be developed by the project secured in a scientifically and technologically convincing fashion? Or, in case this is not yet foreseeable, are convincing criteria described for a subsequent assessment of long-term availability?

5.3 If the project deserves funding:

- Is the requested funding amount appropriate considering the available core support? To what extent do the direct project costs fund activities beyond safeguarding good scientific practice (handling of primary data), which are in the domain of core support?

6 Public Relations Project (if proposed)

6.1 How do you rate the quality of the project and its integration within the Centre?

- Is the definition of the project's objectives and target groups successful? Are the planned activities suited to reach the target groups?
- Is there a clear relationship to the Centre's research topic?
- Are the Centre's researchers involved in the planned activities? Can the project leader(s) demonstrate experience and prior work in science communication?
- If applicable: Does the collaboration with non-university partners (e.g. museums, schools, businesses) appear beneficial, and is it convincingly governed by a cooperation agreement (where necessary)?
- Is the time schedule plausible? Are evaluations and quality checks planned?
- How does the project relate to other PR activities at this location and elsewhere?

6.2 How successful is the integration into the local environment?

- Are plans for collaboration with relevant entities, such as the applicant university's press office, convincing?
- What is the project's added value compared to the applicant university's general PR activities?
- How will the proposed PR activities be integrated within the Centre and the university over the long term? What structural impact can be expected at the applicant university?

6.3 If the project deserves funding:

- Is the requested funding amount appropriate considering the available core support?

7 Transfer Project (if proposed)

7.1 How do you rate the quality of the project and its integration within the Centre?

- What is the scientific quality of the research results to be transferred? In what way does conducting the project require scientific expertise?
- What is the significance of the project from a technical, economic, cultural, and/or societal point of view (also in relation to its cost)?
- To what extent is the implementation innovative?
- What is the expected impact of the project on science and research, and especially on the Collaborative Research Centre?

7.2 How do you rate the objectives and work programme?

- Are the objectives and the criteria for success plausible and assessable?
- To what extent is the work programme suited to achieve the stated objectives? Is it adequately supported by all partners?

7.3 How do you rate the application partner?

- To what extent does the partner appear capable of conducting the project?
- For projects involving commercial partners: To what extent is the transfer project in the pre-competitive range?

- To what extent is the partner's contribution of personnel, material and scientific resources adequate?

7.4 How do you rate the working environment?

- How conducive to the project's success are the available resources in terms of staff, institutional environment, space and instrumentation?
- What opportunities does the project provide for participating research associates to further their academic or professional qualification?

7.5 If the project deserves funding:

- Is the requested funding amount appropriate considering the available core support?

7.6 How would you rate the project based on the following grade definitions?

Excellent:	Meets all requirements in an exemplary manner. Internationally leading. Groundbreaking results achieved / expected. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is excellent.
Very good to excellent:	Meets the requirements to an exceptionally high level. Internationally in the top tier. Many significant results achieved / expected. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is very good.
Very good:	Meets the requirements to a high level. Internationally competitive. Significant results achieved / expected. Minor shortcomings. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is at least convincing.
Good to very good:	Meets the requirements to an adequate level. Internationally visible. Many relevant results achieved / expected. Moderate shortcomings. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is at least good.
Good:	Meets most requirements to a satisfactory level. Relevant results achieved / expected. One or more major shortcomings. Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is at least satisfactory.
Not fundable:	Does not meet the requirements to a satisfactory level. Not fundable. / Integration into the Collaborative Research Centre is not satisfactory.

II Formal Aspects of the Review

1 Confidentiality

All proposals to the DFG, all correspondence with reviewers, and all reviews must be treated confidentially. You may not exploit the contents of a proposal that you review for purposes of your own or others' research. If you have been asked to provide a written review, we request that you not identify yourself as a reviewer to the applicants or to any third party. Consequently, the responsibilities of a written review may only be undertaken personally and may not be delegated to third parties, and the DFG may release the contents and arguments of reviews to applicants only anonymously and, if necessary, with redactions.

2 Conflicts of Interest

Please consider whether there are circumstances that may create an appearance of partiality. For more information on avoiding conflicts of interest, see DFG form 10.201.

www.dfg.de/formulare/10_201/

3 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

In all of its funding programmes, the DFG actively promotes equal opportunities and diversity in German science and academia. Reviews of grant proposals should not disadvantage applicants due to extra-scientific criteria, such as age, gender or disability. For example, applicants should not be assessed based on their absolute age but on their research achievements relative to the duration of their academic career. Applicants may be given credit for certain extra-scientific disadvantages. For example, unavoidable delays in the academic careers of applicants (such as longer training periods, gaps in publication history, or less time spent abroad due to child care responsibilities) should be taken into account. More information on equal opportunities and diversity in science and academia is available at

www.dfg.de/diversity/en

4 **Obligation to Follow Rules of Good Scientific Practice¹**

The rules of good scientific practice also apply to reviewers. A violation of these rules can result in a charge of scientific misconduct. Scientific misconduct includes the intentional or grossly negligent statement of falsehoods in a scientific context, the violation of intellectual property rights, the impediment of another person's research work, and non-compliance with the confidentiality rules above. The circumstances of each individual case are decisive. Depending on the type and severity of the determined misconduct, the DFG may impose one or more sanctions, as specified in the DFG Rules of Procedure.

III **Information on the Review and Decision Process**

1 **Oral Review**

The **preliminary meeting of the review panel** on the morning of the first day is designed to provide information about the review process, discuss particularities of the proposal, and prepare reviewers for their task. It also provides an opportunity to discuss initial assessments.

The subsequent **presentation of the Collaborative Research Centre** takes place in the form of plenary talks and interviews with individuals. The interviews are structured by posters on the various projects. If appropriate, visits to workstations, laboratories, etc. are possible.

In the **first closed meeting** of the review panel in the afternoon and evening of the first day, an initial assessment of the proposal is made based on the projects, and further questions to the Collaborative Research Centre are identified.

¹ The rules of good scientific practice are presented in detail in the white paper entitled "Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice" and in the usage guidelines for Collaborative Research Centres (DFG form 5.01).

In the **plenary discussion** on the morning of the second day, the head(s) of the applicant university/universities address the role of the Collaborative Research Centre for the research profile of their university/universities, as well as its supporting structures. The main issues to be discussed are core support, strategy and planning, early career support, and gender equality in science and academia. Then the review panellists discuss any open questions regarding the proposal with the participating researchers.

The purpose of the subsequent **second closed meeting** is to make a final assessment of the proposal, in terms of both the individual projects and the Centre as a whole. The review panel makes a recommendation to the Grants Committee regarding approval or rejection of the proposal. A representative from the relevant federal state's ministry commonly attends the second closed meeting as a guest.

In a **final meeting**, the results of the peer review will be communicated to the head(s) of the applicant university/universities and the board of the Collaborative Research Centre. Participants in the review also include two members of the Grants Committee on Collaborative Research Centres as rapporteurs, and generally two representatives from the DFG Head Office.

2 Decision Process

The outcome of the review serves as the basis for the funding decision. The Grants Committee on Collaborative Research Centres makes this decision as part of a multidisciplinary and comparative discussion of all relevant review findings and taking into account the available financial resources. The decision is based on the minutes of the review, which are prepared by the DFG Head Office in agreement with the rapporteurs, as well as on the rapporteurs' oral report. The Grants Committee meets twice each year in May and November.

3 Written Review

Supplementary proposals for projects in the Collaborative Research Centres Programme are reviewed in writing. As a rule, two independently working reviewers are called on for

each proposal. Based on their reviews, the DFG Head Office prepares a recommendation for a decision. The funding decision is made by the Grants Committee on Collaborative Research Centres.

The grant decision will be communicated to all persons involved in the review process. The DFG will share reviews with applicants in an anonymised form. The DFG Head Office may redact passages of the review, e.g. if they permit identification of the reviewer.