

# Guidelines

## for the Consultation Phase and Preliminary Review of Initiatives in the Collaborative Research Centres Programme

### Introduction

For the preliminary review of initiatives to establish a new Collaborative Research Centre on the basis of a draft proposal, we ask you to consider the following questions. Aspects that pertain to CRC/Transregio initiatives are identified as such.

The preliminary review and consultation phase is the basis for a first selection stage in the Collaborative Research Centres Programme. The purpose of the phase is to help the initiative and the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres (see section [III](#)) assess whether the draft proposal, in the opinion of independent experts, is an appropriate basis for a full proposal. The main emphasis is on the overall strategy as opposed to the topical or methodological details of the individual projects.

Please note the formal aspects of the preliminary review as per section [II](#). Information on the review and decision process can be found in section [III](#). Please note that a written assessment is not required in conjunction with the preliminary review. If you have any questions, please contact the DFG Head Office.

### I. Key questions for the Session

#### I.1. General Strategy

##### What is your assessment of the research topic?

- Is the topic original, timely and relevant?
- Does the topic have a fundamental character? Can it support research over a longer period?
- Are there prospects for applications, e.g. in terms of social, economic, medical, ecological or cultural developments?
- What relationships exist to thematically related institutions or larger projects, including those at other locations?

**What is your assessment of the scientific quality?**

- How do you rate the qualifications of the participating researchers?
- Is the research programme coherent? Is the division into project areas convincing?
- How is the centre positioned internationally? What are its prospects in the international competition? Is the centre internationally visible?
- For CRC/Transregio initiatives: Are the leading researchers from the relevant subject areas networked?

**How do you rate the coherence and organisation of the consortium?**

- Is the research programme well focused and structured? Do the individual projects clearly fit in with the overall goals?
- How do you assess the potential for cooperation between the individual projects? Do collaborations currently exist? Are synergies to be expected?
- Do plans include multi- or interdisciplinary collaboration? Is there a general strategy for such collaborations?
- What is your impression of the consortium's self-monitoring and control based on the draft proposal? Are management and administration handled appropriately?
- Is there a successful approach to knowledge transfer and public relations? How are research data handled?
- Do collaborations exist with other research networks in Germany or abroad?
- For CRC/Transregio initiatives: Is there effective communication across locations?

**What is your assessment of the consortium in terms of structural criteria?**

- What is the infrastructural environment at the location?
- Are enough researchers involved? Do you see possibilities for advancement and expansion through the inclusion of other subject areas, professorial appointments, etc.? If so, where?
- Is the consortium in line with the university's structural strategy? Can sustainable profile building be expected or observed?
- What is the situation and outlook for early-career researchers? Do they receive appropriate and structured support?
- What is the situation and outlook for women researchers in the consortium? Are there appropriate policies to ensure equal opportunities?
- For CRC/Transregio initiatives: Please consider the criteria mentioned above for each participating location. In addition, consider the following issues: Is the choice of locations convincing? Are the locations interconnected? How is this networking expected to develop in the future? Can a structural impact be observed or expected at every location?

**How do you rate the initiative's prospects for success?**

- Do you believe a proposal would have a good chance of being approved? Should the initiators be encouraged to submit a full proposal? Does it appear promising?
- Might a proposal submitted to another DFG grant programme or another funding organisation be more promising?

**I.2. Research Projects****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

- Qualifications, preliminary work and publications of the designated project leader(s)
- Differentiation from other projects by designated project leader(s)

**How do you rate the integration of the project within the consortium?**

- Does the project relate closely to the initiative's central idea?
- To what other projects are there close relationships? How does this collaboration work?

## **II. Formal Aspects of the Preliminary Review**

### **II.1. Confidentiality**

All proposals submitted to the DFG, the correspondence with reviewers, the reviews and the identity of the reviewers must be treated confidentially. We ask that you not identify yourself as a reviewer to the applicant or to any third party. This entails that the responsibilities of a reviewer may only be undertaken personally and may not be delegated to third parties, as well as that the DFG may submit the contents and arguments of the reviews in a completely anonymised and, if necessary, edited form to the applicants. The scientific content of the proposal may not be exploited for personal and/or other scientific purposes.

### **II.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 10.201e.

### **II.3. Diversity and Equal Opportunities**

In all of its funding programmes, the DFG actively encourages equal opportunities and diversity in German science and academia. Reviews of grant proposals may not disadvantage project leaders due to extra-scientific reasons, such as age, gender or disability. For example, considerations should not be based on the applicants' actual ages but on their research achievements relative to the duration of their scientific careers. To promote diversity and equal opportunities in research, it is possible to compensate for certain extra-scientific disadvantages. For example, unavoidable delays in the scientific careers of applicants (for example longer periods of qualification, gaps in publication history, or less time spent abroad due to family reasons) should be taken into account. More information is available via [www.dfg.de/diversity/](http://www.dfg.de/diversity/).

### **II.4. Obligation to Follow Rules of Good Scientific Practice**

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 noncompliance with the confidentiality rules above. The circumstances of the 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 Preliminary Review and Decision Process**

#### **III.1. Preliminary Review Process**

The preliminary review begins with an internal meeting by the consultation panel to identify priorities and issues for subsequent discussion with representatives of the initiative. A short presentation by the speaker of the initiative opens the discussion. Following the discussion, the review panel meets internally for a second time to come to a final assessment of the draft, focusing on its viability as a proposal and any necessary revisions. This assessment is then communicated to the representatives of the initiative in a final plenary meeting.

Participants in the consultation also include a member, with relevant expertise, of the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres in a reporting function, and generally two representatives from the DFG Head Office.

#### **III.2. Decision Process**

The assessment of the consultation panel forms the basis for a recommendation by the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres. In a multidisciplinary and comparative discussion of all relevant preliminary reviews, the most promising initiatives are identified and invited to submit full proposals. The others are discouraged from applying. The assessment by the consultation panel is communicated to the Senate Committee orally by the reporting member and in writing by the minutes, which are prepared by the DFG Head Office in agreement with the reporting member.