Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

Guidelines for the Review Process

I. General Information on the Review Process

As a rule, each proposal submitted to the DFG is evaluated by two independent reviewers. On the basis of these reviews, the DFG's head office prepares an award recommendation. All documentation is then sent to one or more members of the review boards. The review boards are elected statutory bodies of the DFG. They are responsible for the quality of the review process and, especially in the case of individual grants, for the preparation of the funding decision by the appropriate committee. All reviewers participating in the process will be informed of the final decision.

II. Formal Aspects of the Review Process

If you do not feel that you have the expertise required to evaluate the subject matter, please return the proposal as quickly as possible. In this case we would be grateful if you would assist us by suggesting other possible reviewers.

Please examine whether circumstances exist that could be interpreted as your having a conflict of interest.

In case of any questions about the proposal, please contact the DFG head office exclusively.

When preparing the review please consider that the DFG's head office may forward your comments concerning the proposal, anonymously, to the applicant.

Your review should be limited to 1-2 pages, as appropriate for the complexity of the proposal.

Please provide a **clear recommendation** as to whether you believe the project should be funded.

III. Criteria for the Review Process

1. Quality of the Project / Qualification of the Applicant

- Soundness of the preliminary work, quality of publications and for renewal proposals also the results obtained so far
- Originality
- Expected advancement of knowledge (also in relation to the costs)
- Scientific significance (in its own field and/or across different fields)
- Broader impact (science policy, social policy, economic or technical reasons)

2. Working Environment / Scientific Environment

Staff, institutional, room and instrument requirements and resources

3. Objectives and Work Programme

- Clear working hypotheses
- Reasonable limitation of the topic
- Appropriateness of the methods
- Ability to complete the project within the proposed or overall expected time frame

4. Recommendation Concerning the Extent of Funding

4.1 Staff

Justification of the proposed staff needs by the work programme

4.2 Instrumentation

- Necessity of the proposed instruments for the project; utilisation rate of the proposed instruments by the research project
- Do the proposed instruments qualify as part of current core support needs?
- Necessity of the proposed power rating or the proposed equipment with accessories

4.3 Small Instruments (acquisition costs of no more than €10,000), Consumables, Travel Expenses and Other Costs

After evaluating the individual items mentioned in the proposal, please make a funding recommendation, where applicable for the total amount.

4.4 Publication Costs

If applied for, a lump sum payment of generally up to €750 per year, or in exceptional, justified cases up to €5,000 per year, can be awarded for the publication of scientific project results, provided you have fundamentally expressed your support of the project. Please refer to the DFG's guidelines on research grants (section IV.5.1 of DFG form 1.02e) for more information.

IV. Diversity and Equal Opportunities in German Research

In all of its funding programmes, the DFG actively encourages equal opportunities and diversity in German science and academia. Funding reviews may not disadvantage applicants due to extra-scientific reasons, such as age, gender or state of health. For example, in assessing proposals from young researchers, considerations should not be based on the applicants' actual age but instead on the individual circumstances relating to the duration of their scientific careers and previous research achievements.

When preparing your review, please keep in mind that your comments may be forwarded, anonymously, to the applicants.

In promoting diversity and equal opportunities in research, it is possible to compensate for certain, extra-scientific disadvantages. For example, in order to evaluate the scientific achievements of applicants appropriately, their individual situations need to be taken into account. Equal opportunity therefore includes taking into consideration unavoidable delays in the scientific careers of applicants (for example longer periods of qualification, gaps in publications, or less time spent abroad due to family reasons).

Information on diversity and equal opportunities can be found at www.dfg.de/en/research_careers/equal_opportunities. You may also contact the relevant person at the DFG's head office for more information.

V. Confidentiality

All proposals submitted to the DFG, the correspondence forwarded to you, the reviews and the identity of the reviewers and members of review boards participating in the evaluation must be treated confidentially. They must not be revealed to third parties. Therefore, the responsibilities of a reviewer may only be undertaken personally and may not be delegated to third parties. The scientific content of the proposal may not be exploited for personal or other scientific purposes. Furthermore, we ask that you not identify yourself as a reviewer to the applicant or to any third party.

VI. Conflict of Interest

In each stage of the proposal process the DFG's head office examines whether or not a conflict of interest may exist. A conflict of interest is given if you are directly affected by the subject matter of the funding project or another reason exists that is suitable to raise doubts about the impartiality of your specialist evaluations. Before submitting your written decision or before participating in a group of reviewers, please inform us whether circumstances[1)] exist that could be interpreted as a conflict of interest. Please inform us of any possible reservations so that the DFG's head office and you together can determine whether your participation in a particular review process is opportune.

The mere appearance of a conflict of interest means that you will not be able to participate in this particular review process. You may not submit a decision in the written process. As a member of a group of reviewers, we ask that you leave the conference room before the oral consultations about the appropriate proposal begin. During a final review of several proposals, you will abstain from voting on the proposal for which it appears that you may have a conflict of interest.

VII. Obligation to Follow Rules of Good Scientific Practice

The rules of good scientific practice also apply to reviewers. A violation of these rules can exist if in a scientific context erroneous information is providedintentionally or with gross negligence, the intellectual property of others

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[1)] Such circumstances may include the following:

- Relatives, personal ties or conflicts;
- Close scientific collaboration, e.g. implementation of joint projects or joint publications within the past 3 years;
- Direct scientific competition with personal projects or plans;
- Close proximity, e.g. member of the same scientific institution or impending change of the reviewer to the institution of the applicant or vice versa;
- Teacher/student relationship, unless independent scientific activity of more than 10 years exists;
- Dependent relationship in employment during the past 3 years;
- Participation in ongoing or just previously concluded professorial appointment proceedings;
- Current or prior activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, e.g. scientific advisory boards;
- Participation in mutual review processes, also outside of the DFG process, at least within the past 12 months;
- Personal economic interests in the funding decision;
- Competitive relationship or common economic interests, e.g. common business management.

is infringed upon or the research activity of others is impaired in some other manner. Violations may also occur in cases of noncompliance with sections V and VI 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. These may range from a written reprimand to the loss of eligibility to submit proposals to the DFG for one to eight years or the exclusion from serving as a reviewer or in statutory bodies of the DFG as well as the disqualification of the active and passive right to vote for statutory bodies of the DFG.

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