

**IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

**FOR JOINT SUPPORT OF**

**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TRAINING GROUPS (IRTGs)**

**BY**

**THE DEUTSCHE FORSCHUNGSGEMEINSCHAFT e.V. (DFG)**  
**OF GERMANY**

**AND**

**THE NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF)**  
**OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## **1. Background**

In line with the DFG and the NRF (hereafter referred to as the “Parties”) Agreement on Scientific Cooperation and its Joint Implementation Guidelines signed on 27 October 1999, the two Parties hereby agree to cooperate by supporting the training of postgraduate (i.e. doctoral) students in both countries. The training shall take place within the bilateral joint research projects established and implemented by both the German and South African researchers. These bilateral joint research projects shall offer doctoral students in both countries excellent opportunities to develop their competencies in the context of DFG's **International Research Training Groups (IRTG)**.

## **2. Description of IRTGs**

IRTGs are German structured training programmes that strive to strengthen bilateral partnerships through joint research, a joint qualification programme, cross-border supervision of doctoral students from partnering countries, and long-term coordinated and reciprocal exchange visits by doctoral students at respective partnering institutions. Their emphasis is to provide early career researchers with doctoral degrees within the framework of a focused research programme and a structured training programme that prepares them for the complexities of employment as scientists and/or academics. IRTGs can only be established by a university, university of technology or an equivalent higher education institution which has the legal right to confer doctoral degrees (hereafter referred to as Higher Education Institutions – “HEIs”).

## **3. Structure of the German/South African IRTGs**

The German/South Africa IRTGs will be jointly supported as follows:

- 3.1. Applications will be open to all subject areas, and interdisciplinarity in joint projects will be encouraged.
- 3.2. An International Research Training Group is run by two small teams of professors, one in Germany and one in South Africa. Each team has about 5 to 10 members with proven expertise both in the IRTG's main research topic and in providing outstanding supervision to doctoral students. The participating researchers' expertise at the two locations should be complementary and provide added value to the International Research Training Group.

- 3.3. Each team of professors in an IRTG should be based at a single HEI in Germany and South Africa respectively. In convincingly justified cases, an International Research Training Group may be proposed by more than two HEIs.
- 3.4. The German and South African teams in an IRTG jointly formulate a high quality and coherent research and training programme to be implemented on both sides. The teams should have common research interests and objectives and these must be reflected in a common framework and joint projects.
- 3.5. IRTG Proposals may only be submitted to DFG and NRF by the respective host HEIs in Germany and South Africa. For every IRTG, one member of the team on each side serves as spokesperson who is responsible for the proposal and the scientific coordination of the IRTG. This includes also responsibility for reporting to DFG and the NRF, respectively.
- 3.6. The programme should provide for regular exchanges of academic staff and doctoral students for the purposes of joint research and training.
- 3.7. Doctoral students should spend a period of at least 6 months (and up to 1 year) in total during their PhD project at the respective partner institution for research and training, and each doctoral student should have both a German and a South African supervisor.
- 3.8. Both, the German and the South African side, agree to fund about 10 to 15 doctoral researchers of the Research Training Group in parallel.

#### **4. Support and Funding Model for German/South African IRTGs**

- 4.1. Both DFG and the NRF will provide funding for IRTG project-specific costs incurred by their respective partner HEIs. In accordance with respective internal policies of DFG and the NRF, funds are provided for the following activities:
  - Funding for 3-year PhD positions/fellowships,
  - Project-specific funding for dissertation research projects (e.g. consumables),
  - Longer-term, coordinated and reciprocal research visits (one or more with an overall duration of 6-12 months) by doctoral students to the respective partner institutions,
  - Workshops, conferences and seminars,
  - Short-term visits by the research professors (i.e. supervisors),
  - Further types of funds according to the respective programme guidelines.



- 4.2. The respective host institution will take the responsibility for funding the accommodation of the research professors from the partner institution for short-term visits, lectures, workshops or seminars, whereas the sending institution will cover the international travel costs – given the availability of funds from both sides.
- 4.3. Each sending institution takes the responsibility for providing the travel costs and (if applicable) supplementary fellowships for its graduate students in order to enable them to conduct the research work for the cooperative programme at the partner institution in the host country.
- 4.4. The participating HEIs are expected to supply the necessary core support, especially fully equipped work stations for doctoral students (office, laboratory space, etc.) and operating costs.
- 4.5. As additional support mechanism, both DFG and the NRF will make funds available to support preparatory meetings for International Research Training Groups applications. Provisions stated in 4.2 and 4.3 apply accordingly.

## **5. Duration of Funding**

German/South African IRTGs will be supported for a potential maximum of 9 years, divided into two funding periods of 4.5 years each. Continuation of funding after the first funding phase may only be granted on the basis of a successful renewal proposal.

## **6. Applications, Review and Decision Process**

Both Parties will accept only joint proposals by German/South African HEIs. All joint applications are to be prepared according to the DFG/NRF guidelines for International Research Training Groups and will contain separate budget requests for the German and the South African partner group.

### *6.1. Establishment Proposals for German/South African IRTGs*

German/South African initiatives will first submit a joint IRTG pre-proposal to DFG. DFG will evaluate these pre-proposals according to its established procedures for Research Training Groups. Positively evaluated initiatives will be invited to submit a joint full proposal. DFG will inform NRF on the results of evaluations.

Invited full proposals shall be submitted in parallel, by the German host university to DFG and by the South African coordinator/university to the NRF. Submission must be in accordance with the respective funding organisation's guidelines and through the established submission systems. The annual deadline for submission to DFG is April 1<sup>st</sup>, the NRF will publish its respective deadlines through the annual call for proposals.

### *6.2. Renewal Proposals for German/South African IRTGs*

Renewal proposals shall also be submitted in parallel, by the German host university to DFG and by the South African coordinator/university to the NRF according to the dates set and through the mechanism defined by the Parties.

### *6.3. Review and decision process*

For draft proposals, DFG will independently execute the review process according to the normal procedure for IRTGs. DFG will share the results of evaluations with the NRF. The NRF will agree to accept the outcome of the draft proposal stage and will invite only full proposals based on a positive evaluation by DFG. Full proposals and renewal proposals will be evaluated on site by joint DFG/NRF review panels. Each party will accept recommendations for participation of particular reviewers identified by the respective other party. It is also mutually agreed that the sending party takes the responsibility for covering the international travel and accommodation cost of the reviewers.

## **7. Reporting and Renewal**

Funded programmes will provide annual financial reports on the usage of the funds to both DFG and the NRF, according to the respective institution's rules and regulations. Renewal proposals can be submitted according to the dates set by the Parties. Renewal proposals may also be submitted for review to determine future investments in the IRTG.

## **8. Intellectual Property Rights**

The Parties have no claims on the intellectual property rights arising from the selected projects of the IRTGs. Rules and regulations regarding the results of work generated within the scope of the IRTG's (including inventions) shall be agreed upon between the scientific partners from the German and the South African sides prior to the funding of the specific IRTG.

## **9. Promotion of the Collaboration**

Both DFG and the NRF will actively promote the collaboration to eligible HEIs and will deploy all appropriate measures for the information of applicants and the announcement of results.

## 10. Key Personnel

Each Party shall appoint a designated professional who shall be authorised to act as a primary contact person in respect of each Party's obligations in terms of this framework of cooperation, and who will be responsible for coordinating the partnership and for issuing all approvals and make all requests on behalf of each Party.

The implementation of this framework of cooperation shall come into force upon signature thereof and will remain in force for a period of 10 years. It may be amended or renewed upon the mutual consent of the Parties. Either Party may terminate this framework of cooperation any time prior to the lapse of the 10-year period by providing the other Party with a 6-months' written notice.

The amendment or termination of this framework of cooperation will not affect activities already agreed upon and in progress at the time of the amendment or termination of the framework.



Dr. Ulrike Eickhoff,  
Head of Department, Coordinated  
Programmes and Infrastructure

On behalf of Deutsche  
Forschungsgemeinschaft e.V. (DFG),  
Germany

Date: 19 Dec. 2016



Dr. Aldo Stroebe,  
Executive Director, International Relations  
and Cooperation

On behalf of the National Research  
Foundation (NRF), South Africa

Date: 20 Jan. 2017