Guidelines

for the Review of Draft Proposals for Clinical Research Units

Disclaimer: The English translation of this document is provided for informational purposes. In the event of a discrepancy between the English and the German versions, the German text takes precedence.

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
Kennedyallee 40 · 53175 Bonn, Germany · Postal address: 53170 Bonn, Germany
Tel.: + 49 228 885-1 · Fax: + 49 228 885-2777 · postmaster@dfg.de · www.dfg.de

I Programme Information

Funding for a Clinical Research Unit enables outstanding researchers to collaborate closely on specific medium-term projects whose anticipated findings could not be achieved within individual grants programmes. The thematic focus of a Clinical Research Unit is on basic, disease-oriented or patient-oriented clinical research. Furthermore, measures tailored specifically to the Clinical Research Unit are pursued in order to promote researchers in early career phases and also equity and diversity.

Funding should also contribute to improving clinical research by creating and strengthening research-oriented structures within university hospitals, establishing or enhancing training structures, enhancing the scientific profiles of the departments of medicine, and increasing cooperation between clinicians and scientists in the foundational disciplines of medicine.

A Clinical Research Unit typically has fewer than ten projects which are coordinated to enable work on a common research topic.

A Clinical Research Unit is primarily run by university hospitals and institutes at one location. It is made up of project leaders and project staff. One researcher assumes the role of spokesperson. The spokesperson should be a full-time university teacher. In addition, the Clinical Research Unit is headed by a research coordinator, who is either appointed to or currently holds a research professorship and who is responsible for the scientific and administrative management of the unit. This individual must meet particular requirements with regard to their scientific track record, experience in leading projects, and integration and leadership skills.

A draft proposal must first be submitted before a Clinical Research Unit may submit an establishment proposal. The DFG makes a recommendation on whether or not the establishment proposal should be submitted based on the review of the draft proposal.

The total duration of funding is generally eight years; the first funding period is usually four years. Continued funding may be applied for with a renewal proposal (see the Guidelines for Clinical Research Units – DFG form 50.08).

www.dfg.de/formulare/50_08

Please note:

General Guidelines for Reviews (DFG form 10.20) are available at:
www.dfg.de/formulare/10_20

The review should not exceed three pages in length.

II Structure of the Review

1. How would you assess the **quality of the project**, especially with regard to originality and the anticipated contribution to knowledge?

2. Is the topic particularly relevant and topical, and does it focus on basic, disease-oriented or patient-oriented clinical research? Is funding as a group likely to produce a significant benefit compared to the funding of individual projects? Does the research question require a funding horizon of at least eight years?

3. To what extent do the **objectives and work programme** of the unit as a whole as well as those of the individual projects convincingly reflect clear working hypotheses and an appropriately distinct topic? Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the planned investigations. Are the methods and the schedule as well as the concept for handling research data suitable?

4. How would you evaluate the soundness of the preliminary work, the quality of publications (please refer to the Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists – DFG form 1.91) and the **qualifications of the applicants** – in general and in relation to the project as a whole and the specific individual projects?

5. Please also comment on the extent to which both the spokesperson and, if known, the research coordinator designated for the research professorship meet the requirements in terms of their scientific track record, experience in leading projects, including third-party-funded projects, and integration and leadership skills.

6. How would you assess the **work and research environment**?

7. Will the Clinical Research Unit strengthen the scientific profile of the university or medical department? Will research-oriented structures be established in the participating hospitals

and clinics? Will the unit contribute to intensifying cooperation between clinicians and basic researchers, and what form will the cooperation take?

8. How do you rate the measures taken to promote researchers in early career phases? Are there doctoral programmes for medical graduates within the department? Are there clinician scientist programmes or opportunities for clinicians engaged in research to be released from patient care duties (temporary substitute positions)?

9. Are **equity and diversity** taken into account **appropriately**? Is the subject-specific involvement of researchers appropriate in terms of gender equality? How do you rate the measures to be taken to promote gender equality for researchers, diversity in research and the compatibility of research and family?

10. Please provide a **clear recommendation** as to whether the applicants should be invited to submit an establishment proposal. Is the cost estimate given in the draft proposal plausible?