

On-Site Review Questions for Evaluating *Establishment Proposals* for Clinical Research Units

Clinical Research Units promote close collaboration between highly qualified scientists working on thematic projects within clinical institutions. They are generally established for a period of six years. Clinical Research Units pursue clinical investigations, integrate clinical findings, and may conduct clinical pilot studies. They focus on translational research with patient-oriented approaches and on understanding disease mechanisms.

Clinical Research Units aim to

- improve the quality of clinical research by creating and strengthening research-oriented structures within university hospitals,
- establish or strengthen educational structures in clinical research institutions,
- give qualified younger research scientists new development/career opportunities,
- strengthen the scientific profile of the location and the institution at which the Clinical Research Unit is primarily located,
- support the efficient allocation of funds for clinical research, in particular funds allotted by the German states to the university clinics and medical departments,
- intensify cooperation between clinicians and researchers in the field of applied medical sciences,
- enhance cooperation between research groups at universities, non-university institutions and in industry (where applicable),
- strengthen international cooperation.

Applicants initially submit draft proposals, which are assessed by peer reviewers and/or elected review board members. On the basis of this review, draft proposals then undergo comparative evaluation by the DFG Senate Commission on Clinical Research. If the evaluation is favourable, a full proposal may be submitted, which will usually be assessed on site by a group of reviewers. The final funding decision is made by the responsible DFG committee on the basis of the reviews and endorsement by the Senate Commission on Clinical Research (with involvement by the review board for medicine).

The proposal you have been sent is a full proposal. In preparing for the on-site visit, please consider the following:

I. The position of the Clinical Research Unit

1. Is the proposed topic of current interest and relevance, and does it have a long-term perspective? How is the broader field of research expected to develop over the next six years? Can the Clinical Research Unit contribute to this development? How does the project rate in national and international comparison?
2. How would you assess the career prospects for young scientists in this field, both within and outside academia?
3. Is the university well suited for hosting a Clinical Research Unit with regard to existing infrastructure (institutes, personnel, equipment, libraries, etc.)? How does it compare to other institutions? How would you assess the host university's commitment to this Clinical Research Unit?
4. Are the modalities for allocating performance-based government subsidies for research and education at the host university's medical department convincing? Has the host institution made sufficient commitments to ensure that the facilities and resources required are available? Will space be allocated based on performance?
5. How do this group and the medical department plan to integrate and promote young researchers? Are there any current training programmes/structures or special measures to advance young scientists, particularly medical researchers? If not, are they envisioned? Can research clinicians be released from patient-care obligations (rotation programmes)?
6. Are there strategies for promoting gender equality within the Clinical Research Unit? If so, are they convincing?

II. The Clinical Research Unit in general

1. Is there a sufficient number of established researchers and/or clinicians involved who have carried out research in the field or in a related field?
2. The W3/W2 position is to be filled by XXX. Does XXX have the expertise and background necessary to successfully carry out this position?
3. How would you assess the proposed collaborative research activities/interaction of the scientists involved? Can this collaboration contribute to the overall goal of the Research Unit?
4. Should additional scientists, disciplines, or institutions be involved in this Research Unit?
5. Is the overall research programme well defined, coherent, conclusive, and feasible? If a concentration were necessary, what effect would it have on the affiliation of individual projects?
6. Does the title of the Clinical Research Unit adequately reflect the overall research programme?
7. Are the premises adequate for staff, students, equipment, etc.?

8. Have the initiators been sufficiently selective with regard to the participating researchers and projects? Have they kept the budget within reasonable limits?
9. Do you recommend the establishment and funding of this Clinical Research Unit?

III. Individual projects

1. Are the participating researchers adequately qualified with regard to both the overall Clinical Research Unit and the individual project? Does the project build on previous work? Do the applicants have proven publication records? How is the state of the art taken into account?
2. What is the scientific relevance of the proposal? What is novel and forward-looking about the aims, structure and methods of the proposed research project? What will be gained if the project succeeds (originality, innovation, risk)?
3. Is the proposal well formulated? What are the project's chances for success? Is the individual work schedule sound? Can it be implemented within the proposed time period and environment?
4. Is the individual project strongly connected to the Clinical Research Unit as a whole, or is it marginal? Is it necessary for other projects?
5. If applicable: Are the funds requested for experiments involving animals necessary (species and number of animals, upkeep of laboratory animals, etc.)?
6. Budget:
Is the budget justified and reasonable with regard to the proposed project? Can the project be completed within the proposed time frame?
We invite you to share any comments/suggestions on the budget.
7. Do you have any suggestions that should be passed on to the applicants (either for individual project applicants or in relation to the project as a whole)?
8. Funding recommendation:
Should the DFG fund this individual project? If so, please prioritise.