Draft Proposal Preparation Instructions
for Research Training Groups and
International Research Training Groups

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.
I General Information

The proposal procedure for Research Training Groups (RTGs) and International Research Training Groups (IRTGs) consists of two stages. In the first stage, the participating researchers write a draft proposal, which is then submitted to the DFG by the university or equivalent higher education institution. This draft proposal is then reviewed. The review criteria can be found in the “Guidelines for Reviewing Draft Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups or International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 1.304).

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_304

Based on the draft proposal, the review, and a recommendation by the relevant review board, the Senate Committee on Research Training Groups makes a recommendation as to whether an establishment proposal should be submitted in the second stage. If the recommendation is negative, the applicant may submit a revised version of the draft proposal once. For guidance on the submission of an establishment proposal, please refer to the “Proposal Preparation Instructions – Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 54.05).

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_05

For further information, please refer to the “Guidelines on Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07).

www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07

If you will be applying for the International Research Training Group programme variation, please note particularly the “Guidelines for Differentiating International Research Training Groups from Research Training Groups” (DFG form 1.312).

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_312

Proposing an International Research Training Group requires intensive preparation and close coordination among all participants. It is therefore recommended to inform the DFG Head Office as early as possible about planned proposals. For advice and support, please contact the appropriate programme office at the DFG Head Office.
II Proposal Submission

Draft proposals under the Research Training Groups Programme must be submitted via the elan portal of the DFG. You can access the system at elan.dfg.de to securely submit your draft proposal, proposal-related data and documents.

The draft proposal consists of the following three parts:
A – Proposal Data and Obligations (via the electronic proposal form)
B – Project Description (according to DFG form 53.60)
C – Attachments (biographical sketches and any additional documents)

As soon as the data and the uploaded documents are sent electronically to the DFG, you will receive an acknowledgment of receipt by e-mail with a compliance form attached to it. This document must be signed by the spokesperson and the head(s) of the university/universities, indicating their consent to the submission of the draft proposal, and sent to the DFG (in the case of IRTGs, only from the German side).

A Proposal Data and Obligations

An electronic proposal form is available via the DFG elan portal at elan.dfg.de for you to provide the following information:
- Title of the Research Training Group in German and English (max. 300 characters each)
- Research area, keywords, topical connections to other countries
- Summary of the main intentions of the Research Training Group, i.e. especially of the research and qualification programmes, in German and English (max. 3,000 characters)
- Applicant university/universities; any other participating institutions (for IRTGs, information on the foreign partner institution)
- Designated spokesperson; participating researchers (academic title, first name, last name and location) (for IRTGs, include same information for foreign partner institution)
- Obligations and declarations
B Project Description

For the description of your project, use the appropriate template in English or German, which is available on the elan portal and on the website of the DFG.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_60_elan

The length of the document (exclusive of section 5 “Publications and bibliography for the research programme”) must not exceed 15 pages (20 pages for IRTGs) (A4 format, Arial 11pt font or similar, single-spaced).

In the case of adverse effects on research projects and biographies due to the coronavirus pandemic, relevant statements can be included at a suitable point in the description of the project and in the biographical sketches. Please underpin your description with concrete details on the duration and extent of the adverse circumstances. For further information, see the “Guidelines in the Case of Adverse Effects on Research Projects and Biographies due to the Pandemic” (DFG form 55.07).

www.dfg.de/formulare/55_07

The project description should include the following information:

1 General information

1.1 Applicant university/universities, other participating institutions

Specify the lead applicant university that will manage the funds if the grant is awarded. Name additional applicant universities if applicable.

For International Research Training Groups, specify the foreign partner institution(s) as well.

1.2 Designated spokesperson

The designated spokesperson is responsible for the proposal. The spokesperson must be a member of the university that will manage the funds and must be able to represent the Research Training Group directly in all committees of the department as well as the university at large. He or she must therefore hold a permanent position, have all the rights and
responsibilities of a full-time professor, and have the right to vote for and be elected to the university senate.

For **International Research Training Groups**, specify the spokesperson at the foreign partner institution as well.

1.3 Participating researchers

Name the – usually five to ten – professors who will run the Research Training Group, including their research areas. Please give appropriate consideration to diversity when composing the members of this group. Additional information can be found under [www.dfg.de/diversity](http://www.dfg.de/diversity)

If more than ten researchers are involved, please provide a justification. The DFG strongly recommends involving researchers in early career phases and giving them responsible positions within the RTG. These include advanced postdoctoral researchers, junior research group leaders or junior professors, for example, who may have gained initial experience in supervision. The applicant university is expected to grant such researchers the right to supervise doctoral researchers.

The participating researchers are considered “individuals with a high level of scientific/academic responsibility” as stated in the DFG’s Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct\(^1\). They must take note of these Rules of Procedure and acknowledge them as legally binding (see Declaration of Obligation of Compliance – DFG form 80.02).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/80_02](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/80_02)

For **International Research Training Groups**, include the same information for the foreign partner institution in a second table.

\(^1\) [Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (VerfOwF), DFG form 80.01](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/80_02)
1.4 Number of doctoral researchers, doctoral researchers in medicine and postdoctoral researchers

Within the nine-year period of a Research Training Group, generally 30 to 45 doctoral researchers can be funded by the RTG, each for a period of 36 to 48 months. Several “generations” (cohorts) of doctoral researchers can be funded consecutively or at various intervals.

Please complete the table to provide details of the individuals who are to receive funding in connection with the Research Training Group as doctoral researchers, doctoral researchers in medicine and postdoctoral researchers. Please indicate in each case the individual funding period per person (in months) and the number of persons whose funding starts in the first or second funding period.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Financing duration per person (in months)</th>
<th>Persons whose funding starts in the first funding period</th>
<th>Persons whose funding starts in the second funding period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctoral researchers in medicine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral researchers</td>
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Several “generations” (cohorts) of doctoral researchers can be funded consecutively or at various intervals during the RTG’s maximum 9-year duration. Please state the number of DFG-funded doctoral researchers per cohort (Σ) and present the planned cohort structure in the form of a bar chart. You may use the following template and add more lines if required.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>First funding period</th>
<th>Second funding period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
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<td>Cohort 2</td>
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Information on the various funding modalities can be found in the “Guidelines on Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07), the “Proposal Preparation Instructions for Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 54.05) and the funding guidelines for Research Training Groups (DFG form 2.22, available in German only).

[www.dfg.de/foerderung/formulare_merkblaetter](http://www.dfg.de/foerderung/formulare_merkblaetter)

In addition, specify the anticipated number of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers with funding from other sources.

For **International Research Training Groups**, include the same information for the foreign partner institution as well.

## 2 Research programme

- Description of the core research idea or main topic
- Outline of the research programme. Please note that research programmes are expected to yield excellent topics for theses (potential topics for theses or projects should be exemplified, but not described in detail).
- Innovativeness of the research programme with respect to the current state of relevant international research and feasibility/plausibility of the innovative approaches
- For International Research Training Groups: Description of the value added by international collaboration

In section 2 you may refer to an unlimited number of your own works and those of others that are publicly available. Please list the publications you cite here in section 5, “Publications and bibliography for the research programme”.

Clearly indicate throughout the draft proposal whenever you are referring to the work of other researchers (even if you collaborated in the work yourself as a co-author). The absence of any such indication may constitute a breach of good research practice, and in individual cases may constitute scientific misconduct according to the Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (VerfOwF).
3 Qualification programme and supervision strategy

- Outline of the qualification programme based on the research programme
- Short description of the supervision strategy

4 Environment

- Description of why the proposed location is suitable for the topic of this Research Training Group
- Statement by the university on how the Research Training Group fits into the university’s environment and what structural innovations are anticipated. Also note the guidelines on positioning Research Training Groups relative to other doctoral programmes (DFG form 1.309, available in German only).
  
  www.dfg.de/formulare/1_309

- Under the Collaborative Research Centre programme, a module for structured doctoral training may be applied for. Collaborative Research Centres and Research Training Groups that are based at the same location and have largely overlapping topics should not receive parallel funding. The goal is to increase efficiency by bundling funding for closely related research projects. A thematic overlap is acceptable if the Research Training Group’s topic and/or structure are sufficiently unique. For instance, the establishment of an International Research Training Group may be considered to deliver added value. If your Research Training Group relates closely to a Collaborative Research Centre, please explain what constitutes its added value.

- If the draft proposal is linked to an existing Research Training Group or one that has ended, please explain what experiences have been applied to the new proposal, what new research objectives have been included in the research programme, and what changes have been made to the research team.

5 Publications and Bibliography for the Research Programme

This list should only contain those works that you cited in section 2. You can refer to your own works and those of others; there is no limit to the total number of publications listed. Works which are not in the public domain are not considered publications and cannot be cited. An exception is made for papers that have already been accepted for publication, in which case the manuscript and the editor’s confirmation of acceptance must be enclosed.
A maximum of ten publications by each participating researcher whose topics are directly related to the research programme and document their preliminary work can be highlighted in bold or some other way. Authorship must be cited unchanged and in accordance with how it appears on the published works.

For publications that are only available electronically, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. DOI/Digital Object Identifier), preferably by stating the number, otherwise by naming the URL. For publications that are not published exclusively in electronic format, we recommend that you include a persistent identifier or a URL; note, however, that this is optional.

Note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite. Reviews are only based on the text of the actual proposal.
C Appendices

1 Biographical sketches

Biographical sketches for all participating researchers (including participating foreign partners in International Research Training Groups) are a required attachment. The sketches should be attached as one PDF document for all researchers. If individual employment contracts will end during the course of the proposed Research Training Group, please indicate this. For appropriate assessment of the researchers’ scientific achievements, we recommend that CVs (including dates of birth, stages of academic training, stages of scientific work to date, etc.) specify circumstances that may have impaired scientific work. Examples include childcare, long-term illnesses or disabilities. The five-year periods specified below for supervised theses and third-party funding awarded in the past are extended by two years per child.

Each biographical sketch must include the list of the most important publications or published results of the researcher in question. The information can relate to the person’s entire academic career; the publications need not be directly related to the proposed Research Training Group. The list is to be divided into two parts:

(A) The first mandatory category (A) may contain articles in peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed contributions to conferences or anthology volumes, and book publications; a maximum of ten publications.

(B) The number of publications listed in the second optional category (B) is likewise limited to a maximum of ten. Any other form of published results can be cited here (e.g. non-peer-reviewed articles on preprint servers and contributions to conferences or anthology volumes, data sets, protocols of clinical trials, software packages, patents applied for and granted, blog contributions, infrastructures or transfer). You may also indicate other forms of academic output here, such as contributions to the (technical) infrastructure of an academic community (including in an international context) and contributions to science communication.

Please note that the maximum total of ten items per person that may be listed under (A) and (B), respectively, must be observed. Authorship must be cited unchanged and in accordance with how it appears on the published works. Please number the listed items.
For publications that are only available electronically, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. DOI/Digital Object Identifier), preferably by stating the number, otherwise by naming the URL. For publications that are not published exclusively in electronic format, we recommend that you include a persistent identifier or a URL; note, however, that this is optional.

When listing papers that have been officially accepted for publication but not yet published, the manuscript and the publisher's dated acknowledgement of acceptance must be submitted via the elan portal. Manuscripts in progress and papers that have not been officially accepted for publication may not be included.

Furthermore, the appendix must document any training of researchers in early career phases conducted by the participants within the last five years, e.g. by listing theses that were supervised (including time to degree and, where possible, information regarding the further career development of the doctoral graduates). In addition, participants (for IRTGs at least those on the German side) should list key projects in which they were involved within the last five years that received third-party funding, indicating projects relevant to the Research Training Group.

2 Additional attachments

Where applicable, works contained in the list of publications that have been officially accepted for publication but not yet published, including acknowledgement of acceptance, should be attached. It is also possible to attach a cover letter addressed to the DFG Head Office.
III Supplementary Proposal Instructions

A. Obligations

In submitting a proposal to the DFG, the applicant university/universities and the participating researchers

1. agree to adhere to the principles of good research practice\(^2\).
   The principles of good research practice include, among others: maintaining professional standards, maintaining strict honesty with regard to one’s own contributions and those of third parties, documenting results and rigorously questioning all findings.

2. recognise the DFG’s Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (Verfahrensordnung zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten - VerfOwF)\(^3\) as legally binding.
   In the draft proposal stage, the spokesperson obtains signed Declarations of Obligation of Compliance from the participating researchers and keeps these on file for ten years following submission of the draft proposal to the DFG.
   www.dfg.de/formulare/80_02

   Should allegations of scientific misconduct arise, upon request the spokesperson will forward the relevant declaration to the DFG Head Office.

   Scientific misconduct is defined as the intentional and grossly negligent statement of falsehoods in a scientific context, the violation of intellectual property rights or impeding another person’s research work. The circumstances of each case will be considered on an individual basis. In cases where scientific misconduct has been established, the DFG may impose one or more of the following sanctions in accordance with its Rules of Procedure, depending on the nature and severity of the scientific misconduct:

   - issuing a written reprimand to those involved;

\(^2\) The principles of good research practice are presented in detail in the DFG Code of Conduct Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice.

\(^3\) Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (VerfOwF), DFG form 80.01.
• exclusion from the right to apply for DFG funds for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;

• revoking funding decisions (full or partial termination of the grant contract, demanding repayment of funds spent);

• demanding that those concerned either retract the discredited publications or correct the falsified data (in particular by publishing an erratum), or appropriately indicate the DFG’s retraction of funding in the discredited publications;

• exclusion from serving as a reviewer for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;

• exclusion from membership in DFG bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;

• denying voting rights and eligibility in elections for DFG bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct.

B. Data Protection

Please note the DFG’s data protection notice on research funding, which can be viewed and downloaded at www.dfg.de/privacy_policy. If necessary, please also forward this information to those individuals whose data will be processed by the DFG due to their involvement in your project.

www.dfg.de/privacy_policy
C. Uploading Proposal Documents

Before submitting your proposal, you will be prompted to upload the required documents. You can only upload PDF files as attachments (which should have no access restrictions regarding reading, copying or printing). Please name the PDF documents according to the following naming protocol in order to facilitate the processing of your proposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Document name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>project description (Beschreibung des Vorhabens) (part B of the proposal)</td>
<td>Beschreibung_des_Vorhabens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biographical sketches (Forschungsprofile) (part C of the proposal)</td>
<td>Forschungsprofile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scientific papers (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten)</td>
<td>&lt;year&gt;<em>&lt;author’s_last_name&gt;</em>&lt;keyword&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional attachments (Weitere Anlagen)</td>
<td>&lt;descriptive_file_name&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Files larger than 10 MB cannot be submitted. If a larger file size is unavoidable, you may supply the file subsequently on a suitable medium. In this case, submit an explanatory note instead of the missing document.