

Guidelines

for Differentiating International Research Training Groups from Research Training Groups

Since International Research Training Groups (IRTGs) were introduced, they have become firmly established as a special variation of the DFG Research Training Groups Programme. At the same time, the research and training programmes of traditional Research Training Groups (RTGs) are now increasingly incorporating specific internationalisation features, such as longer stays abroad and international co-supervision, that used to be associated mainly with IRTGs. The coexistence of these two types of Research Training Groups therefore requires clearer differentiation between both programme variations.

In evaluating the IRTG programme variation, the Senate and Grants Committee on Research Training Groups has defined the International Research Training Group as a special type of Research Training Group. International Research Training Groups are characterised by a particularly in-depth, long-term and systematic collaboration between a German university and a university or research institution abroad that involves a significantly higher degree of international networking than is standard for RTGs in general. Choosing the IRTG programme variation therefore requires special justification in order to substantiate particularly the scientific complementarity of both sides and the value added by the collaboration.

The following criteria, phrased as questions, provide guidance for discussing IRTG proposals in review and committee meetings:

1 Participating researchers and participating institutions on the partner side:

- What characterises the individual expertise of the participating researchers on the partner side? Is their track record in research and early career support equivalent to that of the senior researchers on the German side?
- How does the scientific expertise of the international partners complement that of the researchers on the German side? In addition to sharing similar research interests, are they able to contribute their own expertise, methods or investigative approaches that are essential to the successful implementation of the research programme?
- Can all participants on both sides be expected to engage fully and sustainably in the research and training programme and in joint supervision?
- What considerations underlie the selection of the partner institution? Is it internationally visible with regard to the research programme? What characterises the resources and research infrastructure on the partner side?

2 Research programme

- What scientific value is added by the bilateral design of the research programme? To what extent is the bilateral collaboration necessary to answer the central questions of the research programme?
- Will both sides benefit similarly from the research collaboration?
- Is bilateral collaboration ensured across the entire research programme?
- To what extent does the joint research programme enable meaningful research stays by doctoral researchers at the respective partner location? Are the research stays integral to the doctoral projects? What constitutes the specific added value of the research stays?

3 Training and supervision strategy

- Is there a convincing strategy for the bilateral supervision of doctoral researchers at both locations?
- What training opportunities are planned/available on the foreign partner's side? Does the training programme likewise offer added value as a result of complementarity?
- To what extent do joint organisational structures ensure efficient and viable long-term collaboration between the partners?

4 University integration and cooperation

- To what extent do institutional support measures on the partner side (e.g. tuition fee waivers, recognition of courses, provision of additional funds and other resources) contribute to productive collaboration?
- Will the IRTG be part of any larger cooperative arrangements (e.g. larger research networks or university cooperation agreements) from which it will benefit?

5 Additional criteria for renewal proposals:

- Have a majority of doctoral researchers completed or begun a longer research stay at the partner institution? Have the doctoral researchers' stays been integrated into their doctoral projects in a meaningful way? If a different destination was chosen in individual cases: Was this convincingly justified?
- What characterises the research stays of the partner institution's doctoral researchers at the German institution(s)? Are there any framework conditions on the partner side that should be considered?
- Beyond the number and duration of reciprocal research visits, what is the quality of international collaboration in the IRTG overall? What other outcomes can be identified as evidence of successful collaboration (e.g. participation and engagement of doctoral researchers and supervisors at both locations in the training programme, joint events, co-publications, structural cooperation in recruiting, cotutelle agreements/joint degrees, cooperation agreements, etc.)?