

Guidelines

Core Facilities



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 Programme Information

1 Objective

Through this programme in the area of scientific instrumentation and information technology, the DFG aims to promote the establishment and development of core facilities at universities. Core facilities are a fundamental and indispensable part of many research institutions. By providing access to major research instrumentation, special technologies and specialised services (e.g. technological and scientific consultations), core facilities play a key role in supporting scientists and academics in both research and teaching. As shared facilities, they have specialist staff, equipment and space for operational purposes, enabling and organising professional use of the resources for the entire university and, where appropriate, for external users from other institutions. For this purpose, scientific staff who have methodological expertise, including data management skills for data-intensive instrumentation technologies, as well as technical support staff are required. Access and invoicing of the costs of operation and maintenance of the instrumentation as well as those of the scientific services provided are regulated in the terms of use.

Through this programme, the DFG offers applicant institutions the opportunity to submit proposals for implementing structure-building measures that serve to improve the range of uses and accessibility, also for external researchers from other institutions where applicable. The DFG aims to support university-owned core facilities that offer a use/service that is of outstanding importance to science and academia. The prerequisite is an ability to demonstrate that the scientific credentials and the visibility of the facility and its management set it apart from other national/international centres.

The project funds requested must be justified based on measures that are well suited to achieving the programme objectives set out. One core element is the implementation of a scientifically appropriate management concept for sound support of instrumentation usage, ensuring efficient operation of scientific instrumentation and the accompanying services. Appropriate participation is expected on the part of the university concerned in establishing or expanding the core facility from core support, e.g. funding for staff and instrumentation.

Proposals have good prospects of being awarded funding if they are able to describe functions or services that set a core facility apart from others. This might include specialised, novel or rare services or technologies that provide clear added value for research

and a level of visibility that reaches beyond the local area. In addition, project-based testing of new services and specially adapted operational concepts are also eligible for funding if they have the potential to achieve a highly positive impact on science and the institution. The research objectives related to improved instrumentation usage are often in line with efforts to ensure a more sustainable use of (instrumentation) resources. A new utilisation concept that is dedicated to sustainability aspects in particular can have a positive impact for research and institutions, too, and this is intended in this funding programme.

Please note:

The instrumentation and ongoing operating costs of a core facility are not subject to funding under this programme. The vast majority of the full costs of a core facility are to be borne by the applicant university itself. In particular, this programme does not cover acquisition of major instrumentation. This is covered by other programmes (e.g. programme the Major Research Instrumentation as per Art. 91b GG and the State Major Instrumentation programme).

2 Proposals

2.1 Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by publicly funded universities and non-publicly funded universities in Germany. In the case of universities governed by private law, the (host) institution must be recognised as a non-profit organisation.

2.2 Applicant contribution

The applicant university is expected to make an appropriate contribution (core support) for the operation of the core facility, for example by providing the space, personnel and other costs, in particular the major instrumentation itself. A description of and commitment to this contribution must be submitted in a declaration by the university management and included with the proposal (see below).

2.3 Proposal format

The applicant university chooses a person to be responsible for the proposal. This person coordinates the work programme, prepares the proposal, handles correspondence relating to its content and submits the proposal electronically via elan. After the proposal

has been uploaded, a compliance form is generated. This form must be signed by the responsible person and the university administration and returned to the DFG.

The formal structure of the proposal is based on the Proposal Preparation Instructions (DFG form 54.01), with the following adaptations in terms of content:

In the section “State of the art and preliminary work”, the description of the project should include an explanation of how the core facility fits into the national and international context. The following details must be provided:

- significance and demand in terms of the technologies and scientific services available, both for the university and beyond.
- overview of the nature and scope of the existing facilities and user group.
- What equipment, technology resources and services are currently available or in preparation?
- What is the facility’s organisational structure and operating cost model?
- What is the level of capacity utilisation of the instrumentation?
- Which scientific/academic communities and user groups benefit from these services and what is the (estimated) number of users?
- Expertise and previous relevant preparatory work undertaken by the facility’s scientific management.

The following is to be explained in the section “Work programme”:

- what measures are to be implemented with the requested funding in order to achieve improved access to major instrumentation, special technologies or specialised services.
- how the proposed measures will result in an improved organisational structure.
- a description of the future management and personnel strategy (scientific and technical).
- the (planned) terms of use.
- the financing modalities for both the instrumentation and operating costs (including expansion of the instrumentation and the necessary updates/upgrades).
- how access to the facilities will be enabled, coordinated and, if necessary, prioritised.
- what fees are to be charged to internal/external users.

Academic CVs of the main participants must be submitted. The template provided (DFG form 53.200) must be used for this purpose.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan

Additionally, please submit an (informal) supplementary document, the “University statement”. In this document, which must be submitted along with the project description, the university management must explain how the core facility fits into the university’s infrastructure strategy and give a binding commitment to providing the necessary financial resources for the facility. An assurance is to be provided that the university will support the facility and make the necessary basic core support available. In particular, details on the facility’s staffing strategy must be given.

In addition, cooperation agreements, terms of use, data management plans (if already available), etc., may be submitted as attachments. For details of DFG requirements of terms of use, see the DFG form 55.04.

www.dfg.de/formulare/55_04

2.4 Duration and extent of funding

The maximum funding duration for a core facility is five years. Funding of up to €150,000 per year may generally be requested for this period.

In the event of a grant, funding is approved for an initial maximum three-year period and may be offered for a maximum of another two years.

Funding for the final two years is only approved following acknowledgement of an interim report containing updated information on the objectives achieved as well as the long-term outlook for the core facility and its continued operation after the end of DFG funding. Updated or altered assurances on the part of the university are to be attached.

II Proposal Modules

Under this funding programme, you may submit one or more of the following modules for your project in order to meet the project objective. For more details, please see the respective guidelines for each module.

1 Basic Module

Use the basic module to request funding for direct project costs, project-specific staff, and materials necessary to carry out the project.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_01

2 Project-Specific Workshops

If you would like to conduct workshops as part of your project, you may request funding to help you do so. Please note that this module cannot be submitted separately but only in conjunction with the proposed project.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_06

3 Start-Up Funding

Promising researchers in early career phases should gain facilitated access to advanced instrumentation and research infrastructures in order to pursue their own research ideas. These can aim to answer research questions but also focus on methodical and technological aspects. The Start-Up Funding module can be utilised for explorative experiments which can serve as the basis for independent project proposals.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_11

4 Public Relations

To enable you to present your work to the general lay public, you can request funding for public relations. Please note that this module cannot be submitted separately but only in conjunction with the proposed project.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_07

5 Standard Allowance for Equity and Diversity

This module enables the institution to implement targeted measures to promote gender equality for researchers and diversity in research and to make jobs in science and academia more family friendly (including care).

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_14

A total of €1,000 per funding year can be requested.

III Review Process

The General Guidelines for Reviews apply (DFG form 10.20):

www.dfg.de/formulare/10_20

The following review criteria apply in the assessment of proposals under the Core Facilities Programme:

A Research credentials of the facility and its scientific management

Do the individuals involved in the proposal have excellent research credentials? How do you rate the quality of their preliminary work and publications? How do you rate the significance of the scientific results achieved to date on a national and international scale?

B Importance of the facility as a resource for researchers

Is the facility particularly outstanding in terms of what it offers compared to other national/international centres? Does it offer special technologies or exceptional scientific services, for example? How do you rate the facility's added value and support for scientific work? How do you rate capacity utilisation in the future? Does the facility have national visibility?

C Intended structure and proposed measures and funding

Is the planned structure adequate in terms of the scientific/academic target area? Is there an appropriate organisational and management model planned as well as a usage concept? Are these viable and convincing? How do you assess the access and utilisation options as well as the planned prioritisation? Are the intended measures and timetable appropriate? Are the requested funds appropriate?

D University statement with regard to support and internal contribution

Is the facility supported to a sufficient extent by the applicant university? Is the university's own contribution to the core facility appropriate and sufficient? Is core support available for the operation of the core facility, e.g. space and qualified personnel, so as to ensure ongoing operation and maintenance of the instrumentation in the long term?

IV Obligations

In submitting a proposal to the DFG, you

1. agree to adhere to the **principles of good research practice**.¹

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 **Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (Verfahrensordnung zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten – VerfoWF)**² as legally binding.

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;
- 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);

¹ The principles of good research practice can be found in detail in the DFG [Code of Conduct Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice](#) and in the [Funding Guidelines: General Terms and Conditions of DFG Grants](#) (DFG form 2.00).

² [DFG Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct](#), DFG form 80.01

- 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.

By accepting funding, the recipient agrees to

3. use the grant exclusively and in a targeted manner to realise the funded project. The use and accounting of funds must conform to the relevant regulations of the DFG.
4. submit progress reports on the research according to the dates specified in the award letter and to present financial accounts to the DFG detailing the use of funds.

The DFG expects that the findings of the projects it funds be made available to the public.

V 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