

Guidelines

Walter Benjamin Programme with Proposal Preparation Instructions



Guidelines

I Programme Information

1 Objective

The Walter Benjamin Programme enables researchers in the postdoctoral training phase to independently conduct their own research project at a location of their choice.

The project can be carried out at a research institution in Germany or abroad, with the host institution providing infrastructure, project funding, and career development support.

By securing funding for their own research project, particularly qualified postdoctoral researchers pave the way for the next stages of their increasingly independent research career and exercise autonomy. The programme thus promotes early research careers¹ with the aim of fostering the mobility and thematic development that are crucial in this career phase.

2 Programme design

Funding under the Walter Benjamin Programme can generally be received for projects based in Germany or abroad, as well as for projects that combine periods in Germany and abroad. In order to support work-life balance, shorter stays abroad are also possible.

For funding abroad, you need confirmation from the host at the institution where the research project will be carried out.

For funding in Germany, you need an employer statement as well as a statement from the host researcher that explains how you will be supported individually and structurally in the further development of your career and how you will be integrated into local research networks. This is not a letter of recommendation but rather an explanation of development opportunities and local career support.

¹ Recognised Researchers (R2) according to the EU classification, see <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>

During your project, you may not be required to perform any work that is not related to the purpose of the grant.

The host institution is expected to provide you with a workplace and the additional funds necessary to carry out the project. The host institution must be a research institution. The project may not be based at an entity that is for-profit or that does not permit the publication of findings in a generally accessible form.

The review of the proposal will focus on you as well as your proposed research project. You will be assessed not only in terms of your qualifications for the project given the current stage of your career, but also in terms of your potential and career prospects as a scientist or scholar. The research project is expected to be of high scientific quality and originality at an international level. The well-reasoned choice of the host institution with its research environment and working conditions must be a good fit for the research project as well as the intended career path.

3 Proposals

3.1 Eligibility

You are generally eligible to apply if you have completed your academic training with a doctorate and are in the early postdoctoral training phase.

Special provisions

a) Module Walter Benjamin fellowship (abroad)

Funding abroad can only be provided if you are integrated into Germany's academic research system. This is the case if immediately prior to submitting your proposal you have worked as a researcher in Germany for a continuous period of at least three years during your doctoral and/or postdoctoral phase.

If you are already based abroad, funding can be provided abroad if you have completed the majority of your schooling and higher education in Germany and, as of proposal time, have not spent more than three years abroad for research purposes after completing your doctorate in Germany or abroad.

Furthermore, you must not have worked longer than one year at the host institution selected for the Walter Benjamin fellowship as of proposal time.

- b) Module Walter Benjamin position or temporary substitute clinician position under the Walter Benjamin Programme (Germany)

There are no further personal restrictions on eligibility for funding in Germany.

- c) Time of proposal submission

You may apply for funding once you have submitted your thesis to the examination office. In this case, your proposal must include a copy of your thesis, proof that you have submitted your thesis to the examination office, and a statement by your thesis supervisor with regard to your chances of success.

If your proposal is approved, funding cannot be accepted until all doctoral examinations have been successfully completed and corresponding proof is received by the DFG.

3.2 Format and deadline

You may submit your proposal at any time. Please follow the proposal instructions below.

4 Duration

The maximum funding period is two years. In exceptional cases, you may submit a renewal proposal for a maximum of one additional year. An exceptional case exists if, due to external circumstances, you were unable to complete your project within two years. Funding for more than 36 months is not possible under the Walter Benjamin Programme.

II Proposal Modules

Under the Walter Benjamin Programme, you can submit one or more of the following modules to request a personal grant that enables you to carry out your project. For details, please see the module descriptions.

1 Walter Benjamin Fellowship

If you would like to conduct your research project abroad, you can apply for a Walter Benjamin fellowship.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_19

2 Walter Benjamin Position

If you would like to conduct your research project in Germany, you can apply for a Walter Benjamin position.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_18

3 Temporary Substitutes for Clinicians

If you require funding in order to be relieved from patient-care responsibilities to carry out a project under the Walter Benjamin Programme, you can apply for a temporary substitute instead of a Walter Benjamin position.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_04

In addition, an allowance of €250 per month will be provided for direct project costs, travel expenses and publication costs (but not grey literature).

Should the appropriate publication of your project findings call for a book format with high production costs, you may apply for additional funding of up to €5,000 per year. The request must be justified accordingly.

The remaining funds necessary to carry out the project must be provided by the host institution or host researcher.

You can also receive funding for a combination of research periods in Germany and abroad. In this case, funding for the period abroad is provided in the form of a fellowship, while funding for your project in Germany is provided in the form of a position. If you receive funding in Germany, short-term stays abroad lasting up to three months can be supported in the context of position funding if your employer agrees. For longer periods abroad, you must apply for a combination of a Walter Benjamin position or temporary substitute clinician position and a Walter Benjamin fellowship.

In such cases, please specify the duration and sequence of the individual domestic and international phases when submitting your proposal. The phases must immediately follow one another.

III Support by the Host Institution

The following documents must be attached to the proposal:

- a) for the Walter Benjamin fellowship
 - confirmation by the host
- b) for the Walter Benjamin position or temporary substitute clinician position under the Walter Benjamin Programme
 - an employer statement

www.dfg.de/formulare/41_027

and

- a statement by the host researcher indicating that you will be provided with the means to carry out the project at the host institution, what kind of individual career support you will receive from the host researcher, and how you will be integrated into existing local structures and research networks. This statement relates to the future and is not a letter of endorsement recognising your achievements to date.

IV Obligations

In submitting a proposal to the DFG, you

1. agree to adhere to the **principles of good scientific practice**.²

The principles of good scientific 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

² The principles of good scientific 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).

³ [DFG Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct, DFG form 80.01](#)

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);
- 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

Proposal Preparation Instructions

These guidelines apply to proposals under the Walter Benjamin Programme. A proposal consists of the following three parts:

A - Proposal Data and Obligations

B - Project Description

C - Appendices (including the applicant's academic curriculum vitae with a list of up to ten of his/her most important publications)

To complete an electronic proposal form, and to transmit your proposal data and related documents securely, please use elan, our electronic proposal processing system.

elan.dfg.de

Proposals can only be submitted via elan.

Proposals may be submitted either in German or in English.

A Proposal Data and Obligations

Here you are asked to enter information on the project and participating individuals and accept the required formal obligations.

Please enter this information via the DFG's electronic proposal form provided in elan:

elan.dfg.de

B Project Description

For the description of your project, please use the appropriate template in German or English provided in elan. Your project description must not exceed 25 pages in total (up to 15 pages for sections 1 through 5 and up to 10 pages as of section 6).

The template formatting should be retained. In particular, the font should not be smaller than Arial 11 point, with line spacing no less than 1.2. For the sections *Project-Related Publications* and *Bibliography*, the font should not be smaller than Arial 9 point.

1 Starting point

1.1 State of the art and any preliminary work

Explain briefly and precisely the state of the art in your field in its direct relationship to your project.

If you have already done preliminary work on the project, describe this as well. The description must be understandable without referring to additional literature.

To illustrate and enhance your presentation you may refer to your own and others' publications. Clearly indicate when 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 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). Please list the cited publications in your bibliography under section 3. This bibliography is not considered your list of publications. Note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite. Reviews will be based only on the text of the actual proposal.

1.2 Project-related publications

Please list your most significant publications that relate directly to the proposed project and that document your preliminary work. If, due to the early stage of your career, you are not yet able to list any project-specific publications, list only the up to ten most important publications that are part of your curriculum vitae (see C. Appendices).

Please note the *Guidelines for Publication Lists*.

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

The DFG may reject any proposals not in compliance with the rules on publication lists.

2 Objectives and work programme

2.1 Anticipated total duration of the project

Please indicate the desired funding duration. The maximum funding period is two years.

In exceptional cases, you may submit a renewal proposal for a maximum of one additional year. An exceptional case exists if, due to external circumstances, you were

unable to complete your project within two years. In this case, specify since when you have been working on the project.

Funding for more than 36 months is not possible under the Walter Benjamin Programme.

2.2 Objectives

Please give a concise description of your project's research programme and scientific objectives.

2.3 Work programme incl. proposed research methods

Give a detailed account of the steps planned during the proposed funding period. (For experimental projects, a schedule detailing all planned experiments should be provided.)

Provide a detailed description of the methods that you plan to use in the project: What methods are already available? What methods need to be developed? If you are applying for a combination of a Walter Benjamin position or temporary substitute clinician funding and a Walter Benjamin fellowship, specify which activities you want to pursue at which institution and explain why.

Please list all cited publications pertaining to the description of your work programme in your bibliography under section 3.

3 **Bibliography concerning the state of the art, the research objectives, and the work programme**

In this bibliography, list only the works you cite in your presentation of the state of the art, the research objectives, and the work programme. This bibliography is not the list of publications. Unpublished works must be included with the proposal.

4 **Relevance of the project to research career objectives**

The Walter Benjamin Programme promotes both geographic mobility and thematic development in the early stages of researchers' careers. Therefore, please explain in particular how the project fits into your career development plans.

5 Reasons for selecting the host institution(s)

Please explain your choice of research institution(s). In particular, describe what kind of support you will receive there for your project (financial resources, working conditions, equipment) and further career development. Note that the programme promotes geographic mobility and/or thematic development in the early career phase. In the event that you do not plan to change institutions, be sure to justify this, for example with regard to your family situation or your thematic development.

In the following sections, we ask you for information regarding important topics in research. In keeping with the relevance of each topic for your proposed research project, please provide a concise but sufficiently comprehensive explanation.

If any of these topics are of central importance to the research question of your proposed project, discuss them in context under the sections Objectives and Work programme including proposed research methods, and reference them accordingly in the following sections.

The following sections (as of section 6) must not exceed 10 pages in total.

6 Supplementary information on the research context

6.1 Descriptions of proposed investigations involving experiments on humans or human materials

Please describe the ethical and legal aspects of your project:

- treatment or experiment,
- criteria for selecting test subjects,
- description of potential risks and precautions taken,
- method of informed consent.

For projects in Germany, note that in addition to accepting the formal obligations in part A, an ethics committee vote must be submitted as well. The use of human material obtained for diagnostic purposes also requires a statement by the chair of the responsible ethics committee.

6.2 Descriptions of proposed investigations involving experiments on animals

Note that in addition to accepting the formal obligations in part A, the planned animal experiments must be described. Please explain how the principle of the 3Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) will be implemented. For the analysis and reporting of results, the DFG expects you to comply with established international standards, such as the ARRIVE guidelines (<https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines>).

6.3 Descriptions of proposed investigations involving dual use research of concern

Please examine whether your proposed project involves an immediate risk of yielding knowledge, products or technology that could intentionally be misused (also by third parties) to cause substantial harm. If such a risk exists, describe the benefits of pursuing this work weighed against the risks of potential misuse and what measures are planned to minimise these risks. Refer to the guidelines contained in the publication *Scientific Freedom and Scientific Responsibility – Recommendations on Handling Security-Relevant Research*, published by the DFG and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, 28 May 2014. If your university or research institution has a research ethics committee, consult with them in advance and attach a statement by the committee to your proposal.

6.4 Data handling

Improving the management and handling of research data is a priority both for national and international research organisations and for science in general. In order to enhance the long-term archiving and curation of research data, the DFG funds projects that seek to achieve an efficient reuse of research data.

If research data or information will be systematically produced, explain the nature, scope and documentation of the data and how they will be stored. In addition, discuss the possibility of subsequent reuse by other researchers. Please regard existing standards and data repositories or archives in your discipline where appropriate.

Additional information and best practice examples can be found at:

www.dfg.de/proposal_process/research_data

Concerning the reuse of research data, describe how the institutions participating in the project will contribute to data and information management.

If the reuse of the research data being generated is closely linked to research objects (such as tissues, cell lines, installations, materials, artefacts, or similar), also address the proposed storage of such objects.

6.5 Other information

Please use this section for any additional information you feel is relevant which has not been provided elsewhere.

7 People / Collaborations / Funding

7.1 Employment status information

Name and location of current institution

7.2 Researchers in Germany and abroad with whom you have agreed to cooperate on this project

List any researchers in Germany or abroad with whom you have agreed to cooperate on this project (other than collaboration with your host institution or host researcher as described in section 5). Any such agreements must be attached to the proposal.

7.3 Researchers with whom you have collaborated scientifically within the past three years

This information will assist the DFG's Head Office in avoiding potential conflicts of interest during the review process.

7.4 Project-relevant cooperation with commercial enterprises

If you will be conducting your project in cooperation with a commercial enterprise, please note the EU guidelines on state aid⁴ or contact your research institution in this regard.

If you are planning to cooperate with an application partner on a transfer project, i.e. a project that tests the results generated by a DFG-funded research project or develops basic-research findings into prototypes or exemplary applications, note the supplementary instructions contained in DFG form 54.014.

⁴ Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2014/C 198/01)

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_014

7.5 Relevant participation in commercial enterprises

Please indicate if you are the owner of a commercial enterprise or a stakeholder in one (e.g. a director). If so, state how your research project is linked to the company's production branch or activities.

7.6 Additional information

If applicable, please list proposals for this project previously submitted to a third party.

8 Requested modules/funds

Note additional instructions on submitting proposal modules in the relevant module guidelines.

When you submit your proposal electronically, note that euro amounts will automatically be rounded to the nearest hundred, which could result in slight discrepancies in the staffing amounts.

8.1 Walter Benjamin fellowship

Indicate the period and the institution(s) for which you are applying for the Walter Benjamin fellowship.

8.2 Walter Benjamin position

Indicate the period and the institution(s) for which you are applying for the Walter Benjamin position.

8.3 Temporary substitute clinician under the Walter Benjamin Programme

Indicate the period and the institution(s) for which you are applying for a temporary substitute under the Walter Benjamin Programme.

8.4 High publication costs

If you wish to request funding for high publication costs to publish your research results, justify your request.

C Appendices

The proposal must include the applicant's academic curriculum vitae including a list of up to ten of his/her most important publications.

To enable reviewers to assess an applicant's scientific track record appropriately, applicants may indicate in their CV any circumstances that might have hampered their scientific work, for example periods in which they were unable to work continuously due to childcare obligations or due to a prolonged serious illness or disability.

Each CV must include a list of up to ten of the applicant's most important publications. These publications need not be related to the proposed project.

Please note the *Guidelines for Publication Lists*.

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

Please also upload the following documents with your proposal via the elan portal:

- a) for the Walter Benjamin fellowship
 - the host confirmation
- b) for the Walter Benjamin position or temporary substitute clinician position
 - the employer statement

www.dfg.de/formulare/41_027

and

- a statement by the host researcher indicating that you will be provided with the means to carry out the project at the host institution, what kind of individual career support you will receive from the host researcher, and how you will be integrated into existing local structures and research networks. This statement relates to the future and is not a letter of endorsement recognising your achievements to date.

Additional appendices should be submitted where applicable (e.g. ethics statements, research papers, etc.).

Please make sure that the security settings for the PDF documents allow your documents to be read, copied and printed, and note the maximum size of 10 MB per file.

Save PDF documents according to the naming protocol listed at the end of this document to facilitate the processing of your proposal.

Naming Protocol for Proposal Documents

Document	Document Name
employer statement (Arbeitgeberzusage)	Arbeitgeberzusage
host confirmation – for fellowships (Gastgeberzusage)	Gastgeberzusage
host researcher's statement on development opportunities and career support (Stellungnahme aufnehmende/r Wissenschaftler/in zu Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten und Karriereunterstützung)	Stellungnahme_Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten
project description – part B of the proposal (Beschreibung des Vorhabens)	Beschreibung_des_Vorhabens
ethics statement (Ethikvotum)	Ethikvotum
curriculum vitae and list of most important publications (Wissenschaftlicher Lebenslauf mit Verzeichnis wichtigster Publikationen)	CV_PubList_<person's last name>
certificates (Zeugnisse) in one document	Zeugnisse_<person's last name>
accepted manuscripts (Zulässige Manuskripte; erforderliche Annahmebestätigung)	<year>_< last name_author>_<keyword> Bestätigung_<year>_<last name_author>_<keyword>
collaboration agreement with domestic or foreign partner – s. section 7.2 (Kooperationszusage Zusammenarbeit inländ./ausländ Partner)	Bestätigung_Beteiligung_<persons's_last_name>