

# Proposal Preparation Instructions

## Proposals to Establish 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.

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## I General Information

These instructions describe the mandatory format of an establishment proposal and the information it must contain. Please note that the objectives of the Research Training Groups Programme as described in the “Guidelines for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07) form the basis of the information requested in these instructions and should therefore be considered when preparing a proposal.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/50\\_07](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07)

For **International Research Training Groups (IRTGs)**, the proposal must be written jointly by both partner institutions. The proposal must describe the contributions and measures provided by the foreign partner institution in sufficient detail to allow evaluation.

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

[www.dfg.de/formulare/1\\_312](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_312)

One copy of the proposal must be sent to the responsible state ministry for comment.

## II Proposals

Proposals to establish Research Training Groups must be submitted via the DFG's elan portal. You can access the system at

[elan.dfg.de](http://elan.dfg.de)

to securely submit your establishment proposal, proposal-related data and other documents.

The establishment proposal consists of the following three parts:

A – Establishment proposal data and obligations (via an electronic proposal form)

B – Project description (according to DFG form 53.61)

[www.dfg.de/formulare/53\\_61\\_elan](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/53_61_elan)

C – Attachments (academic CVs 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 proposal, and sent to the DFG (in the case of **IRTGs**, only from the German side).

## A Establishment Proposal Data and Obligations

An electronic proposal form is available via the DFG elan portal at  
[elan.dfg.de](http://elan.dfg.de)

for you to provide the following information:

- Title of the Research Training Group in German and English (max. 300 characters each)
- Planned start date
- 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 each)
- Research area, keywords, topical connections to other countries
- Applicant university/universities, other participating institutions (where applicable) (for IRTGs, information on the foreign partner institution)
- Funds requested
- Designated spokesperson; participating researchers (academic title, first name, last name and location)  
(for IRTGs, include the same information for the 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\\_61\\_elan](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/53_61_elan)

The project description must be prefaced by a table of contents with page numbers and, optionally, a cover page. The length of the document (not including the optional cover page, table of contents and section 10 “Publications and Bibliography for the Research Programme”) must not exceed 55 pages, or 65 pages for IRTGs (A4 format, Arial 11pt font or similar, single-spaced).

The project description may be written in German or English. Note that IRTG proposals should generally be written in English. Other languages should be used only after consulting with the DFG Head Office first.

The project description must address the items specified in these instructions and include all section numbers and titles as stated. Tables and charts should be included wherever appropriate. Please avoid repetition and refer instead to the relevant proposal section. Please make your proposal informative and present the information in a clear and well-organised fashion. This will help DFG reviewers make a fair and objective decision.

If, in preparing your proposal, you used artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of generative models for text and image creation, please disclose this fact in a scientifically appropriate manner in your proposal. For more information, see the [“Research Integrity” portal](#).

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 CVs. Please underpin your description with concrete details on the duration and extent of the adverse circumstances.

## 1 General Information

*Delete unnecessary rows or add additional rows to the table if needed.*

### 1.1 Applicant university/universities, other participating institutions

Indicate the applicant university that will administer the funds in the event of a grant. Name additional applicant universities, if applicable, as well as any other participating institutions.

	Name of university
Applicant university with financial responsibility	[max. 1]
Additional applicant universities, if applicable	
Other participating institutions, if applicable	

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

If the applicant university or a co-applicant university is a university of applied sciences (Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW) or Fachhochschule (FH)), evidence of the right to award doctorates or the agreement of the participating graduate institution has to be attached to the proposal (see Attachment 9.7)

If other institutions (universities, non-university research institutions, museums, businesses, etc.) are significantly involved in the proposal by contributing substantially to the research and/or qualification programme, they may be listed here as well.

## 1.2 Designated spokesperson

The designated spokesperson is responsible for the proposal and the scientific coordination of the Research Training Group. The spokesperson must hold a permanent, full-time professorship at the university that will manage the funds, appointed in accordance with the applicable employment law, and represent the concerns of the Research Training Group in all committees of the department as well as the applicant university at large.

Last name, first name, academic title [max. 1]	Research area

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. In this context, please indicate the number of female researchers as well as the corresponding percentage.<sup>1</sup> Written explanations on diversity characteristics of individuals are expressly not desired within a proposal. Additional information can be found under

[www.dfg.de/diversity/en](http://www.dfg.de/diversity/en)

Last name, first name, academic title [usually 5 - 10]	Research area

If more than ten researchers are involved, please provide a justification.

<sup>1</sup> If male researchers are underrepresented at the management level in the relevant research area(s) compared to female researchers, please state the percentage of male researchers involved.

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 and examine doctoral researchers.

The involvement of individuals whose participation is not ensured for the entire funding duration, e.g. due to a fixed-term contract or retirement, is possible. In such cases, please comment briefly on how the ongoing supervision of group members will be ensured after the individuals in question leave.

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<sup>2</sup>. 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)

The same applies to researchers who, in individual cases, are to be integrated as participating researchers in the Research Training Group during the course of the funding period. Requests for such additions must be submitted formally to the DFG and are evaluated during the review process.

For **IRTGs**, please include a second table listing the professors participating from the foreign partner institution and their area of research.

The appendix must include academic CVs for all participating researchers (for **IRTGs** also those at the foreign partner institution) (see instructions on academic CVs in appendix II.C.1).

Researchers in charge of a Research Training Group are expected to work at the same location, or for **IRTGs** at one location in each country.

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<sup>2</sup> [Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct, DFG form 80.01](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/80_01)

If participants are based at more than one location (**for IRTGs** per country), a justification should be included. Please explain how the geographic distance between locations is taken into account in the design of the joint research and qualification programme, or refer to the relevant sections in the proposal.

#### **1.4 Funding period and start date**

The proposal to establish a Research Training Group pertains to a funding period of five years. Please state the anticipated start date. Funding can usually begin four to six months after the grant has been approved. Once the award letter has been received, the start date cannot be changed.

#### **1.5 Number of doctoral researchers, doctoral researchers in medicine and postdoctoral researchers**

Within the nine-year period of a Research Training Group, generally up to 30 doctoral researchers can be funded by the RTG, each for a period of 36 to 48 months. If more positions are applied for, this must be justified in concrete terms; the level of justification required increases proportionally to the degree of deviation from the guideline figure. It is also possible to integrate doctoral researchers who are funded through other sources, so-called associated doctoral researchers. For **IRTGs**, the total number of doctoral researchers should be divided equally between the partner institutions. Doctoral researchers in the Research Training Group are expected to work at the participating institutions.

The individual funding duration for a doctoral researcher can be up to 48 months. Several “generations” (cohorts) of doctoral researchers can be funded consecutively or at various intervals during the RTG’s maximum 9-year duration (first funding period of five years, second of four years).

Doctoral researchers in medicine can be integrated into the research and qualification programmes and receive funding during the course of their studies. Medical students can therefore receive a medical fellowship to work on their doctoral dissertation/thesis within the Research Training Group.

If so-called associated doctoral researchers who are funded through other sources participate in the RTG, the quality standards that apply to them (for **IRTGs**, at least from the German side) are the same as for those funded through the Research Training Group. Except for the salary, all doctoral researchers on the German side must be treated equally; they are subject to the same selection procedures and must be integrated into the Research Training Group, both formally and scientifically.

Funding for postdoctoral researchers can be requested for positions by submitting a plan that describes how they will be integrated into the RTG's research and qualification programme and how their professional development will be supported in the RTG. The Grants Committee on Research Training Groups suspended this funding option until further notice by resolution dated 15 November 2024.

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 and doctoral researchers in medicine. 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.

<b>DFG-funded Research Training Group members</b>			
	Financing duration per person (in months)	Persons whose funding starts in the first funding period	Persons whose funding starts in the second funding period
Doctoral researchers			
Doctoral researchers in medicine			

If doctoral and postdoctoral researchers with funding from other sources are to be involved in the RTG, please use the table to specify the anticipated number of persons involved.

Associated Research Training Group members	
	Persons during the first funding period
Doctoral researchers	
Doctoral researchers in medicine	
Postdoctoral researchers	

For **IRTGs**: Please indicate the anticipated number of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers participating at the partner institution.

Research Training Group members at the partner institution	
	Persons during the first funding period
Doctoral researchers	
Postdoctoral researchers	

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 ( $\Sigma$ ) 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.

	$\Sigma$	First funding period					Second funding period				
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	
Cohort 1											
Cohort 2											
...											
...											

## 2 Profile of the Research Training Group

In about two pages, describe how the proposed (International) Research Training Group will achieve the programme objectives – excellence, innovation, internationality – and how it will meet the requirements of the funding programme (“Guidelines for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups”, DFG form 50.07).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/50\\_07](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07)

Explain in particular what makes this Research Training Group scientifically or academically unique, how the research programme promotes innovation, and what constitutes the added value of the qualification programme.

Furthermore, in view of the programme’s core research idea, describe the scientific criteria according to which the group of participating researchers has been formed, and why these researchers are especially qualified to run this Research Training Group. For **IRTGs**, describe in particular the cooperative arrangements between the researchers on both sides that provide the basis for the International Research Training Group, how the participants complement each other’s expertise, and what constitutes the added value of the cooperation.

If you were informed of any requirements, instructions or recommendations from the review of the draft proposal, please comment on these. Describe whether they have been implemented in the proposal and if so, how. If you did not receive any specific reviewer comments, this point may be omitted.

## 3 Research Programme

### 3.1 Objectives and work programme

The general requirements for the research programme of an (International) Research Training Group are laid out in the “Guidelines for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/50\\_07](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07)

Please describe the participating researchers’ shared research goals by addressing the following aspects:

- the core research idea and the Research Training Group's resulting main focus;
- individual core research areas or individual projects and their integrative interconnection, both with each other and with the research concept at large (preferably accompanied by a schematic presentation);
- the current state of relevant national and international research;
- participants' preliminary work directly relating to the research programme (reference may be made to the list of publications and the CVs of the participating researchers in the proposal appendix);
- potential topics for theses or a description of planned projects (where possible; where this is not possible, please provide examples).
- If the inclusion of qualifying fellows and/or student assistants is planned, explain their tasks and role within the research programme.
- If the inclusion of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers with funding from other sources is planned, please give a brief explanation of their planned integration into the research programme.
- If, in addition to the participating researchers, other researchers from the same or other universities or non-university research institutions will be involved in implementing the research programme to make a significant contribution towards it, please describe this here. Explain their importance and expertise in relation to the research programme and how they will contribute to the Research Training Group.
- For **IRTGs**, describe in particular the research objectives of the joint programme, the expected added value resulting from the collaboration, as well as the specifics of the cooperation between the partners on the core research areas or projects.

The presentation of the research programme should be able to stand on its own and be understandable, coherent and reviewable without the need to read additional documents. Please be sure to present all areas and projects in a consistent manner.

For the research programme, 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 10, “Publications and Bibliography for the Research Programme”.

Clearly indicate throughout the proposal 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 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).

### 3.2 Handling of research data

If the Research Training Group uses, generates and/or processes data, use this section to record key information on the handling of this data (and any underlying objects). Please ensure your descriptions substantively follow the points in the corresponding questionnaire ([www.dfg.de/research\\_data/checklist](http://www.dfg.de/research_data/checklist)) and use the checklist to address the following aspects in particular:

- Characteristics and scope of the data
- Documentation and data quality
- Storage and technical archiving
- Legal obligations and conditions
- Enabling of subsequent reuse and long-term accessibility
- Responsibilities and resources

Please also describe how the institutions involved in the RTG will contribute to data and information management.

If you have already provided more detailed information on the handling of research data in an explanation as part of your preliminary work, work programme or elsewhere, you may refer to those descriptions and limit yourself to supplementary information at this point.

Should the RTG not use or generate data to a relevant extent, please explicitly state this to be the case.

Please note that you can apply for funding to cover project-specific expenses incurred by the management of research data.

For further information on this topic, see:

[www.dfg.de/proposal\\_process/research\\_data](http://www.dfg.de/proposal_process/research_data)

### **3.3 Relevance of sex, gender and/or diversity in the research programme:**

Where applicable, please describe whether and if so to what extent the sex, gender and/or diversity

- of persons under study,
- of individuals affected by the implementation of research results,
- of animals under study,
- with regard to samples taken from humans or animals,
- of researchers,
- in other respects

is relevant to the research programme (methods, work programme, objectives, etc.).

The relevance may vary depending on the subject area, project topic or methods and at different stages of the research programme (ranging from the development of research questions through to application).

Additional information is available at:

[www.dfg.de/diversity\\_dimensions](http://www.dfg.de/diversity_dimensions)

### **3.4 Supplementary information on the research context**

Taking into account the relevant discipline-specific standards and ethical regulations, indicate whether you anticipate any risks and/or harm to individuals or groups and/or the potential for other negative effects that might be posed by your research. If so, how do you intend to address these issues?

If you plan to conduct investigations involving humans, human materials or identifiable human data, animals or genetic engineering, dual use research of concern, or any research covered under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), please describe the ethical and legal implications of the planned experiments and note the relevant requirements and obligations. Provide a concise but sufficiently detailed explanation of the aspects listed according to their relevance. If any of the topics mentioned are of central importance to the research programme or individual areas, explain the relevant topics accordingly.

In addition, note that for any investigations involving humans, human materials or identifiable human data, you must comply with the Declaration of Helsinki as last revised and submit corresponding statements by the responsible ethics committee at the latest prior to commencement of research.

If you are planning to conduct experiments on animals as part of the research programme, explain how the 3Rs principle (replacement, reduction and refinement) will be implemented with reference to various aspects of scientific validity. For more information on the description of research projects involving animal experiments, please refer to the publication "Animal Experimentation in Research: The 3Rs Principle and the Validity of Scientific Research".

[www.dfg.de/handreichung\\_sk\\_tierversuche\\_en](http://www.dfg.de/handreichung_sk_tierversuche_en)

For research conducted abroad involving biological materials (or associated traditional knowledge) or research on biological objects originating from outside Germany, note that such projects may be subject to the regulatory requirements of the Nagoya Protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the access and benefit-sharing (ABS) portions contained therein. Guidance on conducting such projects can be found, for example, in the publication "Proposals for Research and/or Development Projects Involving Access to Genetic Resources and/or Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources", published by the DFG Permanent Senate Commission on Fundamental Issues of Biological Diversity:

[www.dfg.de/en/dfg\\_profile/statutory\\_bodies/senate/biological\\_diversity](http://www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/statutory_bodies/senate/biological_diversity)

Please comment on the ABS requirements that affect your research programme and indicate any steps you have taken or plan to take to fulfil these requirements. Discuss the role of your cooperation partner with regard to the provider country (the country providing access to the material/traditional knowledge). Explain what materials may be transported to Germany. Note that in addition to access and benefit-sharing agreements with the provider country, a declaration of due diligence may also be required in line with the German law "Gesetz zur Umsetzung der Verpflichtungen nach dem Nagoya-Protokoll und zur Durchführung der Verordnung (EU) No 511/2014 sowie zur Änderung des Patentgesetzes".

If there are any indications in your research programme or any parts thereof that it could yield knowledge, products or technology that might directly be misused to cause substantial harm (*Dual Use Research of Concern*), please familiarise yourself with the recommendations issued by the DFG and Leopoldina on handling security-relevant research, which you can find on the web page linked at the end of this paragraph. In your proposal, describe how the risk/benefit ratio is to be assessed and what measures are planned to minimise the risk. If your university or research institution has a research ethics committee, consult with them prior to commencing your research work and request a statement from them. For further information, see the DFG website on [handling security-relevant research](#).

Research must comply with foreign trade regulations (especially the War Weapons Control Act [Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz], EC Regulation No. 428/2009 [EC Dual Use Regulation], the Foreign Trade and Payments Act [Außenwirtschaftsgesetz], the Foreign Trade and Payments Ordinance [Außenwirtschaftsverordnung] or embargo regulations) relating to the non-proliferation strategy and the handling of potentially critical goods, including technologies, software and sensitive knowledge transfer; applicants are advised to examine their projects accordingly. Information for researchers is available on the website of the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA)<sup>3</sup>. If you require further clarification, please contact BAFA directly. For projects subject to licensing, please note that licences must be obtained from the responsible authority prior to beginning research on the project.

International scientific cooperation is one of the basic principles of research. However, it is essential, particularly in the case of cooperation with researchers in countries where misuse of certain research results is to be suspected<sup>4</sup>, to take potential opportunities for abuse seriously, place them in perspective with the benefits of such cooperation and make informed trade-off decisions. Use this space where applicable to reflect on how the risk/benefit ratio is to be assessed with regard to the research subject, research partners and research conditions and what measures are planned to minimise risks. In doing so, please refer to the recommendations on “Dealing with Risks in International Research Cooperation” ([www.dfg.de/risiken\\_int\\_kooperationen\\_en](http://www.dfg.de/risiken_int_kooperationen_en)) and the aspects of assessment and reflection recommended in this paper.

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.bafa.de/EN/Foreign\\_Trade/Export\\_Control/Export\\_Control\\_and\\_Academia/export\\_control\\_academia\\_no\\_de.html](https://www.bafa.de/EN/Foreign_Trade/Export_Control/Export_Control_and_Academia/export_control_academia_no_de.html)

<sup>4</sup> Indications concerning these states can for instance be derived from information issued by the Federal Foreign Office or reports released by the German domestic intelligence services, but also from national and international regulations and agreements, as well as from detailed guidelines relating to export restrictions.

## 4 Qualification Programme

The general requirements for the qualification programme of an (International) Research Training Group are laid out in the “Guidelines for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/50\\_07](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07)

The qualification strategy includes a qualification programme specific to the Research Training Group, a programme for visiting researchers, and any other measures that contribute, directly or indirectly, to the qualification of doctoral researchers, such as internships. For **IRTGs**, it also includes mutual research visits at the German and partner institution.

Please describe potential professional avenues, within and outside research, for researchers who have completed their doctorates within the Research Training Group, including any prospects for development in these areas over the coming years.

In the following sub-sections, you are asked to explain in detail how the qualification programme will prepare doctoral researchers to compete successfully in these occupational fields.

For **IRTGs** please describe the contributions by foreign partners to elements of the joint qualification programme.

### 4.1 Qualification programme

The qualification programme forms the core of the qualification strategy. It must be tailored to the research programme and support the overall objective of scientifically qualifying doctoral researchers, ensuring their interaction within and among all participating institutions. It should be designed so as not to prolong the time to degree.

The description of the qualification programme must include at least the following information:

- a table listing all courses specific to the Research Training Group, including type, duration, frequency, contents, target group, location, prospective instructor, and whether participation is compulsory for Research Training Group members; for **IRTGs**, list all courses to be held either locally or jointly;

- complementary courses from the universities' general programmes or other (external) programmes, if applicable;
- key skills training courses;
- training courses on research involving animal experiments, where such experiments are part of the research programme;
- training courses on research data management;
- training in the principles of good research practice. For help in designing such training, please consult the curriculum for courses on good research practice (in German), provided by the German Research Ombudsman and available at:

[www.ombudsman-fuer-die-wissenschaft.de/curriculum](http://www.ombudsman-fuer-die-wissenschaft.de/curriculum)
- Describe how the transition from the current generation of doctoral researchers to the next and the continuous integration of doctoral researchers throughout the funding period will be handled.
- If the Research Training Group will include as qualifying fellows highly qualified graduates with a bachelor's or other degree that, according to the relevant examination regulations, is not recognised as a doctoral admission requirement, a special strategy for their qualification and integration into the Research Training Group must be presented. In addition, a statement by the university must be included confirming that doctoral admission will be granted upon successful completion of the Research Training Group's qualification phase of up to 12 months (see also section 9.4).
- If applicable, please describe how student assistants will be integrated into the qualification programme.
- If, in addition to the participating researchers, other researchers from the same or other universities or non-university research institutions will be involved in implementing the qualification programme to make a significant contribution towards it, please describe this here. Explain their importance and expertise in relation to the qualification programme and how they will contribute to the Research Training Group.

#### **4.2 Visiting researchers and Mercator fellows**

Please explain how visiting researchers – from domestic or international universities or non-university institutions – who are not part of the Research Training Group will be integrated into the research and qualification programmes, e.g. by way of multi-day contributions to block seminars, one-day lecture visits, etc., or refer to the relevant sections of the proposal. Name the visiting researchers who will be invited. If this is not yet possible at the time of the proposal, please name examples.

If you are planning intensive and long-term exchanges with outside researchers, especially from abroad, Mercator Fellows may be included (see section 7.5).

#### **4.3 Additional qualification measures**

Please describe additional measures planned to further the scientific and professional qualification of doctoral researchers, such as research visits abroad and internships at cultural institutions or businesses.

#### **4.4 For IRTGs: Research visits to the partner institution**

Longer-term coordinated research visits by doctoral researchers from both sides to the respective partner institution in Germany or abroad are a key element of International Research Training Groups (one or more visits with an overall duration of generally 6 to 12 months). Doctoral researchers from the partner institution also complete longer research stays at the university/universities and participating institutions on the German side of the IRTG. Please describe how these visits abroad will be coordinated and what objectives will be pursued, e.g. with regard to appropriate integration into doctoral training stages and into the overall research programme or ensuring local supervision. The successful implementation of research visits is an important criterion in the review of renewal proposals for International Research Training Groups.

### **5 Supervision and Career Advancement, Equity and Diversity, Organisation and Quality Management**

The personnel and organisational strategies should specify the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the (International) Research Training Group and describe their cooperation in selecting doctoral researchers, supervising doctoral researchers, and managing the Research Training Group in general.

Comprehensive quality management is required to guarantee the desired high standard of quality in research and qualification for the duration of the Research Training Group. Measures supporting this goal need to be built into various components of the personnel and organisational strategies (e.g. definition of responsibilities, quality-based selection process, and measures to promote equity and diversity at all qualification levels).

For **IRTGs**, describe contributions to the proposed measures by the foreign partner.

## 5.1 Announcement and selection procedure

The (International) Research Training Group is responsible for filling positions; these should generally be announced internationally. The selection procedure should be both performance-based and transparent.

Selection criteria for doctoral researchers include the timely completion of higher education, with a qualifying degree and above-average results, as well as proven qualifications with particular relevance to the Research Training Group. Candidates should have shown motivation and an interest in research in their careers to date, and should preferably be able to demonstrate initial experience in scientific work. The doctoral training should also fit coherently into the candidate's previous professional history and future career planning.

- Please describe the profile of the target groups of doctoral researchers to be recruited for the Research Training Group, as well as the announcement and selection procedure planned to attract these groups.
- Explain the specific procedures and criteria to be used in selecting doctoral researchers.
- For **IRTGs**, also describe how the doctoral and postdoctoral researchers will be recruited by the partner and whether joint recruitment measures are also planned.

## 5.2 Supervision and career advancement

A binding supervision model is the basis for systematic, transparent and successful doctoral training and timely completion of a degree. When detailing your plans, please consider at least the following aspects:

- Supervision should be provided by at least two professors or by an advisory committee. How will advisors for individual doctoral researchers be chosen? Are there plans for joint supervision or for advisory committees? How will the supervision be organised? For **IRTGs**: Are the foreign partners involved in the supervision? Is adequate supervision ensured during visits to the partner institution abroad? How will researchers on the German side contribute to supervising doctoral researchers from the partner institution?
- Regular progress checks should be planned from the beginning. How, when, and by whom will they be conducted? Will performance reports be issued? Will any new approaches to the assessment of the dissertation be used that are specific to the RTG, such as the separation of supervision and assessment?
- What considerations have been made – in consultation with the university administration where applicable – with regard to cases in which doctorates are not completed within the funding period envisaged and requested by the Research Training Group or within the maximum 48-month funding period? If the renewal proposal is not approved or the Research Training Group is not continued after the first funding period, completion funding for up to 12 months may be requested for the individual(s) affected. Should the doctorates not be completed by that time, describe what plans are in place to fund the doctoral researchers.
- It is expected that supervision agreements be concluded. Do sample agreements currently exist, and can they be attached?
- In addition to providing direct thesis supervision, Research Training Groups also aim to promote the scientific independence of their doctoral researchers. How will this independence be supported? How will doctoral researchers be integrated into the national and international research network? How will the international visibility of the research findings be ensured?

Doctoral supervision should also take into account early career planning. This includes career paths both within and outside academia. The time schedule of the doctoral project should enable swift completion of the doctoral degree within three to a maximum of four years and also be considered.

Promising researchers in early career phases should be encouraged to remain within the research system. Researchers who have completed their doctorates within the Research Training Group should therefore be enabled to define and pursue their own research topics, which they can then use as the basis for their own independent project proposals. Up to €100,000 in start-up funding may be requested per funding period (cf. section 7.8).

If you would like to apply for start-up funding, please provide a description of how these funds will be used, addressing in particular the following points:

- the criteria used to select the recipients of this funding;
- the type of Research Training Group support the selected candidates will receive for their research activities to promote their scientific independence, e.g. in terms of future proposals;
- a description of the university environment conducive to career advancement during this transition phase (including resources).

If otherwise funded doctoral researchers and postdoctoral researchers are to participate in the RTG, explain how they will benefit from the qualification programme. Funding can be requested for associated doctoral researchers providing it is used for qualification purposes. This generally applies to workshops, summer schools and retreats.

### 5.3 Promotion of equity and diversity

The DFG is especially concerned to promote gender equality for researchers, diversity in research and the compatibility of research and family (including care): these are key factors in the successful promotion of researchers, especially in the early stages of their careers. Please outline concisely for each of these three issues how you take them into account in the RTG:

Outline the existing situation and briefly explain what strategies and measures the applicant university and any other participating institutions have already taken and what priorities are to be set.

Briefly outline the extent to which the applicant university/universities take the DFG's Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards into account:

[www.dfg.de/equity\\_diversity\\_standards](http://www.dfg.de/equity_diversity_standards)

In the following table, please provide information on the share of female group members to be admitted to the RTG in the form of percentages. Include both DFG-funded members and associated members.

**A. Objectives for the involvement of female group members<sup>5</sup>**

	%
<b>Female doctoral researchers</b>	
<b>Female postdoctoral researchers</b>	

Set your targets in relation to the subject-specific shares of those who have gained qualifications at the preceding level in each case.

Describe which specific measures are to be implemented in the RTG to promote gender equality for researchers, diversity in research, and the compatibility of research and family (including care). Please explain how these fit with and complement the measures already in place at the university. It is recommended that you liaise with the departments responsible for equity and diversity at your university.

A Standard Allowance for Equity and Diversity can be applied for to fund measures to promote equality in the RTG (see section 7.9). Additional information is available at:

[www.dfg.de/equity/allowance](http://www.dfg.de/equity/allowance)

#### 5.4 Organisation

The Research Training Group manages its own internal organisation. The participating researchers elect a spokesperson among themselves. The spokesperson – in the case of **IRTGs**, jointly with the spokesperson in the partner country – manages the Research Training Group and represents it externally. Please describe further organisational aspects, including:

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<sup>5</sup> If male researchers are underrepresented at the management level in the relevant research area(s) compared to female researchers, please state the targets for male members.

- the specific modalities of management, and for **IRTGs** especially the cooperation between the partners;
- who will organise the qualification and visiting researcher programmes;
- what opportunities doctoral researchers will be given to help shape the Research Training Group; and
- for **IRTGs** the rules according to which the doctoral degree will be granted, which institution will award it, and whether a joint doctoral degree is envisaged in addition to joint doctoral training.

## 5.5 Additional quality management aspects

Please describe additional components of the planned quality management strategy, with particular regard to the following questions:

- How will the development of the research programme be directed (e.g. quality-based project selection)?
- What measures are planned to optimise the qualification programme throughout the duration of the Research Training Group?
- How will relevant data (e.g. application and selection procedure statistics) be documented throughout the duration of the Research Training Group and used to initiate improvements if needed? These data will also be required for the progress report to be submitted with the renewal proposal and for the final report.
- What criteria will be used to evaluate the success of the Research Training Group (e.g. scientific success within an international context and the career development of researchers who have completed their degrees within the Research Training Group) and what are your standards of comparison? The Research Training Group's own criteria for success will also be considered in the review of the renewal proposal and the final report.

## 6 Environment of the Research Training Group

### 6.1 Environment

The general requirements for the research environment of an (International) Research Training Group are laid out in the “Guidelines for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/50\\_07](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07)

Research Training Groups are established for a specific time period by the applicant university/universities. On the one hand, they should support the university's research priorities and foster international networking. On the other hand, the university is expected not only to provide core support, including an appropriately equipped research environment, but also to assist the Research Training Group in various other ways.

The description of the scientific and academic environment should address issues such as:

- How does the Research Training Group fit into the university's research environment and medium-term research priorities? How is the Research Training Group scientifically unique compared to other local research projects with related topics?

Within this context, please describe the university's research environment and infrastructure, e.g. cooperative arrangements with other coordinated projects such as Collaborative Research Centres, Research Units and Clusters of Excellence, as well as projects funded by federal, state, and EU programmes.

Also note the “Guidelines on the Positioning of Research Training Groups in the Context of Other Doctoral Programmes” (DFG form 1.309).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/1\\_309](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_309)

- To what extent does the Research Training Group fit into existing academic structures? Is it compatible with current exam regulations or will the regulations need to be modified? Are there other programmes for promoting researchers in early career phases, e.g. existing structured doctoral training programmes (also including those within Clusters of Excellence and Collaborative Research Centres) or graduate schools? Are specific collaborations planned? Are there plans to integrate the Research Training Group into a graduate school?

- What constitutes the added value of the Research Training Group compared to other locally established forms of doctoral training and, if applicable, current local structured doctoral training programmes, in particular graduate schools? What structural innovations can be expected from the Research Training Group?
- What additional support, material or financial, will the university provide directly to the Research Training Group, e.g. additional funding for direct-project or coordination costs, short-term positions to enable doctoral researchers to finish their degree after the maximum funding period has expired, childcare options?
- How will the university contribute to the Research Training Group's success? Are measures planned to support the doctoral training process (e.g. through simplification of doctoral procedures for interdisciplinary projects, cross-departmental degree regulations, family-friendly doctoral training measures, or support for foreign doctoral researchers)?
- The participating professors should be relieved of workload obligations adequately to compensate for their efforts in the Research Training Group. What incentive mechanisms are planned by the university to actively enhance the Research Training Group's appeal as a centre of research excellence?
- Which associations and cooperative arrangements with non-university research institutions will be leveraged for the Research Training Group?
- How will the Research Training Group be integrated into the international research environment?

For **IRTGs**, please also describe the local conditions at the partner institution, including:

- the research environment and infrastructure that will be available to the International Research Training Group;
- compatibility with existing doctoral programmes and the integration of the Research Training Group;
- other resources to be provided by the partner institution in support of the Research Training Group, e.g. staff, space and accommodations.

## **6.2 Distinction between the Research Training Group and a Collaborative Research Centre**

The Research Training Group Module may be submitted under the Collaborative Research Centres Programme. The aim is to leverage for the Collaborative Research Centres Programme the experience gained and the structures established under the Research Training Groups Programme. A Research Training Group whose topic overlaps with a Collaborative Research Centre based at the same location can only be funded if the Research Training Group's topic and/or structure is sufficiently unique. If your Research Training Group relates closely to a Collaborative Research Centre, please provide a detailed description of its added value.

## **6.3 Distinction between the proposed and previous Research Training Groups**

If the proposal to establish a Research Training Group is linked to an existing Research Training Group or one that has ended, please explain the connections between the previous and the currently proposed Research Training Group, taking into account the following questions:

- What new research objectives has the proposed Research Training Group included in its research programme?
- What, if any, are the personnel changes in the group of researchers submitting the proposal?
- What experiences from the previous Research Training Group are reflected in the new proposal?
- What structural changes did the previous Research Training Group bring about at your university (e.g. modified doctoral degree regulations or new structured doctoral training programmes)?

## 7 Modules and Funding

Funding is provided for the entire funding period. Initially, funding is awarded for the first fiscal year and announced for subsequent years. **Funding is tied to the fiscal year (which corresponds to a calendar year), i.e. it is not possible to carry over funds to the next fiscal year. Funds that are not used by the end of a given fiscal year are forfeited.** For rules on accounting and the use of the funds, please refer to the usage guidelines (DFG form 2.22, available in German only).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/2\\_22](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/2_22)

**Please justify all the funding requested, if necessary by referring to other passages in the proposal, and fill in the summary table.**

Submission of the **Research Training Group Module** is mandatory when proposing a Research Training Group (see section 7.1). In addition, one or more of the following modules (see sections 7.2 to 7.9) may be submitted along with it. For details, refer to the instructions on the individual modules, along with the following explanations.

### 7.1 Module Research Training Group

Use the Research Training Group Module (DFG form 52.15) to request funding for staff and direct project costs.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_15](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_15)

Programme-specific instructions on 1.1 (Doctoral Researchers) and 1.2 (Doctoral Researchers in Medicine)

Positions for doctoral researchers may be requested. Doctoral researchers in medicine who are to be funded before they graduate are only eligible for a fellowship in medicine to conduct doctoral research.

Funding for positions can be requested under the category “Doctoral Researcher or Comparable”. The DFG generally grants funding for staff in the form of standard amounts. For rates and other details, consult the table in DFG form 60.12.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/60\\_12](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/60_12)

For electronic proposal submissions, please note that euro amounts will automatically be rounded to the nearest hundred, which could result in slight discrepancies in the staffing amounts.

The proposed working hours must be at least 50% of a full-time position and may be up to 100% of a full-time position. For more information, see DFG form 55.02 (available in German only).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/55\\_02](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/55_02)

Funding for doctoral researchers in medicine who are to be funded before they graduate can be requested under the category “Doctoral Fellowships in Medicine”. As dissertations/theses in the field of medicine are often started during the study phase, medical students may receive a fellowship in medicine to conduct doctoral research. The students must be integrated in the Research Training Group’s research and qualification programme during the fellowship period. Please describe this in the appropriate sections of the proposal. Integration in the Research Training Group beyond this period is also encouraged. This is possible, for example, in admitting the doctoral researcher as an associated member of the Research Training Group. For further information, including the fellowship amount, please refer to the usage guidelines for Research Training Groups (DFG form 2.22, available in German only).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/2\\_22](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/2_22)

The individual funding duration for a doctoral researcher can be up to 48 months. Several “generations” (cohorts) of doctoral researchers can be funded consecutively or at various intervals during the RTG’s maximum 9-year duration (first funding period of five years, second of four years).

Funding for doctoral researchers whose individual maximum 48-month funding duration did not end during the first funding period can continue using funds from the RTG’s second funding period. If the Research Training Group is not approved for a second funding period, completion funding for up to 12 months can be requested for individuals who have not yet reached the maximum individual funding period of 48 months.

- Please state the number of doctoral researchers to be funded, the funding duration for which the position(s) and, if applicable, the doctoral fellowships in medicine are requested, and the working hours as a percentage of full time.

- Please justify your decision for each number of working hours. In this context, the subject-specific funding modalities for doctoral researchers, within the academic environment of the Research Training Group as well as in national and international comparison, are relevant. For more information, see:

[www.dfg.de/formulare/55\\_02](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/55_02)

- Please explain briefly why the proposed number of doctoral researchers should be funded, referring to the research programme where applicable. Where applicable, describe the envisaged cohort model.
- Please explain what considerations were used to determine the individual funding periods of the doctoral researchers.

#### Programme-specific instructions on 1.3 (Postdoctoral Researchers)

The Grants Committee on Research Training Groups suspended this funding option until further notice by resolution dated 15 November 2024.

#### Programme-specific instructions on 1.4 (Qualifying Fellowships)

Please state the number of fellowships to be funded and the requested funding duration.

Refer to the parts of the proposal where the special qualification programme for qualifying fellows is described, as well as to the included statement from the university confirming that doctoral admission will be granted upon successful completion of the qualification programme (cf. 4.1 and 9.4).

#### Programme-specific instructions on 1.5 (Student Assistants (Support Staff))

Support staff should be introduced in a targeted manner to independent scientific working practices in the Research Training Group. Please describe how they will be integrated into the research programme and, if applicable, into any research projects already planned, as well as into the qualification programme. Their work in the Research Training Group should not prolong their studies; they should therefore work no more than 10 hours per week. Work schedules in excess of 10 hours per week must be specially justified.

- Please give the number of support staff (student assistants) to be funded. State the total amount requested, the planned number of monthly working hours, the length of employment for each position, and the hourly pay rate (according to applicable state or federal law) upon which your calculations are based.
- Taking into consideration the instructions above, describe the involvement of the support staff (student assistants) in the Research Training Group, or refer to the relevant part(s) of the proposal.

Programme-specific instructions on 2. (Funding for Direct Project Costs)

For each category of requested funding for direct project costs (Research Training Group Module 2.1 to 2.6), please state the amount of funds required, how the funds will be used, and how the amount has been calculated. Please refer to the programme-specific instructions provided in 2.2 to 2.6.

Programme-specific instructions on 2.2 (Travel)

Travel funding may be requested for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers to participate in conferences, meetings or similar as well as for archive, laboratory and similar guest and research stays. When calculating travel expenses, please refer to the relevant tax provisions under the travel expenses regulations that apply at your site.

If carbon dioxide emissions are generated from such business travel, these can be offset by purchasing CO<sub>2</sub> certificates. The spokesperson and the university are responsible for the legal aspects of acquiring the CO<sub>2</sub> certificates. Funds required for this purpose can be requested as part of travel expenses. For more information, please refer to DFG form 71.03 (Merkblatt zur Umsetzung der CO<sub>2</sub>-Kompensationregelung), which is available in German only.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/71\\_03](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/71_03)

Programme-specific instructions on 2.3 (Visiting Researchers)

Funding may be requested for lectures or visits by highly qualified visiting researchers who will make a significant contribution to the research and/or qualification programme. The remuneration of the visiting researchers, including the amount of the standard honorarium, must be in accordance with the regulations applicable at the host institution.

#### Programme-specific instructions on 2.4 (Experimental Animals)

If your project requires funding to purchase, breed and keep experimental animals, please state and justify the requested amount. Provide a cost estimate that includes the number of animals required and the duration of housing. Please justify the number of animals, taking into account the 3Rs principle and scientific validity, or refer to the relevant section in the proposal (see also “Animal Experimentation in Research: The 3Rs Principle and the Validity of Scientific Research”).

[www.dfg.de/handreichung\\_sk\\_tierversuche\\_en](http://www.dfg.de/handreichung_sk_tierversuche_en)

In calculating the costs for keeping mice and rats, please note the relevant DFG guidelines in DFG form 55.03, available in German only.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/55\\_03](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/55_03)

#### Programme-specific instructions on 2.5 (Other)

Funding may be requested for user fees for major instrumentation and core research facilities.

The DFG can only cover such costs that are required specifically for the project. Basic funding for the individual instruments or core facilities must be financed through the institution's core support. Further information can be found in DFG form 55.04.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/55\\_04](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/55_04)

#### Programme-specific instructions on 2.6 (Publications)

Per funding period, publication funding of up to €20,000 can be requested.

## **7.2 Module Replacements**

The Grants Committee on Research Training Groups suspended this funding option until further notice by resolution dated 15 November 2024.

## **7.3 Module Coordination**

Coordination funds and, if necessary, gender inclusion funding for spokespersons can be applied for to support spokespersons in coordinating the administration of the various activities undertaken in the Research Training Group.

#### Programme-specific instructions on coordination funds

In a Research Training Group, coordination funds can only be used to finance personnel to support the administrative coordination of the Research Training Group by the spokesperson. It is essentially possible to apply for funds equivalent to a secretarial position for this purpose. In well-founded exceptional cases such as International Research Training Groups, the requested funds may exceed this amount due to an anticipated increase in the amount of coordination work required. Increased funding needs have to be explained and justified in concrete terms. Scientific staff should not assume administrative tasks and may not be financed via coordination funds.

#### Programme-specific instructions on gender inclusion funding for spokespersons

This module can also be used to request gender inclusion funding for individual and subject and/or project-related activities serving to facilitate the spokesperson's role. To be eligible for and to take up such funding, only spokespersons whose gender is underrepresented at the management level in their fields can apply for such funds.

Additional information can be found in DFG form 52.12 "Module Coordination".

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_12](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_12)

#### **7.4 Module Temporary Substitutes for Clinicians**

If physicians and/or licenced psychologists are to perform scientific tasks in a Research Training Group's research and qualification programme, funding may be requested for staff to take over their patient-care responsibilities. This is also a way to (re-)involve early career clinicians in research.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_04](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_04)

#### Programme-specific instructions

Please describe – if necessary also with reference to other parts of the proposal – your model for such a substitute programme in the Research Training Group, explaining both the content and the form of the programme. Funding can be requested either in conjunction with the proposal to establish a Research Training Group or as part of the renewal proposal. It is not possible to submit a supplementary proposal while the Research Training Group is in progress.

## 7.5 Module Mercator Fellows

This module enables the Research Training Group to request funding for intensive and long-term cooperation with researchers in Germany and especially those from abroad, beyond the scope of typical research visits. Fellows will partially be on site but will remain in contact with the Research Training Group even after their stay.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_05](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_05)

### Programme-specific instructions

The significance of the Mercator fellows for the Research Training Group and their role and activities in the research and qualification programmes should be explained in item 4.2 “Visiting researchers and Mercator fellows”.

## 7.6 Module Project-Specific Workshops

Use this module to request funds for workshops, colloquia, networking meetings of Research Training Groups with similar topics, etc. to be conducted as part of the Research Training Group.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_06](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_06)

### Programme-specific instructions

In Research Training Groups, these events are part of the qualification programme. The concept should be explained in more detail under item 4.1 “Qualification programme”.

Funding to cover the travel and maintenance expenses of participating researchers can only be provided for organising or holding internal RTG events that are offered within the qualification programme, which is why such funding can only be requested within this module.

If carbon dioxide emissions are generated within this context by necessary business travel by members of the Research Training Group or participating researchers, these can be offset by purchasing CO<sub>2</sub> certificates. The spokesperson and the university are responsible for the legal aspects of acquiring the CO<sub>2</sub> certificates. Funds required for this purpose can be requested as part of travel expenses. For more information, please refer to DFG form 71.03 (Merkblatt zur Umsetzung der CO<sub>2</sub>-Kompensationregelung), which is available in German only.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/71\\_03](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/71_03)

## 7.7 Module Public Relations

To enable the Research Training Group to present its work to the general lay public, you can request funding for public relations.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_07](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_07)

## 7.8 Module Start-Up Funding

Through this module, research networks can receive funds to help promising researchers in early career phases pursue independent projects.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_11](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_11)

### Programme-specific instructions

In Research Training Groups, this type of funding is intended to support researchers who have completed their doctorates within the Research Training Group, e.g. in developing their own independent project proposals. When requesting start-up funding, the intended use of funds (positions (hours as percentage of full time), direct project costs, etc.) must be outlined and the underlying plan must be presented under item 5.2 “Supervision and career advancement”.

## 7.9 Module Standard Allowance for Equity and Diversity

This module can be used to request funds for targeted and project-specific measures to promote gender equality for researchers and diversity in research or to make jobs in science and academia more family friendly (including care).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_14](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_14)

### Programme-specific instructions

In the proposal to either establish or renew a Research Training Group, up to €15,000 per year may be requested as a lump sum for this purpose. If necessary, the sum may be distributed unevenly over the funding period. Once funds have been approved, they may not be shifted to other fiscal years.

The resources required are to be briefly outlined by presenting the planned measures with reference to section 5.3.

**Tables: Summary of modules and items submitted for funding**

*Please remember that the funds are tied to specific fiscal years and cannot be carried over to subsequent fiscal years.*

*You may add additional lines as necessary (for example for showing positions that cover multiple periods or to show different generations of doctoral researchers).*

**Table 1:**

Staff	Hours as percentage of full time	Number	Duration (from – to)
<b>Module</b>			
<b>Research Training Group:</b>			
Doctoral researcher or comparable			
Module Temporary Substitutes for Clinicians			

**Table 2 (please enter amounts):**

Staff	20XX from [month]	20XX	20XX	20XX	20XX	20XX through [month]	Total
Module Research Training Group: Support Staff (Student Assistants)							

**Table 3:**

Fellowships	Basic amount EUR / month	Number	Duration (from – to)
<b>Module</b> <b>Research Training Group:</b>			
Qualifying Fellowships			
Doctoral Fellowships in Medicine			

**Table 4 (please enter amounts):**

Other Project Funds	20XX from [month]	20XX	20XX	20XX	20XX	20XX through [month]	Total
<b>Module Research Training</b>							
<b>Group:</b>							
Visiting Researchers							
Equipment up to €10,000, Software and Consumables							
Publications							
Travel							
Other							
Experimental Animals							
<b>Module Coordination:</b>							
Coordination							
Gender Inclusion Fund- ing for the Spokesper- son							
<b>Other Modules:</b>							
Module Start-Up Funding							
Module Standard Allow- ance for Equity and Di- versity							
Module Mercator Fel- lows							
Module Public Relations							
Module Project-Specific Workshops							
Total							

**Items that cannot be funded include:**

- compensation for the Research Training Group's participating researchers;
- travel by the professors who run the Research Training Group, except for trips to organise and hold courses as part of the qualification programme or to collaborate with foreign partners;
- construction, furnishings, rent;
- staff and equipment considered contemporary core support;
- general furnishings and equipment (including office materials, fax machines, computer equipment, etc.);
- use of the university's central services (e.g. computer centres, scientific or other services) on the basis of the university's internal cost allocation;
- tuition fees at the universities involved in the Research Training Group;
- operating costs and maintenance, bureaucratic fees of any kind (this does not include private fees such as conference fees);
- costs arising from the operation of DFG-funded equipment (e.g. energy costs, repair and maintenance, ongoing technical support);
- expert and court fees, insurance, telephone charges, postage, account maintenance fees;
- value-added tax to the extent that it can be deducted as input tax.

The host institution is expected to provide core support, including appropriate office and laboratory space and equipment.

***For usage guidelines, please refer to DFG form 2.22 (available in German only).***

[www.dfg.de/formulare/2\\_22](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/2_22)

## 8 Only for International Research Training Groups: Complementary Funding by the Partner Institution

For **IRTGs**, only the German partner university can request DFG funding to cover its project-specific expenses. The foreign partner must guarantee and substantiate complementary funding of the International Research Training Group for the proposed funding period. The IRTG proposal must therefore include a detailed overview of any and all existing, requested and/or awarded funds. Please give a tabular overview, broken down by calendar years, of the funds that the partner institution will or should have available for the following purposes:

- basic funding for the doctoral researchers at the foreign partner institution,
- funds for visits abroad by participating doctoral researchers,
- additional funds for joint activities,
- if applicable, waiver of tuition fees for the doctoral researchers from the German partner university, etc.

Please specify the funding source in each case (e.g. foreign funding agency or host university or institution).

## 9 Declarations

### 9.1 Connections to Collaborative Research Centres

If there is a topical connection between the Research Training Group and a Collaborative Research Centre at the same location, a statement by the Collaborative Research Centre on the intended mode of coordination between the two institutions must accompany the proposal. Please refer in this section to the declaration to be provided in the appendix of the proposal. Consider the distinction required as per section 6.2.

### 9.2 Collaboration with other partners

If you mention specific cooperative arrangements with other local partners (Graduate Schools, Research Units, etc.) in section 6.1, it is recommended that declarations by the cooperating institutions be included with the proposal.

### **9.3 Cooperation with industrial, commercial or service enterprises**

If close collaboration between the Research Training Group and industrial, commercial or service enterprises is planned, a cooperation agreement must be concluded. This cooperation agreement should particularly set the terms for the commercial exploitation of research results and for the publication of findings. A copy of the cooperation agreement agreed upon by all parties must be submitted together with the proposal so it can be reviewed by the DFG Head Office. We recommend using the DFG model agreement.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/41\\_026](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/41_026)

### **9.4 Doctoral admission of qualifying fellows**

If fellowships for qualification students are requested, a statement from the university must be submitted confirming that doctoral admission will be granted upon the successful completion of the (maximum 12-month) qualification phase in the Research Training Group and that appropriate fast-track qualification and/or doctoral programme structures exist or will be established. Please include this statement in the appendix.

### **9.5 Proposal submission to other funding organisations**

If you have already requested funding for this Research Training Group from other organisations, please mention this here.

### **9.6 Only for International Research Training Groups: Letter of intent from the partner**

Please refer to the partner's binding letter of intent, which must be included in the appendix. The letter must be signed by the partner's spokesperson and the head of the partner institution. In this letter, the head of the partner institution agrees to support the planned cooperation and to provide the required infrastructure.

### **9.7 Proposal submitted by universities of applied sciences (HAW/FH)**

If the applicant university or a co-applicant university is a university of applied sciences (Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW) or Fachhochschule (FH)), evidence of the right to award doctorates or the agreement of the participating graduate institution has to be attached to the proposal.

## 10 Publications and Bibliography for the Research Programme

This list should only contain those works that you cited in section 3. 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 that are most relevant to the research programme can be **highlighted** in bold or some other way. The name of the participating researcher whose work is highlighted should be clearly identifiable.

If available, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. DOI/Digital Object Identifier), preferably by stating the number, otherwise by naming the URL.

Note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite. This also applies to review sessions that are held by reviewers on site. Here it is possible to provide manuscripts and publications created prior to the review session in order to be able to explain the proposal at the meeting so that reviewers can view it if necessary. However, reviews are only ever based on the text of the actual proposal.

## C Attachments

### 1 Academic CVs

Academic CVs for all participating researchers (including participating foreign partners in **International Research Training Groups**) with a list of the most important scientific results are a required attachment to the draft proposal. The template provided (DFG form 53.200) must be used for this purpose.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/53\\_200\\_elan](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan)

Please sort the academic CVs alphabetically according to the surnames of the participating researchers. In the case of **IRTGs**, the academic CVs of the German participants should be attached first, followed by those of participants on the partner side.

To enable reviewers to assess an applicant's scientific track record appropriately, applicants may indicate in their CVs 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 prolonged serious illness or disability.

Furthermore, please provide information on the **supervision of researchers in early career phases in the last five years**. In particular, list the doctoral researchers who are supervised, indicating the subject of dissertation, time to degree (for completed doctoral degrees „from... to...“ and for doctorates in progress „since...“) and, where possible, information regarding the further career development of doctoral graduates. If delays as a result of birth and childcare have been specified, the five-year period is extended by two years for each child.

Each academic curriculum vitae 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 and each part is to be numbered:

(A) The first **mandatory** “Category (A) – Articles in peer-reviewed journals, contributions to peer-reviewed conferences or to anthology volumes, and book publications” may contain a maximum of ten publications.

(B) The number of publications listed in the second **optional** “Category B – Any other form of published results” is likewise limited to a maximum of ten. This might include non-peer-reviewed contributions to conferences, articles on preprint servers, 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.

If available, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. DOI/Digital Object Identifier), preferably by stating the number, otherwise by naming the URL.

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.

## 2 Additional Attachments

The following additional documents should be attached to the proposal as appropriate: works included in the list of publications that have been officially accepted for publication but not yet published with acknowledgement of acceptance and a cover letter addressed to the DFG Head Office. In addition, declarations in conjunction with sections 9.1 to 9.7 must also be included, as well as a sample supervision agreement.

Other attachments beyond this must not be included.

### III Supplementary Proposal Instructions

#### A. Obligations

In submitting a proposal to the DFG, the applicant university and the participating researchers agree to:

1. agree to adhere to **the principles of good research practice**<sup>6</sup>.

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)<sup>7</sup> as legally binding.

The spokesperson retains the signed Declarations of Obligation of Compliance provided by the participating researchers (see DFG form 80.02).

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

These remain on file at the institution(s) for ten years after the end of the last funding period and, should allegations of scientific misconduct arise, must be submitted to the DFG Head Office upon request.

#### 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](http://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](http://www.dfg.de/privacy_policy)

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<sup>6</sup> The principles of good research practice are presented in detail in the DFG Code of Conduct [Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice](#).

<sup>7</sup> [Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct \(VerfOwF\)](#), DFG form 80.01.

## 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.

Document	Document name
project description (Beschreibung des Vorhabens) (part B of the proposal)	Beschreibung_des_Vorhabens
academic CVs (Wissenschaftliche Lebensläufe) (part C of the proposal)	CV_PubList_<RTG reference number>
scientific papers (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten)	<year>_<author's_last_name>_<keyword>
additional attachments (Weitere Anlagen)	<descriptive_file_name>
for IRTG: partner's letter of intent (Kooperationserklärung der Partner)	<partner_letter_of_intent>

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.

## IV Guidelines for Reviews of Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups

A proposal to establish a Research Training Group is generally reviewed on site at the applicant university. The reviewers form their judgment on the basis of the written information contained in the proposal and the presentation by the Research Training Group.

Based on the results of this review, the Grants Committee on Research Training Groups, which is composed of scientists and academics as well as representatives from the responsible federal and state ministries, decides on the grant. The Grants Committee meets twice a year. It is therefore recommended that applicants get in touch with the responsible contact person at the DFG Head Office as early as possible for information about the next committee meeting dates and associated scheduling.

Information on review criteria can be found in the “Guidelines for Reviewing Proposals to Establish or Renew Research Training Groups or International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 1.305).

[www.dfg.de/formulare/1\\_305](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_305)

### 1 Objectives and Participants

The main purpose of the review is to provide an opportunity not only for expert reviewers, but also for a scientific member of the Grants Committee on Research Training Groups and for the DFG Head Office to gain an impression of the proposed Research Training Group, the resources at its disposal, and its proposed integration into the research and structural environment. At the same time, the university's administration is given the opportunity to describe how the Research Training Group will help define the profile of the host institution and how the university will support the Research Training Group.

The task of the scientific member of the Grants Committee on Research Training Groups (rapporteur) is primarily to present the reviewers' findings to the DFG's decision-making bodies. In addition, together with the DFG Head Office, the rapporteur is responsible for ensuring that the DFG's criteria for evaluating Research Training Groups are applied during the review. The Grants Committee on Research Training Groups has deliberately assigned these tasks to a committee member from an unrelated subject area.

The reviewers and the rapporteur can also advise the Research Training Group on the design of the research and qualification programmes and make recommendations for future activities.

The review provides an opportunity for all those involved in the Research Training Group, including the host university, to pass on comments and queries to the DFG.

In addition to the reviewers and the Grants Committee member, one representative each from the relevant state and federal ministries may also participate in the review. As governmental committee members, they represent the main backers of the DFG's funding programmes and have an interest in getting to know the local research environment.

For the applicant university, especially the professors who formulated the proposal must be present. In the case of **IRTGs**, it is also expected that professors from the foreign partner university, especially the spokesperson, participate in the review; this enables them to underscore their active involvement.

As structural aspects play an important part in the establishment of a Research Training Group, it is very helpful if the university, as the applicant, is also represented by a member of its administration. University administrators are therefore especially invited to attend the presentation and discussion of the proposal.

Furthermore, representatives of institutions with which close research and/or structural collaborations are planned should also participate in the review, such as existing graduate institutions with other sources of funding (e.g. graduate schools or Research Training Groups integrated into existing Collaborative Research Centres), non-university research institutions and other cooperation partners.

## 2. Review Schedule

The review is generally a one-day event. The exact schedule should be determined in consultation between the applicants and the DFG Head Office. The DFG will send the schedule to all external participants as soon as possible but no later than two weeks prior to the event.

**Therefore, please discuss the agenda well in advance with the DFG Head Office.**

The following agenda is provided as an initial orientation for creating a schedule. The programme elements and their duration and sequence are pre-defined. The starting time is flexible. In most cases, it is recommended to begin the review at 9:00 am and allow a 15-minute break between the internal preliminary discussion and the presentation and discussion of the proposal. Please note that participation by the university administration must take place at a fixed time.

### **1 hour 15 min Internal preliminary discussion by the reviewers**

*Review panel, rapporteurs, DFG Head Office*

It is usually helpful if non-local participants are picked up from the hotel or train station and brought to the meeting location by someone familiar with the area.

**2 hours**

### **Presentation and discussion of the proposal**

*Open to all members of the university; reviewers, rapporteur, representative of the state ministry, university administration, representatives of non-university research institutions and other cooperation partners, if applicable, DFG Head Office staff*

The participating researchers and the university administration introduce the proposal to the reviewers in one or more presentations. These should include the presentation and discussion of both the scientific and structural aspects of the proposal. For this reason, participation by a university administrator, who may also address brief opening remarks to those participating in the review, is required. Participation by the university administration should therefore be planned well in advance and the scheduled time strictly observed. The applicants are responsible for the presentations. As a rule, the discussion is chaired by the rapporteur. To ensure that the review panel has adequate opportunity for discussion with the applicants, a discussion period of approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes in total should be scheduled.

**1 hour****Discussion/optional poster presentation/light lunch**

*Open to all members of the university; reviewers, rapporteur, representative of the state ministry, university administration, representatives of non-university research institutions and other cooperation partners, if applicable, DFG Head Office staff)*

This agenda item allows further discussion and presentation of the proposal on a more individual basis. The members of the review panel and the applicants discuss the proposal individually or in small groups. Posters may be used to present the proposal in more detail. Based on previous experience, we recommend that a light lunch be offered to the participants during the review. As the first presentation may finish early, the lunch should be ready early on. The cost should be covered by the host university.

**2 hrs 15 min****Final consultation by the reviewers**

*(Reviewers, rapporteur, representative from the state ministry where applicable, DFG Head Office staff)*

In the final internal consultation meeting, the reviewers draft their recommendation to the Senate and Grants Committees on Research Training Groups. The review panel's recommendation provides the basis of the decision of the Grants Committee on Research Training Groups.

**After approx.****6 hrs 30 min** **End of the review**

The spokesperson is unofficially notified of the reviewers' recommendations to the DFG's Senate and Grants Committees.

### 3 Organisational Preparations

#### **List of collaborations to exclude any potential conflicts of interest**

The DFG Head Office appoints reviewers as early as possible. For this reason, please be sure to contact the DFG Head Office in good time to arrange the date of submission of the proposal and establish a time frame for the review date. As soon as the group of participating researchers has been determined, please also submit a list of those researchers with whom the researchers participating in the Research Training Group have engaged in close scientific collaboration in the last three years, those with whom they are currently involved in collaborative work, and those with whom collaboration has been agreed. The aim here is to ensure early on – at the stage when the review panel is assembled – that the DFG Head Office is more easily able to avoid possible circumstances that might suggest a conflict of interest on the part of reviewers.

#### **Accommodations for participants from out of town**

The DFG Head Office will reserve hotel rooms for reviewers, the rapporteur, and DFG Head Office staff who intend to stay overnight and will inform the participants accordingly.

To facilitate planning, please inform the DFG Head Office of the review venue as early as possible. We would also welcome recommendations on suitable places to stay (such as a university guest accommodation or a hotel that has special arrangements with the university). Please note that the maximum rates under the German Travel Expenses Act must be observed.

#### **Venues**

As frequent “changes of scenery” often result in a loss of time, we request that you plan for only a limited number of venues with short distances between them. A meeting room is required for the internal consultations between the reviewers. A nearby seminar room would be suitable for the discussions with the Research Training Group. The light lunch and the poster presentations should also take place nearby.

Please list the exact venues in the schedule, which should be coordinated with the DFG Head Office early on, and include a small map if possible.

#### **Handouts**

Since some time will unavoidably pass between the completion of the proposal and the review, you may want to prepare a handout for the reviewers briefly documenting any relevant changes.

In addition, providing pin-on name tags and table nameplates for all participants and a printout of planned presentations by the Research Training Group has proven useful in the past.

***Please do not hesitate to contact the DFG Head Office if you have further questions.***

## V Guidelines on Requesting Additional Funding during the Grant Period

During an ongoing grant period, additional funding may be requested from the DFG for:

- replacement costs (see II.7.2 Module Replacements of these proposal preparation instructions and DFG form 52.03); the Grants Committee on Research Training Groups suspended this supplemental proposal option until further notice by resolution dated 15 November 2024;

- the admission of additional professors to run the Research Training Group;

Note that a convincing supplemental proposal must be submitted describing the academic CVs of the new researchers and their integration into the research and qualification programmes. In addition, justification of the need for additional funding is required. A Research Training Group is generally run by a group of up to 10 professors. If this number is exceeded due to the admission of new professors, special justification must be given.

To be eligible for new admission, the new professors must have come to the university in question within twelve months of submission of the supplemental proposal. Note that this does not apply to professors from universities of applied sciences (Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW) or Fachhochschule (FH)) who will be joining the Research Training Group for the first time; their admission is possible at any time.

- increasing the family allowance (cf. item 4.2.4.3. of the usage guidelines, DFG form 2.22, available in German only);

- supporting doctoral and postdoctoral researchers who, due to pregnancy or infant care, were unable to carry out certain tasks; In such cases, funding provided for equity and diversity measures can be used to finance replacements or student assistants/technical support staff. Should this funding not be sufficient, additional funding may be provided in this case to support doctoral and postdoctoral researchers;

- the integration of refugee researchers;

Refugee researchers can be supported by integrating them in established Research Training Groups, particularly in the doctoral phase. Additional funding may be requested for this.

For additional information, see:

[www.dfg.de/refugee\\_researchers](http://www.dfg.de/refugee_researchers)

- knowledge transfer projects (cf. DFG form 54.06);

[www.dfg.de/formulare/54\\_06](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/54_06)

- gender inclusion funding for the spokesperson (see DFG form 52.12).

If a new spokesperson assumes management of the RTG during the course of the funding period and this person's gender is underrepresented at the managerial level in the discipline, a written request for gender inclusion funding may be submitted at the same time the change of personnel is requested. The maximum amount available is proportionate to the remaining funding duration and according to when the transition has been completed, or, at the earliest, upon submission of the supplementary proposal.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/52\\_12](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/52_12)

Supplemental proposals must be submitted via the DFG's elan portal. Please confirm that the university administration has been informed about the proposal and has agreed to it.

For additional information, please contact the DFG Head Office.