

Proposal Preparation Instructions

Draft Proposals and Proposals to Establish or Renew Clinical Research Units



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 Instructions

Funding proposals¹ are to be submitted jointly by all researchers involved in the Research Unit. They are jointly responsible for the scientific conduct of the project. One of the applicants assumes the position of spokesperson and represents the Clinical Research Unit in dealings with the DFG and other bodies. The proposal is submitted by the spokesperson in consultation with the lead medical department(s). Once the Clinical Research Unit has been established, the person designated for the research professorship assumes its scientific and administrative leadership as research coordinator. If the research coordinator holds the research professorship at the time the renewal proposal is presented, they are responsible for submitting it. In well justified exceptional cases and after consulting with the DFG Head Office first, the spokesperson of the Clinical Research Unit may also serve as its research coordinator and hold the research professorship.

The proposal process takes place in two stages:

1. In the first stage the participating researchers submit a draft proposal to the DFG Head Office. This text (15 pages maximum) should outline the Clinical Research Unit's joint work programme and related objectives and other measures in accordance with the questions and items set out below (see section II) and include a summary (2 pages maximum) for each of the proposed individual projects.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_21_elan

The draft proposal for a Clinical Research Unit can only be submitted by the Research Unit's spokesperson or research coordinator and only electronically via elan:

elan.dfg.de

¹ The language in which the funding proposal may be submitted should be agreed upon with the relevant DFG programme division prior to submission.

Please list all publications **cited** in the Project Description **in a Project- and subject-related list of publications**. Works cited in sections 2 to 4 of the draft proposal are to be listed in section 5. Works cited in the summaries of the individual projects in section 7 are to be listed with the respective individual project.

The respective list should **only** contain those works that you **cited**.

The font used for the list of publications should not be less than Arial 9 point.

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.

For both the overall project and each of the individual projects, a **maximum of ten of your own** publications that are most relevant to the project can be **highlighted** in bold or some other way. Even if there are several applicants, the maximum of ten highlighted works may not be exceeded. Note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite.

Indicate clearly throughout the draft proposal or proposal whenever you are referring to your own work or that of other researchers. The absence of any indication may constitute a breach of good research practice, and in individual cases may constitute scientific misconduct according to the Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (VerfOwF). Your own preliminary work, if publicly available, is to be listed with the date of publication. If this preliminary work was based on DFG funding, please refer to the respective stage of a funding period in the text of the proposal.

If, in preparing your draft proposal or 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 draft proposal or proposal. For more information, see the "[Research Integrity](#)" portal.

Furthermore, the draft proposal must include information on the project leaders. For each project leader, submit an **academic curriculum vitae** with a list of the most important scientific results. The template provided (DFG form 53.200) must be used for this purpose:

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan

Each academic curriculum vitae must include the list of the most important publications or published results of the applicant in question. The information can relate to the person's entire academic career; the publications need not be directly related to the proposed project. The list is to be divided into two parts.

Please note the "Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists" (DFG form 1.91):

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

Note that the DFG may reject any draft proposals and proposals not in compliance with these rules.

Also include:

- a statement by the department of medicine regarding section II, items 2.11 and 2.13,
- a written declaration regarding the budgetary commitment (see III. 1. of the programme guidelines, DFG form 50.08) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, department of medicine, in some cases the state).

The draft proposal, which may be submitted at any time, is sent to reviewers. On the basis of their assessments, the DFG Head Office, in consultation with DFG review board members, advises the applicants of whether they should proceed to the second, establishment proposal stage.

You may only resubmit a revised draft proposal once.

2. The establishment or renewal proposal should particularly describe the proposed research work, the structural aspects, relevant preliminary work and the type and nature of the cooperation between the applicants, in accordance with the questions and items set out below and in a format suitable for peer review. This proposal to establish or renew a Clinical Research Unit can only be submitted by the Research Unit's spokesperson or research coordinator and only electronically via elan:

elan.dfg.de

The first step is for the Clinical Research Unit's spokesperson or research coordinator to submit the framework proposal via the elan portal. This involves entering basic organisational details about the Clinical Research Unit and providing the names of the project leaders using an online form. The framework proposal is processed at the DFG Head Office.

Subsequently, the overall description of the Clinical Research Unit and the coordination proposal (DFG form 53.02) can be uploaded in which the scientific description of the project is set out. This overall description of the Clinical Research Unit and the coordination proposal should not exceed 35 pages in length.

The coordination proposal can only be submitted by the spokesperson or research coordinator.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_02_elan

The proposal must include the following items:

- a statement by the department of medicine regarding the questions mentioned in section II, items 2.11 and 2.13 below, and any of the following:
- for proposals based on draft proposals submitted to the DFG prior to 31 December 2022, a written declaration regarding all relevant aspects of co-financing (see III. 1. of the programme guidelines, DFG form 50.08, 2022) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, department of medicine, in some cases the state), or
- for proposals based on draft proposals submitted to the DFG as of 1 January 2023, a written declaration regarding the budgetary commitment (see III. 1. of the programme guidelines, DFG form 50.08) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, department of medicine, in some cases the state).

Individual project proposals within the Clinical Research Unit should be submitted in accordance with the instructions on submitting project proposals and are to be uploaded in elan by the leaders of the projects in relation to the framework of the Clinical Research Unit.

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_01

A review panel evaluates the proposal to establish or renew a Clinical Research Unit, usually at the site of the proposed unit, and develops a funding recommendation for the appropriate decision-making bodies at the DFG.

II Instructions on Preparing the Overall Description of the Clinical Research Unit and the Coordination Proposal

The following questions and items apply to the Clinical Research Unit as a whole.

The information on referencing your work and the work of others contained in section I 1 must be observed.

1. State of the art and preliminary work

Please explain briefly and precisely the state of the art in your field in its direct relationship to your project. This description should make clear in which context you situate the work of the researchers participating in the Clinical Research Unit and in what areas the Clinical Research Unit intends to make a unique, innovative, promising contribution. This description must be concise and understandable without referring to additional literature.

What (joint) preliminary work has been done? In what way are the participating researchers/working groups qualified for the project?

1.1 For a renewal proposal: Report on the progress to date

For renewal proposals, please report on your previous work. This report should also be understandable without referring to additional literature.

Your report should describe shared goals that have been accomplished by the group and any joint events held (seminars, lectures, workshops, symposiums, etc.). It must also explain why any new projects are being proposed or why any previously funded projects should be discontinued. A final report must be presented for any projects that are terminated early.

In each case, the proposal must include renewed guarantees to lift the time limit on the research professorship at the beginning of the fifth year of the Clinical Research Unit's duration, and to provide the necessary core support after DFG funding expires. After the research professorship has been made permanent it must be funded by the department of medicine (from the beginning of the fifth year of DFG funding for the Clinical Research Unit). Furthermore, proposals based on draft proposals submitted to the DFG prior to 31 December 2022 must include a pledge by the entity responsible under state law to provide funding for the requested temporary substitute position or for 50% of the requested temporary substitute positions.

2 Objectives and joint work programme

2.1 Objectives of the overall project and expected benefits of collaboration within the unit, incl. a description of the group composition and their project-specific qualifications

What common objectives will be pursued by the Clinical Research Unit and to what extent does this require collaboration within the project? Is the collaboration based on an innovative and coherent concept? Can the stated objectives only be achieved through the proposed cooperation? Do you intend to involve all of the relevant disciplines necessary to work on the topic? What key results do you expect in the short to medium term? What long-term results are anticipated?

2.2 Joint work programme including proposed research methods

Describe the Clinical Research Unit's joint work programme.

2.3 Handling of research data

What measures are planned for the handling of research data within the unit? How will this be supported by the institutions participating in the project? For further information on this topic, see:

www.dfg.de/proposal_process/research_data

2.4 Potential impact on the research area and local research environment; distinction from other ongoing programmes directly related to the research topic

Describe the Clinical Research Unit's potential impact on the research area and local research environment.

How is the Clinical Research Unit distinct from other ongoing programmes directly related to the research topic (e.g. Collaborative Research Centres, Priority Programmes, programmes provided by other funding organisations)?

2.5 Description of the spokesperson's qualifications

Please explain why you would like to assume the role of spokesperson, also with respect to your academic qualifications and personal skills. What experience do you have in managing third-party funded projects?

2.6 Promotion of researchers in early career phases

Detail what measures are planned to integrate and promote promising researchers in early career phases within the Clinical Research Unit (e.g. training programmes, special measures, etc.). Are there clinician scientist programmes or opportunities for research clinicians to be released from patient care obligations (through temporary substitute programmes)? Are there plans to offer doctoral programmes for medical graduates?

2.7 Promotion of equity and diversity

Explain what measures are planned within the Clinical Research Unit to promote gender equality for researchers (please highlight separately), diversity in research and the compatibility of research and family (including care). Discuss measures adopted by the participating university/universities or research institution(s) and liaise with the departments

responsible for equity and diversity if required. For renewal proposals, please also report on measures already adopted.

Take into account the substance of the DFG's Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards:

www.dfg.de/equity_diversity_standards

A Standard Allowance for Equity and Diversity can be applied for to fund measures to promote equity and diversity in the Clinical Research Unit (see section 4.2).

www.dfg.de/equity/allowance

2.8 National and international cooperation and networking

What national and/or international collaborations are relevant?

If applicable, how will information and communication technology be used within the research work itself, other than for communication between the participants? (Examples may include interactive planning and conduct of experiments, data sharing for division of work or comparative analysis, etc.)

2.9 Collaboration with international cooperation partners

Are international cooperation partners involved in the Clinical Research Unit?

2.10 Description of the research coordinator's qualifications

Describe the plans for appointing the research coordinator of the Clinical Research Unit to the research professorship. If a specific person is being proposed for this leadership role, he/she should be involved in the creation of the concept. In this case, his/her special expertise should also be documented in a CV and publication list. In all cases, appointments to research professorships are subject to the respective state's higher education laws. Should the individual be selected through an (international) announcement procedure following establishment of the Clinical Research Unit, the DFG must also be included in the appointment process. The DFG is strongly committed to equal opportunities in science and research.

2.11 How does the Clinical Research Unit contribute to the research profile of the university/department of medicine?

Do the Clinical Research Unit's topic, the projects chosen and the participating disciplines provide a suitable basis for the department of medicine to further develop its chosen priorities? Please describe the scientific priorities and the research structure at the institution(s) involved in the proposal.

2.12 Expected benefits of collaboration between clinicians and basic researchers

What are the anticipated benefits of collaboration within the unit? How will the collaboration be structured?

2.13 Explanation of the contribution made by the department of medicine

Are funds from core support distributed for scientific projects by a research commission? If approved by the DFG, will the Clinical Research Unit be guaranteed space and equipment? Will the teams be close to each other (with the core group's clinic and laboratory preferably located in the same building)? Will space be allocated based on performance?

3 Project- and subject-related list of publications

This list should only contain those works that you cited in sections II 1 and II 2. Please note the "Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists" (DFG form 1.91):

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

4 Coordination

4.1 Description of how joint objectives and the joint work programme will be implemented in the coordination project

Describe the coordination project's joint work programme and how the joint objectives will be achieved and implemented.

4.2 Requested modules

The template provided in elan contains a list of funding modules available to facilitate coordination within the Clinical Research Unit. Please provide **detailed** justification for each module requested in the online form.

For the Standard Allowance for Equity and Diversity module, the resources required are to be briefly outlined by presenting the planned measures or by referring to section 2.7.

If you will be applying for gender inclusion funding for spokespersons, please describe what measures are planned and explain how these funds were used during the current funding period.

5 Project requirements

5.1 Employment status information

For each applicant (spokesperson or research coordinator), state the last name, first name, and employment status (including duration of contract and funding body, if on a fixed-term contract).

5.2 Composition of the project group

List only those individuals who will work on the coordination project but will not be paid out of the project funds. State each person's name, academic title, employment status, and type of funding.

Please list separately the individuals paid by your institution and those paid using other third-party funding (including fellowships).

Please give appropriate consideration to diversity when composing the members of the project group (regardless of the individual funding sources). Written explanations on diversity characteristics of individuals are expressly not desired within a draft proposal or proposal. I.

For additional information, see:

www.dfg.de/equity

5.3 Researchers with whom you have agreed to cooperate on this project

Where applicable, list researchers with whom you have agreed to cooperate on this project. Any such declarations must be attached to the proposal. Please do not list here any collaborations from other projects of the unit.

5.4 Scientific equipment

List larger instruments that will be available to you for the coordination project. These may include large computer facilities if computing capacity will be needed.

If you are applying for instruments that are available at your institution, but are not at the project's disposal, please explain why this is the case.

5.5 Project-relevant cooperation with commercial enterprises

If you will be conducting your coordination project in cooperation with a commercial enterprise, please note the EU guidelines on state aid.² Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to conclude a contract with the company or submit a declaration to the DFG. Please refer to DFG form 4.02 "Guidelines on the Participation of Commercial Enterprises in Research Projects". If applicable, please contact your research institution in this regard.

www.dfg.de/formulare/4_02

5.6 Project-relevant participation in commercial enterprises

Please indicate if you are the owner of a commercial enterprise or a stakeholder in one (e.g. a director). If so, state how your coordination project is linked to the company's production branch or activities. Please refer to DFG form 4.03, "Information on Work Results and Usage Rights in the Event of an Association with a Company".

www.dfg.de/formulare/4_03

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

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

² Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2022/C 414/01)

5.8 Considerations on aspects of ecological sustainability in the planning and implementation of the project

In research as well, there is an urgent need for a further shift towards sustainable practices. Use this space to reflect on how sustainability considerations are taken into account in the network measures proposed and, if applicable, in the research processes within this coordination project. Here, you are expected to provide a brief statement that refers specifically to the network-specific plans. Research quality is the pivotal factor for the funding decision, however, so this is the priority in terms of planning the research; for this reason, resource-saving and emission-reducing measures should not result in restrictions in the desired knowledge gain. If increased funding is required due to more sustainable research approaches, this can be taken into account when applying for funds. For further information, see the cross-disciplinary catalogue of guiding questions:

www.dfg.de/reflection_sustainability

6 Other information

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

APPENDIX

The proposal must include each applicant's **academic curriculum vitae**. The template provided (DFG form 53.200) must be used for this purpose:

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan

Please follow the guidelines for the draft phase accordingly, cf. section I 1 above.