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.
I General Instructions

Funding proposals\(^1\) 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, he/she is responsible for submitting it. In exceptional cases, 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 structure and items set out below 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

Please list all cited publications in a **Project- and subject-related list of publications**.

This list should only contain those works that you cited.

The font used for the publication list 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

\(^1\) The language in which the funding proposal may be submitted should be agreed upon with the relevant DFG programme division prior to submission.
been accepted for publication, in which case the manuscript and the editor’s confirmation of acceptance must be enclosed.

**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 such indication may constitute a breach of good research practice, and in individual cases may constitute research 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.

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](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 refer to the “Guidelines for Publication Lists”.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91](www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91)

Note that the DFG may reject any proposals not in compliance with these rules.
Also include:

- a cost estimate,
- a statement by the department of medicine regarding section II, items 2.10 and 2.12,
- a written declaration regarding all relevant aspects of co-financing (see III. 1. of the programme guidelines) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, medical department, 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 structure 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.

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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. In addition, the project leaders can supplement the individual project proposals. Your project description may not exceed 25 pages in length.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_02_elan
Individual project proposals within the Clinical Research Unit should be submitted in accordance with the instructions on preparing project proposals. 

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_01

The proposal must be submitted along with a written declaration regarding all relevant aspects of co-financing (see III. 1 of the programme guidelines) by the entities responsible under state law (university hospital, department of medicine, in some cases the state) as well as a statement by the medical department regarding items under section II, items 2.10 and 2.12 below.

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 structure 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. Please note in addition:

In the case of review sessions that are held by reviewers on site it is possible to provide manuscripts and publications created prior to the review session in order to be able to explain progress reports at the meeting so that reviewers can view them if necessary. However, reviews are only ever based on the text of the actual proposal.

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.

A renewal proposal 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 addition, the renewal proposal must include the responsible state agency’s pledge to provide matching funding for the second funding period, as well as 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).

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? Further information on this topic is available under:

www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/research_data

2.4  Potential impact on the research area and local research environment

Describe the Clinical Research Unit’s potential impact on the research area and local research environment.
2.5 Measures to advance research careers

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 scientists?

2.6 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.)

2.7 Collaboration with international cooperation partners

Are international cooperation partners involved in the Clinical Research Unit?

2.8 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?

2.9 Scientific qualifications of the head of the Clinical Research Unit

Describe the plans for appointing the head 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 gender equality in science and research.
2.10 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.

2.11 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?

2.12 Modalities of performance-based funding allocations for research and teaching through the department of medicine

What are the modalities by which performance-based government subsidies for research and education are allocated at the host university’s department of medicine? Are funds for scientific projects distributed 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 to II 2.3. On this point, please refer to the notes as applicable to the draft in section I 1 on this list as well as the “Guidelines for Publication Lists”.

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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/funds

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. 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.

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.