

Guidelines

for Consultation Panels on Initiatives in the Collaborative Research Centres Programme

Introduction

For the consultation panel on initiatives to establish a new Collaborative Research Centre or CRC/Transregio on the basis of a draft proposal, we ask you to consider the following criteria and questions.

The consultation panel is the basis for a first selection stage in the Collaborative Research Centres Programme. The purpose of the consultation panel is to help the initiative and the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres (see section III) assess whether the draft proposal, in the opinion of independent experts, is an appropriate basis for a full proposal. The main emphasis is on the overall strategy as opposed to the topical or methodological details of the individual projects.

Please note the formal aspects of the consultation panel as per section II. Information on the consultation and decision process can be found in section III. If you have any questions, please contact the officer responsible for the initiative at the DFG Head Office, Research Centres Division.

I. Criteria and Questions

I.1. Collaborative Research Centre as a Whole

How do you assess the Collaborative Research Centre as a whole considering the following criteria?

Research

Research quality

Scholarly significance and timeliness of research topic
Originality and openness to risk
Research aspiration and long-term perspective
Preliminary work / results achieved
International visibility of the Centre

Coherence and synergies

Conclusiveness of project structure
Cooperation across disciplines
Added value through cooperation

People

Qualification of people involved

Relevant expertise
Publication output
International visibility and networks

Research Profile of Applicant University(-ies)

Core support

Staffing situation
Research infrastructure

Strategy and planning

Role of Centre in strategic planning at applicant university(-ies)
Targeted personnel planning
Where applicable: cooperation with other research institutions
Where applicable: impact on teaching

Support Structures

Early career support

Participation of early career researchers in the Centre
Opportunities for professional development at the doctoral and postdoctoral level

Equal opportunities in research

Participation of women in the Centre
Measures to promote gender equality and to help researchers combine career and family

Management and dissemination

Management structures of the Centre
Quality assurance and project selection
Management of data and knowledge
Where applicable: public outreach / knowledge transfer

I.2. Research Projects

How do you rate the scientific quality considering the following criteria?

- Originality, innovation and risk
- Coherence, feasibility and long-term prospects
- Awareness of the current state of research
- Qualifications, preliminary work and publication output of designated principal investigator(s)
- Differentiation from other projects by the designated principal investigator(s)

How do you rate the integration of the project within the Centre?

- Does the project relate closely to the initiative's central idea?
- To what other projects do close relationships exist? How do the projects collaborate?

I.3. Assessment of Prospects for Success

How do you rate the initiative's prospects for success?

- Does a proposal under the Collaborative Research Centre Programme appear to be plausible and promising, or would submission to another DFG funding programme be more likely to succeed?
- In summary, how do you rate the initiative's viability under the Collaborative Research Centre Programme according to the following four categories:
 - The draft proposal is promising and viable; it provides a suitable basis for a proposal (category A).
 - The draft proposal is generally promising and viable; if the suggestions and notes are incorporated, it will provide a suitable basis for a proposal (category B).
 - The draft proposal shows potential; if the points that have been criticised are revised and the concerns raised are addressed, it can provide a suitable basis for a proposal (category C).
 - The draft proposal in its current form does not provide a suitable basis for a proposal (category D).

II. Formal Aspects of the Consultation Panel

II.1. Confidentiality

All proposals and draft proposals submitted to the DFG must be treated confidentially. The contents of a draft proposal may not be exploited for the reviewers' or third parties' own research. Any questions regarding the draft proposal or the consultation process should be directed exclusively to the DFG Head Office

II.2. Conflicts of Interest

Please consider whether there are circumstances that may create an appearance of partiality. For more information on avoiding conflicts of interest, see DFG form 10.201.

II.3. Diversity and Equal Opportunities

In all of its funding programmes, the DFG actively promotes equal opportunities and diversity in German science and academia. Reviews of grant proposals should not disadvantage applicants due to extra-scientific criteria, such as age, gender or disability. For example, applicants should not be assessed based on their absolute age but on their research achievements relative to the duration of their academic career. Applicants may be given credit for certain extra-scientific disadvantages. For example, delays in the academic careers of applicants (such as longer training periods, gaps in publication history, or less time spent abroad due to child care responsibilities) should be taken into account. More information on equal opportunities and diversity in science and academia is available at

www.dfg.de/diversity/en

II.4. Obligation to Follow Rules of Good Scientific Practice

The rules of good scientific practice also apply to reviewers. A violation of these rules can result in a charge of scientific misconduct. Scientific misconduct includes the intentional or grossly negligent statement of falsehoods in a scientific context, the violation of intellectual property rights, the impediment of another person's research work, and noncompliance with the confidentiality rules above. The circumstances of each individual case are decisive. Depending on the type and severity of the determined misconduct, the DFG may impose one or more sanctions, as specified in the DFG Rules of Procedure.

III. Information on the Consultation and Decision Process

III.1. Consultation Panel

The consultation panel begins with an internal meeting by the panel to identify priorities and issues for subsequent discussion with representatives of the initiative. A short presentation (10 minutes in video conferences and 15 minutes in physical meetings) by the spokesperson of the initiative opens the discussion. Following the discussion, the consultation panel meets internally for a second time to come to a final assessment of the draft proposal, focusing on its viability as a proposal and any necessary revisions. This assessment is then communicated to the representatives of the initiative.

Participants in the consultation also include a member, with relevant expertise, of the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres as rapporteur, and generally two representatives from the DFG Head Office.

For draft proposals received after 1 January 2018 and primarily assigned to one of the following four review boards (FK), please note the slightly modified decision process outlined below.

- History (FK 102)
- Physics (FK 307 – 311)
- Basic Research in Biology and Medicine (FK 201)
- Production Technology (FK 401)

As of 1 January 2020, this modified procedure also applies to draft proposals submitted and primarily assigned to one of the following four review boards:

- Neurosciences (FK 206)
- Mechanical Engineering (FK 402)
- Materials Engineering (405)
- Materials Science

A pilot project has been started to facilitate comparative cross-programme assessment in the Research Units, Research Training Groups and Collaborative Research Centres programmes. All draft proposals that have been primarily assigned to the four review boards listed above will be evaluated by the panel members following the consultation. In such cases, both a non-expert member of the Senate Committee for Collaborative Research Centres as well as a member of the review board will participate in the consultation panel. For additional information, please refer to our website.

III.2. Decision Process

The assessment by the consultation panel forms the basis for a recommendation by the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres regarding the initiative's next steps. In a comparative, multidisciplinary discussion of all outcomes of recent consultation panels, the most promising initiatives are identified and invited to submit full proposals. The others are discouraged from applying. The assessment by the consultation panel is communicated to the Senate Committee orally by the rapporteur and in writing via the minutes, which are prepared by the DFG Head Office in agreement with the rapporteur.

For draft proposals received as part of the pilot project, the assessment by the consultation panel is communicated to the relevant review board orally by the review board member who took part in the panel and in writing via the minutes, which are prepared by the DFG Head Office in agreement with the participating committee members. The review board bases its decision on whether to invite submission of a full proposal according to this information. The Senate Committee for Collaborative Research Centres then decides in a written procedure whether it concurs with the recommendation. If not, the draft proposal will be discussed at the next Senate Committee meeting.