

Guidelines

for Reviewing Draft Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups or 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

Reviewers are asked to comment in detail on each of the four criteria listed below and provide a final assessment. In addition, each item should be given a final rating of A, B or C (A = positive, convincing; B = average, borderline; C = negative, not convincing). The rating will aid in the interpretation of your comments. The evaluation should focus in particular on the qualification of the participating researchers as well as on the quality of the research programme.

For International Research Training Groups, please also comment on the added value resulting from the international cooperation with regard to each criterion.

When preparing your review, please bear in mind that the DFG will forward your comments in anonymised form to the spokesperson of the proposed Research Training Group.

II Review Criteria

1 Research Programme

- Please assess the quality, scientific relevance and originality of the Research Training Group's main research topic or research idea. How would you assess the novelty of the research programme in international comparison?
- In what way do you consider it forward-looking to establish a Research Training Group with this focus, considering that the key mission of such a group is to promote researchers in early career phases?
- Please assess whether the research programme justifies the expectation that the main topic will be explored appropriately in projects and theses. Has substantial preliminary work been carried out? Can ambitious doctoral research projects be expected?
- Is the research programme adequately focused and coherent?

Text:

Rating:

A	B	C

2 Participating Researchers (Applicant Team)

Please comment on the scientific credentials of the participating researchers with regard to the proposed main research topic or research idea as well as regarding their experience in training researchers in early career phases.

- To what extent have they distinguished themselves in their research activities and results to date?
- How would you assess their individual expertise with regard to the proposed main topic or research idea?
- To what extent are the participating researchers experienced in training researchers in early career phases?

Text:

Rating:

A	B	C

Please comment on the scientific composition of the team of applicants and their proposed cooperation with regard to the research and qualification programmes.

- To what extent does the team of applicants combine the subject-matter expertise necessary to successfully carry out the research and qualification programmes?
- Have the members of the team taught and/or carried out research together in the past?
- Is the subject-specific involvement of researchers appropriate from the point of view of gender equality? Is the participation of researchers in early career phases, such as advanced postdoctoral researchers, junior research group leaders or junior professors, planned or expected?

Text:

Rating:

A	B	C

3 Qualification Programme and Supervision Strategy

- Do the draft qualification strategy and the relevant preliminary work justify the expectation that researchers in early career phases will be trained successfully?
- Does the proposal incorporate supervisory structures that promote systematic, transparent, and timely completion of doctoral training?

Text:

Rating:

A	B	C

4 Environment

Please comment on whether the scientific environment is especially suited to successfully work on the proposed main research topic or research idea in the framework of a Research Training Group.

Text:

Rating:

A	B	C

If the Research Training Group is closely **related to a Collaborative Research Centre at the same location**, please comment on whether the Research Training Group’s topic or structure is sufficiently unique. For instance, the establishment of an International Research Training Group may be considered to deliver added value. The background to this is that a “module for structured doctoral training” can be applied for under the Collaborative Research Centre programme. Collaborative Research Centres and Research Training Groups that are based at the same location and have largely overlapping topics should not receive parallel funding. The goal is to increase efficiency by bundling funding for closely related research projects.

If the draft proposal is linked to an existing Research Training Group or one that has ended, please explain why the topic of the proposed Research Training Group is sufficiently distinct and to what extent the research programme investigates new scientific problems.

Text:

5 Final Assessment

Please provide a final assessment on whether you consider the concept as a whole promising. Should the university be asked to submit a proposal?

Text:

Rating:

A	B	C

III Additional Aspects of the Review

1 Confidentiality

Please treat the proposal documents confidentially. To ensure the confidentiality of the review process but also for reasons of data protection, only you as the reviewer may have access to the proposal documents. The contents may not be forwarded to third parties – including third parties within your department/work area.

It may, however, be appropriate to involve further individuals if you are under the impression that further expertise is required for reviewing the proposal or if you wish to introduce researchers in early career phases to the review process. Approval of such involvement must be requested at the DFG Head Office (no particular formal requirements apply). For further information on the involvement of third parties and the requirements for a proposal to this effect, see the General Guidelines for Reviews (DFG form 10.20), sections 4 to 6.

www.dfg.de/formulare/10_20

The DFG is looking closely at the potential uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of generative models for text and image creation – both in research work itself and when submitting proposals to the DFG.

As the documents that are provided to you for review are confidential, they may not be used as input for generative models. The use of generative models in the preparation of reviews is inadmissible in any case due to the confidentiality of the review process. What is more, the processing of proposal content using a generative model may constitute a copyright infringement.

When submitting proposals to the DFG, the use of generative models is permissible because of the considerable opportunities and development potential they offer, but such usage must be disclosed in a scientifically appropriate manner. The use of generative models is to be assessed neutrally per se when it comes to evaluating the subject-specific quality of a funding proposal. As far as the content of a proposal is concerned, full responsibility for research integrity remains with the applicants.

2 Obligation to Observe the Principles of Good Research Practice

The principles of good research practice must also be observed during the review process. Detailed information can be found in the DFG [Code of Conduct “Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice”](#).

A violation of these principles can result in a charge of scientific misconduct in accordance with the [DFG's Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct \(Verfahren-sordnung der DFG zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten – VerfOWF\)](#).

3 Conflicts of Interest

Please examine whether any circumstances exist that might give rise to an appearance of bias, favouritism or conflict of interest on your part. For more information, please refer to the Guidelines for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest (DFG form 10.201).

www.dfg.de/formulare/10_201

4 Assessment of Researchers' Achievements

The assessment of a researcher's achievements must be carried out in its entirety and based on substantive qualitative criteria. In addition to the publication of articles, books, data and software, other dimensions can be taken into account, such as involvement in teaching, academic self-administration, public relations or knowledge and technology transfer. Details of quantitative metrics such as impact factors and h-indices are not required and are not to be considered as part of the review.

We ask you to consider a researcher's individual career stage when evaluating the qualification of the applicant and to assess his/her achievements on this basis. In some cases, this may mean that preliminary work specific to the project cannot necessarily be expected.

Please also take into account that some researchers may have pursued individual career paths in a business or non-university context.

The review must not be based on non-scientific criteria such as age, gender, family obligations, origin or health restrictions, to the detriment of the applicant. Researchers are encouraged to declare periods of absence and periods of restricted academic activity (minimum duration: three months in a year) due to unavoidable delays in their career. Such periods should be given appropriate consideration in the researcher's favour in order to compensate for any disadvantages experienced.

For further information on equity and diversity in research, see:

www.dfg.de/diversity/en

In order to be able to make non-discriminatory, science-led funding decisions, it is important for the evaluation process to be based solely on the above criteria and free of non-scientific factors. Regularly engaging with the topic of bias can sensitise people to their own, often unconscious prejudices, thereby counteracting any potential bias in assessment. For further

information, please refer to the recommendations for action and background material that is available at:

www.dfg.de/bias/en

5 Important Information on Data Protection

The DFG takes the protection of your personal data very seriously. The proposal documents on which your review is based regularly contain personal data that is protected by data protection laws, particularly by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). In order to protect this data, we therefore request that you observe the following guidelines on the confidential handling of personal data when preparing your review.

Data protection law stipulates that personal data must be protected by sufficient security measures to prevent any access by unauthorised parties as well as accidental loss. Please take the necessary measures to comply with data protection law, for example by choosing secure passwords, securing PCs, etc. We also ask that you take measures to protect the proposal documents in your home workplace against access by other persons in your household or by other third parties.

If you are working outside the DFG systems (elan), for example saving the proposal documents onto a local end device, please make sure to delete personal data immediately or to securely destroy it when it is no longer required. This should be done in a secure manner (in the case of printed documents, by not disposing of them in a wastepaper basket but by using a paper shredder).

Please help us to recognise and remedy any data privacy incidents, and report all technical difficulties or irregularities to us when using DFG systems (elan), as well as any (potentially) unauthorised access to personal data contained in the proposal documents. Examples of such incidents include:

- Unauthorised use of your elan login data
- Cyberattacks leading to access to personal data contained in the proposal documents by unauthorised parties
- If documents containing personal data relating to the proposal are stolen or read in the event of a break-in
- If USB sticks, mobile phones or laptops containing unencrypted personal data in connection with a proposal document are lost or stolen

In such cases, please contact: E-mail: datenschutz@dfg.de

With regard to your own personal data, please take note of the DFG's data protection notice for reviewers, which can be viewed and downloaded at www.dfg.de/privacy_policy. By taking up your duties as reviewer, you hereby confirm acknowledgement of this data protection notice.

www.dfg.de/privacy_policy