Guidelines

for the Review of Proposals to Establish or Renew 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 Programme Information

Funding for a Research Unit enables outstanding researchers to collaborate closely on specific medium-term projects whose anticipated findings could not be achieved within individual grants programmes. Furthermore, measures tailored specifically to the Research Unit are pursued in order to promote researchers in early career phases and also equity and diversity. A Research Unit typically has fewer than ten projects which are coordinated to enable work on a common research topic. The majority of research projects should be university-based.

A Research Unit is made up of project leaders and project members. One researcher assumes the role of spokesperson. The spokesperson should hold a tenured professorship.

Applicants must first submit a draft proposal to the DFG, which then undergoes review. If successful, the DFG will invite the applicants to submit an establishment proposal.

For proposals based on draft proposals submitted prior to 1 October 2018, note the following:
The total funding duration is generally six years, or eight years in exceptional cases. The first funding period is generally three years. Further funding requires the submission and approval of renewal proposals.
For proposals based on draft proposals submitted after 1 October 2018, note the following:
The total duration of funding is generally eight years; the first funding period is usually four years. Continued funding may be applied for with a renewal proposal (see the Guidelines for the Research Units Programme – DFG form 50.04).

www.dfg.de/formulare/50_04

Please note:

General Guidelines for Reviews (DFG form 10.20) are available at:

www.dfg.de/formulare/10_20

When conducting a review of a proposal to establish or renew a Research Unit, we ask you to consider the following criteria and questions.

II Criteria and Questions for the Review of the Research Unit as a Whole and the Individual Projects

1. How would you assess the **quality of the project**, especially with regard to originality and the anticipated contribution to knowledge gain?

   - For the Research Unit as a whole: Is funding as a group likely to produce a significant benefit compared to the funding of individual projects? Does the research question require a funding horizon of at least eight years?

   - For the individual projects: How does the project contribute to the overall research task of the Research Unit?

   - For renewal proposals: How has the quality of the project developed, also in relation to the development of the wider research field?

2. To what extent do the **objectives and work programme** of the unit as a whole as well as those of the individual projects convincingly reflect clear working hypotheses and an appropriately distinct topic? Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the planned investigations. Are the methods and the schedule as well as the concept for handling research data suitable?

   - For renewal proposals: What scientific progress has been achieved in the previous funding period?

3. How would you evaluate the soundness of the preliminary work, the quality of publications (please refer to the Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists – DFG form 1.91) and the **qualifications of the applicants** – in general and in relation to the project as a whole and the specific individual projects?

   - For the Research Unit as a whole: Please also comment on the extent to which the spokesperson of the Research Unit meets the requirements in terms of their scientific track record, experience in leading projects, including third-party-funded projects, and integration and leadership skills.

4. How would you assess the **work and research environment**?

   - Is/are the host institution(s) suitable for the implementation of the project, particularly in terms of the necessary equipment and facilities?

   - Please also comment on the following aspects in relation to the Research Unit as a whole:
     For single-location Research Units: Can structural effects be expected in the local area? For multi-location Research Units: How is the collaboration between the participants to be supported and organised?

5. For the Research Unit as a whole: How do you rate the **measures taken to promote researchers in early career phases**? Does the department offer doctoral programmes?

6. For the Research Unit as a whole: Are **equity and diversity** taken into account **appropriately**? Is the subject-specific involvement of researchers appropriate in terms of gender equality? How do you rate the measures to be taken to promote gender equality for researchers, diversity in research and the compatibility of research and family?

7. Please provide a **clear recommendation** as to whether the proposal should be approved. If you do vote in favour, please comment on whether the requested funds are justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project. In doing so, take into account whether or not the funds requested are appropriate.

8. Other aspects

   - If the proposal relates to collaboration with developing countries, please note the following:

     o In the funding measure “Cooperation with Developing Countries”, researchers who are eligible to submit proposals to the DFG can propose a transnational research project designed jointly with researchers from developing countries. The goal is to promote cooperation between researchers in Germany and developing countries within the context of ambitious projects. If approved, the grant is awarded solely to the researchers based in Germany, who are formally considered to be the applicants. They then transfer the funds allocated for the international component of the proposal to the international project partners.

- Collaborations with developing countries are subject to the DFG's standard quality criteria. Project components in developing countries can be funded directly if the contribution of the cooperation partner in the developing country is essential to the research project. Work should be planned and carried out as far as possible with equal participation by the German and foreign project members. This participation should provide recognisable added value for all those involved. In addition, the research capacity and scientific performance of the participating researchers in the relevant countries should be enhanced. Please state explicitly whether you believe these objectives can be achieved with the proposal.

- If the project is a D-A-CH, D-LUX or D-Süd proposal in a Lead Agency Procedure, please note the following:
  - In these procedures, which the DFG conducts with partner organisations in Austria (FWF), Switzerland (SNF), Luxembourg (FNR) and the Autonomous Province of Bolzano (South Tyrol), transnational projects with research components in the different participating countries are reviewed by one single lead funding organisation only. In the event of approval, each national component of a D-A-CH, D-LUX and D-Süd project is funded separately by the responsible funding organisation. Reviews solicited by the DFG as the lead agency and the opinion of the DFG review board are made available to the participating partner organisations abroad as a basis for their final funding decision.
  - In your review, you should therefore comment on all national components of the proposal (including requested funds), the international joint proposal as a whole, and the coordination of the various components.

- If the requested funding measure is a Middle East collaboration, please note the following:
  - The "Middle East Collaboration" funding measure enables researchers who are eligible to submit proposals to the DFG to propose a transnational research project designed jointly with researchers from Israel (bilateral project), or Israel and Palestine or the following neighbouring countries of Israel: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria (trilateral project). The goal is to promote cooperation between these researchers within the context of ambitious research projects. If approved,

the grant is awarded solely to the researchers based in Germany, who are formally considered to be the applicants. They then transfer the funds allocated for the international component of the proposal to the international project partners.

- Funding decisions on scientific cooperation in the framework of a Middle East collaboration are subject to the DFG's standard quality criteria.

- Work should be planned and carried out as far as possible with equal participation by the German, Israeli and, if applicable, Palestinian or Arab project members. The participation should provide recognisable added value for all those involved, which for the Palestinian/Arab partners may also consist of expanding research capacity. Please state explicitly whether you believe these objectives can be achieved with the proposal.

- If the proposal is for a part-time temporary position for a principal investigator, please note the following:

  In accordance with regulations on the promotion of equity and diversity in research, it is possible for an individual to take up a part-time (at least 50%) temporary PI position for family reasons (childcare, relatives in need of care) or in cases of disability or chronic illness. Such proposals will be treated as full-time proposals by the DFG with the goal of equal assessment of project proposals involving a temporary PI position.

- If the proposal involves requests for specialised literature, please note the following:

  Funds for purchasing specialised scientific publications may be granted in exceptional cases where the publications in question must either be permanently available to the project but are not purchased by the institution, or when they are not available through interlibrary loan. With this in mind, please state explicitly whether you believe the funds for procuring the specialised literature listed in the proposal should be approved.

- If funds have been requested for science communication, please note the following:

  - Funds for science communication of up to €1,000 per funding year and project may be requested without justification in individual projects and/or in the coordination project. A description of the activity or activities and identification of the target group or groups is sufficient for this purpose. No separate statement is required from you.

- If more than €1,000 per funding year and project is requested in an individual project or in the coordination project, the applicants must provide a detailed justification. This must address the following aspects: description of the activity or activities, their objectives and the target group or groups to be addressed; relevance to the subject of the research project; nature and suitability of the findings for science communication; the ability of the participating researchers to communicate the results of their research effectively; supporting structures at the institutions; anticipated impact, quality assurance and evaluation concept; schedule and budget.

  Please state explicitly whether the proposal addresses these aspects convincingly and whether awarding the requested amount of funding is likely to enable the objectives of the activity or activities to be achieved.