

Guidelines

Consultation Phase in the Collaborative Research Centre Programme



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.

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

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Decisions on the establishment and funding of Collaborative Research Centres (CRCs), including CRC/Transregios, involve a two-stage process. During the first stage the DFG holds a consultation panel with external subject-area specialists. One purpose of this panel is to help the researchers assess whether the draft proposal is a suitable basis for a CRC and what modifications might be appropriate. Furthermore, the result of the panel provides the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres with the basis for a comparative discussion of all recent draft proposals. With the intention to invite only truly promising projects to apply for grants, the Senate Committee issues a recommendation on each draft proposal as to whether or not a full proposal should be submitted.

The following guidelines apply both to traditional Collaborative Research Centres and CRC/Transregios. Researchers submitting a CRC draft proposal commit to adhering to the rules of good research practice.

I Draft Proposals

The consultation panel is held on the basis of a draft proposal, which consists of a project description of up to 120 pages plus attachments. The project description should introduce the CRC's shared objectives and joint research programme, the state of the art, the institutional environment, as well as the planned projects and their interconnections. If a CRC/Transregio will be requested by more than one applicant university or involve additional institutions beyond the applicant university/universities, such as other universities or non-university research institutions, please describe the collaboration strategy to be used between them. The contents of the draft proposal are not binding with respect to developing the full proposal.

Draft proposals may be submitted in English or German. Additional information on proposal submission and formal requirements is contained in section III of this document (Draft Proposal Preparation Instructions for Collaborative Research Centres).

Following submission of the draft proposal via the elan portal, the head of the applicant institution is required to document its support of the centre by signing the compliance form. For CRC/Transregios, signatures from all applicant universities are required.

II Consultation Panel

The main focus of the consultation panel is the design of the Collaborative Research Centre overall, with less emphasis on the substantive or methodological details of its individual projects. On the basis of the draft proposal, the panel discusses particularly the relevance and timeliness of the chosen topic, originality, the willingness to take risks, the research rationale and long-term outlook of the research programme, the preparatory work, the coherence and synergies of interdisciplinary and possibly interinstitutional cooperation, the qualifications of the participating individuals, and the centre's potential competitiveness. In addition, the panel assesses the CRC's intended impact on prioritisation at the applicant universities, as well as the quality of institutional support structures (see DFG form 60.17).

www.dfg.de/formulare/60_17

Consultation panellists are invited by the DFG and include one member of the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres with relevant expertise, about five researchers from related fields, and members of the DFG Head Office. The proposed Collaborative Research Centre is represented by about five researchers who are involved in the CRC. We ask you not to contact the panellists or the rapporteur, either before or after the consultation session, until the Senate Committee has made its decision.

III Draft Proposal Preparation Instructions for Collaborative Research Centres

1 General information

The draft proposal consists of the project description, the length of which must not exceed 120 pages, and attachments. Individual project descriptions should be approximately three to four pages long.

When describing the individual projects, please comment on both the proposed research projects and programme-specific projects. Programme-specific projects are defined as Integrated Research Training Groups, service projects, transfer projects, science communication projects and/or information infrastructure projects. Information on these projects can be found in DFG form 60.100 (Proposal Template for the Establishment of a Collaborative Research Centre).

www.dfg.de/formulare/60_100

The information included in the template also serves as a guide for the information required for individual projects requested in the draft proposal. The formal structure for individual project descriptions can be derived from the recommended outline for research projects.

If you have any questions on preparing your draft proposal, please contact the DFG Head Office. Contact details for CRC programme staff can be found at

[Collaborative Research Centres staff](#)

The project leaders' gender is collected for statistical purposes only.

2 Proposal submission

Draft proposals under the Collaborative Research Centres Programme must be submitted via the elan portal of the DFG. You can access the system at

elan.dfg.de

to securely submit your draft proposal, proposal-related data and documents.

The draft proposal consists of the following three parts:

A – Proposal data (via the electronic proposal form)

B – Project description (according to DFG form 53.120)

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_120_elan

C – Attachments (research profiles)

Additional documents may also be submitted:

- List of collaborations with researchers outside the CRC
- Manuscripts that have been accepted but not yet published

As soon as the data and the uploaded documents are sent electronically to the DFG, you will receive an acknowledgment of receipt by e-mail with a compliance form attached to it. Please print out this document, sign it and send it to the DFG within two weeks of your proposal submission. Note that it is not necessary for all signatures (by the spokesperson and head[s] of the applicant institution[s]) to appear on the same page.

Please also send us four printed copies of the project description and research profiles (printed on both sides and bound in one copy). Upon request, we will forward a printed copy to members of the consultation panel. Please send the printed copies and the signed compliance form to:

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Gruppe Sonderforschungsbereiche, Kennedyallee 40, 53175 Bonn, Germany.

A Proposal data

An electronic proposal form is available via the DFG elan portal at

elan.dfg.de

for you to provide the following information:

- Title of the Collaborative Research Centre in German and English (max. 300 characters each)
- Subject classification
- Summary of the research programme and CRC objectives, in German and English (max. 3,000 characters)
- Applicant university/universities; any other participating institutions
- Spokesperson

Two forms are available in the elan portal for submitting a draft proposal: one for a traditional Collaborative Research Centre, which is applied for by a single university, and one for a CRC/Transregio, which is requested by two or three universities (cf. DFG form 50.06).

www.dfg.de/formulare/50_06

B Project description

For the description of your project, use the appropriate template in English or German, which is available on the elan portal and on the website of the DFG.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_120_elan

The length of the document (not including attachments) must not exceed 120 pages (A4 format, Arial 11pt). Please add a hyperlinked table of contents and make sure your document is easily readable if you are using additional formatting.

If, in preparing your draft 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. For more information, see the “Research Integrity” portal.

[“Research Integrity” portal](#)

The project description should include the following information:

1 Key data

1.1 Research areas

Suggest the primary research area of the proposed Collaborative Research Centre. Where applicable, include the research areas of individual projects participating in the CRC (cf. [DFG subject area structure](#)).

1.2 Spokesperson

List the spokesperson’s academic title, first name, last name, work address, telephone number and e-mail address.

If the spokesperson has also been appointed to a non-university research institution, please consult with the DFG on spokesperson eligibility.

1.3 Participating institutions

List the applicant university/universities and other participating institutions. Include the locations of all universities.

1.4 Project leaders

Provide a table listing the designated project leaders in alphabetical order. For each person, state the academic title, first name, last name, gender (m/f/d), the year they obtained their doctorate, institution and project code. Please give appropriate consideration to diversity when composing the group of project leaders and project working groups (independent of how their members are funded). Written explanations on diversity characteristics of individuals are expressly not desired within a draft proposal. The project leaders are considered “individuals with a high level of scientific/academic responsibility” as stated in the DFG’s Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct. They must take note of these

Rules of Procedure and acknowledge them as legally binding (see Declaration of Obligation of Compliance – DFG form 80.02).

www.dfg.de/formulare/80_02

1.5 List of projects

List the project code, project leader, title, institution and research area in a table. For projects where the leader holds a contractually secured position at more than one institution, the relevant institution is the one at which the project leader is predominantly employed. For persons jointly appointed by a university and a non-university institution, the relevant institution is the one at which the project is to be carried out.

List the projects according to the project area. Project areas should be categorised by capital letters (e.g. A, B, C, etc.) and individual projects by the capital letter of the relevant project area followed by a two-digit code (e.g. A01, B05).

2 General section

2.1 Summary of the research programme

In a plain-language summary (max. 3,000 characters), describe the main research objectives of the proposed Collaborative Research Centre.

2.2 Research programme and long-term objective

What key questions connect the projects and project areas? What makes the project particularly innovative, and what are its long-term prospects? What scientific added value will be generated through the participating researchers' collaboration? Describe the research priorities in the different project areas and how they relate to producing knowledge and insights that are relevant for the CRC as a whole. What criteria were used to include or exclude projects? Describe why you are seeking funding under the Collaborative Research Centres programme.

If relevant, describe what criteria were used to select participating institutions. What are the strengths of the individual institutions and their contributions to the project?

If this is a revision of a draft proposal that was not recommended for proposal submission by the Senate Committee on Collaborative Research Centres, please indicate the reference number of the preceding initiative and briefly describe how you have addressed the points

of criticism and recommendations from the previous consultation. For greater clarity, you may present this information in a separate section.

Please list all publications cited in section 2.2.

2.3 Positioning of the proposed Collaborative Research Centre within its general research area

What developments characterise the CRC's proposed research area from both a national and international standpoint? Have there been research policy developments or other reasons that would justify the need to enhance this field? How will the Collaborative Research Centre be integrated in this area, and to what extent will it contribute to advancing the current state of the art in the field?

Is the same or similar research currently being pursued by other research collaborations and/or centres in Germany (such as Clusters of Excellence, Collaborative Research Centres, Research Units, BMBF collaborative projects) or abroad? Where are competing and/or cooperating working groups located? How does the proposed Collaborative Research Centre position itself with regard to these activities?

If participating project leaders have submitted a draft proposal with a similar topic to the DFG within the past three years, and the draft proposal was denied, list the main aspects of the previous proposal and comment on how they differ from the current proposal in terms of content, structure and personnel.

2.4 Research profile of the applicant university/universities

What universities and non-university research institutions are participating in the proposed Collaborative Research Centre? What other collaborations are envisaged? Is the proposed topic a research priority at the participating institutions, or is a prioritisation planned? What role does the proposed CRC play at the applicant university/universities?

Describe the personnel situation at the applicant university/universities as they relate to the proposed CRC. What personnel measures have been or will be taken with regard to the composition of the CRC and its research programme? What resources (such as laboratories, libraries, major research instrumentation) are available at the applicant or other participating institutions? How will the Collaborative Research Centre handle research data (all

sources and findings resulting from the research process) that have been collected, analysed and/or developed within the CRC? Base this on appropriate subject-specific concepts and considerations regarding professional research data management, taking into account the FAIR principles.

Will the university contribute additional resources (staff, direct costs and/or instrumentation) to the proposed area of research?

Where relevant, outline any existing and/or future collaboration networks among the participating institutions (universities and non-university research institutions) and collaboration strategies.

2.5 Support structures

2.5.1 Researchers in early career phases

Describe the situation of researchers in early career phases in the research area of the proposed CRC at the applicant university/universities. What measures are planned to promote early independence? What measures are planned to ensure high-quality doctoral training and supervision? What impact could the research programme have on teaching?

If you are planning to include an Integrated Research Training Group and have addressed these aspects elsewhere in the proposal, you can reference this here.

Project leaders are considered researchers in early career phases if, at the time of draft proposal submission, they have obtained their doctorates no later than eight years prior to submission (the year of the oral exam should be used). For maternity and/or parental leaves, the 8-year rule is extended by two years per child up to a maximum of 12 years; please include any periods of leave in the research profiles.

2.5.2 Promotion of equity and diversity

Briefly describe the equity and diversity concept at the applicant university/universities. Discuss strategies and measures adopted by the applicant university/universities and liaise with the departments responsible for equity and diversity if required. What measures are planned within the Collaborative Research Centre to promote gender equality for researchers (please highlight separately), diversity in research and the compatibility of research and

family (including care)? How will the allocated funds for equity and diversity be used? Further information can be found in the module guidelines for the Standard Allowance for Equity and Diversity (DFG form 52.14) and on the website.

www.dfg.de/formulare/52_14

www.dfg.de/equity/allowance

2.6 Funding of the proposed Collaborative Research Centre

List the amount of funding you are planning to apply for (total for all staff, direct costs and instrumentation for all projects by year and rounded to the nearest thousand euros) in a table. To calculate staff funding, use the personnel rates contained in DFG form 60.12.

www.dfg.de/formulare/60_12

In addition, list all research instrumentation exceeding €50,000 to be acquired by the CRC. Include the designation/description, the planned year of procurement and the estimated purchase price including value added tax.

3 Projects

3.1 Code and title

3.2 Project leader(s)

List the academic title, first name, last name and work address. For projects where the leader holds a contractually secured position at more than one institution, the relevant institution is the one at which the project leader is predominantly employed. For persons jointly appointed by a university and a non-university institution, the relevant institution is the one at which the project is to be carried out.

3.3 Project description

Describe the main research question, the current state of the art, project-related preliminary work, the work programme and methodology, and integration in the Collaborative Research Centre.

The information provided in this section should be able to stand on its own and be understandable, coherent and reviewable without the need to read additional documents. Only works in which the results and methodology are mentioned may be cited. Both your own publications and publications by researchers not participating in the CRC but important to

the project should be listed in the project- and subject-related list of publications in section 3.4. Other documents may also be referenced there as necessary. To the extent that these documents are non-published works by the participating researchers, they must be submitted via the elan portal. The consultation panel is not required to read additional documents. The proposal text alone will serve as the basis for the review.

The following structure can be used for this section:

3.3.1 Summary and main research question

3.3.2 State of the art and preliminary work

3.3.3 Work programme and role within the proposed Collaborative Research Centre

3.4 Project- and subject-related list of publications

This list should contain those works that you cited in section 3.3. 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. Exceptions are 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.

A maximum of ten of your own publications that are most relevant to the project can be highlighted in **bold**. Even if there are several applicants, the maximum of ten highlighted works may not be exceeded.

When listing papers that have been officially accepted for publication but not yet published, the manuscript and the publisher's dated acknowledgement of acceptance must be submitted via elan.

3.5 Project funding

Is the project currently being funded by the DFG or other institution? Describe the CRC's proposed budget with regard to personnel and larger-scale instrumentation.

C Attachments

1 Research profiles

Research profiles should be attached for all designated project leaders and should include information on each person's career and publication history. Please create each research profile using the CV template in DFG form 53.200.

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan

2 Additional attachments

In order to help the DFG avoid potential conflicts of interest during assessment in the consultation phase, include a list of researchers in Germany and abroad with whom collaboration or coordination exists or is specifically planned and with whom the designated project leaders have collaborated in the past three years on joint projects.

Papers that are included in the lists of publications and have been officially accepted for publication but not yet published, the publisher's acknowledgement of acceptance, and a cover letter addressed to the DFG may be uploaded as additional attachments.

Naming Protocol for Proposal Documents and Supplementary Notes on Proposal Submission

Before submitting your draft proposal, you will be prompted to upload the required documents. You can only upload PDF files as attachments (which should have no access restrictions regarding reading, copying or printing). Please name the PDF documents according to the following naming protocol in order to facilitate the consultation process.

Document	Document name
project description (Beschreibung des Vorhabens) (part B of the draft proposal)	Beschreibung_des_Vorhabens
research profiles (Forschungsprofile) (part C of the draft proposal)	Forschungsprofile
Cooperation with researchers outside the CRC (Zusammenarbeiten mit Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern außerhalb des Verbunds)	Kooperationsliste
scientific papers (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten)	<year>_<author's last name>_<keyword>

Files larger than 10 MB cannot be submitted. If a larger file size is unavoidable, you may supply the file subsequently on a suitable medium. In this case, submit an explanatory note instead of the missing document.