

Election Regulations

for the Election of the Members of the Review
Boards of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
(DFG, German Research Foundation)

- valid for the 2023 review board election and for the 2024-2028 term of office -



Disclaimer: This English translation of the Election Regulations is provided for informational purposes. The English text was carefully translated and reviewed for accuracy. In the event that the English and German versions of the Election Regulations permit different interpretations, the German text shall prevail.

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Part 1: General Provisions

§ 1 Structure of Review Boards, Election Cycle

1. ¹The subject structure of the Review Boards is determined by the Senate of the DFG prior to each Review Board election. ²The Senate subdivides Review Boards generally by subject area and determines the number of elected members for each subject area and Review Board (at least two per subject area). ³It shall ensure that science and the humanities in all their forms and disciplines are covered by the Review Boards and that the Review Boards take their disciplinary research interest and interdisciplinary relationships duly into account.
2. ¹Members of the Review Boards are elected for four years by secret ballot. ²Members may be re-elected once. ³Succession according to § 1 No. 3 d) or e) sentence 1 is treated like a one-time election. ⁴Multiple successions within a term of office are also considered as a single election. ⁵Membership in a Review Board is thus limited to two terms, regardless of the duration of either term. ⁶Memberships in review committees prior to the introduction of the Review Board system in 2003 will not be considered. ⁷The term for newly elected members of Review Boards begins with the inaugural session of the respective Review Board. ⁸The term of the members of the previous Review Board ends concurrently.
3.
 - a) ¹Candidates are assigned a ranking according to the number of votes they receive or, in the event of a tie, by a random draw. ²They are elected in the order determined by the ranking until the available places in the subject area or Review Board are filled. ³Candidates without any votes will be ranked in last place but are not taken into consideration.
 - b) ¹If only one candidate receives votes in a certain subject area, by way of exception only one member will be elected for this subject area. ²If no candidate receives any votes in a certain subject area, or if all elected members, including all succeeding members in accordance with § 1 No. 3 d), leave before the end of their term, grant proposals assigned to this subject area will be considered by the other subject areas on this Review Board.

- c) If, after election, the personal requirements under § 2 No. 2 and No. 4 a) sentence 2 and § 4 No. 1 c) cease to apply, membership in the Review Board shall end at the end of the month in which the letter from the President of the DFG is received by the person concerned.
- d) ¹If a member leaves before the end of the term or does not take up office after the election, the candidate who received the next highest number of votes will succeed that member. ²Candidates who did not receive any votes will not be considered. ³In consensus with the Review Board, a succession process may, by way of exception, be refrained from on special grounds if the expected remaining time in office would be disproportionately short.
- e) ¹With the consent of the succeeding member, temporary succession for a period of at least six months is permitted for special non-scientific reasons (especially maternity or parental leave, or serious illness). ²In the event of permanent succession during a term of office, priority shall be given to temporary successors. ³Any vacancies of less than six months that may arise are to be bridged by the remaining members of the Review Board. ⁴If the remainder of the term would be less than one year after re-entry, temporary succession is not possible.
- f) ¹The Executive Committee of the DFG may release a member of a Review Board from his/her duties for a specified period of time or until the end of the term of office (suspension) if there is good cause for doing so which, taking into account all the circumstances of the individual case and weighing the interests of all concerned, makes it appear unreasonable to allow the member of the Review Board to remain in office. ²The President of the DFG may extend the period of release from Review Board duties if the reasons for the release from the duties are likely to continue for this prolonged period. ³The reasons for the DFG's decision shall be communicated to the Review Board member concerned.

§ 2 Right to Vote

1. To be eligible to vote, candidates must meet personal qualifications and be affiliated with a voting centre according to § 9 No. 2.
2. ¹Individuals personally qualified to vote are:

- a) researchers who
 - aa) have completed their degree and
 - bb) have successfully passed their oral doctoral exam (or a recognised comparable degree examination)

before the first day of the voting period, and

- b) professors (including junior professors),

provided they are working in scientific or academic research on, but not limited to, the first day of the voting period. ²If this activity is interrupted for a foreseeable period of more than three months, it shall be refutably presumed that scientific research activity is no longer being carried out.

3. Affiliation with a voting centre is always established if the academic research is conducted at a research institution according to § 9 No. 2 a) or b) (right to vote by virtue of institutional affiliation).
4.
 - a) ¹Persons according to § 2 No. 2 who on, but not limited to, the first day of the voting period work in scientific or academic research but not at a research institution according to § 9 No. 2 a) or b) may be granted the right to vote on an individual basis by the President of the DFG. ²Nominees under this provision must be permitted to publish freely the findings of their academic research and must be integrated in the German research system.
 - b) ¹Nominations of persons to be granted the right to vote on an individual basis can be submitted to the DFG Head Office up to six months before the beginning of the voting period. ²Nominations may be submitted by research institutions that conduct academic research and that satisfy the conditions set out in § 9 No. 2 b) aa)-cc). ³Each eligible institution may nominate persons engaged in scientific or academic research who satisfy the requirements of § 2 No 2 insofar as it is not possible to apply for the establishment of a voting centre according to § 9 No. 2 b). ⁴The nominating institutions shall provide the persons whom they intend to propose for the award of the right to vote on an individual basis with the information made available to them in due time by the DFG for the Review Board election in

accordance with Articles 13, 14 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) before they propose these persons to the DFG for this purpose.

- c) Individuals who have been granted the right to vote on an individual basis are automatically assigned to the DFG voting centre according to § 9 No. 2 c).
5. ¹Individuals are also eligible to vote if they have been granted the right to stand for election by the Senate of the DFG according to § 4 No. 2. ²These persons are added to the list of individual voters and are therefore assigned to the voting centre for individual voters set up by the DFG according to § 9 No. 2 c).
6. ¹Voters may vote only once, even if they conduct scientific or academic research at more than one institution. ²If they conduct academic research at a member university, they must be registered to vote there.

§ 3 Number of Votes, Vote Splitting

- 1. ¹Each voter has six votes. ²A voter may give up to three votes to the same candidate.
- 2. Votes may be split between candidates for different Review Boards and/or different subject areas.

§ 4 Candidate Eligibility

- 1. The eligibility to serve on a Review Board is granted to all persons who
 - a) have the right to vote according to § 2,
 - b) assure that they have a sufficient understanding of the German language to fulfil the tasks of the Review Boards,
 - c) are employed permanently as scientific or academic researchers, or work independently as scientific or academic researchers (e.g. as Heisenberg fellows or leaders of a junior research group of the DFG, Max Planck Society, or similar institution), and
 - d) work in scientific or academic research at a research institution according to § 9 No. 2 a) or b).

2. Other independent scientific or academic researchers who meet the requirements according to § 2 No. 2 and No. 4 a) sentence 2 and § 4 No. 1 b) and are included in the list of candidates according to the process stipulated in § 7 are granted the right to serve as a candidate upon approval of the list of candidates by the Senate of the DFG according to § 7.
3. If a candidate leaves the institution at which independent research has been carried out after the list of candidates has been approved by the Senate of the DFG according to § 7, she or he will retain the right to vote and to serve as a candidate provided that the personal requirements according to § 2 No. 2 and No. 4 a) sentence 2 and § 4 No. 1 c) continue to be met.

§ 5 Incompatibility with Other Offices

1. An individual as defined in § 2 No. 2 can only be a candidate for one subject area, or for one Review Board if the Review Board is not subdivided into subject areas (cf. § 1 No. 1).
2. Members of the DFG's Executive Committee, Joint Committee, the Grants Committees installed by the Joint Committee, liaison officers, and DFG liaisons at non-member universities may not concurrently serve on Review Boards.
3. Election commissioners who monitor the Review Board elections and their deputies according to § 10 may not run for an election which they monitor, and members of the Election Rules and Procedures Committee may not run for an election for which they have been appointed to the Election Rules and Procedures Committee by the Senate of the DFG according to § 18 No. 1.

Part 2: Candidate Nominations and List of Candidates

§ 6 Candidate Nominations

1. Candidates may be nominated by:
 - a) the member organisations of the DFG, non-subject related;

- b) the scientific/academic societies and faculty associations¹ that have been granted this right for specific subjects for the next election by the Senate;
 - c) the Donors' Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft), non-subject related
 - d) the DFG Senate under mandatory supplementation pursuant to § 7 No. 1 c) and under optional supplementation pursuant to § 7 No. 1 e).
2. The right to nominate candidates according to § 6 No. 1 b) may be granted to scientific/academic societies and faculty associations under consideration of the following points:
- a) the scientific/academic society or faculty association has been officially established,
 - b) its member structure is also research-oriented,
 - c) it is integrated into the German research system,
 - d) its mission is also research-oriented, and
 - e) its mission and members adequately represent the subject area in which the right to nominate is sought, at least in substantial areas.
3. ¹Institutions with the right to nominate candidates according to § 6 No. 1 a) and c) may nominate up to the same number of persons as to be elected in the relevant subject area.
²Institutions with the right to nominate candidates according to § 6 No. 1 b) may nominate a maximum of twice the number of persons as to be elected in the relevant subject area.
4. Nominations meeting the requirements under § 4 should also be submitted in consideration of the following points:

¹ This may also include comparable associations of non-faculty-based units of higher education institutions in Germany.

- a) academic and personal qualification of the nominees, ideally for the subject area as a whole and with a thorough overview of related disciplines,
 - b) balanced consideration of all subject areas,
 - c) adequate consideration of gender equality,
 - d) adequate consideration of researchers at different stages of their careers.
5. ¹Each candidate nomination must pertain to a specific person in a specific subject area in accordance with the relevant nomination rights. ²For each nominee, the DFG must receive a written declaration of consent signed by that nominee. ³In principle this has to be appended to the nomination. ⁴Only nominations received by the deadline can be included in the process of drawing up the list of candidates. ⁵The nominating institutions shall provide the persons they will propose for candidacy with the information made available to them in due time by the DFG for the Review Board election in accordance with Art. 13, 14 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) before proposing these persons to the DFG for candidacy.

§ 7 List of Candidates

1. ¹The Senate of the DFG shall approve the list of candidates according to the results of the steps in § 7 No. 1 a) to e). ²A cut-off date for updates according to § 7 No. 2 and for changes of personal information following approval of the list of candidates will be observed and announced on the website of the DFG.
- a) The Senate may change the subject areas assigned to the candidate nominations if this serves the purposes of § 1 No. 1 sentence 3.
 - b) ¹For each subject area, the number of candidates must be at least twice the number of persons (minimum number) and generally no more than three times the number of persons (maximum number) to be elected. ²In the circumstances described in § 7 No. 1 e), within the supplementation procedure, the Senate may exceed this maximum to the extent described there if the number of candidates of one gender is less than the total number of persons to be elected in the subject area.

- c) If, after assignment to a subject area according to § 7 No. 1 a), the minimum number is not reached in a given subject area, the Senate shall nominate additional persons until the number corresponds to twice the number of persons to be elected (mandatory supplementation).
 - d) ¹If, after assignment to a subject area according to § 7 No. 1 a), the maximum number is exceeded in a given subject area, a limitation procedure must take place in which the nominees will first be ranked by the number of nominations received. ²Nominations in a subject area with more than five nominations form the highest ranking group, within which no further ranking takes place. ³If this ranking would result in the inclusion of only one person or several persons of a ranking group in the list of candidates, the candidates in this ranking group only will be selected by random draw. ⁴The draw must be carried out in a way that promotes gender equality by striving to ensure that each gender is represented with at least one-third of candidates, if possible.
 - e) After having supplemented (§ 7 No. 1 c)) or limited (§ 7 No. 1. d)) the number of candidates where necessary, the Senate may nominate additional persons at the subject-area level such that each gender is represented by a number of candidates corresponding to the number of persons to be elected in a subject area (optional supplementation).
2. ¹If reasons precluding a person's candidature become known after the Senate of the DFG has approved the list of candidates, but before the cut-off date according to § 7 No. 1 sentence 2, such persons will be removed from the list. ²Such reasons may be, for example: withdrawal of candidature, death.

Part 3: Voting Procedure

I. General Regulations

§ 8 Decision on the Voting Procedure, Voting Period

- 1. ¹The voting procedure will be conducted online (voting through the internet). ²If this is not possible for a regularly scheduled election, the Executive Committee of the DFG may decide to hold the election by paper ballot (paper election).

2. ¹The Executive Committee of the DFG determines the first and last day of the voting period (first and last date on which ballots may be cast) prior to each election. ²The voting period will be four weeks for an online election and two weeks for a paper election.
3. The President of the DFG may postpone the election at short notice or extend the voting period on compelling grounds.
4. ¹The voting process for an online election is governed by the provisions in §§ 12–14, and the voting process for a paper election is governed by the provisions in §§ 15–16. ²The general regulations in § 9–11 apply to both voting procedures.

§ 9 Voting Centres, Election Report

1. Voting centres will be set up for the election; they are solely responsible for the proper conduct of the election according to the Election Regulations and hold decision-making responsibility in this respect.
2. ¹A voting centre is generally set up by
 - a) the member organisations of the DFG, with the exception of scientific associations AiF, GDNÄ and DVT²;
 - b) on request, other research institutions at which more than 100 persons who meet the requirements of § 2 No. 2 conduct scientific or academic research, provided these institutions
 - aa) are integrated in the German research system
 - bb) are funded on a non-profit or entirely public basis
 - cc) allow their members to freely publish research results in a generally accessible form.

² The German Federation of Industrial Research Associations, Cologne (AiF), the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians, Bad Honnef (GDNÄ) and the German Federation of Technical and Scientific Associations, Berlin (DVT).

²The request must generally be submitted by a deadline announced in ample time by the DFG. ³Upon approval by the DFG, the institution must establish the voting centre.

- c) the DFG for voters according to § 2 No. 4 and 5, who do not belong to a research institution according to § 9 No. 2 a) or b) (individual voters).
- 3. The obligation to set up a voting centre according to § 9 No. 2 a) or b) may only be disregarded in specially justified exceptional cases.
- 4. Each voting centre is solely responsible for determining the number of researchers who are eligible to vote there and communicates this to the DFG Head Office by the requested date.
- 5. ¹The DFG Head Office provides the voting centres with the documentation necessary to conduct the election. ²The documentation required for online elections is specified in § 12, for paper elections in § 15.
- 6. ¹Each voting centre is solely responsible for forwarding the voting documentation provided to it to the researchers who have the right to vote there with the request that they cast their ballots within the period determined by the Executive Committee of the DFG. ²The voting centre must ensure that each person eligible to vote through the relevant institution firstly has the opportunity to participate in the election and secondly receives only one set of voting documentation.
- 7. ¹Each voting centre is solely responsible for drawing up an election report according to the forms provided by the DFG. ²This report must be forwarded to the DFG Head Office by the date set by the DFG.

§ 10 Election Monitoring

The Senate shall appoint an election commissioner and a deputy commissioner to monitor the election, particularly the counting of the votes.

§ 11 Announcement of Election Results

1. ¹After all votes have been counted, the President of the DFG will announce the preliminary result on the website of the DFG. ²The date of the announcement must be stated on the website.
2. After the deadline for challenging the election according to § 17 No. 2 b) has passed or after election verification according to §§ 17–18 has been completed, the President will establish the final election result by announcement to the Senate of the DFG.
3. Information as to which institutions nominated which candidates and how many institutions submitted nominations will be published at the same time the preliminary and final election results are announced.

II. Special Regulations for Online Elections

§ 12 Voting Documentation

¹Voting documentation consists of the election notification including access information, and instructions on the voting process and the use of the voting system. ²The voting system allows voters to cast votes by electronic ballot via the internet.

§ 13 Casting of Ballots

1. After voters authenticate themselves by entering on the voting system the access information provided in the election notification, they may complete and cast their electronic ballot.
2. The ballot is considered cast when the online voting system displays a confirmation stating that the voting process is finished.
3. Abstentions will be counted as invalid votes.
4. Electronic ballots that have not been properly completed will be deemed invalid.
5. The DFG is solely responsible for the voting system.

§ 14 Counting of Votes

1. Votes are counted electronically after the voting period has expired.
2. The commissioner of the Senate of the DFG according to § 10 shall monitor correct vote counting and compliance with general election principles, in particular the secret ballot principle, by the online voting system.
3. In case of doubt, the commissioner of the Senate of the DFG shall decide the validity of a vote.

III. Special Regulations for Paper Elections

§ 15 Voting Documentation

The voting documentation consists of a ballot, a copy of the Election Regulations, and a list of candidates.

§ 16 Casting of Ballots and Counting of Votes

1. The ballot must be completed according to the instructions printed on it.
2. The casting of the ballot is considered complete when the sealed envelope is received by the voting centre.
3. The voting centres are solely responsible for verifying whether each cast ballot is in compliance with the regulations and documenting this with a note on the voter list.
4. The voting centres must send the cast ballots, together with the election report according to § 9 No. 7 by the deadlines specified by the DFG, to the DFG Head Office.
5. ¹Votes will be counted after the deadline for challenging the election according to § 17 No. 2 b) sentence 2 has passed under the sole responsibility of the DFG. ²Only properly completed ballots enclosed in the proper envelopes and received by the DFG Head Office by the deadline will be included in the vote count.

6. In case of doubt, the commissioner of the Senate as per § 10 shall decide the validity of a ballot.

Part 4: Formal Election Verification

§ 17 Admissibility

1. Election verification will take place only in response to election challenges or reprimands.
2. Election Challenges
 - a) Election challenges must be declared and justified to the DFG in writing and addressed to the DFG Head Office.
 - b) ¹Challenges must be submitted within three weeks after the preliminary election results have been announced on the DFG website according to § 11 No. 1. ²In the case of paper elections, challenges due to errors that have occurred before the end of the voting period may only be raised within three weeks after the last date of the voting period according to § 8 No. 2.
 - c) The President of the DFG shall reject any inadmissible election challenges.
3. Reprimands

The President of the DFG may issue reprimands for violations of provisions of the Election Regulations up to the end of the meeting of the Election Rules and Procedures Committee established according to § 18 No. 1.

§ 18 Justification

1. ¹The grounds for election challenges as well as reprimands by the President of the DFG will be adjudicated by an independent Election Rules and Procedures Committee appointed in due time before the election period by the Senate. ²This committee will consist of five members. ³The committee is quorate if three of the five members are present.

2. ¹The challenge or reprimand is deemed justified if the provisions of these Election Regulations have been violated and the violation is considered significant. ²A violation involving more than one percent of all ballots cast will always be deemed as significant.
3. If no violation of the Election Regulations is found, or if the violation is deemed insignificant by the Election Rules and Procedures Committee, the President of the DFG shall reject the challenge or retract the reprimand as unjustified.
4. If the Election Rules and Procedures Committee determines that the challenge or reprimand is justified, the President of the DFG shall choose appropriate measures to be taken, such as a repeat of the election in its entirety or at certain voting centres.
5. ¹The President of the DFG may submit in writing challenges that are obviously unjustified to the Election Rules and Procedures Committee for rejection. ²If all five members of the Election Rules and Procedures Committee agree, the President of the DFG shall reject such a contestation as manifestly unjustified.

§ 19 Retention Periods

1. Retention periods by the DFG
 - a) If the election is by paper ballot, the ballot envelopes and ballots may not be destroyed until the final election result has been announced according to § 11 No. 2.
 - b) If the election is by online ballot, the raw electronic data of the ballot count may not be destroyed until the final election result has been announced according to § 11 No. 2.
 - c) The documented final election result is to be retained permanently in the case of both voting methods.
2. Retention periods at the voting centres

¹In principle the voting centres are responsible for determining retention and deletion periods under data protection law. ²However, the documents and records created at the voting centres for the respective election as well as the data collected may under no circumstances be destroyed before the DFG has determined the final election results according to § 11 No. 2.