

Clusters of Excellence Funding Line

Instructions for preparation and submission of proposals for a Cluster of Excellence

A General Instructions

The following information and documents must be submitted to the DFG Head Office electronically via the **DFG elan portal** by the cut-off deadline of 16:00 h on **22 August 2024**:

- Proposal including appendix,
- Research Profiles (CVs) as a single separate document,
- Provisional bylaws of the Cluster of Excellence

An **endorsement by the science or research authority/authorities at state level responsible for the applicant university/universities (Landeszusage)** is also required, but this can be submitted later. The deadline for submission of the endorsement is **6 September 2024 (date of receipt)**. Preferably, each state authority should submit a single collective letter of endorsement for all proposals supported, which should be sent by e-mail to exzellenzcluster@dfg.de.

Please note the following procedural changes for the proposal stage:

- **Printed copies of the proposal, the research profiles and the provisional bylaws are no longer requested.**
- **An accompanying letter from the head(s) of the applicant university/universities is no longer requested.**
- **The signatures of the spokespersons or the head(s) of the applicant university/universities are not required in the proposal.**
- **The only document that has to be submitted in print is the compliance form. Other than in the draft proposal stage, the compliance form has to be signed by both the authorised spokesperson and the head(s) of the applicant university/universities. The signed compliance form(s) must be submitted on paper; the upload via elan is not sufficient in the proposal phase. For detailed instructions, please refer to section F.**

Please ensure that all documents fully comply with the formal requirements detailed below. If the formal requirements are not met, you will be requested to submit a revised version within three working days.

B Proposal and Appendix

The proposal and the appendix must be written in English.

You are advised to address the funding criteria for Clusters of Excellence in all relevant sections of the proposal:

www.dfg.de/formulare/exstra110

It is mandatory to use the proposal template provided by the DFG for Clusters of Excellence:

www.dfg.de/formulare/exstra130

The proposal must not exceed 120 pages (A4) in length; the total page count does not include the cover page, table of contents, list of abbreviations and appendix. An interactive table of contents should be created for the PDF document.

Arial 11pt or a similarly sized font and a line spacing of 1.2 must be used throughout the text, and the predefined page margins must not be changed. In general, adjustments of the template that would generate additional space are not permitted. However, smaller font sizes may be used for tables, figures, legends, footnotes and bibliographies. Also, modifications of design-only elements (e.g. use of university logos, choice of font colours, changes of line/column widths in tables, etc.) may be applied as considered appropriate.

The proposal template provides a mandatory structure and a number of predefined tables to be completed. Sections and subsections defined in the template may therefore not be omitted. In section 1, please provide only the data requested. In sections 2-7, additional subsections, tables and figures may be added as necessary.

The proposal must be self-contained. Links to websites containing additional information specific to the proposal are not relevant to the review process and should not be included.

Please note the following change in Appendix 2 (The 25 most important publications for the Cluster of Excellence, Category B) with regard to the draft proposal stage: All articles on preprint servers are Category B publications, regardless of whether they are peer-reviewed or not.

C Research profiles/Curricula Vitae; submission of additional personal information

Research profiles

The research profiles must be written in English.

Please note that a single PDF file containing the CVs of all principal investigators must be submitted together with the proposal. It is mandatory for all principal investigators to use the CV template provided (DFG form 53.200) for this purpose:

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan

The CV form distinguishes between mandatory and voluntary information. If any voluntary information (marked as “optional” in the template) is provided in a CV, the respective researcher **must declare their consent** to the processing of these data in connection with the DFG’s review and decision-making process. The tick box at the end of the form must be checked for this purpose.

Please note the following changes with regard to the draft proposal stage:

- **All articles on preprint servers are now Category B publications, regardless of whether they are peer-reviewed or not.**
- **The page limit for the CVs has been adjusted.** In contrast to the draft proposal stage, the section “Data protection and consent to the processing of optional data” no longer counts towards the limit of four pages per CV. Please be aware, however, that for reasons of transparency, this section must be included in full in every CV, even if no voluntary information is provided.

Submission of additional, confidential personal information

Should one or more of the principal investigators decide to declare relevant, confidential information regarding their personal situation (e.g. illness, disability or other hardship) in the context of the proposal, but do not wish this information to be passed on to reviewers or committee members, this information **must not be included in the respective CV**. Please use DFG form 73.01 instead:

www.dfg.de/formulare/73_01

Please note that this type of data cannot be submitted via elan. Instead, the principal investigator concerned should send their completed and signed form 73.01 after the proposal has been submitted, referencing the four-digit proposal reference number (EXC xxxx), either by post to

DFG-Geschäftsstelle, Gruppe III-EXF, Kennedyallee 40, D-53175 Bonn

or by e-mail to

exzellenzcluster@dfg.de.

D Bylaws of the Cluster of Excellence

The (provisional) bylaws of the Cluster of Excellence have to be submitted together with the proposal. Information on designing the bylaws is available at

www.dfg.de/formulare/exstra140

E Electronic proposal submission via the DFG elan portal

Nomenclature of files

For the electronic submission of your proposal, please adhere to the following nomenclature for file names:

Each file name should start with the four-digit reference number assigned to your project at the draft proposal stage/in first funding period and the abbreviated title of the Cluster, followed by the document type identifier (e.g.: “EXC_3999_WorldTheory_A_proposal_N”).

Document	File name
New Proposal including appendix	"EXC_3xxx_<abbreviated title of the Cluster>_A_Proposal_N"
Renewal Proposal including appendix	"EXC_2xxx_<abbreviated title of the Cluster>_A_Proposal_R"
Research Profiles (CVs)	"EXC_xxxx_<abbreviated title of the Cluster>_B_Research_Profiles"
Bylaws of the Cluster of Excellence	"EXC_xxxx_<abbreviated title of the Cluster>_C_Ordnung"
Endorsement by the science or research authority/authorities at state level (Landeszusage)	"EXC_xxxx_<abbreviated title of the Cluster>_E_Landeszusage"

Submission

The elan portal will be open for proposal submissions starting on **10 June 2024**.

Please note that prior to submission of the proposal, **all spokespersons and all principal investigators must be registered in elan** and have their correspondence address verified. Registration and verification of an account usually takes 1-2 working days.

Only the authorised spokesperson of the draft proposal / currently funded Cluster of Excellence can submit the form. If the spokespersons have changed since submission of the draft proposal (in the case of new proposals), or a new spokesperson has been appointed for the second funding period (in the case of renewal proposals), please inform the DFG Head Office prior to submission via e-mail to

exzellenzcluster@dfg.de.

The proposal including the appendix (in elan: "Project Description") must be uploaded as a single PDF file. All files must be submitted without password protection and without access restrictions for reading, copying or printing. You are kindly requested to use maximum compression for your PDFs. Please note that the maximum size for each file is **20 MB**.

- To start submission, please log in with your elan account.
- Select "Proposal Submission" → "Proposal Overview / Renewal Proposal".
- Under the section "Clusters of Excellence" search for the (draft) proposal of the Cluster of Excellence and select "Continue"
- Start the online form and follow the instructions.
- In the last step, please upload the following mandatory PDF files:
 - Proposal including appendix ("Project Description") (please keep the file sizes as small as possible)
 - Research Profiles of the principal investigators (as a single document)
 - (Provisional) Bylaws of the Cluster of Excellence

- The following documents are optional:
 - Endorsement by the science or research authority/authorities at state level responsible for the applicant university/universities (Landeszusage). Please note that this document is required, but can be submitted subsequently and directly by the state authority if not uploaded here (see above for deadline).
 - Further documents as a single PDF file, such as manuscripts and the editor's confirmation of acceptance for works which are not yet in the public domain but have been accepted for publication.

F Compliance form

After submitting the proposal, you will immediately receive a confirmation of receipt by e-mail. This e-mail also contains a compliance form summarising the key details of the proposal.

The compliance form must be printed out, signed by the authorised spokesperson and the head(s) of the applicant university/universities and returned by post to the DFG Head Office.

Please be aware that for each Cluster of Excellence original signatures are required from the authorised spokesperson and the head of each applicant university.

If a proposal is submitted jointly by two or more universities, the heads of the applicant universities are not required to sign a single copy of the compliance form. In such cases, please proceed as follows:

1. The authorised spokesperson signs a printout of the compliance form.
2. The signed printout is then scanned and electronically forwarded to each of the applicant universities.
3. Each applicant university creates a printout, which is then signed by the respective head of the university, and returned to the managing university.
4. The managing university sends all signed compliance forms of the to DFG.

Please send the signed compliance form(s) to

DFG-Geschäftsstelle, Gruppe III-EXF, Kennedyallee 40, D-53175 Bonn.

The deadline for submission of the compliance form(s) is **6 September 2024 (date of receipt)**.

G Information on legal and ethical aspects of the research programme

In section 4 of the proposal, information is requested regarding important issues relating to research. Considering the relevant discipline-specific standards and ethical regulations, indicate whether you anticipate any risk and/or harm to individuals or groups as a result of your research, and/or any other ways in which your research might potentially have a negative impact.

In the case of investigations involving humans, human materials or identifiable human data, animals or genetic engineering, dual use research of concern, or any research covered under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), please describe the ethical and legal implications of the planned experiments. Provide a concise but sufficiently detailed explanation of the aspects listed according to their relevance.

- For any investigations involving humans, human materials or identifiable human data, you must comply with the Declaration of Helsinki as last revised and submit the relevant statements by the responsible ethics committee no later than prior to commencement of research.
- If animal experiments are planned, please explain the implementation of the 3Rs principle (replacement, reduction and refinement). For more information, please refer to the publication *“Animal Experimentation in Research: The 3Rs Principle and the Validity of Scientific Research”*:

www.dfg.de/download/pdf/dfg_im_profil/geschaefsstelle/publikationen/handreichung_sk_tiersuche_en.pdf

- Research conducted abroad involving biological materials (or associated traditional knowledge) or on biological objects originating from outside Germany may be subject to the regulatory requirements of the Nagoya Protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity and its access and benefit-sharing (ABS) regulations. If applicable, please comment on the ABS requirements relevant to the research programme and how compliance is or will be achieved, discuss the role of your cooperation partner with regard to the provider country, and explain what materials/objects may be transported to Germany. For more information, please refer to *“Proposals for Research and/or Development Projects Involving Access to Genetic Resources and/or Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources”*, published by the DFG Permanent Senate Commission on Fundamental Issues of Biological Diversity:

www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/statutory_bodies/senate/biological_diversity

Please note that in addition to access and benefit-sharing agreements with the provider country, a declaration of due diligence may also be required in line with the German law *“Gesetz zur Umsetzung der Verpflichtungen nach dem Nagoya-Protokoll und zur Durchführung der Verordnung (EU) No 511/2014 sowie zur Änderung des Patentgesetzes”*.

If there are any indications that your research programme or any parts of it could potentially yield knowledge, products or technology that might directly be misused to cause substantial harm (Dual Use Research of Concern), please describe how the risk/benefit ratio is to be assessed and what measures are planned to minimise the risk, in particular with regard to the recommendations published by the DFG and Leopoldina on handling security-relevant research:

www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_dfg_foerderung/sicherheitsrelevante_forschung/empfehlungen_de_en.pdf

In addition, note that research must comply with foreign trade regulations (especially the War Weapons Control Act [*Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz*], EC Regulation No. 428/2009 [*EC Dual Use Regulation*], the Foreign Trade and Payments Act [*Außenwirtschaftsgesetz*], the Foreign Trade and Payments Ordinance [*Außenwirtschaftsverordnung*] and embargo regulations) relating to the non-proliferation strategy and the handling of potentially critical goods, including technologies, software and sensitive knowledge transfer; applicants are advised to examine their projects accordingly. Information for researchers is available on the website of the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA). If you require further clarification, please contact BAFA directly.

In the case of research subject to licensing, please note that licences must be obtained from the responsible authority prior to beginning research.

H Further information

In submitting the proposal to the DFG, the applicant university/universities and the individuals with a high degree of scientific/academic responsibility (i.e. the principal investigators):

1. agree to adhere to the **principles of good research practice**

These principles can be found in detail in the DFG Code of Conduct Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice, which came into force on 1 August 2019.

www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/rechtliche_rahmenbedingungen/gute_wissenschaftliche_praxis/kodex_gwp_en.pdf

2. recognise the DFG's **Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct** (*Verfahrensordnung zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten – VerfOwF*) as legally binding. Prior to submission of a draft or full proposal, all principal investigators must sign a Declaration of Obligation of Compliance (see link to recommended DFG template). The applicant university/universities is/are responsible for gathering the signatures for the compliance forms. The forms must be kept on file by the institutions (either centrally at the applicant university/universities or on a decentralised basis at the employing institutions). Should allegations of scientific misconduct arise, the spokesperson is to forward the relevant declaration to the DFG Head Office upon request. Please use the Template for Declarations of Obligation of Compliance:

www.dfg.de/formulare/80_02

Scientific misconduct is defined as the intentional and grossly negligent statement of falsehoods in a scientific context, the violation of intellectual property rights or impeding another person's research work. The circumstances of each case will be considered on an individual basis. In cases where scientific misconduct has been established, the DFG may impose one or more of the following sanctions in accordance with its Rules of Procedure, depending on the nature and severity of the scientific misconduct:

- issue a written reprimand to those involved;
- exclude those concerned from the right to apply for DFG funds for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct; revoke funding decisions (full or partial termination of the grant contract, requiring repayment of funds spent)
- require that those concerned either retract the discredited publications or correct the falsified data (in particular by publishing an erratum), or appropriately indicate the DFG's retraction of funding in the discredited publications;
- exclude those concerned from serving as a reviewer for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;
- exclude those concerned from membership of DFG bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;
- deny voting rights and eligibility to those concerned in connection with elections to DFG bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct.

I Data Protection

Please note the DFG's data privacy policy on research funding, which can be viewed and downloaded at

www.dfg.de/privacy_policy

If necessary, please also forward this information to those individuals whose data will be processed by the DFG due to their involvement in your project.

J Contact information

Contact persons at the DFG Head Office:

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www.dfg.de/excellence_strategy