

Review of Proposals for Clusters of Excellence – Guidelines for Applicants

The following information for Cluster of Excellence applicants relates to the review during the proposal stage, consisting of a summary of the process involved along with an overview of organisational and technical aspects.

Proposals are grouped into panels, with establishment and renewal proposals being reviewed together. The panels are assembled by the DFG Head Office according to subject-specific criteria, with careful consideration of interdisciplinary aspects, and reviewers are selected accordingly. The review is conducted in person and in the English language.

I Timetable From the Submission of Letters of Intent to the Review of Proposals

In the weeks following the submission of the letters of intent, the DFG Head Office assembles the review panels and schedules the reviews for the various panels. The authorised spokesperson and the heads of all applicant universities are notified of the review date and location by e-mail shortly after receipt of the proposal.

Approximately six weeks prior to the review, an invitation letter is sent to the same persons, together with information on the conflict-of-interest check and a list of the panel members and the proposals to be reviewed. The spokesperson authorised to represent the Cluster of Excellence may inform the DFG within one week of receiving these documents of any apparent conflict of interest on the part of the reviewers with regard to members of the Cluster of Excellence.

There should be no communication regarding the proposal or the review between the parties involved in the proposal and members of the review panel or members of the Committee of Experts.

II The Panel Reviews

Reviews will be conducted by the individual panels between the beginning of October 2024 and mid-February 2025, usually on three consecutive days. In general, each panel will review three proposals, with half a day dedicated to each cluster; in addition there is a preliminary discussion of the review process and the individual proposals. The following time slots are available to applicants in the review meeting.

- Presentation of the Cluster of Excellence (30 min)
- Plenary discussion and poster presentation (1h 50 min)

It is not possible to exceed the presentation time of 30 minutes or the discussion time of 1h 50 minutes. The panel will then meet in closed session and finalise their recommendation.

III Participants:

- Researchers of the proposed Cluster of Excellence as well as management representatives of the applicant university/universities and participating institutions (max. 15 persons)
- As a rule, one state representative per participating federal state
- Reviewers
- Two members of the Committee of Experts
- Representatives of the DFG Head Office
- Possibly one representative of the office of the German Science and Humanities Council (Wissenschaftsrat, WR)
- Possibly one representative of the Federal Government (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, BMBF)

Up to 15 representatives of the Cluster of Excellence or the applicant university or universities may participate. Three weeks prior to the review, the DFG Head Office requires details of who will be participating on the applicant side.

Applicants are requested to submit a list (Word and PDF file) as follows:

First name	Last name	Field of expertise (English)	Institution (English)	Position/ role within the Cluster of Excellence (English)	Institution (German)	Position/ role within the Cluster of Excellence (German)

This list will be made available to the members of the review panel, thereby obviating the need for a round of introductions and allowing full use to be made of the discussion time available.

IV Organisational and Technical Aspects

In addition to the maximum of 15 persons involved in the proposal and poster presentation, one or two additional persons may come along to assist with the technical and organisational preparation of the presentation, although these assistants are not allowed to take part in the review itself. If you intend to make use of this option, please inform the DFG contact person responsible for the respective panel at least three weeks prior to the review.

Applicants are requested to bring clearly legible name and table badges.

A laptop and a projector are available for the presentation. Applicants may also use their own laptops; slides may also be presented to the review panel as a handout. No other documents may be displayed.

Up to five discussion spots can be set up for the poster presentation. These might be analogue or digital posters, video clips, or also small demonstrators, exhibits or models, in line with common practice in the field. The purpose of the discussion spots is to provide opportunities for interaction with the reviewers. There are no stipulations here in terms of form or content. Please note that the poster presentation may take place in a semi-public space (e.g. foyer).

The following facilities are available:

- Five poster walls, size A0
- Multiple electric sockets
- Standing-height tables

It is NOT possible to guarantee a stable wi-fi connection at all locations. For this reason, applicants are requested to refrain from using discussion spots that require an internet connection.

The technical equipment for the presentation and the discussion spots will be set up one hour before the presentation of the proposal.

Participants must organise and finance their own travel and accommodation. Please check with the DFG contact person responsible for the respective panel in advance to find out which hotel the members of the review panel and committee will be staying at. Applicants are requested to choose different accommodation if they are staying overnight in the area.

V Contact and Further Information

If you have any organisational questions regarding the review process, please get in touch with the contact person assigned to your Cluster of Excellence proposal at the DFG Head Office. You will find the relevant contact details in the confirmation of receipt/invitation letter.

For general questions on the second competition phase under the Cluster of Excellence funding line, please contact exzellenzcluster@dfg.de.

All the relevant information on the second competition phase for Clusters of Excellence is also available on our [website](#). Please note in particular the [Excellence Strategy FAQs](#) (in German only).