

Draft Proposal Preparation Instructions

for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups



I General Information

The proposal procedure for Research Training Groups (RTGs) and International Research Training Groups (IRTGs) consists of two stages. In the first stage, the participating researchers write a draft proposal, which is then submitted to the DFG by the university or equivalent higher education institution. This draft proposal is then reviewed. The review criteria can be found in the “Guidelines for Reviewing Draft Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups or International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 1.304).

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_304

Based on the draft proposal, the review, and a recommendation by the relevant review board, the Senate Committee on Research Training Groups makes a recommendation as to whether an establishment proposal should be submitted in the second stage. If the recommendation is negative, the applicant may submit a revised version of the draft proposal once. For guidance on the submission of an establishment proposal, please refer to the Proposal Preparation Instructions – Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups (DFG form 54.05).

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_05

For further information, please refer to the “Guidelines on Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07).

www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07

If you will be applying for the International Research Training Group programme variation, please note particularly the “Guidelines for Differentiating International Research Training Groups from Research Training Groups” (DFG form 1.312).

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_312

Proposing an International Research Training Group requires intensive preparation and close coordination among all participants. It is therefore recommended to inform the DFG Head Office as early as possible about planned proposals. For advice and support, please contact the appropriate programme office at the DFG Head Office.

II Proposal Submission

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

<https://elan.dfg.de/en/>

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

The draft proposal consists of the following three parts:

A – Proposal Data and Obligations (via the electronic proposal form)

B – Project Description (according to DFG form 53.60)

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_60_elan

C – Attachments (biographical sketches and any additional documents)

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. This document must be signed by the spokesperson and the head(s) of the university/universities, indicating their consent to the submission of the draft proposal, and sent to the DFG (in the case of **IRTGs**, only from the German side).

A Proposal Data and Obligations

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

<https://elan.dfg.de/en>

for you to provide the following information:

- Title of the Research Training Group in German and English (max. 300 characters each)
- Research area, keywords, topical connections to other countries
- Summary of the main intentions of the Research Training Group, i.e. especially of the research and qualification programmes, in German and English (max. 3,000 characters)
- Applicant university/universities; any other participating institutions
(for IRTGs, information on the foreign partner institution)

- Designated spokesperson; participating researchers (academic title, first name, last name and location) (for IRTGs, include same information for foreign partner institution)
- Obligations and declarations

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_60_elan

The length of the document (exclusive of section 5 “Publications and bibliography for the research programme”) must not exceed 15 pages (20 pages for IRTGs) (A4 format, Arial 11pt font or similar, single-spaced).

The project description should include the following information:

1 General information

1.1 Applicant university/universities

Specify the lead applicant university that will manage the funds if the grant is awarded. Name additional applicant universities if applicable.

For **International Research Training Groups**, specify the foreign partner institution(s) as well.

1.2 Designated spokesperson

The designated spokesperson is responsible for the proposal. The spokesperson must be able to represent the Research Training Group directly in all committees of the department as well as the university at large. He or she must therefore hold a permanent position, have all the rights and responsibilities of a full-time professor, and have the right to vote for and be elected to the university senate.

For **International Research Training Groups**, specify the spokesperson at the foreign partner institution as well.

1.3 Researchers

Participating researchers

Name the – usually five to ten – researchers who will run the Research Training Group, including their research areas. If more than ten researchers are involved, please provide a justification. The DFG strongly recommends involving advanced early career researchers and giving them responsible positions within the RTG. The applicant university is expected to grant such researchers the right to supervise doctoral researchers.

The participating researchers are considered “individuals with a high level of scientific/academic responsibility” as stated in the DFG’s Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct¹. 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

For **International Research Training Groups**, include the same information for the foreign partner institution as well.

1.4 Number of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers

State the number of positions or fellowships for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers to be funded through RTG funds, including the level of funding (fellowship amount or percentage of full-time hours).

Information on the various funding modalities can be found in the “Guidelines on Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 50.07), the “Proposal Preparation Instructions for Proposals to Establish Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” (DFG form 54.05) and the funding guidelines for Research Training Groups (DFG form 2.22, available in German only).

https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/formulare_merkblaetter/

¹ Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct ([VerfOwF](#)), [DFG form 80.01](#)

In addition, specify the anticipated number of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers with funding from other sources.

For **International Research Training Groups**, include the same information for the foreign partner institution as well.

2 Research programme

- Description of the core research idea or main topic
- Outline of the research programme. Please note that research programmes are expected to yield excellent topics for theses (potential topics for theses or projects should be exemplified, but not described in detail).
- Innovativeness of the research programme with respect to the current state of relevant international research and feasibility/plausibility of the innovative approaches
- For **International Research Training Groups**: Description of the value added by international collaboration

3 Qualification programme and supervision strategy

- Outline of the qualification programme based on the research programme
- Short description of the supervision strategy

4 Environment

- Description of why the proposed location is suitable for the topic of this Research Training Group
- Statement by the university on how the Research Training Group fits into the university's environment and what structural innovations are anticipated. Also note the guidelines on positioning Research Training Groups relative to other doctoral programmes (DFG form 1.309, available in German only).

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_309

- Under the Collaborative Research Centre programme, a module for structured doctoral training may be applied for. Collaborative Research Centres and Research Training Groups that are based at the same location and have largely overlapping topics should not receive parallel funding. The goal is to increase efficiency by bundling funding for closely related research projects. A thematic overlap is acceptable if

the Research Training Group's topic and/or structure are sufficiently unique. For instance, the establishment of an International Research Training Group may be considered to deliver added value. If your Research Training Group relates closely to a Collaborative Research Centre, please explain what constitutes its added value.

- If the draft proposal is linked to an existing Research Training Group or one that has ended, please explain what experiences have been applied to the new proposal, what new research objectives have been included in the research programme, and what changes have been made to the research team.

5 Publications and bibliography for the research programme

5.1 List of published preliminary research relevant to the research programme

Please list publications by the participating researchers whose topics are directly related to the research programme. Alphabetise them by the participating researchers' last names and identify them as

- a) articles which at the time of proposal submission have been published or officially accepted by publication outlets with scientific quality assurance, and book publications; or
- b) other publications.

Please note that the total number of items that may be listed under a) and b) combined is limited to 10 for each participating researcher. Authorship must be cited unchanged and in accordance with how it appears on the published works. Please number the works included.

You may also list an unlimited number of patents (divided into the categories pending and issued).

For publications that are only available electronically, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. a digital object identifier [DOI]), preferably by indicating the DOI number or otherwise by specifying the URL. For publications that are not published exclusively in electronic format, we recommend that you include a persistent identifier or a URL; note, however, that this is optional.

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 the elan portal. Manuscripts in progress and papers that have not been officially accepted for publication may not be included.

5.2 Additional references on the state of the art (optional)

The presentation of the research programme should be able to stand on its own and be understandable, coherent and reviewable without the need to read additional documents. For a more comprehensive presentation of the current state of the art, additional works (by the participating researchers and/or others) may be cited here. To the extent that these documents are non-published works by the participating researchers, they must be submitted via the elan portal. Please note, however, that the proposal text alone will serve as the basis for the review.

C Attachments

1 Biographical sketches

Biographical sketches for all participating researchers (including participating foreign partners in **International Research Training Groups**) are a required attachment. The sketches should be attached as one PDF document for all researchers. If individual employment contracts will end during the course of the proposed Research Training Group, please indicate this. For appropriate assessment of the researchers' scientific achievements, we recommend that **CVs** (including dates of birth, stages of academic training, stages of scientific work to date, etc.) specify circumstances that may have impaired scientific work. Examples include childcare, long-term illnesses or disabilities. The five-year periods specified below for supervised theses and third-party funding awarded in the past are extended by two years per child.

Each biographical sketch must include a **list of the up to ten most important papers** published by the relevant researcher. These papers need not be directly connected to the proposed Research Training Group.

Please structure the list as follows:

- a) articles which at the time of proposal submission have been published or officially accepted by publication outlets with scientific quality assurance, and book publications; or
- b) other publications.

Please note that the maximum total of ten items per person that may be listed under a) and b) combined must be observed. Authorship must be cited unchanged and in accordance with how it appears on the published works. Please number the works included.

You may also list an unlimited number of patents (divided into the categories pending and issued).

For publications that are only available electronically, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. a digital object identifier [DOI]), preferably by indicating the DOI number or otherwise by specifying the URL. For publications that are not published exclusively in electronic format, we recommend that you include a persistent identifier or a URL; note, however, that this is optional.

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 the elan portal. Manuscripts in progress and papers that have not been officially accepted for publication may not be included.

Furthermore, the appendix must document any **training of early career researchers** conducted by the participants within the last five years, e.g. by listing theses that were supervised (including, where possible, time to degree and information regarding the further career development of the doctoral graduates). In addition, participants (for **IRTGs** at least those on the German side) should list key projects in which they were involved in within the last five years that received **third-party funding**, indicating projects relevant to the Research Training Group.

2 Additional attachments

The following additional documents should be attached to the proposal as appropriate: works included in the list of publications that have been officially accepted for publication but not yet published with acknowledgement of acceptance and a cover letter addressed to the DFG Head Office.

III. Supplementary Proposal Instructions

A. Obligations

In submitting a proposal to the DFG, the applicant university and the participating researchers

1. agree to adhere to **the principles of good scientific practice**².
The principles of good scientific practice include, among others: maintaining professional standards, maintaining strict honesty with regard to one's own contributions and those of third parties, documenting results and rigorously questioning all findings.
2. recognise the DFG's **Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct** (Verfahrensordnung zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichen Fehlverhalten - VerFOwF)³ as legally binding. In the draft proposal stage, the spokesperson obtains signed Declarations of Obligation of Compliance from the participating researchers and keeps these on file for ten years following submission of the draft proposal to the DFG. Should allegations of scientific misconduct arise, upon request the spokesperson will forward the relevant declaration to the DFG Head Office.

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:

- issuing a written reprimand to those involved;
- exclusion from the right to apply for DFG funds for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;

² The principles of good scientific practice are presented in detail in the DFG Code of Conduct [Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice](#).

³ [Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct \(VerFOwF\)](#), DFG form 80.01.

- revoking funding decisions (full or partial termination of the grant contract, demanding repayment of funds spent)
- demanding 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;
- exclusion from serving as a reviewer for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;
- exclusion from membership in DFG bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct
- denying voting rights and eligibility in elections for DFG bodies and committees for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct.

B. Storage of Data on Applicants and Research Projects

The data necessary for processing your proposal will be stored electronically by the DFG, used for evaluative and statistical purposes, and forwarded to reviewers and relevant committees, who may be based in third countries, as part of the review and decision-making process.

C. Uploading Proposal Documents

Before submitting your 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 processing of your proposal.

Document	Document name
project description (Beschreibung des Vorhabens) (part B of the proposal)	Beschreibung_des_Vorhabens
biographical sketches (Forschungsprofile) (part C of the proposal)	Forschungsprofile
scientific papers (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten)	<year>_<author's_last_name>_<keyword>

additional attachments (Weitere Anlagen)	<descriptive_file_name>
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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.