EXC Matters of Activity – Funding Guidelines

This is an English translation of the German original and for information only.
Legally binding is only the German original.

Purpose of Funding Guidelines

The Funding Guidelines for the Cluster of Excellence Matters of Activity. Image Space Material explain the modalities of funding management, internal allocation of funds and accounting and define internal funding formats. They are based on the corresponding Guidelines of the German Research Foundation (DFG) and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU). Since the intention is to react flexibly to the developments of the Cluster, the Funding Guidelines are not a finalized catalogue, but will be supplemented on an ongoing basis. Cluster members will be informed in writing via e-mail of any changes and additions to the Guidelines as decided by the Executive Board.

Part 1: General Information

1.1 Budget Resolution

Annually, the Executive Board decides on the budget for the following year. The funds that have already been determined in the grant approvals for the following year are binding. The Executive Board may determine to what proportion funds can be spent on current expenses of the central budget through the budget resolution without further consultation with the Executive Board. Further internal allocation of funds is governed by the Funding Guidelines.

1.2 Assessment Criteria

1. Internal grant approvals for the cluster are based on the criteria set by the internal allocation of funds according to § 14, paragraph 2 of the Cluster Regulations.
2. Additional funding criteria as well as the respective review procedure may be communicated in the respective calls for application and calls for funding format proposals.

1.3 Information on Internal Allocation of Funds

The Executive Board is responsible for the resolution, implementation and quality control of the internal allocation of funds in accordance with Cluster Regulations order §9, paragraph 4. The applicants will be informed of the resolution in writing after the board Meeting.

1.4 Acquisitions from Cluster Funds

1. The Finance & Controlling department of the Cluster's Management Office is responsible for compliance with the DFG's and HU's usage guidelines to guarantee the efficient use of funds and timely procurement.

2. All purchases from Cluster funds must be made through the Finance & Controlling department of the Cluster's Management Office. No costs will be assumed for purchases made without consultation. Purchases such as laboratory materials made from internally approved funds, which can be made via the HU institutes and their procurement channels, are excluded.

1.5 Person-related Travel Funds for Early Career Researchers

Each early career researcher is entitled to up to 500 € travel expenses per year in connection with Cluster research. They may be used for research purposes, active attendance at conferences and meetings or field research, for example. These person-related travel expenses are not listed in the grant approvals for individual projects, but must be individually applied for and accounted for as business trips through the management office.

1.6 Literature

Funding is available for the acquisition of literature in accordance with the grant approval. An additional annual budget is available from general Cluster funds for literature that is relevant to the entire Cluster. The Finance & Controlling department accepts the acquisition proposals. At least quarterly, acquisitions are decided by the Spokespersons. Literature purchases financed from both project and central funds are to be made exclusively through the Finance & Controlling department, since the procurement is carried out centrally by the university library of the HU. Self-acquisitions can only be made after prior consultation with the Academic Management and only in exceptional cases.

After an inventory by the university library has been made, purchased literature usually becomes property of the HU and generally accessible in the Cluster library.

2.1 Internal Approval of Projects

1. Projects: The initial approval of projects took place with the approval of the Cluster by the DFG on September 27th 2018 with projects commencing on January 1st 2019. Further projects will be approved in a quality control procedure at a later date.
2. The quality assurance procedure for the approval of projects at »Matters of Activity. Image Space Material« calls for a written application upon request by the Executive Board and a review process of each application by the Scientific Advisory Board. Applications are processed in a two-stage procedure.
3. First, a report is submitted regarding the project research to date. New proposals submit a description of applicants' previous Cluster research as well as specification of the planned research and its objectives in the 2023–2025 phase on no more than three pages. The Executive Board discusses the draft proposal and decides whether to invite to submit a proposal. The invitation may be supplemented with notes from the Executive Board and accompanied by personal feedback interviews with the applicants.
4. Applications may describe the project to be funded on no more than five pages. The description comprises a concrete research question, a summary of the current state of research, a description of the scientific objectives, a work program including justifications for the requested expenditure, a description of the methods and the classification within the Cluster's research structure as well as a description of conceivable results of the project, their publication as well as further visions which might be implemented with the results. An annotated budget plan must be enclosed in the application. The proposal will be presented in 30 minutes to all Cluster members and the Scientific Advisory Board; the Executive Board and the Advisory Board can ask questions about the proposal for 20 minutes afterwards.
5. All applications will be evaluated comparatively by two reviewers with different disciplinary expertise, primarily members of the Scientific Advisory Board; the Executive Board will vote on the funding of the applications by simple majority.
6. Applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of the procedure.

2.2 Human Resources for Projects

1. Human resources allocated to each project are listed in the cluster-internal grant approvals, along with the job title, duration and amount of allocated resources.
2. Internally approved positions may be transferred, merged or shared, both within a project and across several projects after consultation with the Academic Management and without incurring costs.
3. All staff are recruited at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Exceptions require contractual regulation. The Spokespersons of the Cluster are the service superiors of all employees who are employed from Cluster funds at HU. A project Principal Investigator takes on the role of the technical superior. Service superiors and technical superiors coordinate their decisions.

2.3 Material Resources for Projects

1. The internal grant approval includes fund for material resources which may be used for the abovementioned types of expenditure during the financial year in question. Funds may be transferred to other types of expenditure in accordance with the DFG's guidelines and after consultation with the Administrative Management.
2. The material resources of a project are available to all project staff for the duration specified in the grant approval. The Principal Investigators involved in project research together with the project staff decide how the allocated funds are to be used. Expenditure planning takes place quarterly along with calls for funds.

2.4 Calls for Funds for Projects

1. Each project appoints one member to the project's financial officer. As a representative of the project, he/she is responsible for drawing up the call for funds on a quarterly basis with the agreement of all Principal Investigators and project members.
2. To support the financial officers of the projects, the Administrative Management provides a template for respective calls for funds. Quarterly, it informs the financial officers of the project's account balance, calls for funds in due time and advises on expenditure planning.

2.5 Transfer of Funds Between Fiscal Years

1. Expenditures of a fiscal year from the project budget must be made by a deadline announced annually in September; the deadline depends on the deadlines of the HU administration. Later expenses will be credited to the budget of the following year.
2. Projects may apply for use of unused funds of one financial year in the following year. The application must be sent to the Administrative Management informally by e-mail by July 15th. If the application is not submitted in time, the fiscal year's unused funds are allocated to the Cluster and are no longer available to the project. Whether or not the application can be granted will be decided after the DFG has informed the Cluster of the total amount of funds reapproved for the following year.

Part 3: Further Funding

All direct members of the Cluster of Excellence are entitled to apply for funding for proposals that serve to achieve the Cluster's goals. Generally, the Spokespersons decide on the approval of funding applications up to 8,000 €, while the Executive Board decides on approvals over 8,000 €; the Executive Board decides on the funding of Cluster fellows regardless of the amount of funding applied for. Furthur funding can be used for the following purposes:

1. increasing project budget
2. publishing research results (text, object, exhibition, prototype, software, etc.)
3. holding an event (guest lecture, workshop, conference, exhibition, etc.)
4. seed funding (acquisition of additional research projects)
5. trips (research, networking, lecture, initiation of a cooperation etc.)
6. representing a PI in teaching to enable intensive research activities at the cluster
7. equality, diversity and family friendliness
8. emergence

Funding for purposes not mentioned here can also be applied for after prior consultation with the Academic Management.