

Procedure for the Approval of Cluster Projects in the Research Phase 2023–2025

The first of January 2023 marks the beginning of the second phase of the Cluster. Being a dynamic structure that should allow for new questions and constellations, the Cluster has adopted a procedure to approve projects for the second phase. This phase does not represent a new beginning, but rather an »evolution« of the existing projects. At the same time, it should be noted that the projects can, unfortunately, only be set up with less staff than in the first phase. The Executive Board determined on September 29th 2020 the following procedure for the approval of cluster projects in the research phase 2023–2025.

Procedure for the internal approval of projects

1. General Points

- Cluster members are invited to submit applications by the Executive Board.
- The decision-making process for all research projects takes place simultaneously.
- The internal approval of projects is based on a procedure that enables quality assurance. This procedure ensures the comprehensibility and transparency of the Board decision concerning the start and termination of research projects according to § 9(4) of the Cluster regulations.

2. Eligibility Criteria

The funding criteria for research projects are based on the evaluation criteria for the DFG Clusters of Excellence and the German Council of Science and Humanities, the expert commission's report, and the objectives of the Cluster of Excellence formulated in the application and the Regulations of the Cluster.

§14 (2) of the Regulations of the Cluster define the following criteria for the decision:

- (a) Scientific quality of the proposal
- (b) Contribution to the achievement of the Cluster's objectives
- (c) Interdisciplinary research performance
- (d) Technical expertise of the researchers involved in the project
- (e) Adequacy of the requested material and human resources requested

The following criteria are also taken into account:

- Originality and willingness to take risks
- Effects on the research areas involved
- Added value through interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary research
- if applicable, the relevance for future applications, knowledge transfer, and national/international cooperation
- Research performance and implementation of acquired knowledge from previous Cluster research

- Feasibility concerning the infrastructure of the Cluster of Excellence
- Gender and diversity aspects in the project: research content, topics, project members (to what extent are gender and diversity relevant to the research project e.g., in methods, work program, and objectives?)

3. Eligible Applicants

The researchers invited by the Executive Board to submit an application are entitled to apply. As a rule, at least three relevant PIs should participate as applicants, and at least three different disciplines should be involved in the project's research.

4. Application Format

A two-stage evaluation procedure will be implemented.

Stage 1: Draft proposal

First of all, a draft proposal of maximum three A4 pages should be submitted, containing the results from the project's previous Cluster research (one page) and a research plan for 2023–2025 (two pages). The text should be comprehensible without having to consult any further literature.

The call for draft proposals will be issued to all Cluster Members on April 15th, 2021.

The Executive Board will discuss the draft proposals and decide whether an invitation for grant proposals will be issued. The invitation for proposals can be supplemented with comments from the Executive Board and might be accompanied by personal feedback rounds with the applicants.

Stage 2: Grant application

- a) In writing: Proposals describe the project on a maximum of five A4 pages. The description must include the following: a concretely formulated research question, a summary of the state of research, the results from previous research at the Cluster including gender and diversity aspects, a description of the scientific objectives, a work program justifying the requested resources, a presentation of the methods and their integration into the Cluster's research structure as well as the description of possible results of the project, their publication and other outcomes that could be realized. Unfortunately, applications that do not comply with these guidelines cannot be considered. Furthermore, an annotated financial plan, a list of planned publications, a list of qualification projects, and individual reports from all applicants from MoA's Current Research Information System (CRIS) must be submitted as an attachment.
- b) Presentation: The proposed project will be presented to all Cluster Members and the Scientific Advisory Board in 30 minutes at the 2021 retreat. The Executive Board and the Advisory Board members can then ask questions about the application for 20 minutes.

5. Review Procedure

5.1. Schedule

In order to implement the beginning of the second phase from January 1st, 2023, and thus to provide sufficient time for research until the end of the current Cluster period, the following timetable for the procedure is intended:

15 October 2020	Publication of the project approval procedure for the second Cluster phase from 2023
27 October 2020	<u>Cluster day: Project presentations 01/2019–10/2020</u> Twenty-minute presentations about what has been achieved so far and what delays have been caused by Corona. Followed by ten minutes of questions. The presentations will be recorded.
12 November 2020	<u>Retreat: Project planning 11/2020–12/2022</u> Twenty-minute presentations of what should be achieved by the end of the first phase on December 31 st , 2022. Followed by ten minutes of questions. The presentations are recorded.
Beginning of March 2021	Workshop to develop ideas for the second Cluster phase
15 April 2021	Executive Board's Invitation to submit project draft proposals
1 August 2021	<u>Submission of proposal drafts to the Executive Board</u> Report on existing research as well as a description of the planned research and its objectives in the 2023–2025 phase on a maximum of three pages .
31 August 2021	<u>Cluster day:</u> All drafts are presented in the plenum for 10 minutes.
1 September 2021	½ –1 day special meeting of the Executive Board on the proposal drafts with one representative per draft
2–15 September 2021	Feedback round between applicants and the Executive Board on the proposals (if necessary, advise against submitting an application)
1 November 2021	<u>Submission of grant applications</u> Proposals describe the project on a maximum of five A4 pages . The description must include the following: a concretely formulated research question, a summary of the state of research, the results from previous research at the Cluster including gender and

diversity aspects, a description of the scientific objectives, a work program justifying the requested resources, a presentation of the methods and their integration into the Cluster's research structure as well as the description of possible results of the project, their publication and other outcomes that could be realized.

Furthermore, an annotated financial plan, a list of planned publications, a list of qualification projects, and individual CRIS reports from all applicants must be submitted as an attachment.

16–18 November 2021	<u>Retreat: Presentation of the proposals</u> Thirty-minute presentations in front of all Cluster members and the Scientific Advisory Board. The Executive Board and Advisory Board can ask questions about the application for twenty minutes afterwards.
18 November 2021	Advisory Board meeting on applications & presentations
23 & 30 November 2021	Executive Board meeting on applications & decision
7 December 2021	Announcement of funding decisions/sending grant notifications
January–December 2022	Announcement of new positions, selection and recruitment or contract extensions as of January 1 st , 2023

5.2. Scientific Assessment

All proposals will be evaluated orally by two reviewers with different disciplinary expertise. The reviewers will primarily be members of the Cluster's Scientific Advisory Board. If necessary, the Executive Board will appoint additional reviewers. The reviews are based on the funding criteria and comment on them.

5.3. Verification of the estimated costs

The management verifies each application's estimated costs and makes a recommendation for the financing of the requested personnel and material resources.

5.4. Funding Decision by the Executive Board

After hearing the expert opinions and reviewing the financing, the Executive Board meets. The Board votes with a simple majority on the funding of the applications. Board members involved in the respective application are not entitled to vote.

5.5. Notification of the procedure's outcome

Applicants will be informed in writing of the procedure's outcome. The allocation of funds for the projects is defined in internal approval notifications. These decisions are binding for the period stated in the notification.