

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

(new version from 25.01.2020)

The Cluster is a dynamic structure that should allow for new questions and constellations, Nevertheless, the second 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 (see point 6: Allowance).

Procedure for the internal approval of projects

1. General Points

- Cluster members are invited by the Executive Board to submit project descriptions.
- 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. It also 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 Cluster 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 project
- (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 Submittants

The researchers entitled to submit a project draft or project description are invited by the Executive Board. As a rule, at least three relevant PIs should be involved in the project description, and at least three different disciplines should be involved in research for the described project.

4. Application Format

Projects are approved in a two-stage procedure:

Stage 1: Project drafts

First of all, a project draft 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 project draft submissions will be issued to all Cluster Members on September 11th, 2021.

The Executive Board will discuss the project drafts and decide whether an invitation for a more comprehensive project description will be issued. This invitation can be supplemented with comments from the Executive Board and might be accompanied by personal feedback rounds with those involved in the described project.

Stage 2: Project descriptions

- a) In writing: The project is described 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, descriptions 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, along with a complete job description of the requested position.
- b) Presentation: The described 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 proposal 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:

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|---------------------|---|
| 7 September 2021 | PI workshop to develop ideas for the 2 nd Cluster phase |
| 8 September 2021 | ½ day – special meeting of the Executive Board on project draft ideas & composing invitation for submissions of project drafts |
| 13 September 2021 | Executive Board's call for project draft submissions |
| 18 October 2021 | Submission of project drafts to the Executive Board |
| 26 October 2021 | <u>Cluster Day</u> : All project drafts are presented in the plenum for 10 minutes |
| 2 November 2021 | ½ –1 day: special meeting of the Executive Board on the project drafts. For each submitted draft, a representative will be invited to the meeting to answer follow-up questions |
| 5–12 November 2021 | Feedback round between those involved in project drafts and the Executive Board (if necessary, advise against submitting a project description) |
| 17–18 November 2021 | <u>Retreat</u> One afternoon reserved for reflecting on described projects for research phase 2023–2025 |
| 15 February 2022 | Project description submissions |
| 9 March 2022 | Presentations of project descriptions |
| 10 March 2022 | Advisory Board meeting on project descriptions and presentations |
| 17 & 18 March 2022 | Two Executive Board meetings: 1 st for the discussion of project descriptions, 2 nd for decision |
| 31 March 2022 | Announcement of funding decisions/sending grant notifications |
| April–December 2022 | Announcement of new positions, selection and recruitment or contract extensions as of January 1 st , 2023 |

5.2. Scientific Assessment

All project descriptions will be evaluated verbally 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 the estimated costs of each project description 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 projects. Board members involved in the respective project are not entitled to vote.

5.5. Notification of the procedure's outcome

All persons involved in a submitted project description will be informed in writing about the outcome of the procedure. The allocation of funds for the projects is defined in internal approval notifications. These decisions are binding for the period stated in the notification.

6. Allowance

A total of approx. 18 post-doc positions (100% regular working time) and approx. 8 doctoral positions (67% regular working time) for the research projects can be financed from the Cluster's project funds during the research phase 2023–2025. A total of approx. € 300,000 is available per year for material resources.