

**Excellence Initiative by the German Federal and State Governments
to Promote Science and Research
at German Universities**

Second Programme Phase

Guidelines for Graduate Schools

I. Programme Objectives

Graduate schools play a key role in developing internationally competitive centres of top-level research and scientific excellence in Germany. They train outstanding young researchers within excellent research environments and enable them to become independent early on. Graduate schools thus offer ideal conditions for doctoral researchers and, as integrative institutions with international visibility, encourage them to be active members of their local academic communities. Graduate schools encompass broad, interdisciplinary areas of research and strengthen the research priorities of their host universities. They are part of a university's strategy to promote young researchers and help sharpen its profile. Both scientifically and structurally, they go significantly beyond the DFG's Research Training Groups and structured programmes offered within clusters of excellence and thus differ from them substantially.

In the second programme phase of the Excellence Initiative, the continuation or establishment of a graduate school should add value to existing local structures and doctoral training programmes. This added value should significantly shape a university's research and training profile even after special federal and state funding expires.

I. Funding and Proposals

1. Funding period

The continuation of the Excellence Initiative is currently planned for a five-year funding period for initial and renewal proposals (1 November 2012 through 31 October 2017).

2. Funding volume

An initial or renewal proposal for a graduate school may apply for funding ranging from approximately 1 million to 2.5 million € per year, as needed. In addition to this project funding, a graduate school will receive a supplemental allowance amounting to 20 percent of the funding sum to cover indirect costs related to the project.

The number of newly established and continued graduate schools will be based on the financial framework for federal and state funding in the second funding phase. A total of approximately 60 million € per year has been appropriated for this funding line.

3. Eligibility

Proposals must be submitted by universities, with the rector/president applying on behalf of the institution.

Several universities may submit a joint proposal for a graduate school and assume the role of the speaker university if it is clear that each participating university can be expected both to generate synergies and structural added value, and to enter into a strategic cooperation that will endure over the long term. The role of speaker university is subject to approval by the Joint Commission.

Multiple graduate schools at one university may be funded if doing so promotes prioritisation and helps sharpen the university's profile.

4. Participants and collaboration

Graduate schools are encouraged to include suitable non-university institutions whose participation can enhance scientific training and/or help prepare doctoral researchers for a non-academic career. In addition to involving non-university research institutions, graduate schools may also cooperate with libraries, museums, commercial and industrial enterprises, schools, government agencies, etc. Furthermore, universities and institutions in other countries may also participate in a graduate school. For guidelines on the financial participation of partner institutions, consult the publication *Verwendungsrichtlinien Exzellenzinitiative* (www.dfg.de/exin/gsc/formulare/ >> DFG/WR form ExIn10 in German). In case of a cooperation agreement with a commercial partner, contractual provisions should follow the DFG model agreement (www.dfg.de/formulare/ >> DFG form 41.026e).

5. Type of funding

Proposals may request project funding for direct costs, instrumentation, and staff, including funds for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers as well as professorships (W1 – W3). For professorships initially underwritten by project funds, post-programme plans must be documented. In addition, graduate schools receive staff and direct project funding for efficient management, including professional recruitment, as well as money for public relations. For guidelines, see the publication *Verwendungsrichtlinien Exzellenzinitiative* (www.dfg.de/exin/gsc/formulare/ >> DFG/WR form ExIn10 in German). The managing committees of graduate schools will determine the internal allocation of funds. The proposal should discuss the rules for this process.

III. Project Requirements

1. A graduate school is part of a university's strategy to promote young researchers. The proposal must present a pertinent structure-building plan for establishing or expanding the graduate school. Furthermore, it must discuss the university's research priorities, also in terms of its general strategy and including previously funded institutions of excellence and other projects submitted for funding.

Renewal proposals must also demonstrate the achievements the graduate school has made to date with its qualification and supervision programmes. Moreover, they must describe what steps are envisioned for the second funding period to further develop the graduate school.

Universities submitting an initial proposal are expected to have already taken successful steps, within the scientific area of the proposed graduate school, to introduce structured doctoral training formats, which they want to develop further according to the initial proposal.

2. A graduate school can be set up at the departmental or faculty level, but it may also include several or all of a university's departments/faculties. It should take an interdisciplinary approach. The composition of disciplines may be extended to further develop an existing graduate school.

A graduate school may be divided into different sections focusing on different topics, thereby integrating other structures such as DFG Research Training Groups, Max Planck Research Schools, or Collaborative Research Centres and Clusters of Excellence with their doctoral training groups.

3. A graduate school must be characterised by a) its academic profile in the form of overarching goals, themes or principles (not specialised topics), which may involve a variety of subjects and topics, in keeping with the structure of the graduate school; and b) a structured doctoral training process that features a clearly defined supervision model, including compulsory supervision agreements and a differentiated qualification programme, and is specified in the doctorate regulations.

4. The design of the graduate school must promote gender equality and be attractive to international doctoral researchers.

5. If possible, the graduate school should build on the university's bachelor's and master's programmes or integrate with career strategies for postdoctoral researchers. It is possible to incorporate the doctoral training phase of earlier and/or later qualification phases into the graduate school's strategy, also for further developing an existing graduate school. For information on receiving funding for such measures, consult the publication *Verwendungsrichtlinien Exzellenzinitiative* (www.dfg.de/exin/gsc/formulare/ >> DFG/WR form ExIn10, in German).

6. The research training process must be internationally integrated and oriented.

7. The essential components of a graduate school include professional leadership and efficient management. It is recommended that initial proposals include a draft of the statutes. The model statutes for graduate schools may serve as a guideline (www.dfg.de/exin/gsc/formulare/ >> DFG/WR form ExIn21, in German). Renewal proposals must include the current statutes.

8. Graduate schools are expected to be integrated into the structure of the university for the long term. The selection process, status and integration of doctoral researchers within the university and the graduate school should be clearly defined and codified in the university's statutes and doctorate regulations.

9. The university should take into account, in cooperation with the state authorities, the extra work required from participating professors for example by crediting it to their teaching load.

10. Funding will be approved or declined on the basis of the proposal and only according to scientific criteria. For the individual review criteria see "Review Criteria for Graduate Schools" (www.dfg.de/exin/gsc/formulare/ >> DFG/WR form ExIn203e).

IV. Proposal and Decision Process

1. The DFG has set up a Joint Commission together with the German Council of Science and Humanities. It consists of an expert commission (whose members are appointed by the DFG Senate) and a strategic commission (whose members are appointed by the Scientific Commission of the German Council of Science and Humanities). The Joint Commission specifies the terms of funding for the programme and issues funding recommendations for all three lines of funding under the Excellence Initiative. Funding decisions will be made by a Grants Committee consisting of the members of the Joint Commission and the ministers responsible for research and science in the federal and state governments.

2. The call for proposals to establish graduate schools follows a two-stage process (draft proposals and proposals). Draft proposals are evaluated by international review panels. The Joint Commission will hold a selection meeting to decide who will be invited to submit proposals. For renewal proposals, the process has only one stage (proposals only). Renewal and initial proposals are evaluated together by international review panels. Funding for initial and renewal proposals will be recommended by the Joint Commission and decided by the Excellence Initiative Grants Committee in June 2012. For details of the review and decision process, see the call for proposals for the second programme phase (www.dfg.de/exzellenzinitiative/ in German).

3. Graduate schools whose first funding period ends 31 October 2011 will receive transitional funding for one year up to the amount granted for the previous 12 months. Transitional funding will not be offset against a new funding period or expiration funding. Applications for transitional funding may be submitted informally by 15 September 2010.

4. Graduate schools not approved to continue in mid-June 2012 will receive degressive expiration funding for up to two years. Completion funding will be awarded by the Excellence Initiative Grants Committee. Transitional funding will not be offset against completion funding.

5. Refer only to the following templates updated for the second programme phase for (www.dfg.de/exin/gsc/formulare/):

- Declarations of intent >> DFG/WR form ExIn101 in German
- Notes on preparing draft proposals for graduate schools >> DFG/WR form ExIn202e
- Initial proposals (available in late 2010)
- Renewal proposals (available in late 2010)

6. All draft, initial and renewal proposals must be written in English. In justified cases and upon special arrangement with the DFG Head Office, the proposal may additionally be submitted in German.

7. All draft, initial, and renewal proposals must be submitted to the DFG by way of the respective state agencies in charge of science and research. The states' co-financing pledges should be submitted along with the initial or renewal proposals.

For more information visit

http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/programmes/excellence_initiative/index.html

<http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/arbeitsbereiche-arbeitsprogramm/exzellenzinitiative/aktuelles/>

<http://www.gwk-bonn.de/index.php?id=194>