

Guidelines

for Reviewing

Renewal Proposals for Research Training Groups

and International Research Training Groups

I. General

Research Training Groups (RTG) and International Research Training Groups (IRTG) applying for renewal are evaluated during a one-day on-site visit to the host university, on the basis of a written proposal. Please refer to the appendix of the Proposal Guidelines for Renewal Proposals for further information on the planning and organisation of these on-site evaluations (DFG forms 1.30fa_e or 1.301fa_e).

Please assess the proposals according to the criteria below. Additional criteria for reviewing Research Training Groups with multiple domestic locations and International Research Training Groups have been underlined.

The explanations and questions for each criterion are illustrative.

At the end of each meeting, reviewers are asked to grade the criteria below, with 5 = “excellent”, 4 = “very good”, 3 = “good”, 2 = “satisfactory”, 1 = “insufficient”, 0 = “not reviewable”, and to provide a funding recommendation. These marks serve as an orientation for the Grants Committee on Research Training Groups. The decision will be based on the reviewers' comments as noted in the minutes of the meeting. The DFG's Head Office will forward an anonymised copy of the minutes and the Grants Committee's funding recommendation to the Research Training Group's spokesperson.

II. Review Criteria

If recommendations were made by reviewers during the establishment phase, please take into account whether they were implemented and if so, how.

1. Participating researchers

- Please comment on the scientific credentials of the participating researchers. For International Research Training Groups, please also consider the foreign partners.
- To what extent have the participating scientists and academics distinguished themselves in their research activities and publications to date? Please consider in particular the researchers who joined the Research Training Group during the first funding period or those who will be admitted with the renewal proposal.
- How do you assess the individual expertise of the applicants with regard to the proposed main research topic and research concept?
- Have the researchers actively participated in the work of the Research Training Group and the supervision of the dissertation projects?
- Please comment on the scientific composition of the team of applicants and their proposed cooperation with regard to the research and qualification programmes. For International Research Training Groups, please also consider the international partners.
 - To what extent does the researcher team combine the subject-matter expertise necessary to successfully carry out the research and qualification programmes?
 - Did the scientists work together successfully during the first funding period?
 - To what extent did the Research Training Group succeed in attracting qualified young researchers? Are young researchers (still) involved in the Research Training Group?
 - For Research Training Groups with multiple domestic locations: Did the participation of researchers from different locations prove to be necessary and successful? How did this become evident during the first funding period?
 - For International Research Training Groups: Does the cooperation continue to exhibit an added value? What added value was shown during the first funding period?

2. Research programme

- How would you assess the implementation of the research programme during the first funding period?
 - Was the research programme a suitable framework for ambitious doctoral thesis projects?
 - Did the networking of topics prove successful? Was the intended scope of collaboration achieved? If applicable: Was the interdisciplinary approach implemented successfully?
- Please assess the quality, originality and scientific relevance of the Research Training Group's main research topic and research programme in an international context. Does the programme serve as a suitable basis for an additional funding period, or has it been adapted to meet the requirements of the second funding period?
- Is the research programme adequately focused and coherent? Are its individual areas sufficiently interconnected, or are there marginalised areas? Do the thematic focus areas further encourage exchange and collaboration among doctoral researchers? What synergistic effects are to be expected from the research programme?
- For International Research Training Groups and Research Training Groups with multiple domestic locations:
 - Has close cooperation between the participating locations been achieved? What added value did this collaboration have on the research?
 - How does the research programme further ensure the integration of the participating locations?

3. Doctoral researchers

- Did the Research Training Group succeed in recruiting highly qualified doctoral researchers, including some who are not financed by the RTG's funds?
- How would you assess the scientific achievements of the doctoral researchers, e.g. the quality of their work, their publications, and their participation at conferences?
- Did the doctoral researchers take the opportunity for visits abroad?
- Please assess the time to degree.
- Did the researchers find adequate positions after obtaining their degrees?

4. Qualification programme

- Did the qualification programme
 - efficiently support the doctoral researchers' individual specialities and thereby the doctoral thesis work?
 - convey expertise that went beyond the doctoral researchers' specialities, in order to foster collaboration within the Research Training Group und provide a broader qualification? For example, does it reflect the RTG's interdisciplinary approach?
 - prepare the doctoral researchers for the academic and non-academic job market by conveying key skills? Have they been trained in the rules of good scientific practice?
 - leave sufficient time for the doctoral researchers to work on their projects?
 - foster the cooperation between doctoral researchers optimally?
 - leave enough room for doctoral researchers' own initiatives?
- How do the doctoral researchers assess the qualification programme? Do you share their view?
- Have modifications been made to the qualification programme for the second funding period? What opportunities for improvement were identified during the first funding period? Have new measures/policies been implemented?
- For International Research Training Groups and Research Training Groups with multiple domestic locations:
 - Were joint courses and meetings held on a regular basis?
 - Did the partner institution regularly offer courses, etc., in which the doctoral researchers could take part?
 - Does the qualification programme continue to take the geographical arrangement into account?
 - International Research Training Groups: Did doctoral researchers participate in longer-term, coordinated and reciprocal research exchange visits (one or more with a total duration of 6-12 months) at the respective partner location? Did these follow from the research programme in a scientifically logical way?

5. Supervision and career advancement, gender equality, organisation and quality management

- How would you assess the **announcement and selection procedure**?
 - Are the choice of entry qualifications and selection criteria adequate? Is the selection procedure designed transparently?
 - How would you assess the ratio of doctoral researchers who are selected locally, nationally and internationally?

- To what extent did the **supervisory structures** promote systematic, transparent and speedy doctoral training?
 - Were the doctoral researchers adequately supervised, i.e. did the level of support exceed mere individual supervision?
 - Were regular progress checks conducted? Did they have the appropriate scope and intensity?
 - Did the strategy attain a healthy balance between intensive supervision and the encouragement of independence?
 - Were the doctoral researchers motivated to publish their findings early on and to attend international conferences?
 - Did the Research Training Group encourage and promote networking and collaboration adequately and to an appropriate extent, e.g. through programmes for guest researchers or research stays at other institutions at home or abroad?
 - How do the doctoral researchers assess the supervision? Do you share their view?
 - For International Research Training Groups: Have researchers from both partner institutions been involved in the supervision of individual doctoral researchers? How does the RTG ensure that adequate supervision is provided during the exchange period?
 - Start-up funding for first-time applicants – if applicable: Were these funds used successfully to further the scientific careers of the RTG's doctoral researchers following their completion of the programme? Does a convincing strategy exist for the continued use of the funding?

- Please comment on the **measures for promoting gender equality** and work/family compatibility that were implemented by the Research Training Group or that are planned for the second funding period.
 - Were the measures successful?
 - Is the Research Training Group's strategy in line with the measures being implemented by the host university?
- Were **management and coordination** of the Research Training Group effective?
 - Are the functions, rights and obligations of the members of the Research Training Group as well as procedures clearly defined?
- Please comment on the **quality management strategy**.
 - Were appropriate measures taken to ensure that the desired, high level of quality in research and qualification was achieved for the duration of the Research Training Group?
 - Did the Research Training Group achieve the goals it set for itself? What possibilities for improvement were recognised during the first funding period? Were new measures/policies implemented?

6. Environment

- How would you assess the research environment at the university? Did the Research Training Group adequately leverage existing options for cooperation with other research projects (e.g. with Collaborative Research Centres or Research Units)? What distinguishes this Research Training Group from other local research projects?
- How would you assess the regional non-university research environment? What national cooperative arrangements are relevant to the Research Training Group? Did the Research Training Group leverage existing options for cooperation, and if so, will it continue to do so?
- Are there any other doctoral programmes in the environment of the Research Training Group? If so, how would you assess the coordination and collaboration between the Research Training Group and these programmes? Do all parties benefit mutually from the cooperation? What is the added value of the Research Training Group compared to other forms of doctoral training and/or structured doctoral programmes at the respective location?

- How would you assess the support provided by the host university (e.g. adequately equipped work places for the doctoral researchers, infrastructure, coordination, reduction of the teaching load of participating professors, performance-based funding allocation, support for foreign doctoral researchers, family-friendly doctoral training, measures for promoting gender equality, etc.)?
- Has the Research Training Group made a structural impact at the university?

7. Internationality

- Were existing international cooperative arrangements, whether individual or institutionalised, used by the Research Training Group to reach its goals during the first funding period? Have new collaborations resulted from the work of the Research Training Group?
- Were the measures intended to integrate the Research Training Group into the international research community implemented during the initial funding period (e.g. exchange of doctoral researchers, international conference participation, visiting researcher programme)?
- How will the international networking of the Research Training Group be continued during the second funding period?
- For International Research Training Groups: Please provide a summarised assessment concerning collaboration with the foreign partner institution as well as with regard to further international cooperation.

8. Funding

- Is the proposed budget justified? Will it enable the group to operate in an optimum way and to fulfil its mission according to the objectives of the Research Training Group programme?
- If applicable: Does the proposal present a convincing strategy for integrating postdoctoral researchers, qualifying fellows, and/or research students?
- For International Research Training Groups: The partner institution is expected to make an equivalent contribution to the Research Training Group. Has the contribution of the foreign partner been of sufficient scope in the past and has it been guaranteed for the second funding period?

III. Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Science and Academia

The DFG actively encourages equal opportunities and diversity in all of its funding programmes. Funding reviews may not disadvantage applicants due to extra-scientific reasons, such as age, gender or state of health. For example, in assessing proposals from young researchers, considerations should not be based on the applicants' actual age but instead on the individual circumstances relating to the duration of their scientific careers and previous research achievements.

In promoting diversity and equal opportunities in research, it is possible to compensate for certain, extra-scientific disadvantages. For example, in order to evaluate the scientific achievements of applicants appropriately, their individual situations need to be taken into account. Equal opportunity therefore includes taking into consideration unavoidable delays in the scientific careers of applicants (for example longer periods of qualification, gaps in publications, or less time spent abroad due to family reasons).