

# Guidelines

## General Guidelines for Reviews



Disclaimer: The English translation of this document is provided for informational purposes. In the event of a discrepancy between the English and the German versions, the German text takes precedence.

**Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft**

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Your participation in the review process serves as an important basis for the DFG's decision-making process. We will notify you of the review outcome.

The DFG will share your written statement or the vote of the review panel with the applicants **in anonymised form**. The DFG will also share the written reviews from all the reviewers involved with all reviewers in anonymised form. This also includes your review.

**Please treat the proposal documents confidentially.** To ensure the confidentiality of the review process but also for reasons of data protection, only you as the reviewer may have access to the proposal documents. The contents may not be forwarded to third parties – including third parties within your department/work area (see the information below on dealing with artificial intelligence).

It may, however, be appropriate to involve further individuals if you are under the impression that further expertise is required for reviewing the proposal or if you wish to introduce researchers in early career phases to the review process. Approval of such involvement must be requested at the DFG **Head Office** (no particular formal requirements apply) and the following conditions must be met:

- The review is not merely delegated to another researcher from the group of persons indicated above.
- You as the primarily contacted reviewer will remain responsible for the content of the review drawn up together with the additional person.
- The person that is to be involved is considered qualified also by the DFG and there is no apparent conflict of interest on the part of that person.

The DFG Head Office will review your request and inform you of the outcome in writing. If approval is granted, the proposal documents will be made available to the person that is to be involved via the DFG elan portal, allowing you to engage in specialist exchange from that point on and to draw up a review together. You as the primarily contacted reviewer should upload the review. Please note that forwarding the proposal documents yourself constitutes a breach of the principles of confidentiality and might also constitute a breach of good research practice (see below for information about the DFG Code of Conduct).

The main **review criteria** include:

- **Quality of the project**
- **Objectives and work programme**
- **Applicants' qualifications**
- **Work and research environment**

These criteria generally apply to all proposals; note, however, that some funding instruments may have programme-specific criteria and considerations. Therefore, please use the relevant guidelines when preparing your review.

Please also provide a **clear recommendation** as to whether the proposal should be approved and, if so, whether the requested funds are appropriate.

Proposal specifics regarding the aspects of “risks in international cooperation” and “considerations on ecological sustainability aspects in the planning and implementation of the project” as listed in the information accompanying the planned project and relating to the context of the research are not the subject of the scientific review in the sense described above. Instead, a straightforward plausibility check within the scope of your expertise will help the evaluation and decision-making bodies gain an overall impression of these aspects of the proposal.

#### **Important information:**

The DFG is looking closely at the potential uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of generative models for text and image creation – both in research work itself and when submitting proposals to the DFG. **When submitting proposals to the DFG, the use of generative models is permissible** because of the considerable opportunities and development potential they offer, but such usage must be disclosed in a scientifically appropriate manner. The use of generative models is to be assessed neutrally per se when it comes to evaluating the subject-specific quality of a funding proposal. As far as the content of a proposal is concerned, **full responsibility for research integrity remains with the applicants**. Documents that are provided to you for review are confidential and they may not be used as input for generative models. **The use of generative models in the preparation of reviews is inadmissible in any case** due to the confidentiality of the review process. What is more, the processing of proposal content using a generative model may constitute a copyright infringement.

The **principles of good research practice** must also be observed during the review process. Detailed information can be found in the DFG [Code of Conduct “Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice”](#).

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A violation of these principles can result in a charge of scientific misconduct in accordance with the [DFG's Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct \(Verfahrensordnung der DFG zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten – VerfOWF\)](#).

Please examine whether any circumstances exist that might give rise to an appearance of a **conflict of interest** or (unconscious) prejudice (bias) on your part. For more information, please refer to the Guidelines for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest (DFG form 10.201) and the Guidelines for Mitigating Bias in Scientific Evaluation and Decision-Making Processes (DFG form 10.60):

[www.dfg.de/formulare/10\\_201](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/10_201)

[www.dfg.de/formulare/10\\_60](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/10_60)

In the proposal you will find a project- and subject-related list of publications, and also a list of scientific results in the curriculum vitae. The DFG provides clear guidelines regarding the structure of publication lists in a proposal. To find out more, see our Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists (DFG form 1.91). Please include the publication lists in your assessment, especially the highlighted papers in the proposal's list of publications.

[www.dfg.de/formulare/1\\_91](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91)

The assessment of a researcher's achievements must be carried out in its entirety and based on substantive qualitative criteria. In addition to the publication of articles, books, data and software, other dimensions can be taken into account, such as involvement in teaching, academic self-administration, public relations or knowledge and technology transfer. Details of quantitative metrics such as impact factors and h-indices are not required and are not to be considered as part of the review.

We ask you to consider a researcher's individual career stage when evaluating the qualification of the applicant and to assess his/her achievements on this basis. In some cases, this may mean that preliminary work specific to the project cannot necessarily be expected.

Please also take into account that some researchers may have pursued **individual career paths** in a business or non-university context.

The review must not be based on **non-scientific criteria** such as age, gender, family obligations, origin or health restrictions, to the detriment of the applicant. Applicants are encouraged to declare periods of absence and periods of restricted academic activity (minimum duration: three months in a year) due to unavoidable delays in their career. Such periods should

be given appropriate consideration in the researcher's favour in order to compensate for any disadvantages experienced. For further information on equity and diversity in research, see:

[www.dfg.de/equity](http://www.dfg.de/equity)

The individual procedural steps are summarised under

[How Does the DFG Decide on Funding Proposals?](#)

**Important information on data protection:**

The DFG takes the protection of your personal data very seriously. The proposal documents on which your review is based regularly contain personal data that is protected by data protection laws, particularly by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). In order to protect this data, we therefore request that you observe the following guidelines on the confidential handling of personal data when preparing your review.

Data protection law stipulates that personal data must be protected by sufficient security measures to prevent any access by unauthorised parties as well as accidental loss. Please take the necessary measures to comply with data protection law, for example by choosing secure passwords, securing PCs, etc. We also ask that you take measures to protect the proposal documents in your home workplace against access by other persons in your household or by other third parties.

If you are working outside the DFG systems (elan), for example saving the proposal documents onto a local end device, please make sure to delete personal data immediately or to securely destroy it when it is no longer required. This should be done in a secure manner (in the case of printed documents, by not disposing of them in a wastepaper basket but by using a paper shredder).

Please help us to recognise and remedy any data privacy incidents, and report all faults or irregularities to us when using DFG systems (elan), as well as any (potentially) unauthorised access to personal data contained in the proposal documents. Examples of such incidents include:

- Unauthorised use of your elan login data
- Cyberattacks leading to access to personal data contained in the proposal documents by unauthorised parties
- If documents containing personal data relating to the proposal are stolen or read in the event of a break-in

- If USB sticks, mobile phones or laptops containing unencrypted personal data in connection with a proposal document are lost or stolen

In such cases, please contact: [datenschutz@dfg.de](mailto:datenschutz@dfg.de).

With regard to your own personal data, please take note of the DFG's data protection notice for reviewers, which can be viewed and downloaded at [www.dfg.de/privacy\\_policy](http://www.dfg.de/privacy_policy). By taking up your duties as reviewer, you hereby confirm acknowledgement of this data protection notice.

[www.dfg.de/privacy\\_policy](http://www.dfg.de/privacy_policy)