

Joint Press Release by the DFG and the German Science Council

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Initial Decisions Reached on the Excellence Initiative

Joint Commission Decides on Over 300 Draft Proposals

The Joint Commission, which is made up of members of the DFG's expert commission and the German Science Council's strategic commission, made its initial decisions in the first stage of the proposal process for the Excellence Initiative programme today.

Following this preselection, a total of 36 universities have been invited to submit full proposals for the second stage of the two-stage selection process. These universities are listed below in alphabetical order, with the number of draft proposals for which each was invited to submit full proposals given in brackets:

Graduate schools:

RWTH Aachen University (4)
Free University of Berlin (1)
Humboldt University Berlin (1)
Technical University of Berlin (1)
University of Bielefeld (2)
Ruhr-University Bochum (1)
University of Bonn (2)
Technical University of Braunschweig (1)
University of Bremen (2)
University of Cologne (1)
Dresden University of Technology (1)
University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (1)
University of Frankfurt am Main (2)
University of Freiburg (2)
University of Giessen (1)
University of Göttingen (1)
Hannover Medical School (1)
University of Hannover (1)
University of Heidelberg (1)
University of Hohenheim (1)
University of Karlsruhe (TH) (1)
University of Mainz (1)
University of Mannheim (1)
University of Munich (2)
Technical University of Munich (2)
University of Stuttgart (1)
University of Tübingen (1)
University of Ulm (1)
University of Würzburg (1)

Total: 39

Clusters of excellence:

RWTH Aachen University (2)
Free University of Berlin (1)
Humboldt University Berlin (2)
Technical University of Berlin (2)
University of Bonn (1)
University of Bremen (1)
University of Cologne (1)
Darmstadt University of Technology (2)
Dresden University of Technology (1)
University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (1)
University of Frankfurt am Main (1)
University of Freiburg (1)
University of Giessen (1)
University of Göttingen (2)
University of Hamburg (2)
Hannover Medical School (2)
University of Heidelberg (1)
University of Karlsruhe (TH) (1)
University of Kiel (2)
University of Konstanz (1)
University of Leipzig (1)
University of Marburg (1)
University of Munich (4)
Technical University of Munich (3)
University of Oldenburg (1)
University of Stuttgart (1)
University of Tübingen (1)
University of Würzburg (1)

Total: 41

Institutional strategies:

RWTH Aachen University
Free University of Berlin
University of Bremen
University of Freiburg
University of Heidelberg
University of Karlsruhe (TH)
University of Munich
Technical University of Munich
University of Tübingen
University of Würzburg

Total: 10

Regional distribution: Four of the universities that applied for institutional strategies are located in Baden-Württemberg, three in Bavaria and one each in North Rhine-Westphalia, Bremen and Berlin.

In response to the first call for proposals, a total of 319 draft proposals were submitted by 74 universities. These were distributed between the three lines of funding as follows:

- 157 draft proposals for clusters of excellence,
- 135 draft proposals for graduate schools, and
- 27 draft proposals for institutional strategies.

The nearly 300 draft proposals in the first two lines of funding were reviewed by 20 international peer review panels, called into being by the DFG. The review processes followed the criteria for scientific quality, the principles of interdisciplinarity, international prominence and the integration of regional research capacity, such as non-university research institutes.

Following the decisions made in the first stage of the selection process, the following distribution between subject areas can be seen for the graduate schools and clusters of excellence: The draft proposals for graduate schools demonstrate a strong degree of interdisciplinarity, some even involving several different departments. Overall it is evident that each of the main disciplines, humanities and social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences and, not far behind, engineering, are relatively equally represented. In accordance with the differing needs and requirements of the different subject areas, there is a shift of emphasis amongst the – also very interdisciplinary – clusters of excellence. Over one-third of them are in medicine and the life sciences, and about one-quarter each in the natural sciences and engineering, respectively. Several of the draft proposals also incorporate the humanities and social sciences, meaning that they actually account for more than the remaining roughly ten percent.

The selection of applicants for the third line of funding is based on a complex process, taking into account all of the criteria given in the call. In addition to careful examination of the draft proposals, the research performance of the university and its development in recent years, review groups spanning the subject divides were also formed in order to facilitate comparison, and peer expertise was also taken into consideration.

Each university that has successfully passed the preselection stage is requested to submit full proposals by 20 April 2006. These proposals will be reviewed over the summer and final funding decisions will be made by the Excellence Initiative Grants Committee on 13 October. Then an announcement will be made as to which of the graduate schools (approximately 20), clusters of excellence (approximately 15), and institutional strategies will receive funding for the five-year period, beginning in November 2006.

The second round for the Excellence Initiative programme is also due to begin in April 2006 and close in October 2007. The full scope of the programme is envisaged to fund approximately 40 graduate schools, providing an average of €1 each year for each graduate school, and 30 clusters of excellence, which will each receive an average of €6.5 million annually, as well as an as yet undecided number of institutional strategies. A total of €1.9 billion has been allocated to funding the Excellence Initiative over a five-year period.

The initiative is also accompanied by the introduction of full economic costing for research in Germany. This means that for each project for which funding is approved, an additional 20 % of the amount allocated is granted to cover indirect costs incurred by the research work, such as procurement of equipment, rental costs, etc.

The DFG and the German Science Council anticipate that this programme will make a significant contribution towards improving the quality of research at German universities, thus boosting their international profile significantly.