

Joint Press Release by DFG and WR

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German Science and Humanities Council Issues Second Call for Proposals for Universities of Excellence

New call for proposals issued for the Universities of Excellence funding line under the Excellence Strategy / German federal and state governments to provide an additional €60 million per year for up to four additional funding spots

On Thursday 28 March the competitive procedure was initiated for the selection of further Universities of Excellence or University Excellence Consortia under the Excellence Strategy run by the German federal and state governments. Individual universities and consortia consisting of up to three universities may apply providing they successfully acquire two or three Clusters of Excellence, respectively, in May 2025. In November 2025, applicants must then submit an overall institutional strategy for the funding of their top-level research that will enable the university or consortium concerned to build on its leading international standing and networking. The competitive procedure requires applicants to demonstrate that their underlying conditions and level of research quality already meet very high standards.

“The Excellence Strategy enables the expansion of top-level university research in Germany, boosting strategic development of the funded universities,” said Wolfgang Wick, Chair of the German Science and Humanities Council (Wissenschaftsrat, WR). “The universities not only receive funding to strengthen their research, they also get the opportunity to develop new structures and processes, and additional resources are provided for this purpose if overall funding is approved,” stressed Wick.

“We’re already seeing how Excellence Strategy funds are being used to create room for experimentation at the universities concerned – to further enhance personnel and career concepts, for instance, to digitise research and teaching, or to network with other universities worldwide.”

Funding for up to four new Universities or University Excellence Consortia will be awarded based exclusively on science-driven criteria. Ten Universities of Excellence and one University Excellence Consortium have been funded since 2019, receiving a total of €148 million per year. In the course of the upcoming evaluation, these will likewise be called upon to demonstrate what they have accomplished to date. If funding of a particular university or university consortium is not continued, the vacant spot can be awarded to a new applicant university or university consortium that prevails in the competition. The results of the evaluation of currently funded institutions will be submitted in March 2026. New universities or university consortia will be selected in September 2026 by the Excellence Commission, a

body that is made up of 39 top-ranking international re-searchers and the federal and state ministers responsible for research.

The second funding phase for Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia starts on 1 January 2027. Funding under the Excellence Strategy currently amounts to €533 million per year. From 2026 onwards the total annual budget is to be increased to €687 million.

The Clusters of Excellence funding line, implemented by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), finances internationally outstanding research projects at universities or university consortia for up to two periods of seven years. Under the Universities of Excellence funding line, for which the German Science and Humanities Council (Wissenschaftsrat, WR) is responsible, universities and university consortia receive permanent funding as entire institutions in order to build on their leading international status in research.

For full details of application documents and further information on the procedure, see the WR website: https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/EN/Fields-of-Activity/Competitive_review_processes/Excellence-Strategy/Call_for_Proposals_2024-2026/Call_for_Proposals_2024-2026_node.html

Media contact:

Georg Scholl, Head of Communications and Public Relations at the WR, Tel. +49 221 3776-243, scholl@wissenschaftsrat.de

Marco Finetti, Head of Press and Public Relations at the DFG, Tel. +49 228 885-2230, marco.finetti@dfg.de

Contact persons at the WR and DFG Head Offices:

Dr Inka Spang-Grau, Head of the Excellence Strategy Department, Tel. +49 221 3776-281, spang-grau@wissenschaftsrat.de

Dr Christine Petry, Head of Excellence Strategy and Research Impulses, Tel. +49 228 885-2355, christine.petry@dfg.de

For detailed information on the Excellence Strategy, see also: <https://www.exzellenzstrategie.de/en/>