

Universities of Excellence funding line

Guidelines for the individual evaluation of Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia

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A. Preface

According to the Administrative Agreement (VV, Verwaltungsvereinbarung), the Universities of Excellence funding line serves "to permanently strengthen the universities or university consortia as institutions and to expand their international leading positions in research on the basis of successful Clusters of Excellence" (§ 1 VV). |¹ The Wissenschaftsrat (WR, German Science and Humanities Council) is responsible for administering the Universities of Excellence funding line, while the DFG (German Research Foundation) administers the Clusters of Excellence funding line (§ 2 para. 3 VV).

The Excellence Strategy programme aims to support the "subject-based and strategic profiling" (Preamble VV) of universities and university consortia, which "may relate to all performance areas" (Preamble VV). In the first round of the Universities of Excellence funding line, the applicant universities submitted a "strategic, institution-based overall concept and a rough funding plan" in accordance with § 4 para. 2, which was reviewed by an international panel of reviewers during on-site visits. Following the on-site visits, the results were comparatively assessed by the Committee of Experts. The funding decisions in the first round of the Universities of Excellence funding line were subsequently made on July 19, 2019, by the Excellence Commission, which was composed of the Committee of Experts and the responsible federal and state ministers. Funding began on November 1, 2019.

Based on the Administrative Agreement, guidelines are here presented that will form the basis of the individual evaluations of the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia in the Universities of Excellence funding line. The guidelines are based on the Funding Criteria of the Universities of Excellence Funding Line in the version of 2024 (cf. Annex IV) as well as on the procedural documents published within the framework of the Excellence Strategy. |²

The guidelines presented here provide information on the tasks and the central procedural principles and steps as well as the assessment categories for the individual evaluations. They are intended to assist the Universities of Excellence and the University Excellence Consortia to be evaluated in preparing for the evaluation procedure, while also providing orientation for the reviewers. The Excellence Strategy Committee of the WR prepared the guidelines for the individual evaluations in its deliberations, and the Committee of Experts of the Excellence Strategy subsequently adopted them

|¹ Cf. GWK (Joint Science Conference): Administrative Agreement between the Federal and State Governments in accordance with Article 91b Paragraph 1 of the Basic Law on the Funding of Top-Level Research at Universities - "Excellence Strategy" of October 19, 2016. <https://www.gwk-bonn.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Dokumente/Papers/Verwaltungsvereinbarung-Exzellenzstrategie-2016.pdf>, last accessed on March 05, 2024. Further quotations referring to the Administrative Agreement are not indicated by footnotes. Instead, the respective section of the Administrative Agreement is referenced in brackets in the body text.

|² This includes the Calls for Proposals, proposal templates with explanatory notes and model tables as well as the Guidelines of the Universities of Excellence Funding Line (cf. [here](#) and [here](#)).

at its meeting on 30 November and 1 December, 2020 and updated them at its meeting from 29 January to 1 February 2024.

B. The evaluation procedure in the Universities of Excellence funding line

Under the Excellence Strategy, Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia receive long-term funding according to § 5 para. 1 VV, provided they are positively evaluated every seven years. This is a central innovation of the Excellence Strategy compared to the preceding programme of the Federal Government and the states, the Excellence Initiative, which ran in two programme phases between 2005 and 2017. The long-term institutional funding of the overall strategic orientation of a University of Excellence or a University Excellence Consortium also marks a clear difference from the project-oriented funding in the Clusters of Excellence funding line of the Excellence Strategy with a maximum of two funding periods of seven years each. Consequently, the Federal Government and the states have stipulated as a new element in the Administrative Agreement that Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia are to be subjected to an “independent and external evaluation of selective nature” (§ 6 para. 1 VV), which is to take place “regularly every seven years” (§ 6 para. 1 VV), to be organised by the WR and to be evaluated by the Committee of Experts. The prerequisite for long-term funding is that the universities and consortia already receiving funding (continue to) fulfil the requirements of being eligible to apply for funding under the Universities of Excellence funding line.

B.1 Legal basis, framework and purpose of individual evaluations

At all stages of the procedure, the funding criteria for the funding line defined in the Administrative Agreement and by the Committee of Experts (cf. Annex IV) form the central frame of reference. § 6 of the Administrative Agreement stipulates that the universities and consortia (currently) funded within the Excellence Strategy must undergo “an independent and external evaluation of selective nature” (§ 6 VV) every seven years. § 6 para. 1 sentence 2 stipulates that the evaluations of the Universities of Excellence or University Excellence Consortia must specifically examine “whether the conditions for joint funding [...] are still fulfilled” (§ 6 para. 1 VV). To this end, the universities or university consortia are expected to have achieved the goal of expanding their international leading position in research, while having contributed and continuing to contribute outstanding research achievements on an international level.

The “selective nature” of the evaluation specified in the Administrative Agreement (§ 6 para. 1 sentence 1 VV) acknowledges the possibility that a University of Excellence or a University Excellence Consortium may be negatively evaluated and thus drops out of the Universities of Excellence funding line. In terms of content, the evaluation comprises two sub-elements:

1. **§ 4 para. 1** stipulates that at least two Clusters of Excellence at a University of Excellence or at least three Clusters of Excellence in the case of a University Excellence Consortium must be funded. The fact that a funded University of Excellence or University Excellence Consortium must continue to have the minimum number of Clusters of Excellence after seven years thus represents a **formal funding requirement** and a constitutive sub-element of the evaluation of the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia. Thus, a fundamental connection between the two funding lines of the Excellence Strategy is given.
2. **§ 4 para. 3** specifies the overarching criteria that apply to Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia that must be fulfilled on an ongoing basis after funding is awarded. For the selection and decision-making processes in the Universities of Excellence funding line, the Committee of Experts in 2017 defined and adopted specific funding criteria for the Universities of Excellence funding line based on the specifications in the Administrative Agreement. The criteria apply in the version of 2024. |³

According to the Administrative Agreement, these two sub-elements, i.e. the acquisition of two – or in the case of consortia three – Clusters of Excellence as a formal funding requirement, and the fulfilment of the funding criteria of the Universities of Excellence funding line, are necessary but not sufficient components of an overall positive individual evaluation. Only a positive assessment with regard to both sub-elements can lead to a positive evaluation and thus to further funding as a University of Excellence or University Excellence Consortium.

The individual evaluation examines whether the requirements for long-term federal-state funding continue to be met overall. For this purpose, it is evaluated whether the set goals and the expected progress and results stated by the funded institution in its original proposal were achieved, what changes may have occurred and what effects the funding has (had) on the respective university or consortium. Recommendations can also be made by the Committee of Experts.

The reporting obligations of the funded universities or consortia vis-à-vis the Federal Government and the respective host state as specified in the Administrative Agreement, e.g. within the framework of annual status talks during which the “progress in terms of content, the use of the additional

| ³ Cf. Section IV of the Annex as well as at http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/2024/ExStra_Funding_Criteria_Institutional_Strategy.html, last accessed on March 25, 2024.

funds and further planning” (§ 5 para. 2 VV) are discussed on the basis of a simplified Financial Status Report (cf. § 5 para. 3 VV), are independent of the individual evaluation.

B.2 Procedural Principles

When evaluating the funded Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia, the following procedural principles must be particularly observed. |⁴ For the individual evaluation of the funded Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia, the guidelines for evaluative procedures of the WR provide a procedural and methodological framework. This framework also includes the **principles for successful evaluations** – adapted below for the evaluation procedure in the context of the Universities of Excellence funding line – which are designed to ensure the success of evaluations: |⁵

- **Transparency:** A central information session is offered in advance. In addition, the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia may, upon request, have an individual information meeting with the WR Head Office prior to the start of the evaluation, in which the procedure and its processes are explained. Criteria and procedures, including the names of the reviewers, must be known to all participants at the start of the evaluation.
- **Participation:** To the extent possible, all parties involved in the procedure must be given the opportunity to participate in the on-site visits. In addition to the representatives of the university or consortia to be evaluated this also includes representatives of the federal government and the respective host state, who may participate in the on-site visits as guests, except in the case of internal meetings of the panel of reviewers.
- **Acceptance:** The procedural principles of the evaluation must be accepted as appropriate and fair by all parties involved. The report on the status quo as part of the evaluation report compiles information that is composed by the WR Head Office on the basis of the self-assessment report of the university or consortium. The report on the status quo as part of the evaluation report written by the WR Head Office is checked by the University of Excellence

| ⁴ The German Science and Humanities Council approved of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment agreement (CoARA) in summer of 2023. URL: <https://coara.eu/agreement/the-agreement-full-text/>. The Council thereby declared its intention to commit to CoARA's vision that the assessment of research, researchers and research institutions recognizes the various outcomes, practices and activities that improve the quality and impact of research; central to this are peer review procedures, supported by the responsible use of quantitative indicators; the German Science and Humanities Council also commits to regularly review and adapt its assessment procedures.

| ⁵ The evaluations within the Leibniz Association based on the above-mentioned procedures of the WR and the standards for evaluations of the German Evaluation Society were also consulted in this process. Cf.: Leibniz Association: The Leibniz Association Senate Evaluation Procedure Basic Principles as amended on 27 November 2018. https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder_und_Downloads/%C3%9Cber_uns/Evaluierung/Leibniz_Senate_Evaluation_Procedure_-_Basic_Principles_without_attachments.pdf, last accessed on April 12, 2021 and DeGEval – Evaluation Society: Standards für Evaluation. First revision 2016. https://www.degeval.org/fileadmin/content/Z03_Publikationen/DeGEval-Standards_fuer_Evaluation.pdf, last accessed on March 11, 2024.

or the University Excellence Consortium, revised if necessary and is not changed in the further process.

- **Selection of suitable reviewers:** In order to make optimal use of the potential of reviewers, both junior as well as senior academics, especially from abroad, should be included; a balanced gender ratio as well as a high degree of diversity within the group should be striven for. It is the responsibility of the chairing members of the Committee of Experts to ensure that the reviewers receive all the necessary information relevant to the evaluation, such as information on the German higher education system and particularly the Excellence Strategy programme. In addition, the reviewers are informed about the procedure and its processes by the WR Head Office and the expectations placed on them will be clearly formulated in advance.
- **Avoidance of conflicts of interests:** In the composition of the panels of reviewers, care must be taken to ensure that no reviewer has a relationship with the institution to be evaluated that could indicate a conflict of interest on the part of the reviewer. |⁶ Should a conflict of interest have been established, participation in a panel of reviewers is ruled out. Institutions to be evaluated will have the opportunity to indicate a possible conflict of interest for a reviewer; however, they do not have a right to propose or a right to veto regarding the selection of reviewers.
- **Consideration of the differing institutional profiles of the funded institutions:** The universities or consortia currently funded through the Excellence Strategy programme have differing profiles and priorities in research, teaching, transfer and research infrastructures as well as in their further areas of activity. With regard to the composition of the panel of reviewers, particular attention will be paid to selecting reviewers with the broadest possible range of academic backgrounds and comprehensive institutional expertise, who are thus able to fully grasp and evaluate the profile and the institutional strategy of the university or the consortium.
- **Evaluating achievements in research:** In the Universities of Excellence funding line, the research portfolio of the University of Excellence or University Excellence Consortium must be evaluated on a national and international level. This is done on a broad and superordinate level, considering how the research profiles and achievements have developed and have contributed to improving the performance level of the university or consortium as a

| ⁶ Reasons for an appearance of conflicts of interest could be, e.g.: family relations to the university management, etc., personal or financial interests with regard to a positive evaluation, current or planned close research or research policy collaborations with the university or consortium being evaluated, involvement in a proposal within the framework of the Excellence Strategy, an employment relationship with the university or consortium being evaluated or a supervisory relationship with a person working at the university or consortium to be evaluated in the past six years; employment at or imminent transfer to the university or consortium; or membership in a university council or similar supervisory body of a university participating in the Universities of Excellence funding line.

whole. Reciprocal effects between research and other performance areas or further areas of activity are also considered. A detailed evaluation of specialist research fields is not possible within the framework of the procedure.

- **Non-intended effects of evaluations:** Evaluation procedures can have unintended effects. These can include the overevaluation of activities and measures that follow a dominant trend in the respective field and the underevaluation of original, innovative approaches that deviate from the trend. In general, it can be an effect of frequent evaluations that researchers tend to orient their activities more towards probabilities of success in evaluations and less towards scientific standards. This possibility must always be considered in the evaluation process. In addition, the criteria and procedures must be critically reviewed for unintended effects on a regular basis and adjusted if necessary.
- **Procedural efficiency:** The burden on the institutions to be evaluated is usually high; preparing the self-assessment report, compiling the relevant documents and the preparation of the on-site visits are time-consuming and typically lead to research activities being reduced at least temporarily. Therefore, the quantitative data to be submitted is designed in such a way that, as far as possible, the quantitative data collected according to the Research Core Dataset can be carried over from the simplified Financial Status Report for the funding bodies.
- **Confidentiality and data protection:** The reviewers and members of the Committee of Experts are obligated to treat the submitted evaluation documents and the contents of the on-site visits confidentially and to destroy the documents obtained in connection with the evaluation within six months after the conclusion of the procedure. With regard to any personal data and information collected and passed on in the course of the individual evaluation which are not publicly accessible, the representatives of the university or consortium to be evaluated must ensure that the relevant data protection requirements are met.

B.3 Procedure and stakeholders

In the Administrative Agreement, the organisation of the evaluation of the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia is assigned to the WR, which is responsible for the Universities of Excellence funding line. In 2016, for the purpose of implementing the funding line, the WR established the **Excellence Strategy Committee** which supports the Chair of the WR in preparing the procedural documents for the Committee of Experts.

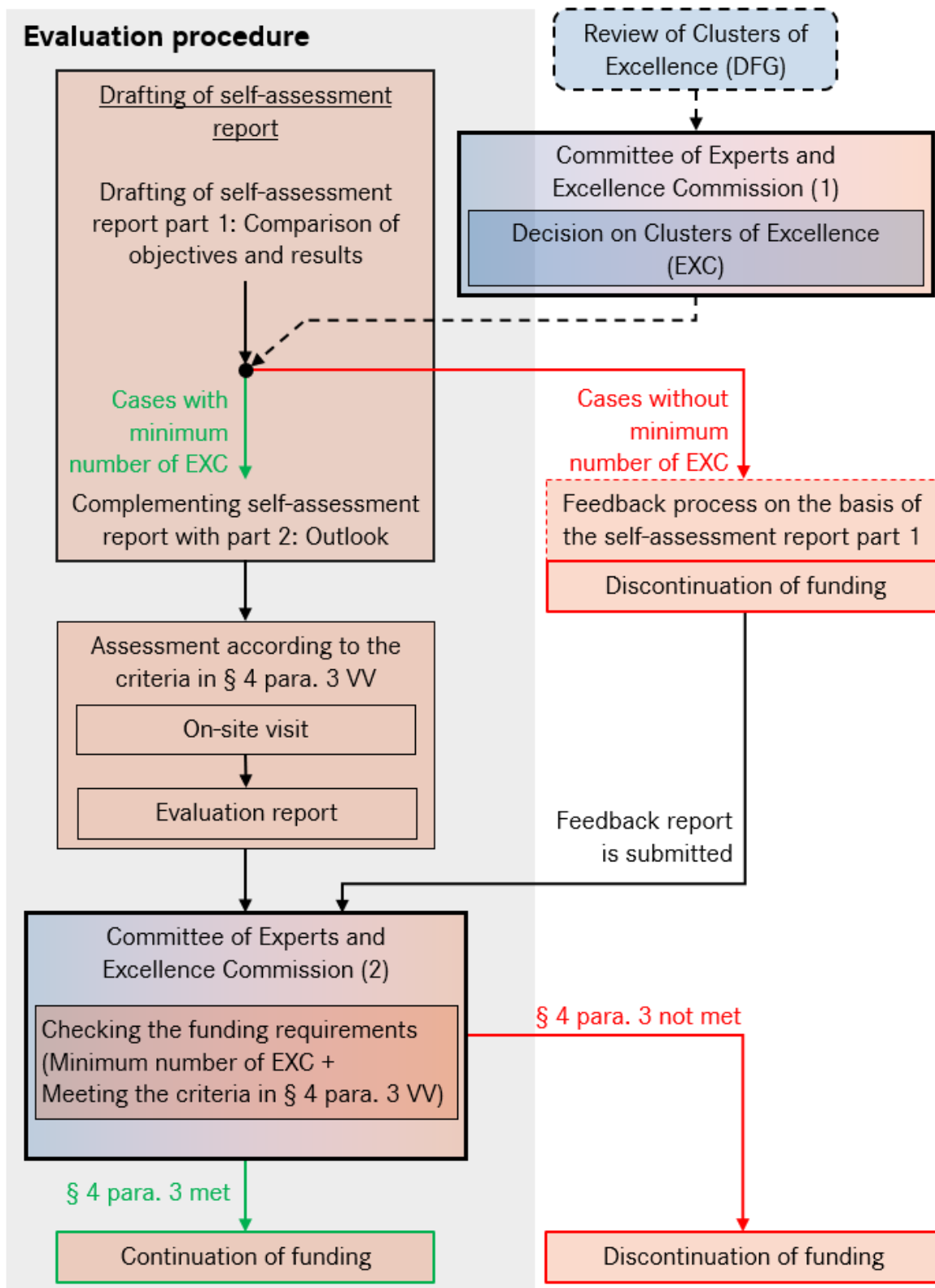
Methodologically, the academically driven evaluation procedure is carried out by research experts (*peers*) through an informed qualitative assessment (*informed peer review*). This procedure was and is also used in the review process for the initial proposals of the universities and consortia.

The evaluation at the individual level is carried out in a **two-tier process**. This entails the following tasks for the stakeholders involved:

1. In a first step, a **panel of reviewers** specifically appointed for a certain University of Excellence or University Excellence Consortium will visit the funded institution and examine how it has implemented the approved measures and what results and effects have been achieved through the funding (cf. B.3.3).
2. In a second step, the **Committee of Experts** will evaluate the reports and assessments of the respective panel of reviewers in this regard and present the results to the Excellence Commission for confirmation (cf. B.3.4).

The following figure illustrates the different procedural steps of the individual evaluation, which are also described in further detail below.

Figure 1: Procedural steps of the individual evaluation



Source: WR Head Office.

The individual steps in the evaluation procedure are described in more detail below.

B.3.1 Checking the formal funding requirements

The individual evaluation in the Universities of Excellence funding line takes place **after** the decisions on the Clusters of Excellence. This means that an evaluation may not occur for every university or consortium. Universities or consortia that have not acquired the required minimum number of Clusters of Excellence have not fulfilled the first sub-element of the individual evaluation and will therefore not be evaluated further, instead dropping out of the funding (cf. Section B.1).

B.3.1.1 Meeting the formal funding requirements

⇒ continue directly with Section B.3.1.3

B.3.1.2 Failure to meet the formal funding requirements

If the required number of Clusters of Excellence is **not** achieved, the Excellence Commission will announce, together with the decision on the Clusters of Excellence, that the university or consortium concerned will no longer be funded in the Universities of Excellence funding line due to failing to fulfil the requirements.

The affected university or consortium will receive written comments on the previous funding period as part of a feedback process. The feedback will take the form of an academically driven feedback report, prepared in written form and without reviewers conducting on-site visits. This report constitutes a quality-assessment that concludes the funding in the Universities of Excellence funding line. The basis for this is the written self-assessment report submitted by the university or consortium on the implementation to date of the approved measures and the implementation of the institutional strategy (cf. Section B.3.1.3). If funding is to end, the self-assessment report by the university or consortium is also the final report within the framework of the funding line. |⁷

The feedback report prepared by the reviewers is discussed in the Committee of Experts and submitted to the Excellence Commission. The Committee of Experts informs the university or the consortium of the results of its deliberations. In addition to the formal completion funding on a diminishing basis pursuant to § 6 para. 3, the Federal Government and the host state shall decide on the exact modalities of the withdrawal of the respective university or consortium from joint funding (cf. § 6 para. 2).

| ⁷ Regarding University Excellence Consortia, the term “institutional strategy” refers to a supra-institutional strategy of the consortium as a whole.

B.3.1.3 Self-assessment reports from the Universities of Excellence or University Excellence Consortia

Each university or consortium submits a self-assessment report divided into one or two parts, depending on the result of the examination of the formal funding requirements:

- In Part 1, the progress, results and effects of the approved institutional strategy achieved through the funding are presented (comparison of objectives and results). This part of the self-assessment report must also be submitted by funded institutions that do not fulfil the formal funding requirement of a sufficient number of Clusters of Excellence and will therefore depart from the joint funding; in this case, the self-assessment report also constitutes the final report.
- Part 2 comprises a prospective part (outlook on the future) and is only to be submitted by the university or consortium if the required number of Clusters of Excellence has been achieved.

In both scenarios, the self-assessment report includes a supplementary data annex with quantitative information on the University of Excellence or the University Excellence Consortium. As far as possible, the quantitative data collected in accordance with the Research Core Dataset from the simplified Financial Status Reports for the funding bodies can be used to compile the quantitative data. Details on how the self-assessment report is to be structured in concrete terms can be found in sections I and II of the annex. In both scenarios (feedback process and continued evaluation procedure), the self-assessment report from the university or consortium is made available to the reviewers.

For the evaluation report, the WR Head Office will prepare a report on the status quo on the basis of the self-assessment report. The university or consortium will have the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the report on the status quo.

The following procedural steps only apply to Universities of Excellence or University Excellence Consortia that continue to fulfil the formal funding requirements.

B.3.2 Preparation of the individual evaluation

Following the decision of the Excellence Commission on the Clusters of Excellence, the evaluation procedure is opened – provided the university or consortium meets the necessary requirements. The university or consortium has the opportunity to have an information meeting with the WR Head Office, in which the evaluation procedure is explained.

B.3.3 On-site visits by panel of reviewers

If the formal funding requirements are met, the university or consortium will be evaluated on site by a specially assembled panel of reviewers. The Committee of Experts and the Scientific Commission of the WR will support the WR Head Office in putting together the panels. The on-site visit is chaired by four members of the Committee of Experts; during the deliberations at the on-site visit they are not entitled to vote. On the basis of the self-assessment report and the results of the on-site visit, an evaluation report (consisting of the report on the status quo and an assessment part) is prepared.

B.3.4 Assessment and decision

Following the on-site visits, all self-assessment reports as well as all the evaluation reports from the individual evaluations will be submitted to the Committee of Experts. The Committee of Experts has the task of assessing the evaluations carried out by the panels of reviewers. On this basis, it reviews whether the requirements for joint funding in the funding line are still met at each university or consortium, and submits a corresponding recommendation (§ 6 para. 1 VV). The results of all individual evaluations are in turn submitted to the Excellence Commission. If the requirements for joint funding continue to be met, joint funding is continued. If the requirements are not met, the Federal Government and the host state shall decide on the modalities of the withdrawal of the University of Excellence or the University Excellence Consortium from the joint funding (§ 6 para. 2 VV).

C. Assessment categories for the individual evaluation

The evaluation of Universities of Excellence or the University Excellence Consortia will be guided by the question whether the requirements for funding continue to be met in accordance with the Administrative Agreement. The funding criteria (cf. Annex IV) must therefore be continually fulfilled. The focus of the individual evaluation will be on the extent to which the funding as a University of Excellence or a University Excellence Consortium has been implemented, what kind of results and effects have been achieved through the funding and how and on what level of quality the approved measures have been implemented.

For this purpose, the panels of reviewers will compare the implementation of the plans at the respective university or consortium with the approved initial proposal, including any adjustments made (input), and evaluate the results (output) and effects (outcome). |⁸ This is a qualitative

|⁸ On the conceptual triad Input-Output-Outcome, cf. Wissenschaftsrat: Wissenschafts- und Technologietransfer als Gegenstand institutioneller Strategien, Weimar 2016 and Kurz, B.; Kubek, D.: Kursbuch Wirkung. Das Praxishandbuch für alle, die Gutes noch besser tun wollen,

assessment by reviewers. Quantitative information will supplement the evaluations, but, as is the case with the (initial) application procedure, will require contextualisation by the reviewers.

In contrast to the competitive (initial) application procedure, in which a comparative assessment and selection process by the Committee of Experts and the Excellence Commission took place in addition to the individual assessment of each applicant university or consortium, the evaluation is limited to an individual case assessment. This distinguishes the evaluation procedure from the selection process.

In order for the recipients of funding to be able to present the objectives, results and effects of the funding in a differentiated manner, guiding questions providing orientation have been formulated for the self-assessment report (cf. Annex II). Progress should be described in a comprehensible way with regard to the various performance areas and further areas of activity, with processes and intermediate steps in implementation being included in the reflection on results and effects.

Annex

I. Instructions for preparing the self-assessment report, for use by the universities or consortia

General notes

Every seven years, the University of Excellence or the University Excellence Consortium will submit a self-assessment report. This individual report as well as the on-site visit are part of the evaluation and are assessed by the reviewers. If the formal funding requirement is not met (see B.3.1.2), the self-assessment report (Part 1) is also the final report of the university or consortium within the framework of the funding line.

The following information is addressed to the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia. The contact partner of the funded institutions for the preparation of the self-assessment report is the WR Head Office. FAQs are published and updated regularly to assist with the preparation and writing of the self-assessment report. For further questions in the context of the preparation of the self-assessment report, the universities or consortia funded through the Excellence Strategy's Universities of Excellence funding line are assigned contact persons at the WR Head Office's Excellence Strategy Department.

Formal references

All universities or consortia funded through the Excellence Strategy's Universities of Excellence funding line are requested to send the self-assessment report for the first funding phase to the Excellence Strategy Department at the WR Head Office by 1 August, 2025.

The self-assessment report including the data annex must be submitted in English and supplemented by a two-page summary in German. In order to allow the self-assessment report to be written in the universities' or consortia's corporate design, there are no specific requirements regarding font or font size. Instead, a maximum number of characters is specified, and exemplary sample formats are provided. Further information can be found in the following overview table. Information on how to structure the content of the self-assessment report can be found in Annex II.

Overview: Guidelines for writing the self-assessment report

Deadline for submission	<p>Report on the first funding phase:</p> <p>Digital version (in English – with a two-page summary in German): 1 August, 2025 (12:00 p.m., deadline)</p> <p>Print version: 8 August, 2025.</p>
Form of submission	<p>Self-assessment reports shall be submitted:</p> <p>a) in digital form to the WR Head Office and</p> <p>b) by post (10 hard copies).</p> <p>Address: WR Head Office, Excellence Strategy Department, Scheidtweilerstraße 4, 50933 Cologne, Germany</p> <p>Further information on submitting the digital versions will be published on the web page of the WR in due time.</p>
Format	<p>PDF version including a table of contents with jump labels (for both the self-assessment report body text and the data annex).</p> <p>The PDF document is to be created without password protection and without access restrictions regarding reading, copying and printing.</p>
Components and structure of the documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cover page ▪ Signature page ▪ Table of contents ▪ optional: list of abbreviations and tables ▪ German abstract (max. two pages) ▪ Body text (Part 1a and Part 1b; Part 2 only if the required number of Clusters of Excellence is fulfilled, cf. Annex II) ▪ Data annex <p><u>Notes:</u></p> <p>No elements or documents other than those listed here may be attached to the self-assessment report.</p> <p>For the preparation of the data annex (cf. Annex III), the WR Head Office will provide the university or the consortium with Excel templates, which are to be used. The formulas stored in these templates may not be changed. If</p>

	<p>necessary, additional rows may be added while rows that do not apply to the university or consortium may be deleted.</p> <p>Only publications that have been published or finally accepted for publication may be listed in the data annex.</p>			
Cover page	<p>The cover page should contain the following text:</p> <p>„Excellence Strategy of the Federal and State Governments (2019–2026) PRIVATE! FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY! Universities of Excellence Funding Line – First self-assessment report for the evaluation of the University [Name]/of the Consortium [Name], 2025“</p> <p>„Exzellenzstrategie des Bundes und der Länder (2019–2026) PERSÖNLICH! NUR FÜR DEN DIENSTGEBRAUCH! Förderlinie Exzellenzuniversitäten – Erster Selbstbericht zur Evaluation der Universität [Name]/des Verbunds [Name], 2025“</p>			
Signature page	<p>The self-assessment report must be signed by the respective head(s) of the university or consortium. An electronic signature may be used for the digital version. For the print version, one copy with the original signature is requested.</p>			
Maximum number of characters for body text			<p>Individual universities:</p> <p>In total max. 100,000 characters incl. spaces.</p> <p>This corresponds to approx. 40 pages in Arial font, 11 pt. with 1.5-fold line spacing.</p>	<p>Consortia:</p> <p>A total of max. 125,000 characters including spaces.</p> <p>This corresponds to about 50 pages in Arial font, 11 pt. with 1.5-fold line spacing.</p>
	Part 1	a	5,000 characters (approx. 2 pages)	5,000 characters (approx. 2 pages)
		b	75,000 characters (approx. 30 pages)	95,000 characters (approx. 38 pages)
	Part 2	<p><i>(to be filled in only if at least two EXCs have been acquired)</i></p> <p>20.000 characters (approx. 8 pages)</p>		<p><i>(to be filled in only if at least three EXCs have been acquired)</i></p> <p>25.000 characters (approx. 10 pages)</p>

Page format	Upright
Line spacing, font and font size	The text should be easy to read. Guidance is provided by the above-mentioned sample formatting with 1.5-fold line spacing with Arial font and 11 pt. (for Times New Roman 12 pt.).
Pagination	Consistent page numbering of the content
Language	The report including the data annex is to be written in English.

Obligations

By submitting the self-assessment report for evaluation in the Universities of Excellence funding line, the university or consortium undertakes:

- to comply with the [DFG guidelines for ensuring good scientific practice](#) and to adequately deal with research data;
- to use the approved funding exclusively in the interest of an appropriated and targeted implementation of the funded institutional strategy;
- to hold regular discussions on progress in terms of content, the use of additional funds and further planning with the funding bodies in accordance with § 5 para. 2 of the "Excellence Strategy" Administrative Agreement of 4 November, 2022;
- to communicate the data protection information of the WR as referenced below to the data subjects presented in a personal or personally identifiable manner in the self-assessment report.

Furthermore, the university or consortium gives its consent to the publication of the evaluation results by the WR Head Office.

Data protection

The WR takes the protection of personal data very seriously. It advocates transparency with regard to the processing of the collected data. Technical and organisational measures ensure that the data protection regulations are observed.

The data protection information on the individual evaluation of the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia by the German Science and Humanities Council in accordance with Articles 13 and 14 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is available at: https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/2024/ExStra_EXU_Datenschutz_Evaluation.html

This data protection information contains, in particular, information on the purpose of the processing of personal data within the framework of the evaluation procedure, on the legal basis of the processing and on the rights of the data subjects under the GDPR.

The WR does not collect the personal data processed in the evaluation procedure itself. Rather, the personal data is made available to the WR through the submission of the self-assessment reports by the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia. In this respect, the universities and consortia commit themselves, upon submission of the self-assessment report, to communicating the above referenced data protection information of the WR to the data subjects presented in a personal or personally identifiable manner in their submitted self-assessment reports. Personal data constitutes data that can be clearly assigned to a specific person, while personally identifiable information constitutes information that can be indirectly assigned to a specific person, so that a specific person can be inferred.

II. Structure and content of the self-assessment report from the universities and consortia

In the following, you will find a model structure and explanatory notes on the writing of the self-assessment report.

German-language summary

(Max. two pages or 5,000 characters)

Part 1: Progress achieved within the framework of the funding, results and effects of the approved institutional strategy

1.a *(Max. two pages or 5,000 characters)*

At the beginning of your self-assessment report, please provide an overall assessment of the funding you have received to date within the framework of the Universities of Excellence funding line.

1.b *(Max. 75,000 characters for individual universities, max. 95,000 characters for consortia)*

For each of the four performance areas and the further areas of activity, please provide an overview of the development of the university or consortium over the course of the programme. Further, reflect on how the activities in the individual performance areas and further areas of activity have promoted the excellence of the university or consortium as a whole. Please structure your report making use of subsections for the performance areas and further areas of activity as listed below. The following overarching guiding questions are intended to serve as orientation and to assist you in presenting the developments in the various areas in an effect-orientated manner. The guiding questions should be considered, but do not have to be worked through schematically.

Input:

- Were the approved funds and resources used as planned? Were the resources sufficient to achieve the set objectives? What strategies are being pursued to integrate project-based measures into permanent funding?

Output:

- What is the current status of implementation (goal- as well as project-related) and what results have been achieved to date?

- How is the quality of implementation (incl. the achievement of target quotas and acceptance) being assessed? What processes and criteria are being used to monitor the achievement of objectives and acceptance?
- What has proven to be particularly beneficial in the implementation process, what has not been successful and for what reasons? What challenges have arisen during the implementation process and how has the university or consortium responded to them?

Outcome:

- What are the effects of the implemented institutional strategy and the approved measures? What unintended effects have arisen?
- To what extent were the measures suitable for addressing the weaknesses identified in the original application?
- To what extent were the measures suitable for promoting outstanding performance in the performance areas and further areas of activity in a sustainable and permanent manner?
- Where did adjustments and, if necessary, shifts in priorities have to be made? Where is there potential for improvement, e.g. with regard to areas that did not benefit from the funding? Where have new needs arisen?

For consortia only:

- What type of synergies and added values have resulted from the implementation and effects of the institutional strategy and the approved measures by collaborating as a consortium? In what way has this also affected the individual participating universities?

Please substantiate your descriptions, if possible, and refer to the corresponding information in the data annex. For your orientation, possible references to the data annex are listed next to the respective subsections. Table 19 provides an overview of all approved plans and the funds originally requested for them.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1.b.1 Research
<i>(incl. research/publication activities, recruitment of renowned scientists and scholars)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Table 2, Table 2.1 - Table 3.1, Table 3.2 & in particular Table 14 - Table 4 - Table 10 - Table 11 - Research Collaborations Table 12 & Table 13 |
| <p>1.b.2 Teaching</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any data available can be displayed in the body text |

- 1.b.3 Transfer** - Any data available can be displayed in the body text
- 1.b.4 Research infrastructures** - Any data available can be displayed in the body text
- 1.b.5 Early career support & Strategic Staff development**
(incl. comments on the success rates for tenure track professorships)
- Table 6 & Table 15
- Table 7 & Table 16
- Table 10
- 1.b.6 Equal Opportunity & Diversity**
(incl. promoting excellence through diversity; in coordination with the equal opportunities officers or, if applicable, with the diversity management offices at the university or consortium)
- Percentages of the corresponding categories in Table 3.1 to Table 9 as well as Table 14 to Table 16
- 1.b.7 Internationalization**
- Percentages of the corresponding categories in Table 3.1 to Table 9 as well as Table 14 to Table 16
- Table 13
- 1.b.8 Governance**
(including institutional steering mechanisms/performance review in relation to the institutional strategy and measures, internal monitoring and evaluation systems, continuous capacity for institutional renewal)
- Table 17 & Table 18
- 1.b.9 If necessary, other areas of activity,**
(if necessary) *e.g. digitalization, science communication*

Part 2: Outlook

2. *(To be answered only if the required two or three Clusters of Excellence were acquired; max. 20,000 characters for individual universities, max. 25,000 characters for consortia)*

In relation to the institutional strategy and the performance areas as well as central areas of activity, including the planning of new professorships: What **further plans** and, if applicable, strategic, content related, project-related as well as resource-related changes are envisaged within the framework of the funding as a University of Excellence or University Excellence Consortium? What future challenges are expected? Please present your rough funding plan until 2033 in Tables 20 to 22.

III. Model tables for the data annex of the self-assessment report

Note: Since information and data on implementation are also collected by the university or consortium for reporting in the Joint Science Conference (simplified Financial Status Report, cf. § 5 para. 3 of the Administrative Agreement), the data collection has been coordinated accordingly. The data collection for the individual evaluation as well as for the Financial Status Reports for the annual reporting in the Joint Science Conference is primarily based on the "Research Core Dataset" (KDSF), which is also used as a basis for new proposals in the Universities of Excellence funding line. When filling in the tables, please use, wherever possible, the data submitted in the Financial Status Reports. If there are divergences from the data in the Financial Status Reports (e. g. due to subsequent corrections), this should be explained in a footnote.

To create the data annex, please use the Excel document "[Model tables for the data annex of the self-assessment report for Universities of Excellence](#)" or "[Model tables for the data annex of the self-assessment report for University Excellence Consortia](#)" provided on the WR-website.

List of linked to Data Annexes: University of Excellence

III.1 Basic data on the university

- Table 1: Total budget 2024
- Table 2.1: Third-party funding in all performance areas and areas of activity from 2019 to 2024 by funding providers
- Table 2.2: Third-party funding in all performance areas and areas of activity from 2016 to 2024 by subject groups
- Table 2.3: Third-party funding in all performance areas and areas of activity from 2019 to 2024 by faculties
- Table 3.1: Professors 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 3.2: Professors by faculties 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 4: Professorial appointments at the university to be evaluated 2016–2024
- Table 5: Vacant professorships and professorships due to become vacant from 2027 to 2033
- Table 6: Academic and artistic staff (excluding professors) 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 7: Doctoral students and junior research group leaders 2024
- Table 8: Students and graduates

III.2 Data on the organisation and quality of research and support for early career researchers

Table 9: Completed doctorates 2018, 2021, 2024

Table 10: Third-party funded projects, prizes and awards since 2019

Table 11: Brief descriptions of research focal areas and potential areas in research currently being developed

III.3 Data on other areas of activity

Table 12: Most important partner institutions in research and other performance areas and areas of activity in Germany (maximum of ten)

Table 13: Most important partner institutions in research and other performance areas and areas of activity in other countries (maximum of ten)

III.4 Employees financed via EXU-funding

Table 14: Professors financed through funds of the Universities of Excellence funding line 2022 to 2024

Table 15: Academic and artistic staff (excluding professors) financed through funds of the Universities of Excellence funding line 2022 to 2024

Table 16: Doctoral students and junior research group leaders financed through funds of the Universities of Excellence funding line 2024

III.5 Diagrams showing structural organisation, bodies and processes

Table 17: Organisational chart showing the structural organisation of the university
(e.g. central entities, academic structural units, cross-faculty research centres)

Table 18: Diagram showing the university's central advisory, decision-making and monitoring bodies and processes

III.6 Funding plan

Table 19: Planned total funding for measures by funding category from 2019 to 2026 in € millions

Table 20: Planned total funding for continued and new measures (if applicable) by funding category from 2027 to 2033 in € millions

Table 21: Planned funding for staff, other direct expenditure and investments by year in € millions

Table 22: Planned annual total funding for continued and new measures (if applicable) in € millions

Table 23: Planned number of employees financed via EXU-funding (in FTE) by staff categories for 1 December 2030

List of linked to Data Annexes: University Excellence Consortium

III.1 Basic data on the consortium

- Table 1: Total budget 2024
- Table 2.1: Third-party funding in all performance areas and areas of activity from 2019 to 2024 by funding providers
- Table 2.2: Third-party funding in all performance areas and areas of activity from 2016 to 2024 by subject groups
- Table 3.1: Professors 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 3.2: Professors by faculties 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 4: Professorial appointments at the universities participating in the consortium 2016–2024
- Table 5: Vacant professorships and professorships due to become vacant from 2027 to 2033
- Table 6: Academic and artistic staff (excluding professors) 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 7: Doctoral students and junior research group leaders 2024
- Table 8: Students and graduates

III.2 Data on the organisation and quality of research and support for early career researchers

- Table 9: Completed doctorates 2018, 2021, 2024
- Table 10: Third-party funded projects, prizes and awards since 2019
- Table 11: Brief descriptions of research focal areas and potential areas in research currently being developed of the consortium

III.3 Data on other areas of activity

- Table 12: Most important partner institutions in research and other performance areas and areas of activity in Germany (maximum of 15)
- Table 13: Most important partner institutions in research and other performance areas and areas of activity in other countries (maximum of 15)

III.4 Employees financed via EXU-funding

- Table 14: Professors financed through funds of the Universities of Excellence funding line 2022 to 2024
- Table 15: Academic and artistic staff (excluding professors) financed through funds of the Universities of Excellence funding line 2022 to 2024
- Table 16: Doctoral students and junior research group leaders financed through funds of the Universities of Excellence funding line 2024

III.5 Diagrams showing structural organisation, bodies and processes

Table 17: Organisational chart showing the structural organisation of the consortium

Table 18: Diagram showing the consortium's central advisory, decision-making and monitoring bodies and processes

III.6 Funding plan

Table 19: Planned total funding for measures by funding category from 2019 to 2026 in € millions

Table 20: Planned total funding for continued and new measures (if applicable) by funding category from 2027 to 2033 in € millions

Table 21: Planned funding for staff, other direct expenditure and investments for each university by year in € millions

Table 22: Planned annual total funding for continued and new measures (if applicable) in € millions

Table 23: Planned number of employees financed via EXU-funding (in FTE) by staff categories for 1 December

Universities of Excellence Funding Line

IV. Funding Criteria Institutional Strategy

Overarching Criteria

- Objectives and long-term sustainability of the institutional strategy |⁹ with regard to improving the positioning of the university or university consortium in regional, national and, especially, international settings
- Effectiveness of governance and management
- Capacity for institutional renewal

Status quo and prior achievements

- Coherence of the overall profile of the university/universities in light of the individual starting situation(s)
- Level of performance:
 - ◆ Quality of research
 - ◆ Quality in the performance areas of teaching, transfer and research-infrastructure
 - ◆ Excellence of participating researchers
- Self-assessment based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses encompassing all performance areas and taking into account the starting situation(s)

Plans and potential

- Effectiveness and monitoring of the planned projects with regard to
 - ◆ improving the level of research performance
 - ◆ further developing the performance areas of teaching, transfer and research-infrastructure (in accordance with the respective priorities)
 - ◆ improving the framework conditions for researchers at all career levels
 - ◆ supporting early-career researchers and promoting their academic independence
 - ◆ supporting equal opportunity and diversity
- Plausibility of the timeline and the funding plan

| ⁹ Regarding proposals for a University Excellence Consortium, the term “institutional strategy” refers to a supra-institutional strategy of the consortium as a whole.

For University Excellence Consortia (additional funding criteria)

- Quality of cooperation
- Objectives of the consortium in relation to the objectives of the individual universities
- Synergies through the creation of the consortium and added value for the individual universities