

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

NRF / DFG PARTNERSHIP ON INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TRAINING GROUPS (IRTGs)

Background and Description of IRTGs

International Research Training Groups (IRTGs) are structured doctoral programmes run by German universities in conjunction with universities or research institutions abroad. They are funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation – DFG). As bilateral collaborations, they train scientists and academics at different stages of their careers, with a particular emphasis on doctoral researchers. IRTGs promote systematic research cooperation through joint research and qualification programmes as well as through cooperative cross-border supervision of doctoral researchers. A central feature of International Research Training Groups is the coordinated and reciprocal research visits by doctoral researchers at the respective partner institutions. IRTGs can only be established by a university, university of technology or an equivalent higher education institution which has the legal right to confer doctoral degrees (hereafter referred to as “Higher Education Institutions – HEIs”). Project-specific costs of the German university are funded through a grant of DFG. The IRTG’s partner institution abroad has to provide complementary funding acquired from a national source.

The South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and DFG have agreed on a joint application/funding scheme to support South African-German International Research Training Groups.

Structure of South African-German IRTGs

Applications for IRTGs are open to all subject areas, and interdisciplinarity in joint projects is encouraged. An IRTG should be run by two small teams of Professors in Germany and in South Africa respectively. Each team should have approximately 5 to 10 members with proven expertise both in the IRTG’s main research topic and in providing outstanding supervision to doctoral students. The participating researchers’ expertise at the two locations should be complementary and provide added value to the IRTG. Each team of Professors in an IRTG should be based at a single HEI in Germany and South Africa respectively. In convincingly justified cases, an IRTG may be proposed by more than two HEIs.

The German and South African teams in an IRTG should jointly formulate a high quality and coherent research and training programme to be implemented on both sides. The teams should have common research interests and objectives and these must be reflected in a common framework and joint project. Applications are submitted by the host HEIs. For every IRTG, one member of the team on each side serves as spokesperson (i.e. Principle Investigator) that is responsible for the proposal and the scientific coordination of the IRTG. This also includes responsibility for reporting to DFG and the NRF, respectively.

The programme should provide for regular exchanges of academic staff and doctoral students for the purposes of joint research and training. Doctoral students should spend a period of at least 6 months (and up to 1 year) in total during their PhD project at the respective partner institution for research and training and each doctoral student should have both a German and South African supervisor. On the German side, approximately 10 to 15 doctoral researchers will be funded within a single IRTG in parallel. The partner site in South Africa should support a group of doctoral researchers of the same size.

Funding Model for South African-German IRTGs

Both the DFG and the NRF will provide funding for IRTG project-specific costs incurred by their respective partner HEIs. In accordance with respective internal policies of the DFG and the NRF, funds can be requested for the following activities:

- Funding for 3-year PhD positions/fellowships,
- Project-specific funding for dissertation research projects (e.g. consumables),
- Longer-term, coordinated and reciprocal research visits (one or more with an overall duration of 6-12 months) by doctoral students to the respective partner institutions,
- Workshops, conferences and seminars,
- Short-term visits by the research Professors (i.e. supervisors).

As an additional support mechanism, both the DFG and the NRF will make funds available to support preparatory meetings for IRTG applications.

The total available funds for 1 IRTG from the South African side are R10mil for one funding phase (i.e. 4 years). This budget envelope makes provision for R5.4mil for PhD positions at R120 000 per student per annum, with the rest of the funds (R4.6mil) to be utilised for all other activities mentioned above at the discretion of the research Professors (i.e. supervisors).

Duration of Funding for South African-German IRTGs

South African-German IRTGs will be supported for a potential maximum of 9 years, divided into two funding periods of 4 years each. Continuation of funding after the first funding phase will be granted on the basis of a successful renewal proposal.

Application and Decision Making Process

Both parties will accept only joint proposals by German-South African institutions. All joint applications are to be prepared according to the respective DFG/NRF guidelines for IRTGs and will contain separate budget requests for the German and the South African partner group (refer to the web-links below for the call guideline).

The German-South African consortium will firstly need to submit a joint IRTG draft proposal to the DFG, submitted by the German host university. DFG will evaluate this draft proposal according to established procedures for IRTGs. DFG will inform the NRF of the results of the evaluations, and only positively evaluated proposals will be invited to submit a joint full proposal.

Invited full proposals are then submitted in parallel by the German host university to DFG and by the South African coordinator/university to the NRF. Submission must be in accordance with the respective funding organisation's guidelines and through the established submission systems.

Review of Funded Proposals

Renewal proposals for the second funding period are submitted in parallel by the German host university to DFG and by the South African coordinator/university to the NRF. Submission must be in accordance with the respective funding organisation's guidelines and through the established submission systems.

Full proposals and renewal proposals will be evaluated on site by a joint DFG-NRF review panel.

Preparatory Workshops

For new South African-German IRTG initiatives, DFG and the NRF provide for the possibility to support a workshop for the preparation of an IRTG proposal. Funding can be granted only if research cooperation is already established and plans for the IRTG have already been consolidated. The workshop funding may either be applied for prior to the draft proposal submission, or – after positive evaluation of the draft proposal prior to submission of the full proposal.

From the South African side the NRF will support the South African researchers' participation at a maximum amount of R50 000 for 1 workshop per IRTG. The preparatory workshop can be held in either South Africa or in Germany. Please note that the NRF will fund a workshop provided that the workshop has also been approved by DFG. Therefore, from the South African side, application for the preparatory workshop must be accompanied by a letter from the DFG confirming that the workshop has also been approved and will be supported from the German side.

Important Dates

Draft proposals can be submitted by the German host university throughout the year. It is advisable to consult with DFG on the timing of submission to ensure that the timelines for full proposals can be met. Draft proposals must be submitted via the DFG *elan* portal at <https://elan.dfg.de/en/>.

Full proposals can be submitted after positive evaluation of the draft proposal. Proposals are due **no later than 1 October each year** in parallel by the German host university to DFG and by the South African coordinator/university to the NRF, and in accordance with the respective funding organisations' guidelines. Decisions are communicated in **May each year**. Funding will commence during **September of every year**.

Renewal Proposals must be submitted 12 months prior to the end of the first funding period. DFG and the NRF will notify funded IRTGs well in advance of the submission date.

Preparatory workshops can be applied for throughout the year. It is advisable to consult with DFG and the NRF on the timing of submission.

Further Detailed Information

Comprehensive information about Research Training Groups is available on the DFG website: <http://www.dfg.de/gk/en>.

The “Guidelines for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups” provide a concise overview of the funding programme: http://www.dfg.de/formulare/50_07/50_07_en.pdf.

It is advisable to also consult the “Guidelines for Differentiating International Research Training Groups from Research Training Groups”: http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_312/1_312_en.pdf.

Draft proposals shall be prepared according to DFG form 1.303en (“Draft Proposal Preparation Instructions for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups”): http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_303/1_303_en.pdf.

Full proposals shall be prepared according to DFG form 54.05en (“Proposal Preparation Instructions for Research Training Groups and International Research Training Groups”): (http://www.dfg.de/formulare/54_05/54_05_en.pdf).

Renewal proposals must be prepared according to form 54.07en (http://www.dfg.de/formulare/54_07/54_07_en.pdf). It must include a progress report on the first funding period, prepared according to form 54.08en (http://www.dfg.de/formulare/54_08/54_08_en.pdf).

Funding for **preparatory workshops** is requested from DFG according to form 1.306en (http://www.dfg.de/formulare/1_306/1_306_en.pdf). For the NRF requirements, please contact the NRF directly.

Contact Detailed for Queries

For the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG):

Dr Sebastian Granderath
Research Careers, Research Training Groups,
Graduate Schools
Email: Sebastian.Granderath@dfg.de

For the National Research Foundation (NRF):

Lebogang Mpetle
Liaison Officer
International Relations and Cooperation
Email: Lebogang.Mpetle@nrf.ac.za