

# Funding Guidelines for the Central Research Fund (ZFF) of the University of Kassel

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# 1. Basics

The University of Kassel supports researchers in acquiring third-party funding and therefore offers internal funding lines under the umbrella of the Central Research Fund (German *Zentraler Forschungsfonds, ZFF*). The goals of these programs are to promote individual career development and to advance the university's research foci. The ZFF aims at strengthening co-operations within the university (e.g., across disciplines and departments), at supporting young researchers at stages R2/R3<sup>1</sup> in developing an independent research profile, and at sharpening the university's third-party profile.

The ZFF comprises seven funding lines, each with its own target group and focus, such as first-time proposal writers or established researchers who intend to develop new research areas. Scientists who are planning to apply for third party funding receive targeted support. Depending on the funding line, both material and personnel costs can be funded.

The Research Support coordinates the Central Research Fund. With this handout, we will give you an overview of the funding lines including aim, target group and scope. This should provide support in order to select a suitable funding line.

The Research Support will organize information events prior to each call with time for questions.

The regulations listed below in sections 2–6 apply to the funding lines **Project**, **Coop**, **Cluster**, **Individually Qualified** and **Pilot**. For applications in the funding lines **Bridge** and **Focus**, please contact the Research Support directly.



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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the profiles by the EU commission for the different career stages in research: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>

## 2. Submission and Selection Procedure

Submissions are handled digitally via the research information system Coveris. Exceptions are the funding lines **Bridge** and **Focus**, for which proposals can be submitted anytime. The same applies for external early career researchers, who intend to set up a Junior Research Group in Kassel and aim for the support measures of the funding line **Individually Qualified (Success)**. For these funding lines, proposals are sent to the Research Support by Email.

In principle, proposals are only processed in case the project is not under review elsewhere or funding has already been approved by another institution. This should prevent an excessive number of proposals and ensure that applications are processed quickly. In addition, ZFF funds cannot be spent on support services that are already offered at the university, such as research on funding modalities. Generally, doctoral projects are supported as the funding duration and funding scope are not appropriate. The funding line **Individually Qualified (Success)** is an exception here, as additional funds are made available in case the third-party proposal is successful.

The selection of eligible projects is a multi-stage process. After the deadline and formal review by the Research Support, the proposals are reviewed by the Research Commission. The Research Commission consists of a sub-commission for the humanities, social sciences and arts, and a sub-commission for technical, natural and agricultural sciences. Please select the responsible subcommittee for each proposal during the submission process in Coveris.

With the exception of the funding lines **Coop** and **Project**, there is no fixed budget per funding line, allowing a selection exclusively on the quality criteria. For the funding lines **Coop** and **Project**, however, a fixed annual budget does exist.

Promising initiatives in the **Pilot** and **Cluster** funding lines are invited to present their project to the Research Commission as a second selection step. In the case of the **Individually Qualified** funding line, the presentation of the project idea takes place if required.

In addition to the recommendation on the eligibility of a proposal, the Research Commission can also make suggestions for changes, for example, with regard to the funding period or funding amount of individual project proposals.

The decision on the project funding is made by the Executive Board on the basis of the recommendations made by the Research Commission. In case of proposals from external applicants under the **Individually Qualified (success)** funding line, the positive funding decision of the third-party funding body is decisive for internal funding.

# 3. Proposal Instructions

The ZFF bases on a standardized proposal form similar across all funding lines (except for **Bridge**, **Focus**, and **Individually Qualified (Success)**). Proposals may be written in German or English and require the following information:

## 1. General (Entry in Converis)

- Program line
- Proposal number (generated automatically)
- Selection of subcommission
- Call incl. deadline
- Title
- Applicants



## 2. Proposal details (Integration in Converis)

- Description (as PDF document, 4,000 characters per category)
  - State of the Art
  - Preliminary work
  - Content and objectives of the ZFF-project
  - Content and objectives of the targeted third-party project
  - Literature (max. 8 publications)
- Own estimation on Originality and innovative power of the project (Funding line **Pilot** only)
  - Added value of the project: (a) for the artistic area, (b) for the scientific area (Funding line **Coop** only)
- Schedule and budget plan
- Perspective for third-party funding
- Success criteria

## 3. Appendix (Link / Entry in Converis)

- Publications within the last three years
- CVs of involved researchers
- Acquired third party funding within the last four years
- Previous funding from university-internal funds within the last 5 years
- Miscellaneous

For the funding lines **Bridge** and **Focus** as well as for the additional funds in case of success for **Individually Qualified (Success)**, the proposal is handed in after consultation with the Research Support, by describing which funds are needed for which purpose. Approval for the **Bridge** and **Individually Qualified (Success)** funding line is only granted after written confirmation from the third-party organisation.

## 4. Selection criteria

Regardless of the funding line, proposals are selected according to uniform criteria. For the funding lines **Coop** and **Pilot**, additional selection criteria apply as listed below. Criteria applying to all funding lines are:

- Scientific quality of the proposal
- Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding
- Active support of early career researchers
- Contribution of the research project to strengthening the profile and central research pillars of the University of Kassel
- Contribution to promoting new research topics

Proposals in the **Pilot** funding line are reviewed specifically with respect to below mentioned criteria:

- Originality and innovative power of the project
- Scientific and technological contribution for a long-term research vision
- Possible knowledge gain in case of failure

Additional selection criteria also apply to the **Coop** funding line due to its special focus on enhancing cooperation between the faculties of the University and the Kunsthochschule Kassel:

- Potential to establish a long-term interdisciplinary cooperation

## 5. Proposal feedback and funding notification

For all proposals submitted via Converis, feedback is provided to the applicants in form of a short report via a digital system message. The short report summarizes the main results of the formal review by the Research Support and the evaluation of the proposal by the members of the Research Commission. The aim of the report is to make the decision-making process transparent and comprehensible for the applicants. In addition, the short report should support the third-party funding strategy.

The formal approval of all proposal is done by a decision of the presidium.

## 6. Reporting

Funding through the ZFF is associated with a reporting obligation. For one-year projects, a report on the project is to be uploaded in Converis 6 months after the end of the funding period. For projects with a duration of several years, there is also an obligation to submit annual interim reports. Further funds can only be

accessed after reporting on the use of funds for the previous year. The request to submit the annual or final report is made automatically by a system message in Converis.

The reports are divided into a scientific and a project-specific part. The scientific part provides information on the developments achieved in terms of content and methodology, as well as on publications that have arisen or are planned in the course of the project. The project-specific part serves to evaluate the progress made in applying for third-party funding as well as the projects' contributions to the active support of early career researchers.

## 7. Funding lines

### 7.1 Coop

Goals	The funding line <b>Coop</b> aims at encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration between faculties and the Kunsthochschule (School of Art and Design).
Focus	This funding line targets projects, from which opportunities for a long-term collaboration arise. Open access is recommended for publications.
Target group	All researchers at the University of Kassel who are planning an interdisciplinary project in collaboration with the Kunsthochschule are eligible to apply. At least one PI must be a member of the Kunsthochschule.
Scope	Maximum funding is 15,000 € for the funding line per year, which can be used for material and travel costs as well as hiring student assistants. The maximum funding duration is one year.
Submission	The proposal is submitted via Converis.
Deadline	1 November, in case there are remaining funds, a second funding period is possible for 1 May
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific quality of the proposal</li> <li>• Active support of early career researchers</li> <li>• Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel</li> <li>• Contribution to promoting new research topics</li> <li>• Potential to establish a long-term interdisciplinary co-operation</li> </ul>



## 7.2 Project

Goal	The funding line <b>Project</b> supports researchers in preparing a proposal for individual third-party funding.
Focus	This funding line targets projects with chances of submitting a promising individual third-party funding proposals. Open access is recommended for publications.
Target group	All researchers of the University of Kassel. Early career researchers (R2+R3) in particular are encouraged to apply.
Scope	Maximum funding is 12,000 € per proposal, which can be used for material and travel costs as well as hiring student assistants. The maximum funding duration is one year.
Submission	The proposal is submitted via Converis.
Deadline	1 February/ 1 May / 1 November
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientific quality of the proposal</li><li>• Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding</li><li>• Active support of young researchers</li><li>• Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel</li><li>• Contribution to promoting new research topics</li></ul>



## 7.3 Individually Qualified and Individually Qualified (Success)

Goals	The funding line <b>Individually Qualified</b> supports applicants who are preparing promising proposals for individual excellence-oriented junior researcher programs (such as DFG-Emmy Noether, ERC SG).
Focus	This funding line targets projects with chances to submit a promising proposal for the above-mentioned programmes. Open access is recommended for publications.
Target group	All early career researchers (R2+R3) who locate their third-party funded project at the University of Kassel are eligible to apply, but only members of the University of Kassel can apply for the first preparatory year.





Scope	<p>Maximum funding is 20,000 € for the preparatory year, and it can be used for material and travel costs as well as student assistants. The funding duration is one year.</p> <p><b>Individually qualified (Success):</b> In case the third party funding is approved, additional funding of up to 200,000 € can be made available. This funding can be used flexibly for staff or material costs within the funded project. The funding can also be used to secure the contract of the applicant after the external funding period. The decision on how the funds are spend must be made in advance.</p>
Submission	<p>The proposal is submitted via Converis.</p> <p><b>Individually qualified (Success):</b> External applicants, who would like to apply for the 200,000 € are asked to contact the Research Support.</p>
Deadline	<p>Proposals for the preparatory year can be submitted until 15 May and 15 October.</p> <p><b>Individually qualified (Success):</b> The application for the additional funding should be submitted before the third-party proposal is handed in.</p>
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific quality of the proposal</li> <li>• Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding</li> <li>• Active support of young researchers</li> <li>• Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel</li> <li>• Contribution to promoting new research topics</li> </ul>

## 7.4 Pilot

Goal	<p>The funding line Pilot supports Blue Sky initiatives and aims for opening up fundamentally new and under-researched areas that lie outside existing research directions or scientific paradigms.</p>
Focus	<p>This funding line targets innovative, under-studied topics and should lead to a promising third-party proposal. Open access is recommended for publications.</p>
Target group	<p>All professors of the University of Kassel are eligible for funding. Postdocs can apply after consultation with the head of their unit. Including early career researchers in the proposal is strongly encouraged.</p>
Scope	<p>Maximum funding is 110,000 € and can be used for staff, travel and material. The funding duration is between 6–18 months.</p>

Submission	The proposal is submitted via Converis.
Deadline	15 May / 15 October
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific quality of the proposal</li> <li>• Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding</li> <li>• Active support of early career researchers</li> <li>• Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel</li> <li>• Contribution to promoting new research topics</li> <li>• Originality and Innovative power of the project</li> <li>• Scientific and technological contribution for a long-term research vision</li> <li>• Possible knowledge gain in case of failure</li> </ul>



## 7.5 Cluster

Goal	The funding line <b>Cluster</b> supports collaborative projects that advance the thematic focus in line with the University of Kassel's development plan and thus contribute to the medium-term excellence capability.
Focus	This funding line targets projects, which aims for submitting a funding draft for a collaborative proposal (SFB/GRK/TRR) within the last year of funding. Open access is recommended for publications, if any.
Target group	All professors of the University of Kassel can apply when aiming for a collaborative research project with the University of Kassel as lead institution. Postdocs can be co-applicants; consortia are strongly encouraged to involve early-career researchers in the proposal.
Scope	Maximum funding is 70,000 € per year and can be used for staff, travel and material. Project duration is between 18 and 36 months
Submission	The proposal is submitted via Converis.
Deadlines	15 May / 15 October

- Selection criteria
- Scientific quality of the proposal
  - Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding
  - Active support of young researchers
  - Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel
  - Contribution to promoting new research topics

## 7.6 Bridge



Goal	The funding line Bridge supports initiatives that have received an invitation to submit a full proposal for collaborative research projects (GRK/SFB/TRR) in order to foster the evaluation and – if applicable – a quick project start.
Focus	This funding line targets projects that aim for developing a full proposal for a collaborative research initiative. Open access is recommended for publications, if any.
Target group	All professors of the University of Kassel can apply when aiming for a collaborative research project with the University of Kassel as lead institution. Postdocs can be co-applicants; consortia are strongly encouraged to involve early career researchers in the proposal.
Scope	The maximum funding sum is 150,000 €, which can be spent on staff, travel and material costs.
Submission	The proposal is submitted directly to the Research Support together with the invitation to submit a full proposal of the third-party funding organisation.
Deadline	A submission is possible at any time.
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific quality of the proposal</li> <li>• Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding</li> <li>• Active support of young researchers</li> <li>• Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel</li> <li>• Contribution to promoting new research topics</li> </ul>

## 7.7 Focus

Goals	The funding line <b>Focus</b> supports collaborative initiatives in enhancing draft proposals through external coaching and thus promotes coherence in the proposal.
Focus	The aim of this funding line is to arrange workshops with external coaches to promote group cohesion and draft writing as well as conferences, workshops, coaching sessions and other suitable formats for the formation and consolidation of consortia for large-scale applications, as well as the possibility of applying for an additional €2,000 for the involvement of external expertise. Open access is recommended for publications, if any.
Target group	Professors of the University of Kassel, who intend to write a collaborative research proposal are eligible for the funding
Scope	Maximum funding is 5,000 € (plus an additional 2,000 € for an external coach, if applicable) for material and travel costs.
Submission	The proposal is submitted via the Research Support with reference to existing work
Deadline	A submission is possible at any time.
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientific quality of the proposal</li><li>• Potential to acquire third-party funds in order to ensure a permanent funding</li><li>• Active support of young researchers</li><li>• Contribution of the research project to strengthening the main research foci of the University of Kassel</li><li>• Contribution to promoting new research topics</li></ul>

## 8. Contact

The Research Support, which is responsible for coordinating the ZFF, provides information to the calls by organizing and conducting information events and answers questions about individual program lines or reporting. Within the Research Support team, Dr. Anna Bauer takes care of the ZFF: [anna.bauer@uni-kassel.de](mailto:anna.bauer@uni-kassel.de). You can also contact the team address [forschung@uni-kassel.de](mailto:forschung@uni-kassel.de).