

# 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 five active 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 university Research Support service coordinates the Central Research Fund. This handout provides you with an overview of the funding lines including aims, target groups and scopes, to aid you in identifying a suitable funding line for your research.

The regulations listed below in sections 2–6 apply to the funding lines **Project, Coop, Cluster, Individually Qualified** and ~~**Pilot**~~ (suspended). For applications in the funding lines **Bridge** (suspended) 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/career-development/researchers>

## 2. Submission and Selection Procedure

Submissions are handled digitally via the research information system Coveris. Exceptions are the funding lines **Bridge (suspended)** and **Focus**, for which proposals can be submitted anytime by e-mail.

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 spend 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 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 (suspended)** 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.

## Instructions

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

1. General (Entry in Coveris)
  - 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)
  - Generally understandable summary of the project
  - 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** (suspended) 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 (suspended)** and **Focus**, the proposal is handed in after consultation with Research Support, accompanied by details of funds needed and for which purpose. Approval for the **Bridge (suspended)** 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 (suspended)**, 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 (suspended)** 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 (School of Art and Design):

- 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 proposal. Open access is recommended for publications.
Target group	All researchers at the beginning of their career at the University of Kassel are eligible to apply: (i) postdocs in the first 6 years after completing their PhD, and (ii) professors in the first 5 years after assuming their professorship in Kassel.
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

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) at Kassel who aim to locate their third-party funded project at the University of Kassel are eligible to apply.
Scope	Maximum funding is 60,000 € per project, and funds can be used for personnel, material and travel costs as well as student assistants. Maximum funding duration is one year.
Submission	The proposal is submitted via Converis.
Deadline	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



## 7.4 Pilot (suspended)

Goal	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.
Focus	This funding line targets innovative, under-studied topics and should lead to a promising third-party proposal. Open access is recommended for publications.
Target group	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.
Scope	Maximum funding is 110,000 € and can be used for staff, travel and material. The funding duration is between 6–18 months.
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 within the first 10 years of assuming their first professorship 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 90,000 € per year and can be used for personnel, travel and material (i.e. max. 135,000 € altogether). Max. project duration is 18 months.
Submission	The proposal is submitted via Converis.
Deadlines	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 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>



## 7.6 Bridge (suspended)

Goal	<del>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.</del>
Focus	<del>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.</del>

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
- 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

## 8. Contact

Research Support, which is responsible for coordinating ZFF, provides information to the calls via their website and the FIT newsletter, and answers queries about funding lines or reporting. Research adviser Dr Anna Bauer is responsible for 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).