

HHU Postdoc Guidelines

General remarks

Postdoctoral researchers (postdocs) make an important contribution to research and teaching at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (HHU). They are recognised researchers who take up temporary employment after completing their doctoral thesis in order to further develop and sharpen their academic profile¹. The postdoc phase is characterised by self-directed and goal-oriented career development supported by a supervisor.

In order to ensure a fair and inclusive research culture for postdocs, HHU has also committed to a range of HR measures in its Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), such as the family-friendly organisation of events and University-wide health management. Supervisors are called upon to support the mental health of postdocs, e.g. through effective workload management, effective measures and practices to combat discrimination, bullying and harassment, and the provision of appropriate support for those who report problems.

The following guidelines are intended to provide a productive and inspiring working environment as well as good research conditions and opportunities for personal development for HHU postdocs. The guidelines apply regardless of the type of funding for the position.

Outline of the Postdoc Position

Before the start of the postdoc phase, supervisors and postdocs should hold a meeting to clarify mutual expectations with regard to the postdoc phase and agree the portfolio of tasks associated with the given position as well as the necessary resources and access to scientific infrastructure. Set out in writing, this agreement serves as a reference point for subsequent reflection meetings, which should take place on a regular basis (at least twice a year).

Career Development Plan

As part of the target agreement, postdocs develop a personal career development plan that is subject to ongoing evolution and regular revision together with the supervisor twice a year. Essential elements that should be included in the career development plan are

- (a) the envisaged professional future,
- (b) the desired qualification goals (all career paths should be considered on equal footing),
- (c) personal research goals (which can be reflected in e.g. publications, conference presentations, collaborations, etc.) and a time line,

¹ According to the [profile category description of the European Commission](#), postdocs are in the R2 phase (recognised researcher).

(d) the necessary qualification steps (e.g. habilitation or habilitation-equivalent achievements, teaching experience, experience in personnel management as well as training in key professional skills, mobility),

(e) the assumption of administrative responsibilities.

Visibility and Profiling

Given the possibility, supervisors shall strive to support the visibility and profiling of the postdocs by

a) supporting their work toward attaining (co-)authorship on publications,

b) allowing them time for independent research (within the existing requirements of the funding body) and opportunities to collaborate,

c) enabling them to participate in conferences or organise their own such events independently,

d) enabling research stays at home and abroad,

e) giving them the opportunity to participate in training measures on career-related topics and to acquire corresponding skills,

f) providing guidance on applications for research grants and other scientific awards.

Teaching Activities

Postdocs whose employment is financed via University funds are obligated to teach in accordance with the academic workload guidelines. Third-party funded postdocs are encouraged to participate in teaching in order to obtain corresponding skills.

Leadership Experience

Postdocs should be given the opportunity to supervise students or guide doctoral researchers in order to gain leadership experience.

Academic Self-Governance

Postdocs participate in the academic self-governance of HHU (e.g. by taking over duties in the department, acting as postdoc representatives and participating in appointment committees) within the scope of their possibilities and benefit from their engagement.

Research Contributions

Significant contributions made by individual postdocs are transparently presented in project proposals or publications in accordance with the rules of good scientific practice.

Third-Party Funding

Postdocs who acquire their own third-party funding are autonomously responsible for managing the funding and the project in accordance with the funding rules. Administrative support is provided by the institutional administration and after consultation with the supervisor.

Flexible Work

Postdocs agree with their supervisor whether and to what extent flexible working arrangements, e.g. remote working, are possible.

Work-Life Balance

Supervisors shall strive to support a healthy work environment.

Career development discussion and feedback

Supervisors are called upon to give postdocs regular feedback (at least twice a year) on their academic performance in relation to the results gained and the progress made. Possible career perspectives (including non-academic ones) should be considered at least twelve months before the end of the contract.

Contact Points for Postdocs at HHU

The Junior Scientist and International Researcher Center (JUNO) is the central contact point for postdocs at HHU. International postdocs are supported by the JUNO Welcome Center. Similarly, the Service Center for Good Teaching and Learning (SeLL) offers further training, advice, information and exchange for lecturers from all faculties. The SelmaMeyerMentoring programme provides special support for the career development of female early career researchers.