

Funding Initiative

Lichtenberg-Professorships

Deadline

November 1

Contact

For applications in the natural and engineering sciences, including medicine:

Dr. Anja Fließ

Phone: +49 (0)511 8381 374

Fax: +49 (0)511 8381 4374

E-mail: fliess@volkswagenstiftung.de

For applications in the humanities and social sciences:

Dr. Gudrun Tegeder

Phone: +49 (0)511 8381 289

Fax: +49(05) 8381 4289

E-mail: tegeder@volkswagenstiftung.de

VolkswagenStiftung

Kastanienallee 35

D-30519 Hannover

www.volkswagenstiftung.de

1. Objectives

The “Lichtenberg Professorships” are designed to combine support for both **persons as well as institutions**. The Volkswagen Foundation will provide support to outstandingly qualified (junior) academics in connection with innovative fields of research located between the disciplines as well as new teaching concepts within the respective research environment. The funding which will be made available for a period of up to **eight years** is expected to pave an interesting new path in higher education and research. On the one hand, young scholars will be offered a future perspective on a kind of “**tenure-track**”, and on the other hand institutions will gain a better basis for planning – both from a strategic point of view with respect to content as well as concerning personnel planning.

It is intended to support about ten professorships at universities in Germany per year; also non-German nationals are eligible for funding. There are no thematic restrictions; hence, the funding is available equally to applicants from the humanities and the social sciences, or the natural and engineering sciences as well as medicine.

2. Target groups

The main target group will comprise **junior scholars (W1)**. This group is to be given the opportunity at an early stage in their career to independently pursue research in new and interdisciplinary areas. Candidates, who - as a general rule - obtained their PhD within the last four years, should have a proven research record and preferably some experience working abroad. Since obtaining their PhD they should have published some outstanding papers. The main selection criteria comprise the applicant’s qualifications together with the thematic focus, which should be in an innovative and thus daring field of research, as well as the scientific environment and how the new professorship is embedded in the university.

Additionally, the initiative also aims at outstanding young scholars who - as a general rule - obtained their PhD at the most seven years previously (**W2**).

Candidates for these professorships should **preferably be returning or coming to Germany from abroad**. A change of the academic environment has to have taken place during the last five years or is intended with the professorship applied for; the return to the university where the PhD or the “Habilitation” has been obtained will be funded only in exceptional cases and requires a separate justification and the evidence of academic independence as well. In these cases, there will be more rigorous criteria than for the main target group, both with regard to personal qualifications as well as to the thematic scope of the professorship. Applications will not be considered in the event that research interests lie in the established core areas of their respective discipline.

3. General conditions for applications

The initiative to apply for funding may originate on either side – either the person or the institution – but the actual application may only be submitted by the respective researcher. Applications are to be accompanied by a statement on the part of the university management of the (intended) host institution as well as the respective unit and/or department. In this statement the university elucidates the frame conditions and to what extent the thematic focus of the new professorship fits in with the main scientific thrust of the unit/department and substantive strategic objectives with regard to research and teaching as well as personnel planning. Merely a letter of support from the head of department (Dekanat) or the Chair will **not** be considered sufficient. Should no binding statements of the host institution regarding the tenure track be provided when submitting the proposal the applicant has to state two more institutions where the professorship could be established and give reasons for these selections, in case the preferred solution cannot be implemented. A prerequisite for the allocation of funds is that in any case the university enters into a firm **commitment** to progressively assume the successful professorship and its infrastructure, i.e. upon a positive evaluation (cf. section 4). The institution must also guarantee that a regular W2 or W3 professorship will be included in the university’s budget for the period following expiry of the funding. The contractual agreements pertaining to tenure for the professorship of the applicant are to be concluded at the latest in connection with the evaluation.

The Foundation expects that the university will make a significant **contribution** from the outset, which should consist of a basic share from its own budget and the use of resources. In the humanities and social sciences there must also be assurances regarding access to libraries, archives, or computer facilities; for professorships in science and engineering the use of equipment and workshops. Furthermore, assurances have to be made to the effect that any necessary rooms/experimental laboratories will be made available. In the case of the W2 professorships a contribution normally amounting to at least 10 % of the budget is expected.

In the event that state laws contain variant arrangements, the institution should provide assurances that the necessary rights and obligations of a professorship will be put in place for the W1 candidates as well. In order to ensure that the junior scientists are not burdened with an unduly high teaching load or too many administrative duties during the initial support years, upper limits for the first three years should be negotiated and agreed to in writing. Both these areas of duty should be given significantly more attention in the following support period.

4. Application, selection and evaluation procedure

Applications for W1 or W2 Lichtenberg-Professorships **can only be submitted by the candidate**. In addition to an exhaustive description of the subject matter of the proposed professorship and its innovative thrust also in international comparison together with the concept agreed upon with the respective institution (c.f. section 3), the Foundation expects convincing arguments for the choice of institution, that the thematic focus is embedded in the respective research environment as well as details of how much and what type of teaching and committee work is foreseen. For further details of what is to be included please refer to the 'Checklist for Applicants'. Declarations made by the university are necessary (c.f. section 3).

Applications will be evaluated on their merits by the Foundation in cooperation with international reviewers. Subsequently, a limited number of applicants will be invited to deliver a presentation in front of an interdisciplinary panel of experts at the Foundation. The professorship is to be taken up at the latest one year after the approval of funding.

At the end of the fourth year, or at the beginning of the fifth year, an **evaluation** is to take place, conducted jointly by the university and the Foundation with the participation of external referees to be chosen by the Foundation. The evaluation will provide the basis for the ultimate decision on tenure. (The university may conduct an evaluation itself at an earlier stage, especially in cases where the law prescribes that an evaluation must take place following a period of three years.)

5. Scope and duration of the funding

Initially, a five-year period of funding is envisaged with an amount of EUR 0.8 to 1.5 million per professorship, corresponding to the requirements of the respective research area and the candidates' individual situation. Subsequent to a positive evaluation, the Foundation may approve additional degressive support for a period of up to three years; the modality and scope is to be clarified between the university, the professor and the Foundation at the time of evaluation at the latest. Funding for the five-year duration could be broken down as follows: funds for the W1 or W2 professorship; funds for 1.5 scientists positions (divisible); funds for running costs, equipment and travel. Should the need arise, a professor in sciences or engineering may also apply for funding of a TA position.

Generally speaking, however, the composition and funding of the professorship depends on the specific requirements of the subject area involved and can be handled by the Foundation in a flexible manner. In special cases, funds may also be made available for larger apparatus specifically required for research work. The basic assumption, however, is that fundamental items of basic equipment are available and that larger apparatus can be procured by the university or through the DFG- funding program "Forschungs-großgeräte".

In consideration of possible family commitments, part-time occupation of the positions, corresponding with an extension of the overall funding period, is possible as well. Where there is an urgent need for the W1 professor, grants can be supplied to provide for child day-time care.

6. Submission of applications, deadlines and eligibility

Applications must reach the Volkswagen Foundation at the latest by **November 1 in any given year** (postmark date), electronically (e-mail or CD-ROM, application and appendix as separate pdf-files, see form) and in written form. Proposals in the field of the sciences, engineering sciences, and medicine are to be submitted in the English language, accompanied by a summary in German and English. Applications should be formulated clearly and should provide sufficient information to allow evaluation by the Foundation and its experts. Along with the points described in 2. to 4. the application should include the information listed in the "Form for Applications".