

Funding Initiative

Lichtenberg-Professorships

Deadline

November 1

Contact

Dr. Anja Fließ
Phone: +49 (0)511 8381 374
Fax: +49 (0)511 8381 4374
E-mail: fliess@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 up to seven 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 should have obtained their PhD within the last four years and, as a general rule, should have ample experience of working abroad. Since being awarded 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 ago (**W2**). Candi-

dates 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 granted will be funded only in exceptional cases and requires a separate justification together with evidence of academic independence. 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 faculty 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 faculty/department. The statement should also include a description of the substantive strategic objectives with regard to research and teaching as well as personnel planning. Merely a letter of support from the head of the faculty (Dekanat) or the Chair will **not** be considered sufficient. In the event that it is not possible to obtain a binding statement from the host institution regarding the tenure track when submitting the proposal, the applicant has to state two more institutions where the professorship could be established and give reasons for these selections. 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 also be put in place for the W1 candidates. In order to ensure that the young researchers 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**. Candidates should provide a detailed description of the thematic focus of the proposed professorship and its innovative thrust in national and 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 (cf. section 6). Moreover, applications must include (binding) declarations on the part of the proposed hosting university (cf. 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 the Foundation to deliver a presentation in front of an interdisciplinary panel of experts. As a rule, the professorship is to be taken up at the latest six months following 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 hosting 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 its own evaluation 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 funding

Initially, a five-year period of funding is envisaged in an amount of EUR 0.8 to 1.5 million per professorship, according 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. In case the prerequisites should change during the first five years of funding (e.g. due to fending off a chair offer) funds for the degressive funding period will be limited to support for the final phasing-out of the grant. Funding for the five-year duration could be broken down as follows: funds for the W1 or W2 professorship; funds for 1 postdoc position and 1 PhD position or 2 to 3 PhD positions (flexibly 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. As a general rule, funds for PhD students should cover at least 50 % of their regular working hours. In case the competitive national or international academic system requires funds for more than 50 % of their regular working hours it is also possible to apply for.

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 (see leaflet "Information on family-related benefits").

Electronic application

Please use the Foundation's electronic application system on the internet.

<https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en>

Please remember to print the cover sheet provided, sign it and send it to us. Instructions on the electronic application system are provided online.

6. Submission of applications and check-list

Applications have to be submitted to the Volkswagen Foundation by **November 1 in any given year** at the latest and are to be written **in English**. Applications in German will only be accepted in exceptional cases and only in agreement with the Foundation prior to submission of documents. All applications have to be submitted using the Foundation's electronic application system. The following data and documents (PDF files) are requested:

Web forms including information on applicant, grant recipient (intended host institution), title, duration, cost budget and on legal statement.

Attachments:

1. Cover letter
2. Summary of objectives and substantiation of broad concept, reasons for choice of host institution; in German and English (max. one page each, two separate PDF files)
3. Research proposal (max. 25 pages, 12 pt, 1.5 spacing)

The research proposal should include the following information:

- Detailed description stating the thematic scope of the proposed professorship (substantiation of innovative aspects, also to take into account the status of international research, elucidation of methods and future perspectives pertaining to the research area to be pursued)
- An elaborated concept for proposed research (including work program and time schedule) and for teaching (details of hours involved: minimum two, maximum four hours/week per semester during the first three years for W1)
- Reasons for choice of host institution and description of the academic environment, including any existing collaborations, both at venue as well as national and international, details of the thematic areas represented by participating scholars
- Details of the contributions to be made by the university and of structural frame conditions (e.g. workshops, archives, availability of equipment)
- Details of support received elsewhere (projects with titles, life span, amount of funding and funding institution), a delimitation concerning the application made to the VolkswagenStiftung, where appropriate

4. Quotations (just one PDF file if possible)
5. Curriculum vitae and lists of publications
 - Applicant

- Professors who may be of importance for the research environment of the new professorship (one page each, if possible only one PDF file)
6. Publications of the applicant (just one PDF file if possible)
- up to five most important publications in the case of the natural and engineering sciences as well as medicine
 - up to three pieces of work, in case of monographs excerpts incl. list of contents, altogether not to exceed 70 pages in the case of humanities and social sciences
7. **(Binding) Letter of Commitment from the University** (agreed to by university management as well as by the faculty (Fakultät) and/or the department (Fachbereich) and signed/authorized by these bodies).

Should no binding statements of the host institution 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.

Please ask the University to author the Binding Letter following the scheme described below.

The following information should be included (if applicable):

- The strategic concept of respective faculty and department
 - Strategic orientation and objectives of the applicant with regard to the subject matter under investigation, and personnel planning for the next five to ten years
 - Frame conditions and integration of the thematic focus of the new professorship
 - Details of the host university's contribution as well as the resources and rooms which will be made available
 - Progressive assumption of costs for the professorship and its infrastructure (positions and other expenses) by year six to eight (in the case of successful evaluation) and W2 or W3 professorships (held by the candidate) to be included in university budget upon termination of funding
 - In the event that state laws contain variant arrangements, the **W1** professorships should equate with junior professorships with regard to rights and obligations
 - In case of **W1** professorships: Agreement on upper limits for teaching and administrative duties
 - In case of **W2** professorships: details of the co-financing, normally amounting to at least 10 % of the budget.
8. Detailed substantiation of the individual budget items in consideration of the equipment already available and in terms of the working plan