Call

Humanities, Cultural Studies, Social Sciences and Professional Practice in Graduate Education

1. What is the aim of this call?

The aim of this call is to provide a once-only concentrated and paradigmatic stimulus for stronger orientation to practice in doctoral education at German universities.

The majority of postdocs take up occupations outside the university realm, e.g. at other scientific institutions, in private enterprises, or as freelancers. Despite the fact that today's economy and our digitalized knowledge-based society generate strong demand for leadership personnel and other employees with scientific qualifications, the system of doctoral education at German universities fails to take this development sufficiently into account. This particularly affects the humanities, cultural studies and the social sciences since outside the teaching profession rather few other occupations are directly open to these disciplines—and permeability between science and the economy is low in any case.

2. Scope of funding

The initiative comprises two lines of funding:

Funding line 1

Graduate research groups in the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences

Funding line 2

Practical modules for doctoral students enrolled in graduate schools for the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences

Funding line 1:
Graduate research groups in the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences

Funding can be allocated for pilot-type graduate research groups in the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences in which the members are trained both for careers in academia as well as for other non-university career options by gaining work experience in different relevant fields of practice. The

practical element must by closely linked thematically to the doctoral dissertation and fit in with the general thrust of the doctoral project.

Up to seven doctoral positions can be funded per group. In addition, one postdoc position can be applied for per group. The postdocs are to write a "second book", or an equivalent work, and simultaneously act as group coordinators. They may participate in the practical element, but are under no obligation to do so.

Funding is subject to approval of a concept that ensures both high-quality doctoral research and intensive supervision as well as the inclusion of insights on professional practice relevant for the dissertation topic. Proposals must include details of the planned cooperation with non-university partners or partners external to the respective field. Applications must include a statement issued by the respective university leadership concerning the material and room facilities to be made available to the graduate research group. The practical elements are compulsory for the doctoral students and should have terms of six to twelve months.

In consideration of the longer times subsequently needed for completion of dissertations, the doctoral positions can be approved for periods of up to 4 years. The postdoc position can likewise be funded for up to 4 years (this position, however, need not be occupied by the same person for the whole time).

Funding line 2:
Practical modules for doctoral students enrolled in graduate schools for the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences

This funding offer addresses all university graduate schools, including those run in collaboration with non-university institutions in the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences. However, graduate schools already funded by the German Research Foundation are excluded from funding.

Per graduate school, funding can be allocated for up to 15 practical modules with terms of between six and maximum twelve months. Funding takes the form of a monthly lump-sum grant of EUR 1,000, thus the maximum funding amount per doctoral student is EUR 12,000.

Up to five of the 15 modules can be earmarked for future research projects planned to start in the year following the submission of proposals. The responsibility for granting these modules lies with the respective graduate school. Applications are to be submitted by the graduate school in the person(s) of their spokesperson(s).

A condition for funding is that the doctoral positions in question are financially secured over a three-year period. The funding of the practical module will be granted beyond this three-year period. The practical module must be closely linked thematically to the dissertation and fit in with the general thrust of the doctoral project. The doctoral students must therefore start work on their dissertation in the first year of their doctoral project.

Proposals must include details of the planned cooperation with non-university partners or partners external to the respective field.

Furthermore, proposals must clearly show how it is intended to ensure that integration of the practical elements in the respective graduate school can be sustainably maintained when the Foundation's once-only funding expires.

3. How many projects can be funded?

The Foundation is prepared to fund up to five graduate research groups and up to 10 graduate schools with up to 15 practical modules each.

4. Who is to submit the proposal?

In **Funding line 1**, all professors engaged at German universities are able to submit applications. They must be able to provide an accordant statement from their university leadership.

In **Funding line 2**, all spokespersons or coordinators of university graduate schools are able to submit applications. However, graduate schools already funded by the German Research Foundation are excluded from funding.

5. How do I apply?

You must submit an application for funding that includes the following:

Funding line 1:

- a thematic concept of the graduate research group and the disciplines involved
- the structure of the research group and the planned work program
- exemplary doctoral projects
- if applied for: Description of the postdoc position
- Information concerning the supervision of doctoral students
- a detailed list of the practical partners with accordant statements (statements are not included in the 15 application pages)
- information on potential non-university career fields
- information on advertising positions and planned start of research group (in the event you already have a proposal to fill the postdoc position: candidate's résumé)
- itemized budget plan with substantiation
- list of thematically relevant literature
- résumés of applicant(s) and supervisor(s) of doctoral projects (max. two pages per résumé and up to ten for the publications most relevant for the project – not included in the 15 application pages)
- a statement from the respective university leadership concerning the material and room facilities available to the research group

Funding line 2:

- Information about the organizational structure of the graduate school
- Brief description of the doctoral projects encompassed by the practical module together with the following information on each single project:

- o Information concerning the (minimum three-year) financing of the individual doctoral projects and about the work status to date (candidate's) who must still be in the first year of the doctoral project)
  - o Duration of the proposed module
  - o Details of how the doctoral project links to the practical module
  - o detailed of the practical partner, including statement
- Explanation of how practical elements can be integrated into the education offered by the graduate school and sustainably maintained when the Foundation's once-only funding expires.

Applications are to be filed via the Foundation's application por-tal.volkswagenstiftung.de. You will find a checklist containing the necessary documents under Point 10 below. Instructions on how to use the electronic application portal is included under Point 11below.

6. What does the funding encompass?

In **Funding line 1**, monies can be allocated to fund the following positions:

- Personnel costs (TV-L13 65% for up to 4 years for the doctoral positions and TV-L13 100% for up to 4 years for the postdoc position)
- Travel costs (also for visiting scholars from other parts of Germany and abroad)
- Ongoing and one-off costs of materials
- Science communication (conferences, translations, publications etc.)

In **Funding line 2**, personnel costs only (for each doctoral student a monthly lump-sum grant of EUR 1,000 over a period of between six and maximum twelve months).

7. Selection and review procedure?

Applications are first examined in respect of conformity with the call by the Foundation. Following this preselection, they are forwarded to a review panel comprising national and international experts from the applications' scientific fields.

The short-listed applicants in **Funding line 1** are then invited to present and discuss their proposals in front of the reviewers.

The short-listed proposals in **Funding line 2** are assessed by a group of experts on the basis of the written applications.

The reviewers submit their recommendations to the Foundation. The Foundation's Board of Trustees eventually takes the final decision.

8. What are the review criteria?

- The scientific quality of the graduate school's theme (in FL 1) as well as that of the applicant(s) and supervisor(s)
- Can it be expected that upon obtaining their doctorate the graduate students will have both possibilities to pursue careers in academia as well as improved opportunities to find positions outside the university realm?
- Quality and variety of the proposed practical fields
- Linkages between the doctoral research topic and the planned practical elements
- Reliability of commitment(s) entered into by the proposed non-university partner(s)
- Degree of sustainability with regard to the integration of practical elements when the once-only funding expires (in FL 2)

9. How long before a decision can be expected?

Following the closing date for submitting proposals, it can take about six to eight months before decisions are made known. Applicants are only able to question a decision in the context of their oral presentation in front of the review panel.

Only use the Application Portal on the homepage of the Volkswagen Foundation to submit your proposal: **por-tal.volkswagenstiftung.de**

Don't forget to print out the **cover page** you will find there, to sign and scan it, and to upload it duly signed. You can find instructions on how to use the Application Portal online under Point 11.

10. Application checklist

Applicants are requested to submit their proposals electronically via the Application Portal on the Foundation's homepage (see Point 11). Please upload the following as attachments (PDF files):

- Description of proposal (max. 15 pages, Arial, 11-pint, 1.5 line spacing)
  - see Point 5.

- In Funding line 1: Short résumé (max. 2 pages) of applicant as well as of other possible doctoral supervisors with details of their position in the respective institution and list of up to ten most important publications

- Itemized budget plan with details of each item

- Cover page downloaded from Application Portal
  - signed by the applicant
  - In case of different institutions or locations you must upload different duly signed cover pages

- Miscellaneous (optional)
  - Statement from university leadership (Funding line 1) and non-university partner (Funding line 1 and 2)

11. Electronic application made easy – instructions and tips

The Volkswagen Foundation will only accept pre-proposals and applications via its electronic application system portal.volkswagenstiftung.de. Please note that only registered users of the electronic application system have access to application data, can submit applications and receive corresponding e-mail messages. Hence, it is required for applicants with project responsibility to register him/herself or to ask a co-worker to register in his/her name with the proper e-mail address.

Please follow the six steps to compile and submit your application:

- If you are a new user please **register** at the application portal with your name, your e-mail address and your own password. When registering you will be asked about your work address details. Subsequently, you must **activate** your account using the link sent by e-mail. If you already have a user account you can immediately log in using your e-mail address and password.

- Click on "**new application**" to select the corresponding funding initiative (here: Life?), the application type (here: pre-proposal), the grant-receiving institution, and the language.

- Having completed the first two steps – and later on – you can interrupt the procedure and return to it, logging in or out at any time.

- Please check whether the pre-filled data on the applicant are correct. We need the **application data** (e. g. project title, duration) and the **budget details**. Please upload this as PDF file under the heading "Budget". Please note that by pressing the "**save**" button you do not transfer any data to the Foundation. You are able to revise all data up to the time you actually submit your application. Please don't forget to read and accept the legal statement. If you wish you can generate a PDF of the filled-in forms for verification and for your filing.

- Under "**Attachments**" you should upload all the items listed on the checklist on the preceding page of the "Information for Applicants". Only PDF files are accepted. You can make changes to all files up to the time you actually submit your application.

- Once your application is complete, please **submit** it electronically to the Foundation. Additionally, a PDF generation of a cover sheet for print-out is required. Add your signature, scan it and upload it.

In the course of processing your application the Foundation might request additional information. Click on "**new supplement**" to upload and submit the respective files. This can also be done by co-applicants and not only by the lead applicant.