

Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups Programme

Fact Sheet for Universities

11 April 2016: Internal deadline for the submission of application papers to Helmholtz Centres by the young researchers

6 June 2016: Deadline for the submission of complete applications by Helmholtz Centres to the Bonn office

15 September 2016: Deadline for the submission of the joint statement by the university and Helmholtz Centre (Appendix 5) to the Bonn office

4-5 October 2016: Final selection meeting in Berlin

12 months at the latest after receiving the funding approval the young investigator group has to start its work

The Helmholtz-Young Investigators Groups Programme

- The Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups programme gives the best up-and-coming researchers in Germany and abroad the opportunity to set up and lead their own research team. The programme fosters the early academic independence of the researchers and offers excellent working conditions in an environment specifically geared towards research as well as secure career prospects based on proven scientific achievement.

The Universities as important strategic partners

- The Helmholtz Association's most important strategic partners in this programme are universities. The resulting cooperation allows group leaders to experience the benefits of a collaborative working culture, both in terms of a division of labour and of striving for a common goal, at an early stage in their career. At the same time, the Young Investigators Group leaders have the chance to acquire teaching experience and the skills required of university staff. The President of the Helmholtz Association supports all efforts to jointly appoint selected Helmholtz Young Investigators Group leaders to professorships at the partner universities.
- Young Investigators Groups may be based at a university, at a Helmholtz Centre or at both. However, they should carry out clearly defined tasks at both institutions, which must be set out in detail in the planned work schedule.
- As important partners, the universities are included in the selection process right from the very beginning. The Helmholtz Centres confer with the universities in nominating candidates who are forwarded to the Helmholtz Bonn office for the final selection round. In other words, the universities and Helmholtz Centres decide together which applicants are suited to setting up a successful Young Investigators Group.
- To strengthen collaboration in supporting young researchers, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Helmholtz Association published a joint white paper in 2004 ([see Appendix](#)). This identified the Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups as being particularly well suited to promoting academic excellence and to enhancing the reputation of both partner institutions. The points set out in the white paper on the Young Investigators Groups provide the basis for the joint statement that is submitted with each application ([see Appendix 5](#)). It was also agreed in the white paper that a HRK representative regularly participates in the final selection meeting.

A selection procedure that meets the highest quality standards

- In 2007 the Helmholtz Young Investigators Group programme was thoroughly evaluated by iFQ, the Institute for Research Information and Quality Assurance (see iFQ working paper no. 6. December 2009, Postdocs in Germany: a comparative study of the Young Investigators Groups programme). The study confirmed that the selection process is comparable to the processes used by other programmes in terms of quality and transparency (e.g. the German Research Foundation's (DFG) Emmy Noether Programme.)
- The first call for applications to the Young Investigators Group programme took place in 2003, and it has meanwhile become a highly competitive procedure. In the last few years, the Helmholtz Centres received about 200 applications for the 20 available places per year. The applications are assessed in a multi-stage selection process that meets the highest quality standards. In the first stage, the Helmholtz Centres and the universities jointly make a pre-selection. The nominated candidates' applications are then forwarded to the Helmholtz head office in Bonn. Here, at least two appraisals from national or international experts are commissioned to evaluate each application. On the basis of these appraisals, 30 applicants are invited to the Berlin office to present their projects to an interdisciplinary panel.

The application – required documents

- The complete application should also include a written statement from the university management and department covering the following points:
 - The applicant's rights and responsibilities (i.e. staff and budget responsibilities, PhD student supervision, teaching responsibilities of max. four hours per semester week, access to all necessary resources or facilities), in accordance with the higher education laws applicable in the relevant federal state.
 - Eligibility for professorship
 - The prospects of a joint appointment as a professor, should the Young Investigators Group leader wish to continue his or her career at the university after the end of the funding period.

A sample university statement on the rights and responsibilities of a Young Investigators Group leader is provided in Appendix 5. This form – or a comparable version – should be submitted to the Helmholtz head office **by 15 September 2016** at the latest.