

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

28 February 2018

for three Helmholtz International Research Schools

funded by the Initiative and Networking Fund  
of the President of the Helmholtz Association

Second call



The approximately 8000 PhD candidates trained together by the Helmholtz Centers and universities make a major contribution to the outstanding research results obtained by the Helmholtz Association. Promoting PhD candidates has long been a key part of the Helmholtz Association's talent management. 34 Helmholtz Research Schools and Helmholtz Graduate Schools have been set up at the Helmholtz Centers since 2005. The established structures guarantee reliable conditions, facilitate exchange and networking, and are distinguished by a wide range of courses teaching subject-specific and interdisciplinary skills and by the provision of career advice. The high level of support for PhD candidates is also guaranteed by high quality standards of quality as specified in the Helmholtz PhD Guidelines (cf. Appendix 6).

## A) Objectives of funding measure

Through the Helmholtz International Research Schools, the Helmholtz Association aims to continue diversifying the support available to PhD candidates while improving their career prospects. Another focal point of this Call for Applications is the recruitment of outstanding international PhD candidates. The Research Schools also have the purpose of establishing and consolidating international contacts, thus opening up new, promising research areas. The partner institutions involved complement each other and use the resulting synergies to increase their research performance, thus paving the way to becoming leaders in the most innovative research areas. This instrument consequently also makes a valuable contribution to the Helmholtz Association's strategy of internationalization.

Each Helmholtz International Research School focuses on one scientific topic and offers a structured program of doctoral education in cooperation with the respective Helmholtz Center, foreign partner and German university partner. PhD candidates at a Research School receive an outstanding scientific education along with professional, character-building training that significantly enhances their skills profiles. They work in a scientifically challenging international environment and quickly learn the importance of strategic alliances by carrying out joint research into interdisciplinary issues. The international nature of the program offers additional development opportunities for PhD candidates besides opening up a wide variety of career options.

## B) Object and duration of funding

The aim of this Call for Applications is to grant funding for **up to three** Helmholtz International Research Schools working on topics in the following research areas: Energy, Earth and Environment, Health, Key Technologies, Matter, and Aeronautics, Space and Transport. Interdisciplinary topics and topics encompassing several research areas are welcomed.

The funding provided by the President's Initiative and Networking Fund will amount to **up to 300,000 Euro per annum** and will serve as co-financing. The applicants are expected to provide funding to at least an equivalent amount, with an appropriate contribution being made by the partner institution abroad. The monies from the Initiative and Networking Fund are primarily intended to finance the additional expenditure incurred on account of the organizational structure and the special professional and supplementary services offered. However, a part of the funding can be used to finance PhD positions. The monies awarded cannot be used to fund fellowships for PhD candidates.

Helmholtz International Research Schools are designed as joint institutions organized by the Helmholtz Center, the foreign partner and the German university in the region where the Center is located. The doctorates can be awarded by the German universities and/or the foreign partners.<sup>1</sup>

**Funding is provided for a period of six years**, with an interim evaluation held after three to four years as part of a one-day on-site inspection.

## C) Target groups

The offer is directed at Helmholtz Centers, foreign research institutions, German universities and other possible partners in the fields of science, business, society etc. who together wish to make a special contribution to training early-stage researchers and to develop or expand international cooperation in a promising field of research.

## D) Application procedure

The application is lodged by the respective Helmholtz Center; it is compiled jointly by the Helmholtz Center, the German university, the foreign partner and additional partners, if applicable, and is submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office by the Helmholtz Center's director. The complete application (including all attachments) must be submitted in PDF format (as a continuous document) on or before **June 8, 2018** (exclusion period) using the Helmholtz Association's electronic application and review system EABS (<https://helmholtznet.de/antraege/default.aspx>). In addition, the Helmholtz Association's head office (Ahrstrasse 45, 53175 Bonn) must have received a hard copy of the application by June 08, 2018 (cf Appendix 1).

Each Helmholtz Center can submit at maximum one application for a Helmholtz International Research School.

For each application, the Helmholtz Head Office obtains a minimum of two written assessments from independent external experts.

Based on the written assessments, the applicants are invited to a selection meeting in Berlin, where they are required to present their application to a selection panel chaired by the President of the Helmholtz Association. The invitation will be sent out approximately six weeks before the selection meeting.

The Helmholtz International Research School must start within 12 months after the funding is awarded.

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<sup>1</sup> The Helmholtz Association sees itself as bound by the content of the benchmark paper issued by the German Rectors' Conference and the Helmholtz Association on working together to promote early-stage researchers (cf. Appendix 7 in German only).

## E) Dates and deadlines

- **February 28, 2018:** Publication of the call.
- **June 8, 2018:** Deadline for Helmholtz Centers to submit complete applications to Helmholtz head office.
- **November 27, 2018:** Selection meeting in Berlin.
- No later than 12 months following award of funding: Start of Helmholtz International Research School.

## F) Criteria for the evaluation of applications by external appraisers and panel

### Scientific program

- Excellence, innovative content, relevance, and sustainability of the specific scientific program. Interdisciplinary approaches are expected.
- Added value of the international partnership in terms of the development of the respective research area.
- Potential for outstanding thesis topics, joint publications and other joint projects.
- Scientific expertise of all scientists included in the application.

### Training program and supervision

- Subject-specific and interdisciplinary teaching and training that takes account of the needs of the target group (“outstanding early-stage scientists”) and also pays attention to intercultural aspects.
- Experience with supervision gained by all scientists included in the application.
- Quality of the supervision concept and career development measures.
- Added value of the partnerships with regard to the professional and interdisciplinary skills and career development of the PhD candidates.
- Mobility concept that can take various dimensions of mobility (e.g. intersectoral, interdisciplinary) into account along with international exchanges with partner institutions. The PhD candidates are expected to spend a significant period of at least 6 months at the foreign partner institution.
- PhD candidates are taught the principles of good scientific practice and encouraged to consider scientific ethics.

### Program structure and general conditions

- Organization of the Research School including a management, communication and decision-making culture that fosters the interaction planned between all participants.
- Maturity of the partnership planned (e.g. interaction to date) and realizability of the jointly planned program.

- Integration of Research School into existing structures for doctoral education and talent management etc. (e.g. Graduate Schools) at the respective Helmholtz Center.
- Quality of selection procedure to be established.
- Strategy for developing longer term interaction between the institutions involved.
- Integration of additional strategic partners (e.g. in science, business, society etc.).
- Participation of PhD candidates in structuring Research School.
- Quality of equal opportunities and diversity measures.
- If applicable, concept covering alumni work and career tracking; monitoring training quality.
- Sustainability of structures and outline of ideas for developing the program further.
- Internationality of the Helmholtz Center lodging the application (e.g. existing 'welcome culture', language courses offered, translation of relevant documents, etc.).
- Marketing and PR concept with goals including increasing the Research School's international visibility.