

Annex 5

Fact Sheet for Universities

The Helmholtz Young Investigator Group program

The Helmholtz Young Investigator Group program gives the best young scientists in Germany and abroad the opportunity to set up and lead their own research group. The program fosters early scientific independence of researchers and offers excellent working conditions in a research-intensive environment with secure career prospects based on proven scientific achievement. Since the start of the program in 2003, more than 200 recipients have benefited from it.

Universities as important strategic partners

The Helmholtz Association's most important strategic partners are universities. Close cooperation with them plays a key role in the Young Investigator Group program. This cooperation allows group leaders, at an early stage of their careers, to experience the benefits of a collaborative culture based on the division of labor when striving to achieve a common goal. At the same time, they have the opportunity to gain teaching experience and qualify to become professors. The President of the Helmholtz Association supports all efforts to jointly appoint the selected Helmholtz Young Investigator Group leaders to professorships at the partner universities.

A Young Investigator Group may be based at a university, a Helmholtz Center, or both. However, the group is expected to perform clearly defined tasks at each of the institutions. These tasks must be set out in detail in the planned work schedule.

As important partners, the universities are included in the selection process from the very beginning. The Helmholtz Centers confer with the universities when nominating candidates. These nominations are forwarded to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn for the final selection round. This means that the universities and Helmholtz Centers jointly decide which candidates are suited to setting up a successful Young Investigator Group.

To strengthen cooperation in young talent promotion, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Helmholtz Association published a joint white paper in 2004. It identified the Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups as being particularly well suited to promoting scientific excellence and to enhancing the reputation of both partner institutions. The points set out in the white paper on the Young Investigator Groups form the basis for the statement submitted with each application.

Selection procedure quality assurance

In 2007, the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group program 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 Investigator Groups program). The study confirmed that the selection process is comparable to the processes used by other programs (the Emmy Noether Program of the German Research Foundation (DFG), for example) in terms of quality and transparency standards.

The first call for applications to the Young Investigator Group program was issued in 2003, and has since established itself as a highly competitive procedure. The last round saw the Helmholtz Centers receive about 220 applications for the 15 available places. The applications are assessed in a multi-stage selection process that meets the highest quality standards. In the first stage, the Helmholtz Centers 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 by national or international experts are commissioned to evaluate each application. On the basis of these assessments, up to 30 candidates are invited to Berlin to present their projects to an interdisciplinary panel.

The application – required documents

The complete application should include a written statement by the university management and the department covering the following points:

- rights and responsibilities (staff and budget responsibilities, doctoral candidate supervision, teaching responsibilities not exceeding four hours per semester week, access to all necessary resources/infrastructure), in accordance with the higher education laws applicable in the relevant federal state;
- planned joint appointment to a professorship;
- career prospects should the Young Investigator Group leader wish to continue his or her career at the university after the funding period ends.

A sample university statement on the rights and responsibilities of a Young Investigator Group leader is provided in Appendix 8.

This statement is to be submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn **by September 30, 2019**.