As part of its talent management strategy the President’s Strategic Fund of the Association provided grants to its 18 independent research centres to establish Helmholtz Graduate Schools. The Schools vary in size but usually have around 200 doctoral candidates at any one time and often incorporate the Helmholtz Research Schools (c.24 doctoral candidates). The Helmholtz Graduate Schools are broadly themed (for instance, energy and climate research), whereas the Research Schools are more tightly themed for instance, mechanisms and interactions of climate change in mountain regions. Helmholtz Graduate Schools offer you optimal conditions to become integrated into the research environment and explore related themes with colleagues working in a range of research institutes represented in the Graduate School.

You will have a supervisor at your Helmholtz research centre and at the university which awards your doctorate and you will follow a training programme which increases your scientific impact and acquisition of transferable skills (such as scientific writing, presentation and technology transfer).

Working in a truly interdisciplinary environment will spark your creativity and you will be encouraged to build your international network by taking opportunities to go on research stays outside of Germany. Recent examples include stays at Imperial College London and AMU Luminy in France. Your research stay could result in building a relationship with an external mentor, recent examples of this being Helmholtz Graduate School doctoral candidates getting support from professors at Princeton (USA) and Baoding (China).

English is the working language at our research centres. This helps international researchers integrate and helps build international networks and reputations.

APPLICATIONS

If you are interested in applying to study for your PhD at a Helmholtz Graduate School you should look at the website for the school that you are interested in (see map): each school runs its own recruitment but all vacancies appear on the Helmholtz Association central website. Generally, applicants should hold an M.Sc. or equivalent degree. Opportunities are not restricted to an ‘academic year’ and appear regularly.

INTERESTED IN GETTING YOUR DOCTORATE IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENT WHILST LEARNING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS?

If so, our dynamic Helmholtz Graduate Schools might be what you are looking for. The Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres has 13 Graduate Schools in the fields of:

- ENERGY
- HEALTH
- KEY TECHNOLOGIES
- AERONAUTICS, SPACE AND TRANSPORT
- EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT
- MATTER

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Adrian von Stechow: Doctoral Student – Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics

I joined the International Helmholtz Graduate School for Plasma Physics (HEPP) at the Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics (IPP), in 2012 after graduating in physics. HEPP provided me with a structured postgraduate learning where I attended seminars related to my field of research and gained transferrable skills. I particularly enjoyed an environment of questioning and feedback, seminars by guest speakers invited by doctoral candidates themselves and being required to present my work at the regular HEPP colloquia. I have been able to build my own experiment on magnetic reconnection in plasmas which explores observations in astrophysics in the laboratory. Being part of the IPP, HEPP’s international networks also facilitated my research stay at the Max-Planck-Princeton Center for Fusion and Astro Plasma Physics. I gained my PhD in Current sheet dynamics in magnetic reconnection from Greifswald university (a HEPP partner) in 2015 and, following my supervisor’s advice, have gained a postdoctoral post at IPP. HEPP allowed me to meet a lot of like-minded scientists and launch a career which, I hope, will see me working on the Wendelstein 7-X stellarator at Greifswald and become a member of the international fusion-research community.