

# Financing Your Doctorate



Information brochure for current and prospective  
doctoral candidates of Goethe University



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# Introduction

Before deciding on a doctorate, you need to address a number of questions. In addition to your individual aptitude and the specific requirements of the respective subject area, funding is one of the most important factors relevant to the success of your research project that will last for several years. As in many European countries, there are two options available to you in Germany: funding by employment in academia, or a scholarship that provides PhD candidates with living expenses during their dissertation project.

Financial planning is a difficult task to tackle even before the start of your dissertation. The existing funding structure for doctorates is neither particularly clear nor are the details easy to understand. For the first option alone - funding through an employment position in the academic community - you have the choice between a variety of different positions, sponsors and employment relationships. Whether you intend to carry out your dissertation project as a research assistant at your supervisor's chair, or as an employee at a non-university research institute or by being employed in science management, it can make a tangible difference to the individual progress of your doctorate. The type of university employment can have a significant impact on the duration and quality of your doctorate as well as on your positioning as a researcher in the postdoc phase.

Applying for scholarships can also be rather confusing. In Germany, many public and private foundations as well as business-related funders are willing to support young researchers. However, not only do the formal and subject-related requirements differ considerably, but also the funding models can vary greatly in terms of duration, amount or objectives.

In addition to weighing up the basic funding (employment or scholarship), it is also important to consider whether you will write your dissertation in a more conventional manner of an individual doctorate at a chair or department, or in a structured doctoral program. In order to take an appropriate decision, you need a clear understanding of your own project and your personal requirements as well as a great deal of perseverance and, in particular, solid information.

With this brochure, the Goethe Research Academy for Early Career Researchers (GRADE), as the central training, service and advisory institution of Goethe University for researchers in the early career phase, would like to inform you, as a (prospective) doctoral candidate, on the funding options available. You can then determine how best to finance your doctorate.

Hence, the following sections present the basic funding options for a doctorate. In particular, the respective advantages and disadvantages as well as the more detailed conditions or subject-specific requirements are listed. In the second and third parts of the brochure, the most important contacts for scholarship funding or financial grants are referenced. The last section contains basic information on applying for a scholarship, relevant internet links and insurance law aspects that are important when considering undertaking a doctorate.

Please note: The selection of funding opportunities intends to provide you with an overview of the existing funding options. No guarantee is given for the specific conditions and/or legal provisions. Please inform yourself online about all the current legal requirements and general conditions and regulations.

Furthermore, this selection of funding opportunities does not claim to be exhaustive. Many scholarships are advertised on a one-off or irregular basis; a large number of short-term or part-time scholarships or grants, some of which are aimed at very specific target groups, cannot be fully represented here. Please inform yourself on the respective websites of the various foundations, funding organizations and other scholarship agencies about the current funding eligibility criteria.

In addition to your own inquiries, we also recommend to look up current calls for applications on the [GRADE website](#), on our [Facebook page](#), and on [LinkedIn](#).

We hope that this brochure will provide a useful and systematic approach to help establish a financial basis for your research project, and we wish you an informative read!



## 1. Doctoral funding: An overview

In Germany, the following two models are generally possible for financing a doctoral project:

1. Employment at a university, a non-academic research institute, or at a company: this is subject to social security contributions
2. Financial support by means of a scholarship.

The following sections deal with the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the general conditions, of the two financing options. It should be mentioned that self-employment can also be a model for doctoral funding.

Only a small proportion of PhD candidates in Germany are able to cover their entire doctorate with long-term funding. Often, financing of one type ends shortly after the first half of the doctorate and further funding needs to be secured.\* This results in mixed funding for the duration of the doctorate where financial resources for the dissertation project are obtained from different sources depending on the doctoral phase. This is illustrated at the end of the chapter in a case study.

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\* cf. Ambrasat, J., Martens, B. (2022). Stabilität oder Krisengefahr? Die Finanzierung von Promotionen im Verlauf. In: Korff, S., Truschkat, I. (eds) *Übergänge in Wissenschaftskarrieren*. Wissenschaft – Hochschule – Bildung. Springer VS, Wiesbaden. Online: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-35717-7\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-35717-7_3) [in German only], last checked on 3 March 2024.

## 1.1 Pursuing a doctorate while employed

A common model for university-related doctoral funding is being employed as a research assistant. As a rule, this employment is usually part-time and is attached to a chair, an institute or is part of a research project. Other PhD candidates are employed by a company or are self-employed. In the latter two cases, there is not necessarily a connection to the doctoral project, thus, depending on your job profile, you may have more or less time to work on your research project.

Each type of professional relationship accompanying the doctorate brings with it its own general conditions and specific advantages and disadvantages. Whether a position is suitable for financing your doctoral phase depends on your personal career goals but also on the job configuration, the working hours and the subject in question.

### Doctoral positions: Types and general conditions

The majority of PhD candidates in Germany finance their doctorate by employment in the academic sector. According to the Federal Report on Early Career Researchers 2021, around 61 % of doctoral candidates are currently employed by their university.\* Indeed, at Goethe University, the majority of doctoral candidates are financed by employment at the university.\*\* If you would like to work as a research assistant, be aware that the contract duration may not cover your whole doctorate. However, positions belonging to a chair or an institute can be extended for up to six years and, therefore, offer a relatively high degree of planning security for the doctoral phase.

The majority of these research assistant positions are advertised as part-time positions. Presently, approximately a third of academic staff work full-time, while the majority are employed part-time. Outside the university, half of the PhD candidates who completed a survey on their contracts worked full-time, while the other half were employed part-time.\*\*\*

Regarding the ratio between the contracted hours and the actual working hours, subject-specific differences come into play. For example, according to the 2019 NACAPS survey,

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\* cf. Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2021 (BUWIN 21),  
Online: <https://www.buwin.de/dateien/buwin-2021.pdf> [in German only], p. 117; last checked on 3 March 2024

\*\* cf. „Promovieren an der Goethe-Uni: wie überall oder doch ganz anders?“, in: Goethe-Universität, UniReport 4/2022, Online: <https://www.unireport.info/121619793/unireport-ausgabe-4-22-vom-7-juli-2022.pdf> [in German only].  
last checked on 3 March 2024

\*\*\* cf. Nacaps-Datenportal, National Academics Panel Study 2019 and 2021,  
Online: <https://nacaps-datenportal.de/>; last checked on 3 March 2024.

PhD candidates in the natural sciences spend around 60 % of their working time on their doctorate, while PhD candidates in the social sciences and humanities stated that they only have 40 % of their working time available to work on their dissertation.\* In fact, job holders are often expected to complete their doctorate in their free time. However, in their job role, they must take on research and teaching activities as well as organizational and administrative tasks, thus, reducing the available time for their research.

In the natural science disciplines, on the other hand, the separation between work tasks and research for the doctorate is usually less distinct as the PhD candidates are explicitly employed for their research work at an institute or in a Research Training Group. Thus, the ratio of agreed working hours to actual working hours that are to be spent in the laboratory is more important here. In both cases, applicants should inform themselves in advance about the expected field of work and the time requirements.

Not only do public debates surrounding #ichbinhanna show that a position as an employed research assistant is no guarantee of a career path to a professorship, but also the Federal Report on Young Academics states that this group only accounts for just over 20 % of academic employees ten years after completing their doctorate.\*\* The federal government's tenure-track program launched in 2016 is intended to give more postdocs the chance of a professorship. For most PhD candidates, however, planning a career elsewhere is still the more realistic path.

Although an overlap between the topic of the doctorate and the work for which one is employed is usually welcome, it is by no means obligatory. However, in some doctoral research projects, the topic of the doctorate and everyday professional life are closely intertwined, both in theory and practice. These positions can be based within interdisciplinary research groups but also at non-academic research institutions where they are often third-party funded research positions. In the 2014/15 winter semester, just over half of all doctoral positions were financed by third-party funds; in contrast, around 47 % of positions were financed by basic funding from the respective universities. According to the 2021 Funding Atlas of the German Research Foundation (DFG), the proportion of third-party funding has not changed significantly since 2015.\*\*\*

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\* cf. Berroth, L., Adrian, D., Briedis, K., & Wegner, A. (2022). Beschäftigungsbedingungen für junge Forscher\*innen - ein empirischer Beitrag zu #IchBinHanna. (DZHW Brief 04|2022). Hannover: DZHW. Online: [https://doi.org/10.34878/2022.04.dzhw\\_brief](https://doi.org/10.34878/2022.04.dzhw_brief) [in German only], last checked on 3 March 2024.

\*\* BUWIN 2021, C 3.3, S. 212, Online: <https://www.buwin.de/dateien/buwin-2021.pdf> [in German only], p. 207, last checked on 3 March 2024.

\*\*\* cf. DFG Förderatlas 2021, Online: [https://sites.dfg.de/sites/fundingatlas2021/download/dfg\\_fundingatlas\\_2021.pdf](https://sites.dfg.de/sites/fundingatlas2021/download/dfg_fundingatlas_2021.pdf), p. 19 ff., last checked on 3 March 2024.



The majority of third-party funding is provided by the DFG and the federal government. However, externally funded positions can also be established by state funding or private companies.

These sources of funding are also used for positions in university and science management. However, unlike the work in research projects or with staff positions at a professorship with a doctoral focus, the academic work on one's own research project must be carried out alongside the job. Typical responsibilities of these positions include the organization of events and conferences as well as editorial or administrative activities. Even though these positions are subject to stricter regulations, they are rarely advertised on a permanent basis. Nevertheless, sometimes graduates interested in pursuing a doctorate are also sought for these positions.

Scientific research is carried out not only at universities but also at companies and, therefore, companies can offer doctoral positions. Such positions in industry offer you the opportunity to finance your own doctoral project, usually throughout the entire PhD, and to benefit from the research infrastructure of a company. This applies above all to so-called application-oriented research fields in the natural sciences. However, research work in the humanities on company history or social science studies can also be relevant for companies in industry and the service sector. You can find relevant job advertisements on companies' careers pages, job portals (such as [academics.de](https://www.academics.de)) and in the job section of the weekly newspaper "Die Zeit."

HR departments also use careers fairs and recruiting events to look specifically for interested PhD candidates whose research interests and personal profiles match the research needs of their company. In addition to the integration into business-related research practice, one advantage of these positions is that they may have a longer time limit than university research positions, which are often limited to less than three years.

## Doctoral positions at a glance

The following overview of the tasks, as well as the advantages and disadvantages, of the aforementioned job models is intended to provide an initial orientation. The profiles of the fields of activity overlap in many areas. Only the job advertisement text and the employment contract can provide the exact information about an employment relationship as a PhD candidate. With regard to your own academic background, it should be kept in mind that doctoral positions in companies are often advertised for natural scientists and engineers, while social scientists and humanities graduates are more frequently found in science management positions.

Research assistant position	
Tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research work</li> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Conference organization</li> <li>• Research and third-party funding applications</li> <li>• Publications</li> <li>• Supervision of students</li> <li>• Examinations and invigilating written exams</li> <li>• Committee work as part of the non-professorial faculty</li> </ul>
Advantages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close connection to research practice</li> <li>• Teaching experience</li> <li>• Close contact with the supervisor</li> <li>• Development of an academic network</li> <li>• Standard wage (federal or state)</li> <li>• Employment subject to social security contributions</li> <li>• Relatively high planning security due to longer contract period</li> </ul>
Disadvantages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the position and academic discipline, there is little time to work on your own doctoral project</li> <li>• No structured qualification but knowledge is gained by “learning on the job”</li> </ul>



### Scientific collaboration project or third-party funded research position

<p>Tasks:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive research work</li> <li>• Presentation of research results</li> <li>• Research and third-party funding applications</li> <li>• Publications</li> <li>• Committee work as part of the non-professorial faculty (less intensive than with a research assistantship when employed at an institute)</li> </ul>
<p>Advantages:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative research practice</li> <li>• Development of an academic network and own research relationship</li> <li>• Possibility of a close connection between doctorate and externally funded project</li> <li>• Standard wage (federal or state)</li> <li>• Employment subject to social security contributions</li> </ul>
<p>Disadvantages:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually no follow-up employment available after project completion</li> <li>• Possibly short fixed-term contracts in projects with short duration</li> <li>• Potential conflicts between own research interests and the employer's stipulations</li> </ul>



## University and science management positions

<p>Tasks:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• Administration</li> <li>• Conceptual work</li> <li>• Event management</li> <li>• Press and public relations</li> <li>• Editing (in print and online)</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>
<p>Advantages:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation of research and funding</li> <li>• Work subject to social security contributions</li> <li>• Standard wage (federal or state)</li> </ul>
<p>Disadvantages:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often temporary</li> <li>• No qualification position</li> <li>• Depending on the job profile, little time for own research work</li> </ul>



## Research positions in private companies

<p>Tasks:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research work</li> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• Administration</li> <li>• Press and public relations</li> <li>• Company-specific tasks</li> <li>• Preparation of a project according to the employer's needs</li> </ul>
<p>Advantages:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High starting salary depending on the industry</li> <li>• Networking in the industry</li> <li>• Often permanent employment or comparatively long contract periods</li> <li>• Contact with clients</li> <li>• Practical application of research subject</li> </ul>
<p>Disadvantages:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High workload depending on the industry</li> <li>• Potential conflicts between employer or client and own research interests</li> <li>• High dependency on employer (when changing jobs, usually no continuation of the doctoral project is possible)</li> <li>• Potential conflicts between universities and companies regarding patents and confidentiality clauses</li> </ul>

## 1.2 Pursuing a doctorate with a scholarship

Another important funding option for your doctorate is a scholarship. This is tax-free financial support that is not tied to conditions as in a contract and is paid out regularly over a predefined period of time to cover the scholarship holder's living expenses (accommodation, living costs, social and health insurance). In addition, many scholarship providers award grants for stays abroad, publications and for laboratory running costs, research expenses or printing costs. Upon application, a child and family allowance can also be often be granted. As some scholarships only cover short periods or one-off benefits, a fundamental distinction must be made between full and partial funding.

Funding organizations (funded by the BMBF) award full scholarships to gifted students that are sufficient to fully support the student throughout their studies. There are also a large number of private and company-affiliated foundations that often only award smaller amounts as research prizes or who may offer to cover materials, laboratory or printing costs. You will find an overview of the most important foundations and their conditions for applying in the next chapter. Firstly, we will explain which factors you should consider when applying for a scholarship.

### Scholarships: types and general conditions

The advantage of a scholarship is that it allows you to concentrate fully on your doctoral project. As applicants have to go through an extensive selection process, a scholarship also holds a certain distinction. To apply, you usually need a research summary, a schedule and work plan, several letters of recommendation, a CV, copies of qualification certificates and proof of your acceptance as a doctoral candidate at a university. Depending on the funding institution, financial support is offered alongside non-material support, e.g., through training programs or conferences. This enables scholarship holders to advance their doctoral project in a goal-oriented manner through suitable training and professional exchange.

One disadvantage of doctoral scholarships is that they are not considered employment, therefore, statutory contributions, such as health insurance, must be paid by the scholarship holder. Furthermore, scholarship holders do not pay unemployment and pension insurance which means that they are not entitled to unemployment benefits once the scholarship ends. You can find detailed information on this in the last part of this brochure. Scholarships normally allow the possibility of earning additional income up to a certain amount.

However, if you exceed the specified part-time earnings limit, the scholarship installment will be reduced accordingly or must be taxed. Many scholarship holders work part-time at

a university or research institution as an auxiliary staff member. This gives them a closer relationship to the university and allows them to be registered with a health insurance company due to their employment status.

There are scholarships aimed at specific subject groups or subject areas, while others are awarded as part of a structured program (e.g., Research Training Groups, Graduate Schools and Research Schools), and some scholarships can be applied for by PhD candidates from all research fields. Some federal states maintain scholarship programs, the announcement of which is the responsibility of the universities. In addition, universities also offer their own, usually temporary, funding for PhD candidates, such as starting or completion scholarships.

In general, if you are doing a doctorate with the help of scholarship funding, you should make every effort to plan your dissertation project well and to bring it to a successful conclusion quickly as most scholarships only cover a maximum of three years. When applying, you should be sure to respond to the call for proposals and compile the necessary application documents in good time in order to meet all formal requirements; more on this is provided in the last part of this brochure.

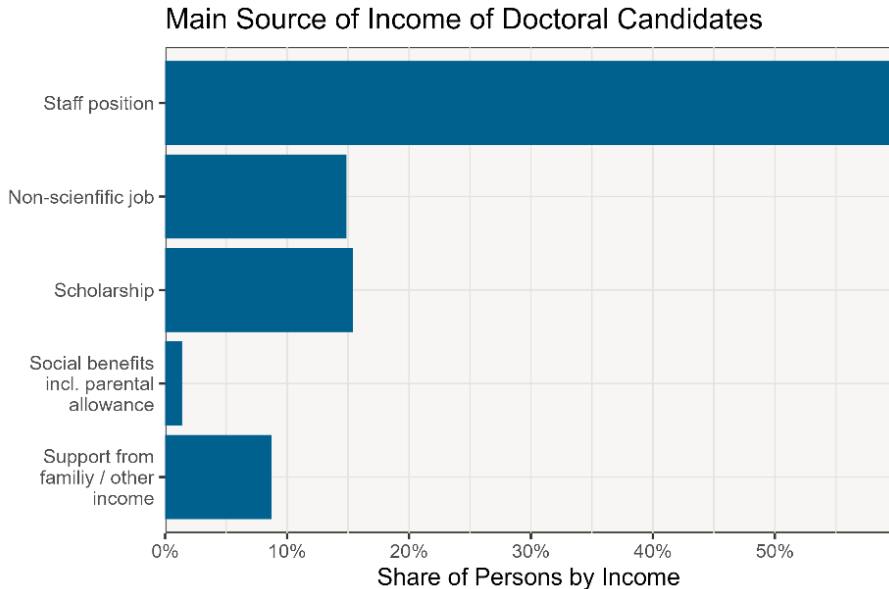
## Case study of mixed funding

If you wish to receive funding for your doctorate, you should allow for a certain degree of flexibility. Although many foundations allow extensions of the funding period in response to biographical events - such as pregnancy - it is not uncommon for doctoral projects to be funded by a mixed funding arrangement; this also includes periods without a fixed financial income. It is often overlooked that the scholarship application process is extensive, occurring during or after completing the undergraduate studies and so this time must also be covered financially. The following is an example to illustrate what such mixed financing can look like.

Employment as an assistant at the institute can help you through the scholarship application phase. However, although the funding organization provides funding for the following two years, it does not grant an extension of the scholarship. Therefore, for the third year, a writing-up scholarship at the university is obtained. Finally a grant covering the printing costs from a private foundation is required to enable the publication of the dissertation.

## 1.3 Doctoral financing: statistics

Since 2019, the the National Academics Panel Study (Nacaps) conducts regular surveys among doctoral candidates across Germany about their doctoral conditions and their individual situation. On this basis, it is possible to provide approximate statistical information on how doctoral students (in the first two years of their doctorate) finance their doctorate and, depending on the respective funding, how they rate their doctoral conditions.\*



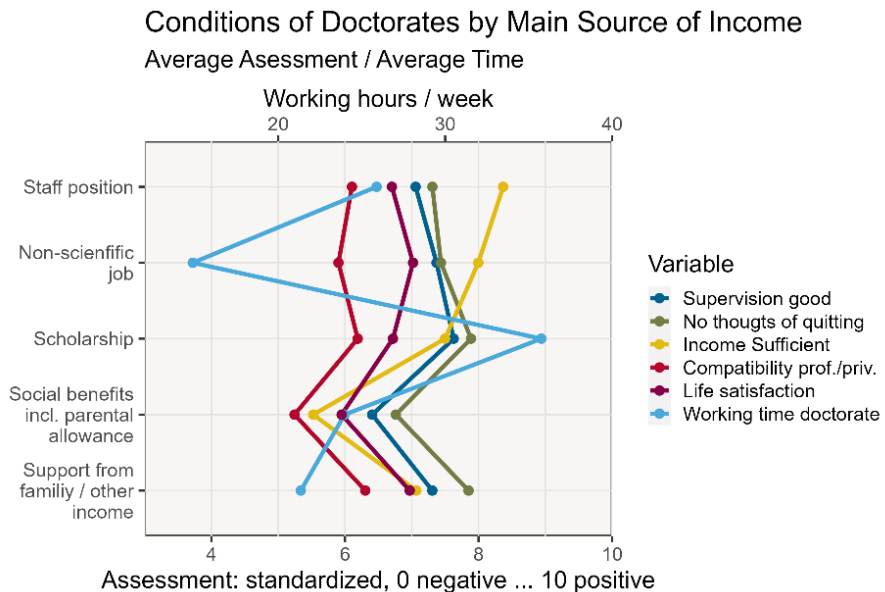
More than half of the doctoral candidates state that they finance their doctorate through an academic staff position. This type of funding is the most common in the natural sciences and engineering. Just over 15% finance their PhD through a non-academic job (particularly frequently in law) or a scholarship (more frequently in many of the social sciences and humanities).

\* All data according to the Nacaps surveys in 2019 and 2021. Only answers from PhD candidates who had neither completed, discontinued or interrupted their doctorate at the time of the survey are taken into account.



How satisfied are doctoral candidates, on average, with their supervision, their overall situation, the sufficiency of their income and their work-life balance, depending on the funding? How many hours per week can they work on their doctorate and how many of them go through the doctorate without thoughts of quitting? This can be seen in the following diagram. Scholarship holders are more satisfied with their supervision and have more time for their dissertation than those with a staff position. However, they are less satisfied with the sufficiency of their funding.

Unsurprisingly, people who finance their doctorate through a non-academic job have the least time for their doctorate. Overall, those who are dependent on social benefits or parental allowance for their doctorate are most dissatisfied with their overall situation.



Please bear in mind that these are only average values, which conceal many very different individual cases. For the success of your doctoral project, it is essential that you make a viable decision between the options available to you based on your individual goals and needs.



## 2. Funding opportunities in Germany

In this section of the information brochure, we present the individual scholarship providers in detail. These include organizations for the support of gifted students but also smaller, private and public foundations for specific target groups or disciplines. However, this does not spare you the need to analyze your individual suitability and the specific application requirements. Above all, you should consider which funding institution is the best fit for you with regard to subject, biography and, if applicable, political or religious beliefs.

As there are many foundations dedicated to very specific target groups that only irregularly announce their funding awards or scholarships, we strongly recommend that you do your own research online. The website [Research in Germany](#), for example, offers a good overview on public funding organizations. Additionally, the [database of the Deutscher Stifterverband](#) offers an extensive collection of private foundations. Unfortunately, the website is only available in German language.

## 2.1 Individual support through scholarships

### Organizations for the support of gifted students

There are thirteen organizations for the support of gifted students in Germany that support PhD candidates with full scholarships, including both financial and non-material support. These funding organizations, financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBWF), award the majority of scholarships in Germany. In recent years, around 4.000 doctoral candidates per year have benefited from these scholarships.

Each funding organization reflects a specific political, denominational, economic or social orientation and are intended to represent the social diversity of Germany. For the purpose of international cooperation, many of the organizations also have offices abroad and regularly organize academic conferences. The sponsoring organizations are formally independent, however, they are usually affiliated with a political party, a religious community or trade unions and employers' associations.

When speaking of talent in this context, it does not merely mean good academic performance as a funding criterion. The foundations also attach great importance to the applicant's commitment to civil society, social political engagement or trade union activities. Individuals who have already received a scholarship for their undergraduate studies are often also supported. However, this is not a qualifying application requirement.

Parallel applications to different foundations are allowed, however, the simultaneous funding by a foundation for the gifted and another funding institution is not permitted, or it will be offset against the funding period.

As a general rule, the offers also include non-financial support measures, such as:
























- Seminars to a certain topic lasting several days
- Conferences, seminars, summer schools
- Language courses
- Advisory services
- Coaching and mentoring
- Support for research stays abroad
- Networking opportunities (local and regional groups)
- Organization of own events and working groups



























## Funding conditions

Target group:	Funding is generally interdisciplinary and without thematic restrictions. However, the funding organizations place specific requirements on the profile of the applicants. Therefore, please inform yourself about the denominational, political or civil society profile of the respective funding organization.
Funding period:	3 years as the standard funding period + 6 month optional extension + 12-month renewal option for parents, family caregivers and people whose work progress is limited by a chronic illness or disability
Funding amount:	1,450 euros (gradually increasing to 1,650 euros by 2025) + 100 euro lump sum for research costs + 155 euro child allowance for the first child + euro child allowance for each additional child + health insurance allowance
Additional income:	Additional gainful employment is possible for working hours of - less than 10 hours per week (academic positions) - less than 5 hours per week (other positions) Other income over 3,070 euros is taken into account.
Restrictions:	These vary depending on the funding organization. Please inform yourself in particular about the following - Age restrictions - German language requirements - Disciplines excluded from funding (applies to medicine and dentistry, among others)
Application:	Varies depending on the funding organization. Please inform yourself about the respective application deadlines.

## Funding Organization | Target group and contact

	<p> Muslim PhD candidates and PhD candidates working on Islam-related topics</p> <p> <a href="https://www.avicenna-studienwerk.de/scholarship/">https://www.avicenna-studienwerk.de/scholarship/</a></p> <p> info@avicenna-studienwerk.de</p>
	<p> Catholic PhD candidates who are involved in church and/or social contexts</p> <p> <a href="https://www.cusanuswerk.de">https://www.cusanuswerk.de</a></p> <p> info@cusanuswerk.de</p>
	<p> Jewish PhD candidates and PhD candidates working on Jewish topics</p> <p> <a href="https://eles-studienwerk.de/?lang=en">https://eles-studienwerk.de/?lang=en</a></p> <p> info@eles.de</p>
	<p> Protestant PhD candidates; justified exceptions are possible</p> <p> <a href="https://www.evstudienwerk.de/english">https://www.evstudienwerk.de/english</a></p> <p> info@evstudienwerk.de</p>
	<p> PhD candidates who are committed to social democratic values</p> <p> <a href="https://www.fes.de">https://www.fes.de</a></p> <p> stipendien@fes.de</p>
	<p> PhD candidates who are committed to liberal values</p> <p> <a href="https://www.freiheit.org">https://www.freiheit.org</a></p> <p> service@freiheit.org</p>
	<p> PhD candidates who are socially, politically, or ecclesiastically active in the spirit of the foundation</p> <p> <a href="https://www.hss.de">https://www.hss.de</a></p> <p> info@hss.de</p>



## Funding Organization | Target group and contact

 <p><b>Hans Böckler Stiftung</b></p> <p>Mitbestimmung · Forschung · Stipendien</p>	<p> PhD candidates who are socially and/or politically active in the spirit of the foundation</p> <p> <a href="https://www.boeckler.de">https://www.boeckler.de</a></p> <p> zentrale@boeckler.de</p>
 <p><b>HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG</b></p>	<p> PhD candidates who are socially and/or politically active in the spirit of the foundation</p> <p> <a href="https://www.boell.de">https://www.boell.de</a></p> <p> studienwerk@boell.de</p>
 <p><b>KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG</b></p>	<p> PhD candidates who are socially and/or politically active in the spirit of the foundation</p> <p> <a href="https://kas.de">https://kas.de</a></p> <p> zentrale@kas.de</p>
 <p><b>ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG</b></p>	<p> PhD candidates who are socially and/or politically active in the spirit of the foundation</p> <p> <a href="https://www.rosalux.de">https://www.rosalux.de</a></p> <p> info@rosalux.de</p>
 <p><b>sdw</b> Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft</p> <p><i>Wir stiften Chancen!</i></p>	<p> PhD candidates who are socially and/or politically active in the spirit of the foundation</p> <p> <a href="https://www.sdw.org">https://www.sdw.org</a></p> <p> studienförderwerk@sdw.org</p>
 <p><b>Studienstiftung</b> des deutschen Volkes</p>	<p> PhD candidates who show excellent academic performance and social commitment</p> <p> <a href="https://www.studienstiftung.de">https://www.studienstiftung.de</a></p> <p> info@studienstiftung.de</p>

## Foundations with independent sponsorship



### German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU)

The DBU supports projects dealing with environmental protection from the perspective of small and medium-sized enterprises and with technical innovation. Every year, it supports over 50 doctoral candidates researching sustainability and green technology.

Target group:	University graduates who develop scientific solutions for national and international environmental problems
Funding period:	A maximum of 3 years
Funding amount:	1,600 euros + 210 euros material allowance; family allowance possible on application
Additional income:	< 10 h per week; Income above the basic tax-free allowance is taken into account
Restrictions:	Compelling CV, above-average degree, doctoral project at a German university
Application	Twice a year on January 15 and June 15
Contact:	 <a href="https://www.dbu.de/en/">https://www.dbu.de/en/</a>  stipendienprogramme@dbu.de



### Gerda-Henkel-Stiftung

Funding is available for doctorates in the field of historical humanities. Applicants from other disciplines can apply at any time if their project is part of one of the foundation's three special research programs.

Target group:	PhD candidates in the historical humanities field and related to the Foundation's special research programs
Funding period::	2 years + extension option
Funding amount:	1,600 euros + material and overseas/expatriate allowance, 400 euros family allowance (1st child) + 100 euros (from 2nd child)
Additional income:	No additional income possible
Restrictions:	Undergraduate university degree before the age of 28; professional aptitude; degree with an overall grade of 1.5
Application:	Possible at any time, time for processing is 6 months
Contact:	 <a href="https://www.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de">https://www.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de</a>  info@gerda-henkel-stiftung.de

### Foundation for Education and Science

The purpose of the foundation is to support young independent researchers from the literary sciences. Completion scholarships are also offered for PhD candidates in literature and history

Target group::	Graduates of literary studies who have financed their studies through BaFöG or independently
Funding period:	Initially for one year, with renewal option
Funding amount:	€ 1,200 per month, no further grants
Additional income:	No information available
Restrictions:	Maximum age of 30 years
Application:	Once a year by January 15
Contact:	 <a href="http://www.stiftung-bildung-und-wissenschaft.de">http://www.stiftung-bildung-und-wissenschaft.de</a>  <a href="mailto:tanja.denker@stiffterverband.de">tanja.denker@stiffterverband.de</a>

### The Polytechnic foundation of Frankfurt am Main

The scholarship foundation of the Polytechnische Gesellschaft Frankfurt supports PhD candidates at Goethe University and the University of Music and Performing Arts with the MainCampus.doctus program.

Target group::	PhD candidates in the natural sciences, life sciences, humanities, music education and musicology
Funding period::	Initially for one year with renewal option, maximum of 3 years
Funding amount:	1,300 euros per month + 100 euros lump sum for research costs
Additional income:	Not specified
Restrictions:	EExcellent university degree; PhD project at Goethe University or the HfMDK
Application:	Once a year; applicants are nominated by the universities. Unsolicited applications are not possible.
Contact:	 <a href="https://main-campus.de/doctus-stipendium">https://main-campus.de/doctus-stipendium</a>  <a href="mailto:info@sptg.de">info@sptg.de</a>





## Foundations of companies

Many companies are interested in promoting young talent and in maintaining foundations to support suitable PhD candidates in their research. The funding priorities, although not exclusive to, are predominantly in the natural sciences and applied sciences. Some selected funding opportunities through scholarships and grants from corporate foundations in Germany are listed below. You can search for further funding opportunities in the [database of the Stifterverband der deutschen Wirtschaft](#) [in German only].

### Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds (BIF)

The BIF awards scholarships to PhD candidates who wish to carry out their doctoral project in basic biomedical research in a leading international laboratory. Selections are held three times a year on the basis of external expert opinions and personal interviews. Information on the scope of funding and how to apply can be found on the [fund's homepage](#).

### Hertie-Foundation

Twice a year, the Hertie Foundation awards doctoral scholarships in the field of human medicine, particularly in the area of multiple sclerosis. In addition to a material allowance for the supervisor, a one-year financial grant of €800 per month is awarded. Further information can be obtained on the [foundation's website](#).

### Kekulé Mobility Fellowship

The Chemical Industry Fund (FCI) awards a 2-year scholarship to promote young scientists in chemistry and chemistry-related life sciences. The monthly installments of the fellowship amount to €1,850. In addition, a material allowance of €1,000 per year is granted for the purchase of specialist literature, computers including IT-equipment and for attending conferences. Further information can be found on the [FCI website](#).

### Evonik Foundation

Funding is provided for doctorates in the natural sciences that fit in with the foundation's annually changing funding priorities. The doctoral funding extends over two years and amounts to 1,400 euros per month. In addition, applications can be submitted for the purchase of specialist literature and for attending scientific conferences. For further information on the application procedures, please go to [the foundation's website](#).

### FAZIT-Stiftung

The FAZIT Foundation emerged from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and the Societätsdruckerei. Among other things, it supports PhD candidates with grants for printing their thesis and travel expenses, but it also provides 24-month full scholarships. Applicants should not be older than 28 years of age and must provide proof of financial need. The foundation has compiled further information [in a leaflet](#) [in German only].

## Graduate funding from the federal states and universities

In some federal states, those interested in pursuing a doctorate can also apply for funding from the state graduate funding scheme. Depending on the federal state, this takes the form of a cooperation between the state universities in specific graduate schools, state programs or individual scholarships. At the moment, there are no funds for individual scholarships in Hessen.

The state funds tend to be used to establish interdisciplinary research training groups and graduate schools at the state's colleges and universities. Accordingly, applications for this funding are restricted to separately specified research areas. A list of the regulations and legal texts by the federal states as well as the Hessian research training groups can be found on the [website of the education server](#). [in German only]

Some universities also offer funding opportunities for individual institutes or research groups. It is, therefore, worth checking the doctoral funding website of your current or future university for relevant adverts.



## 2.2 Doctorates within structured programs

In addition to the model of the individual doctorate (where it is only linked to a supervisor and the associated university department), the model of structured doctoral programs has been developed further in recent years.

PhD candidates take part in special qualification programs and cooperate closely with other PhD candidates within their research network. They are expected to contribute to the thematic focus of their network with their research. Depending on the university and department, this may also include joint publications or the organization of specialist conferences and meetings.

### Structured doctorates with DFG funding

In Germany, the Research Training Groups funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) have been offering structured doctoral programs since 1990. A Research Training Group (RTG) can be applied for at the DFG by several researchers, usually professors, and is funded for up to nine years after a successful interim evaluation. Other funding institutions also offer similar programs; these are known as doctoral colleges or graduate schools. Research Training Groups can also be founded as a cooperation between different universities and professors from Germany and abroad.



Image: Goethe University, PR and Communications

The aim of the RTGs is to bundle the content of the doctoral candidates' research projects and to structure the work on their dissertations in organizational terms. The doctoral candidates are usually employed as research assistants at the university in accordance with the wage level TV-L E13. Please note that different recommendations for the scope of the positions (65 % - 100 %) apply depending on the discipline. You can find an overview of the usual salary by discipline in a [table online](#) [in German only].

The RTGs offer regular courses, lectures, seminars, conferences or workshops to support PhD candidates in their academic and personal development and to promote exchanges within the consortium. As a rule, one part of the program is compulsory while another part can be chosen individually.

The DFG also funds PhD candidates through Collaborative Research Centres (CRCs), under whose umbrella the so-called integrated Research Training Groups exist. Doctoral and postdoctoral positions are usually advertised at the beginning of the funding period. Typically, RTGs and CRCs also permit doctoral candidates to write a dissertation as an associated doctoral candidate. The prerequisites for this are thematic suitability, funding through a scholarship or third-party funding and membership of the supervisor at the CRC or RTG.

Whether positions are open at a RTG or CRC depends on the funding period. The admission of new doctoral candidates is decided by a committee of the professors involved in the RTG. Applications are submitted directly to the respective DFG Research Training Groups. A database of currently existing Research Training Groups can be found [on the DFG website](#).

Further information on DFG funding for PhD candidates can be found in an [online information sheet](#).



Image: Goethe University, PR and Communications

## DFG Research Training Groups at Goethe University

As a rule, participation in a Research Training Group consists of a predefined curriculum and work phases for your own dissertation. In international RTGs, doctoral candidates from universities in Germany and abroad carry out research within the same subject area.

Goethe University currently has the following DFG-funded RTGs for PhD candidates:

- [RTG 2105](#): Doing Transitions. Individual, Institutional and Discursive Forms of Shaping Transitions in the Life Course (Department: Educational Sciences, since 2017)
- [RTG 2279](#): Configurations of Film (Department: Modern Philologies, since 2017)
- [RTG 2336](#): Resolution of Inflammation. Mediators, Signaling and Intervention (Department: Medicine, since 2017)
- [RTG 2566](#): Interfacing image analysis and molecular life-science. Imol (Department: Physics, since 2021)
- [RTG 2836](#): Fixing Futures: Technologies of Anticipation in Contemporary Societies (Department: Social Sciences, since 2023)
- [RTG 2852](#): Standards of Governance (Departments: Social Sciences, Law, since 2023)

## Collaborative Research Centres at the Goethe University

Within the DFG's Collaborative Research Centres (CRC), thematically related Research Training Groups can be established. Doctoral candidates researching there are usually employed in cohorts per funding period

The following CRCs with integrated Research Training Groups are currently established at Goethe University:

- [CRC 1177](#): Molecular and Functional Characterization of Selective Autophagy (Department: Medicine, since 2016)
- [CRC 1292](#): Gezielte Beeinflussung von konvergierenden Mechanismen ineffizienter Immunität bei Tumorerkrankungen und chronischen Infektionen (Department: Medicine, since 2018)
- [CRC 1361](#): Regulation of DNA Repair and Genome Stability (Department: Medicine, since 2019)
- [CRC 1366](#): Vascular Control of Organ Function (Department: Medicine, since 2019)
- [CRC 1507](#): Membrane-Associated Protein Assemblies, Machineries and Supercomplexes (Department: Medicine, since 2022)
- [CRC 1531](#): Damage control by the stroma-vascular compartment (Department: Medicine, since 2022)
- [CRC 1629](#): Negation in Language and Beyond (Department: Modern Philologies, since 2023)
- [CRC 326](#): Geometry and Arithmetic of Uniformized Structures (Department: Mathematics, since 2021)



## Non-university research institutions

Even though doctorates can only be awarded by universities, research in Germany is not carried out solely at these establishments but also at numerous, publicly funded research institutes. The most important non-university research institutions are grouped into four large associations:

- The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft for the promotion of applied research
- The Helmholtz Association of German research centers
- The Max Planck Society for the advancement of science
- The Leibniz Association

All four organizations receive public funding and in addition raise, independently, third-party funds. In return, the numerous institutes carry out scientific research, often with an international and interdisciplinary focus. Detailed information on the institutes and their locations can be found on the [website of the Federal Report on Research and Innovation](#).

In addition, the non-university research communities are committed to promoting doctoral studies and strive to enable highly qualified graduates with suitable qualifications to complete a doctorate as part of a research project or a structured doctorate. The individual institutes and research facilities cooperate closely with the universities.

At Goethe University, there are research collaborations between non-university institutes and various faculties that may also be of interest to PhD candidates seeking a scholarship. The non-university research institutions and their collaborations with Goethe University are presented below.

### Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft

Among the research fields of the more than 80 Fraunhofer Institutes and research facilities are health and environment, protection and security, mobility and transportation, energy and raw materials, production and services, and communication and knowledge. The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft specializes in application-oriented research in close cooperation with companies and public clients. Often, cooperation with universities exists through the appointment of professors to a chair that is also accompanied by the management of a Fraunhofer Institute. Only positions according to TVöD, E13 are available for doctorates in a research project located here. Vacant doctoral positions are advertised at <https://jobs.fraunhofer.de/> and in national weekly newspapers

In Frankfurt, the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft has established the Institute for Translational Medicine and Pharmacology with additional locations in Hamburg and Göttingen. Open doctoral positions are advertised on the [institute's website](#)

### Helmholtz Centers

The Helmholtz Association, having 18 large scientific-technical and medical-biological research centers, is financed by public funds as well as self-raised, third-party funds. In these centers, the Helmholtz Association pursues the long-term research goals of the government and society within the scope of broad-based research programs. Currently, over 7,000 PhD candidates are conducting their research in Helmholtz centers. Furthermore, the Helmholtz Association has a strong international focus in the promotion of young researchers. There are regional offices in Brussels, Beijing and Moscow as well as individual offices of the research centers abroad. Research focuses on energy, earth and environment, aeronautics, space and transportation, matter, health and key technologies.

The Research Schools of the Helmholtz Association offer structured doctoral programs with a curriculum and a variety of training opportunities. In each of the International Research Schools, a Helmholtz Center, a German partner university and an international partner institution cooperate.

Interested individuals can apply for PhD fellowships in the Research Schools. Employment as a research assistant is also possible.



There are currently two Helmholtz Research Schools at Goethe University in cooperation with the Department of Physics:

- Helmholtz Research School for Quark Matter Studies in Heavy Ion Collisions  
<https://fias.uni-frankfurt.de/helmholtz/>
- Helmholtz Graduate School for Hadron and Ion Research  
<https://hgs-hire.de/>

### International Max Planck Research Schools (IMPRS)

The Max Planck Institutes (MPIs) are located at various sites throughout Germany and conduct basic research in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. Their international orientation is reflected, among other things, in the promotion of scientists at the beginning of their academic careers. The Max Planck Society's graduate schools, for example, already express their international emphasis in their names. Collaborations exist with universities and the DFG Collaborative Research Centres.

A structured doctorate at an IMPRS is based on predefined curricula that include research seminars and professional skills workshops. Employment contracts are primarily agreed between the respective Max Planck Institute and the PhD candidates. Interested applicants should enquire about the funding model of the Research School they are interested in. IMPRS partnerships with MPIs have also been established at Goethe University:

- PCGS - Paul Crutzen Graduate School (FB 11, MPI für Chemistry)  
<https://www.mpic.de/3538568/pcgs-paul-crutzen-graduate-school>
- IMPRS for Neural Circuits, (FB 15, MPI for Brain Research)  
<https://brain.mpg.de/imprs>
- IMPRS on Cellular Biophysics (FB 14, MPI for Biophysics)  
<https://imprs-cbp.mpg.de/>
- IMPRS Molecular Organ Biology (FB 16, MPI for Heart and Lung Research)  
<https://imprs-mob.mpg.de/>

The MPI for European Legal History located at the Westend Campus and the MPI for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt also offer opportunities for individual doctorates, however, they do not have their own IMPRS. Information on this can be found on the respective website [here](#) and [here](#).



## Leibniz Graduate Schools

The Leibniz Association consists of a total of 96 scientific institutions whose research areas range from natural sciences, engineering and environmental sciences to economics, spatial and social sciences and the humanities. The Leibniz Association includes a wide variety of institutions that engage in research and/or provide services for science, from research institutes to computer centers and museums.

In the Leibniz Graduate Schools, which have been successively established since 2006, PhD candidates benefit from a structured doctoral program that is carried out either at the corresponding Leibniz Institute or at the cooperating university. They are usually offered a position as a research assistant. Current job advertisements are advertised on the institute websites. Since 2016, there has also been a Leibniz PhD Network led by elected PhD candidates that offers all PhD candidates of the Leibniz Association a platform for exchange at specialist conferences and career fairs.

Goethe University does not host a Leibniz Graduate School. However, several institutes that cooperate closely with Goethe University are part of the Leibniz Association and offer their own doctoral programs. These include the:

- [Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education \(DIPF\)](#)
- [Peace Research Institute Frankfurt \(PRIF\)](#)
- [Senckenberg-Leibniz Institution for Biodiversity and Earth System Research \(SGN\)](#)
- [Leibniz Institute for Financial Research \(SAFE\)](#)



## 2.3 Funding for international doctorates

### DAAD scholarships

The DAAD supports doctoral candidates from Germany for temporary stays abroad and promotes international doctoral candidates for doctorates in Germany. Doctoral candidates who spend several months abroad for their research can apply to the DAAD for one-year or short-term scholarships (up to six months). The requirement is that the doctoral degree is to be obtained at a German university. For subjects with a strong practical focus, such as fine arts, music or architecture, there is a separate program for one-year funding. You can find all information on the [DAAD website](#).

Please note that doctoral candidates who already receive a scholarship from a scholarship organization for gifted students are not eligible to apply for DAAD funding abroad. Scholarship holders in DFG Research Training Groups are only eligible to apply for short-term research fellowships. However, funding for more than 6 months is possible if the DFG funding is suspended for this period. Nevertheless, the simultaneous award of an annual fellowship and a short-term fellowship for doctoral candidates is not possible.

Doctoral candidates with foreign citizenship can apply to the DAAD for Research Grants that provide a monthly allowance of 1,300 euros + a research grant which can be paid for up to four years in the case of a doctorate. The condition is enrollment at a German university, although this regulation does not apply to international doctoral candidates who already

receive an incoming DAAD scholarship in Germany. The DAAD also offers research grants for binational research projects of international doctoral students with a maximum funding period of two years. Further information can be found online in the [scholarship database](#).

If you plan to apply for a DAAD scholarship in Germany, please have a close look into the current regulations and requirements, as they may differ from the conditions for DAAD scholarship holders abroad. You can find all relevant information [here](#).

**Please note:** Depending on the country of origin, there may be different conditions regarding the cancellation of your funded doctorate (e.g. partial repayment in case of non-completion of doctorate) and/or your right of residence after the doctorate (e.g. mandatory return to home country after completion). If you want to make use of a specific DAAD program, we strongly recommend that you seek information and advice from the respective contact persons listed in the [DAAD Scholarship database](#) under "Contact and consulting".

## Scholarships from the Fulbright Commission

The international exchange program between the USA and more than 150 other countries was established in 1946. To date, more than 40,000 scholarship holders from the USA and Germany have been supported. Doctoral candidates who wish to obtain a PhD in the USA can also apply for scholarships there. Information on the relevant Fulbright Foreign Student Program can be found on the [website of the Fulbright Commission](#). German doctoral candidates planning a four- to six-month research stay in the USA are financially supported by the Fulbright Commission with its own Fulbright doctoral student programs.

## Marie Skłodowska-Curie-Actions (MSCA)

With the MSCA program, the European Commission promotes the European and global exchange of scientists. In this regard, the most important funding opportunities for doctoral researchers are the Innovative Training Networks (ITNs). ITNs are joint research projects of several European research institutions and offer a structured doctoral program with longer stays abroad. However, doctoral candidates do not apply to the EU but directly to the ITNs. All requirements can be found on the [website of the MSCA program](#). A list of all MSCA programs with the participation of Goethe University can be found [here](#).



Image: Goethe University, PR and Communications

## 2.4 Funding opportunities at Goethe University

The Freunde und Förderer der Goethe-Universität support the academic activities of researchers at all qualification levels, for example, the participation of PhD candidates at conferences by covering travel expenses or conference fees. You can find further information on funding and how to apply [here](#) [in German only].

The PhD programs of the Graduate School of Economics, Finance and Management at the House of Finance offer various scholarship and funding formats to a limited number of applicants. Further information can be found on the [GSEFM website](#).

### GRADE Centers

PhD candidates in the GRADE Centers benefit from a range of funding opportunities. These include funding for workshops, lecture series, travel, publication and translation costs, while some centers also offer short-term scholarships. The centers pursue an interdisciplinary training concept where the courses are intended to promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work by the PhD candidates and postdocs. Further information can be found on the [GRADE Center website](#).

## GRADE: Financial support offers

GRADE regularly awards scholarships and financial support for early career researchers at Goethe University from third-party funds originating from foundations and public funding bodies:

### Starting Scholarships for International PhD Candidates

These scholarships are intended to facilitate the start of a doctoral project for international PhD candidates. The funding amounts to 1,350 euros/month for a period of three months. Only applications from individuals with an international background will be considered. It is also a prerequisite that the start date of the doctorate does not exceed one year from the award date and that the applicants are not employed to a significant extent at the GU or elsewhere.

### Financial support for early career researchers with children

Financial support can be provided in the form of a scholarship for applicants with employment for a few hours only. For those who are already employed to a considerable extent, support is provided in the form of payment for auxiliary staff, who take on the routine tasks in research and teaching, so as to free up the student's time for their children. The total amount of support is EUR 2,400.

### GRADE Completion Scholarships

The scholarships serve as grants for the completion of the dissertation. Only applications from enrolled PhD candidates with an international background will be considered. Applicants must also be carrying out their doctorate at Goethe University.

### Ad Infinitum Scholarships for PhD candidates in German Studies\*

GRADE awards two scholarships of up to €1,350/month for PhD candidates in German Studies and related subjects from funds provided by the Ad Infinitum Foundation.\* The applicant's studies and previous doctoral research must not exceed eight years. The duration of the scholarship is for up to two years.

Further information on financial support from GRADE can be found at [www.grade.uni-frankfurt.de/funding](http://www.grade.uni-frankfurt.de/funding).

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\* Doctorates in general and comparative literature, general linguistics, Scandinavian studies and theater, film and media studies that are related to German studies can also be funded.



## 2.5 Funding opportunities for female\* academics

Below you will find selected funding opportunities that are specifically aimed at female\* doctoral candidates. They include models of full and partial funding for various subject-related target groups.

### Christiane Nüsslein Volhard Foundation

Financial grants are awarded to female (post-)doctoral candidates in the natural sciences and medicine who are in the practical work phase of their studies and who also have care responsibilities. It is assumed that the applicants are self-supporting. Support is provided for private childcare, the purchase of household appliances or other costs incurred by single mothers. You can find more detailed information on the [foundation's website](#).

### German Academic Women's Association (DAB)

The DAB supports young female academics by admitting them into academic networks and, in exceptional cases, through scholarships but, above all, the DAB provides printing cost subsidies for the publication of scientific papers. The individual funding opportunities and application requirements can be found on the [website of the DAB funding committee](#). [in German only].

## Hildegardis Association

The Catholic women's support association Hildegardis supports, among other things, Christian female doctoral candidates in their academic qualifications and further education through interest-free loans. The association offers support for female academics with disabilities as part of the iXNet project. The "Church in Mentoring" project also supports women in church institutions. All information on the various formats can be found on the [association's website](#) [in German only].

## Gunda Werner Institute

This institute is affiliated with the Heinrich Böll Foundation and is specifically engaged in the promotion of education, research and academic public relations work on feminism and gender democracy. The scholarships awarded by the Institute are subject to the same conditions as the Heinrich Böll Foundation's scholarships for gifted students. You can find current calls for applications on the [website of the institute](#).

## UNESCO-L'Oréal funding program

With the "For Women in Science" program, UNESCO and L'Oréal support young female scientists worldwide who are aiming for an academic career. In cooperation with the Christiane Nüsslein Volhard Foundation, the German version of the program supports three female applicants from the experimental natural sciences each year. The program and application information can be found [online](#).

## Funding for women in science

The federal states of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate have established support schemes for women, including PhD candidates; these include non-material support, start-up funding and scholarships. A list of further funding opportunities for women in science by federal states can be found on the [website of the education server](#) [in German only].

Further offers of support for women in science and research beyond the doctorate can be found in the [database of the Center of Excellence Women and Science](#) at the GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.

Non-university research institutions also have special support schemes for female scientists such as the Fraunhofer Society's TALENTA network or the Max Planck Society's equal opportunities program.





## 3. Partial funding and international doctorates

In order to highlight the variety of funding options outlined in the previous chapter, we present some partial funding options below. In addition to the positions and scholarships mentioned above that cover research costs, possibly fees for a university place and living expenses, there are also funding opportunities for specific positions that have to be financed externally as part of a dissertation. There are also separate offers for the funding of international doctorates and stays abroad that are subject to special subject-related and institutional conditions.

### 3.1 Partial funding

#### Grants for research and travel expenses

While working on a dissertation for several years, costs are often incurred that exceed the private budget; for example, for trips abroad to conferences and symposia, costs for laboratory materials, accommodation and meals during research stays, for memberships and for one-off fees for field research. If your application is successful, these research-related costs can be covered or co-financed by federal institutions such as the DAAD, higher education institutions and universities as well as public and private foundations or associations.

Some universities and departments also regularly announce project grants that can be used for temporary research work. This type of partial financial support is an essential part of research work as a young scientist and is, therefore, often acquired by postdocs for their continuing research projects.

Even if you have no need for this type of grant during your doctorate, it is worthwhile to look into these funding opportunities as they may become relevant as your academic career progresses.

## Temporary funding

Some universities regularly offer bridging scholarships for graduates that can be used to finance the time between graduation and starting your doctorate. Many universities in Germany and Europe also award writing-up or completion scholarships to finance the final phase of the doctorate. The focus here is usually on the final draft of the thesis as well as its publication and presentation in the scientific community.

Academic archives and institutes in Germany and abroad also regularly offer scholarships for temporary research stays. Some universities also support guest stays that allow international PhD candidates to gain teaching experience. At Goethe University, GRADE offers annual scholarships lasting several months for international PhD candidates. Additionally, the International Campus program of the Global Office encourages professors to propose teachers from foreign universities to teach as a guest lecturer at Goethe-University. This program may cover up to 75% of the total costs of an international lectureship (travel, accommodation, allowance). You can find further information [here](#).

## Printing cost subsidy

Publication of the dissertation is mandatory in Germany. While doctoral theses in the natural and life sciences are often published online or by university libraries, other disciplines incur high costs for printing and publishing, depending on the number of copies. For this reason, some private foundations have now specialized in (partially) covering the printing costs of selected doctoral theses. For PhD candidates at Goethe University, the [Wilhelm Hahn and Erben Foundation and the FAZIT Foundation](#) are particularly suitable for this purpose [in German only]. The University Library also supports you with a [digital open access publication](#) [in German only].

Until 2022, the VG-Wort also granted printing cost subsidies for outstanding academic works. This funding is currently suspended due to a legal dispute. You can find current information on this [here](#) [in German only].



## 3.2. International doctorates

With a few exceptions, German funding institutions support graduates who wish to do a doctorate at a German university. However, some of the funding organizations for the support of gifted students also award scholarships for doctorates abroad. If you are interested in pursuing a doctorate abroad, you should contact the relevant funding institutions directly. The DAAD does not provide scholarships for complete doctorates abroad for German applicants, however, it does grant PhD candidates at German universities one-year scholarships and short-term scholarships for doctoral research stays abroad. In addition, a number of private and public foundations offer funding options for such short-term stays abroad during the doctorate.

However, for doctoral candidates with German citizenship who wish to earn their PhD entirely at a university abroad, there are scarcely any opportunities to access German funding sources. In most cases, it is more advisable to look for suitable scholarships and funding schemes in the respective country.

## Tips for international PhD candidates

International early career researchers are very welcome at German universities. For this reason, the organizations for the support of gifted students and other funding organizations support doctoral candidates from abroad with scholarships and research awards. The DAAD, for example, supports the stay of around 5,000 international doctoral candidates in Germany with a scholarship every year.

In principle, it is not the origin of the applicant that is the decisive factor for the funding of doctorates in Germany, but rather that the dissertation project is linked to a university in Germany. Non-German graduates can, therefore, apply for all scholarships that are available to German PhD candidates, provided that they are enrolled as PhD candidates at a German university. Some of the funding organizations for the support of gifted students have compiled their own information on their application processes for international PhD candidates. You should pay particular attention to the German language requirement which can be a hurdle for some international candidates. The non-university research institutions mentioned above are also always on the lookout for highly qualified doctoral candidates from abroad. The websites [Research in Germany](#) and the [DAAD database](#) provide a good overview of current funding and scholarship opportunities. If you want to apply for a DAAD scholarship, please check the specific conditions as outlined in Chapter 2.3 of this brochure.

## Cotutelle de Thèse | Binational Joint Doctorate

In a cotutelle procedure, PhD candidates acquire a title which is awarded jointly by two universities from two different countries. This dual academic qualification can be advantageous for both academic and non-academic career paths. A number of funding bodies offer additional funding for binational doctorates. This funding is provided primarily for the costs of mobility for the PhD candidates, supervisors and examiners.

The Franco-German University (DFH) supports Franco-German cotutelle doctorates with a grant of 5,000 euros which can be applied for over a period of three years. DAAD scholarships for stays abroad can be supplemented to cover cotutelle-related mobility costs. The DFH has compiled further information for PhD candidates on its [website](#).

The guidelines and consultation services for the Cotutelle procedure with the participation of Goethe University can be found on the [GRADE website](#).



## 4 Further tips and information

### 4.1 The scholarship application

Applying for one or more scholarships takes a lot of time. The earlier you start, the better! Depending on the subject culture, the existing research proposal and professional situation, the planning, preparation and completion of such an application can take from one month to a year.

To ensure that the considerable amount of time required is worthwhile and that your application is at least considered by the respective funding institution, you should pay particular attention to a few key aspects that are explained in detail on the following pages.

#### Subject and thematic suitability

Before applying, make sure that your doctoral project actually fits the thematic profile of a foundation. Some foundations have very stringent requirements in that respect and set narrow, even intra-disciplinary, limits. You should, therefore, adapt your proposal or research plan for each individual application.

The same applies to the cover letter or the personal statement of the application or the letter of motivation. Here, you should emphasize the professional relevance of your project to the research focus of the funding institution. Some private and public foundations pay very close attention to whether a doctorate can actually be of interest to their thematic profile.

## Personal suitability

In addition to your doctoral project, one of the decisive factors for the success of your application is whether your CV and your personality are a good fit with the foundation. What is, and is not, required here is usually clearly specified in the application requirements of the individual scholarship providers. For example, if you cannot document any involvement in civil society or politics, you should not apply to foundations that specify such activities as a basic requirement for the application.

Equally, note the maximum age permitted for applicants and check whether certain subject areas are excluded from funding. If you are unsure, you can also phone for clarification. Many foundations may also have more flexible guidelines depending on the annual application situation.

## Formal requirements

Funding agencies generally expect some formal errors in the applications received, thus making them void. Therefore, a number of applications are legitimately rejected without being assessed. Hence, you should pay close attention to the formal requirements for the documents to be submitted with each application. Depending on the foundation or university, this usually includes the specified minimum and maximum number of characters in the synopsis, the file format and file size, the order of the individual documents and a professional layout of the cover letter.

It is also essential that you adhere to the specified closing dates for the applications and the submission of documents. It can be assumed that an outstanding doctoral project will not be rejected if the number of characters is slightly exceeded. However, you can significantly reduce the risk of rejection by not making avertible formal errors.



## 4.2 Notes on social insurance

PhD candidates do not have their own status in the German Social Security Code.\* Your social security cover in the event of illness and your pension provision during the dissertation phase depend on your professional status: Are you employed and receiving social security contributions, or self-employed or a scholarship holder?\*

### Health insurance

In Germany, there is a general obligation to have health insurance. Employed PhD candidates receiving an income subject to social security contributions, in general, are insured by a public "statutory health insurance" (GKV). The contribution rate for statutory health insurance has been 14.6 % of contributory income since 2015. The employer is responsible for ensuring that contributions are paid to the statutory health insurance fund. Employees can choose one of several health insurance companies with different contributions and benefits. PhD candidates who are not employed or who are self-employed are not automatically members of the GKV. They are also obliged to take out a health insurance policy but, generally, have to arrange and finance this themselves. You can choose between GKV insurance and private providers. PhD candidates receiving a scholarship are considered self-employed by health insurance companies and must take out their own health insurance. Compared to compulsorily insured individuals, they can claim a reduced contribution rate that is calculated on the basis of their respective monthly income. Scholarship holders of one of the organizations for the support of gifted students can usually apply for a subsidy for their health insurance. Please contact your scholarship foundation for more information.

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\* The following information on health insurance, unemployment benefit and pension insurance is based on the information brochure of the Gewerkschaft für Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW): "Sozialversicherung für Promovierende. Ein Ratgeber," online: [https://www.gew.de/fileadmin/media/publikationen/hv/Hochschule\\_und\\_Forschung/Broschueren\\_und\\_Ratgeber/Ratgeber\\_Sozialversicherung\\_fuer\\_Promovierende.pdf](https://www.gew.de/fileadmin/media/publikationen/hv/Hochschule_und_Forschung/Broschueren_und_Ratgeber/Ratgeber_Sozialversicherung_fuer_Promovierende.pdf); last checked on 3 March 2024.

\*\* Please note that some of the following regulations may not apply to non-EU citizens. Nevertheless, international doctoral candidates should contact the Goethe Welcome Centre for information on the applicable regulations, see [https://www.goethe-university-frankfurt.de/45729918/Welcome\\_to\\_the\\_Goethe\\_Welcome\\_Centre](https://www.goethe-university-frankfurt.de/45729918/Welcome_to_the_Goethe_Welcome_Centre)

## Long-term care insurance

Anyone with health insurance must also pay contributions to long-term care insurance. The respective contribution rate is subject to a statutory assessment. In Germany, the contribution to long-term care insurance in 2021 is 3.05 % of the contributory income, while, for those without children, it has been 3.4 % since January 2022. PhD candidates in both private and statutory health insurance schemes are required to contribute to long-term care insurance in equal measure.

## Unemployment insurance

PhD candidates with a job automatically pay into unemployment insurance. After the end of their employment, they are entitled to unemployment benefit (ALG) if the employment was for more than 24 months and was carried out over 360 calendar days. Self-employed individuals and scholarship holders do not have to pay compulsory unemployment insurance contributions as they are not considered to be employees. In the event of unemployment, they are, therefore, not entitled to unemployment benefit. Instead, they can apply for the so-called citizen's allowance ("Bürgergeld"), provided that they are available to the labor market during this period. You can find the current regulations in an [information brochure online](#).

Please note that your entitlement to ALG may lapse if you receive a scholarship for several years since, as a scholarship holder, you are not subject to social security contributions. However, if for at least 360 calendar days in the past two years you have been employed and subject to social insurance contributions, and you then receive a scholarship, you can prevent this forfeiture by registering as a jobseeker for a short period before the start of the scholarship and, thus, obtain ALG. Your entitlement will then remain valid for up to four years after the first application.

## Pension insurance

If you are employed while carrying out your doctorate, you are obliged to pay pension insurance contributions. The current contribution rate is 18.6 % of your income and is paid directly by your employer. If you have a minor employment ("Minijob") or if you are a member of a professional pension scheme (e.g., lawyers, architects), you are not required to pay contributions; this also applies to self-employed persons and scholarship holders. In order to reach the minimum contribution period required later, self-employed individuals and doctoral candidates with a scholarship can make voluntary contributions to their pension insurance. However, please note, self-employed educators and teachers are subject to the compulsory pension insurance. In individual cases, please check with the relevant Human Resources office or trade union whether your academic activity involves compulsory pension insurance.



## 4.3 Links

### Doctoral positions

- <https://www.academics.de/>  
Academic job exchange [in German only]
- <https://www.daad.de/en/studying-in-germany/phd-studies-research/phd-germany/>  
Doctoral positions in Germany
- <https://www.hsozkult.de/>  
Jobs and scholarships for humanities scholars
- [https://jobs.zeit.de/stellenmarkt/wissenschaft\\_lehre](https://jobs.zeit.de/stellenmarkt/wissenschaft_lehre)  
ZEIT academic job market [in German only]
- <https://www.euraxess.de/germany/jobs-funding>  
EU-funded doctoral positions in Europe
- <https://www.mystipendium.de/jobs/doktorandenstellen>  
Doctoral positions and scholarships in Germany [in German only]
- <http://jobs.e-fellows.net/Akademische-Stellen-suchen>  
Doctoral positions in Germany [in German only]
- <http://www.medicinooxy.com/>  
Doctoral positions in the fields of medicine, pharmacy and biology
- <http://drarbeit.de/>  
Doctoral positions in the natural sciences and medicine [in German only]
- <https://www.jobvector.de/>  
Positions in the fields of natural sciences, medicine and computer science [in German only]
- [https://jobs.fraunhofer.de/?locale=en\\_US](https://jobs.fraunhofer.de/?locale=en_US)  
Job advertisements of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft

## Research Training Groups and Graduate Schools

- <https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/OCTOPUS?language=en&task=programmlisten>  
List of current DFG Research Training Groups
- <https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/careers/careers-in-research/phds-at-leibniz/leibniz-graduate-schools.html>  
Leibniz Graduate Schools
- <https://www.helmholtz.de/en/career/careers-at-helmholtz/phd-candidates/helmholtz-international-research-schools/>  
Helmholtz (International) Research Schools
- <https://www.mpg.de/en/imprs>  
International Max Planck Research Schools

## Scholarships

- <https://www.daad.de/en/studying-in-germany/phd-studies-research/phd-germany/>  
Scholarship database of the DAAD
- <https://www.mystipendium.de/stipendien/stipendienprogramm>  
Doctoral positions and scholarships in Germany [in German only]
- <https://www.hsozkult.de/grant/page>  
Scholarships for social sciences, humanities and cultural studies
- <https://www.deutsches-stiftungszentrum.de/foerderung/index.html>  
Database of the Stifterverband der deutschen Wirtschaft [in German only]

## Social insurance for PhD candidates

- <https://www.gew.de/wissenschaft/promotion>  
Information on social insurance and employment law for PhD candidates [in German only]
- <https://www.bmas.de/EN/Social-Affairs/Social-insurance/social-insurance.html>  
General information on social insurance in Germany by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

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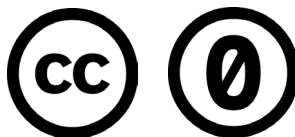
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