

postdoc primer *essentials*

Get started at HHU

HHU Postdoc Primer

On behalf of the Junior Scientist and International Researcher Center (JUNO) we welcome you as a postdoctoral researcher at Heinrich Heine University (HHU). This primer serves as an overview of the support structures for postdocs and aims to bundle all the relevant information together for a smooth start at HHU. JUNO offers interdisciplinary qualification and soft skill trainings for postdocs, young research group leaders and junior professors in order to support the scientific independency of the young academics. Furthermore, JUNO's Welcome Center serves as the main contact and service center for international researchers at HHU. JUNO is part of [Heine Research Academies \(HeRA\)](#).

If you want to keep up to date about JUNO's activities and receive regular information about topics and events surrounding the postdoctoral phase, you can [register for our mailing list here](#).

■ What makes a postdoc?

Literally speaking, you are a "postdoc" after completing your doctorate. However, this especially refers to those who continue to work in academia - whether at universities or other research institutions. According to a narrower definition, only the two to max. four years after the doctorate are referred to as the postdoc phase. During this time the decision on a possible further academic career path is made, in particular considering the attainment of the ability to hold a professorship through habilitation, junior professorship or junior research group leadership or a permanent position in academia beyond professorships. However, also the decision to leave academic research is still possible for you during the postdoc phase. Doing a postdoc is part of your qualification for a future independent (research) career.

As a postdoc at HHU you develop your own scholarly competence working under the supervision of HHU faculty members. You build a scientific network and learn additional subject specific methods and technics. As a postdoc you are in the R2 career phase according to the [EU Research Profiles descriptors](#) („recognised researcher, PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent“).

■ Postdoc Guidelines

Central to all activities surrounding the postdoctoral phase at HHU are the [HHU postdoc guidelines](#). The guidelines are intended to provide a productive and inspiring working environment as well as good research conditions and opportunities for personal development for HHU postdocs. A clear description of the job profile including a [target agreement](#), a [guide for feedback meetings](#), a personal career development plan, regular discussions about your professional development with your supervisor, and measures to support your visibility and building of your career profile are proposed in order to support you best during your postdoc phase at HHU.

■ Internationals: Welcome Guide and Welcome Center

If you are an international researcher, consider registering for JUNO's [Welcome Service for international PhD students, postdocs and professors](#). JUNO is the central contact for international researchers and their families at HHU. Our Welcome-Service assists international researchers with their start at HHU and provides support in administrative procedures such as visa matters, finding accommodation and health insurance. In addition, you find a lot of useful information in the [Welcome Guide](#) specifically targeted towards international researchers.

■ Living in Düsseldorf

The city of Düsseldorf and its suburbs offer many nice places to live, but the housing situation is tight. When preparing your stay in Düsseldorf, make sure to look for accommodation well in advance, ideally before travelling to Düsseldorf. Especially when coming from abroad, it may be easier to first look for short-term accommodation. Our colleagues from the Welcome Center provide ample information about finding accommodation on their [website](#).

■ Aspects of the postdoctoral phase and of your future career

During your postdoc you should start thinking about the different career paths available to you and the different skill sets required. Developing a professional competence portfolio is crucial for your future career.



- ***Career paths***

Since all paths require different skill sets, seeking targeted skill qualification is essential for the postdoctoral phase. As a supporting measure, JUNO has developed a [career guide](#) that can help you figure out your personal goals as well as creating an individual career plan.

- ***Third-party funding***

HHU supports you in the process of developing a research profile in particular by financially supporting your innovative research ideas and projects by the [Strategic Research Fund \(SFF\)](#). [The Third-Party Funding Bonus for Young Researchers](#) is additionally intended as an incentive to apply for additional third party funding. A good collection of useful information on research funding is available for you on the [corresponding JUNO webpages](#).

- ***Habilitation***

Habilitation defines the academic qualification to self-conduct university teaching and research. In some research areas habilitation is still fundamental in order to obtain a professorship in Germany and many other European countries. The habilitation is the highest qualification level at universities. The requirements to obtain the habilitation degree are specified in the [habilitation regulations of HHU's faculties](#).

- ***Mobility – HeRA Travel grants***

International experience is a requirement for a successful career in research and an added bonus for a career in other fields. For active participation at academic conferences and symposia as well as for research stays abroad Heine Research Academies support you financially with [travel grants](#) as a member of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine or the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

- ***Publication***

The University Library (ULB) has points of contact for [subject information for research and teaching](#) in the different disciplines. The ULB also offers you [support](#) for publishing your dissertation and habilitation as well as publishing monographs or journals in an open access format. For publishing in general please refer to HHU's [publication guideline](#).

- ***Academic Employment Law***

In order to protect employees, fixed-term employment contracts are only legally permissible under certain conditions. This is intended to prevent employers from hiring their employees on fixed-term contracts more than once and not giving them a permanent employment contract combined with a regulated protection against lay-offs. However, in order to do justice to the general conditions in scientific education, there is a special regulation for scientists and scholars - the law on fixed-term employment contracts in science (Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz, WissZeitVG). Currently, there are talks about revising the WissZeitVG. For now, you can find all relevant information about the current state of the law [on our website](#).

- **Networking**

Networking, both within and across universities, is a vital aspect of career planning. To get in contact with other postdoctoral researchers at HHU, you are invited to join JUNO's Social Events like the monthly [Postdoc Lunch](#). To exchange with researchers at other research institutions in Germany consider joining the [German Postdoc Network](#).

- **Skills Training and Professional Development**

The postdoctoral phase and subsequently the management of an own working group are part of the qualification path to scientific independence. JUNO would like to support you on this path and offers a variety of events and courses to further develop your competences and strengthen your profile.

- **JUNO Workshops, Düsseldorfer Weg and career certificates**

A wide-ranging [workshop programme](#) covers the topics of Good Research Practice, leadership, management and organization, research funding and acquisition of third-party-funding, presentation and communication, self-competence and career development, as well as entrepreneurship and is organized as interfaculty training for postdocs at HHU. JUNO also offers [career counselling](#) for postdoctoral researchers of all subject areas as well as well as [coaching](#) for experienced postdocs, research group leaders and junior professors.

Within the framework of the two-stage certificate programme [“Düsseldorf Way of Training”](#) there is the opportunity to familiarise yourself with three different academic career paths - (1) researcher (2) lecturer (3) scientific manager. In the orientation phase, key competencies of all three areas are taught, which are then expanded on in the specialization phase. To further supplement your career development we also offer a [career certificate for careers in business and society](#). The program is geared toward giving researchers the skills they need for jobs outside a university setting. This includes working in business and society but also at universities of applied sciences and non-university research organizations.

- **University Didactics**

The [Service-Center for Good Learning and Teaching \(SELL\)](#) provides you with additional education, guidance, information, and opportunities to plan and design courses, modules, and study programs in a learner-centered manner. All teaching staff at HHU can participate in the [certificate programme: “Professional teaching skills for the higher education sector”](#) and thus have the opportunity to develop a professional self-image and make a contribution to quality assurance in studies and teaching.

- **Professionalisation, advanced training and interdisciplinary learning – ProFiL**

[ProFiL](#) offers a selected range of further education and training that will help you to successfully meet current and future challenges of your career and to continuously professionalize your work. ProFiL brings together all the training courses offered at HHU in one place. The events are generally open for all members of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf.

- *SelmaMeyerMentoring programme for female researchers*

The [SelmaMeyerMentoring programme](#) is a personnel development strategy for female early career researchers. It aims to help qualified, committed female early career researchers identify and develop their skills and expertise, and systematically integrate these into their career planning.

- **Contact points @HHU**

[The Academic Staff Council](#) represents academic staff and research assistants from all faculties and institutions at HHU. They advise and support you in all personnel matters and mediate in disagreements and disputes with superiors.

[The Commission and ombudspersons for Good Research Practice](#) safeguard the principles of Good Research Practice at Heinrich Heine University.

[The Department of Research Management and Transfer](#) at HHU offers support for third-party funding applications, implementation of approved projects, legal advice on research projects and general funding information.

[The Research Data Management Unit](#) of HHU supports you in all matters relating to research data management with guidance, tools and training on aspects like data management plans, storage media, persistent identifiers, data publication and metadata.

[The Center for Entrepreneurship Düsseldorf \(CEDUS\)](#) at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf is your contact for all questions related to self-employment and starting a business.

[The Public Engagement Unit](#) is responsible for implementing the HHU public engagement strategy, referred to as the Citizens' University ("Bürgeruniversität"). The main objective of the strategy is to promote dialogue between science and society in a wide variety of ways as well as training in science communication.

[The Family Support Centre](#) is a counseling and mediation office for students and employees of the university who want to combine family and career or studies.

- **Mental Health**

is covered by the [Health Section of the Heine Center for Sustainable Development](#). Help outside the university is listed on the website of the [Diversity Portal](#).

- **Occupational Safety and Health**

gets managed by the individual institutes at HHU. Furthermore, the [Staff Unit Occupational Safety, Health and Environment](#) functions as a central contact point.

- **Further Reading**

Please make use of all the information that is gathered on the corresponding [JUNO website](#). In addition, you find a vast number of interesting articles and experience reports on [career planning and different career options](#). If you are interested in [further position papers and publications on Junior Researchers](#), JUNO has compiled several interesting links on its website.

Index

Academic Employment Law 3
Academic Staff Council 5
Career guide 1, 3
Career paths 2, 3
Center for Entrepreneurship Düsseldorf (CEDUS) 5
Commission and ombudspersons for Good Research Practice 5
Düsseldorf Way of Training 4
Düsseldorfer Weg 3,4
Family Support Centre 5
Further Reading 5
German Postdoc Network 4
Guide for feedback meetings 2
Habilitation 3
HeRA Travel grants 3
Internationals 2
JUNO Workshops 4
Living in Düsseldorf 2
Mental Health 5
Mobility 3
Occupational Safety and Health 5
Postdoc Guidelines 2
Postdoc Lunch 4
Professionalisation, advanced training and interdisciplinary learning – ProFiL 4
Public Engagement Unit 5
Publication Guideline 3
Research Data Management Unit 5
Research Management and Transfer 5
Research Profiles descriptors 1
SelmaMeyerMentoring programme 5
Service-Center for Good Learning and Teaching (SELL) 4
Skills Training and Professional Development 4
Strategic Research Fund (SFF) 3
Target Agreement 2
Third-party funding 3, 5
Third-Party Funding Bonus for Young Researchers 3
University Didactics 4
University Library (ULB) 3
Welcome Center 2
Welcome Guide 2

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