Pre-Doc Award 2020/2021
Call for applications

The Pre-Doc Award is a strategic support programme of Leipzig University in the field of promoting young scientists. It is anchored in our university’s Personnel Development Concept and University Development Plan (HEP 2025).

Postdocs and qualified Pre-Doc candidates interested in a doctorate get the opportunity to jointly plan a research project within a funding period of one year. As a result, an application for a scholarship by those interested in a doctorate or for third party funding by the postdoc including the financing of a doctoral position should be made. In this way, promising research projects will be funded and postdocs are strengthened on their way to scientific independence by expanding their supervision skills.

As of 1 October 2020, Leipzig University will provide up to 20 “Pre-Doc Awards” to fund the preparation of doctoral projects

Funding will be provided through a position as a research assistant (WHK, Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft) 19 hours per week for 12 months

Eligible are graduate students (Masters, Diploma or State Examination) from all research fields with excellent academic records who team up with postdoctoral researchers to propose a joint research respective doctoral project. The application should clearly reflect the collaborative working relationship between the postdoc and the Pre-Doc candidate, i.e. both are expected to actively participate in conceptualizing and drafting the application. It is advisable to outline the application in accordance with the postdoc’s research profile.

Application and evaluation procedure

The Pre-Doc Award addresses university graduates, whose final exams (date of degree/certificate) will either be achieved shortly, the latest within the first 6 months of the funding period or date back no longer than eight months, and postdocs in the period of qualifying for a next career step after their dissertation.

The application (in English or German) must include a standard list of documents. Please follow the guidelines outlined in the Application and Programme Details.

The Vice-Rector for Research and Young Academics will appoint a selection committee, which will decide on the projects to be funded, based on pre-defined evaluation criteria.

The Application and Programme Details are an essential part of this call and are enclosed. They may also, along with further information and the FAQs be found here: https://www.uni-leipzig.de/pre-doc-award

For further questions, please contact Dr. Nicole Koburger (Tel.: 0341/9735093, nicole.koburger@zv.uni-leipzig.de).

Please submit your application, preferably via email, as one pdf-document to nicole.koburger@zv.uni-leipzig.de

Application deadline is 21 June 2020.

Students/graduates with disabilities are invited to apply and with equal qualification are given preference.
Your contact person for questions and postal address for printed applications:

Universität Leipzig
Dezernat Forschung und Transfer
Dr. Nicole Koburger
Ritterstr. 26
04109 Leipzig

Internal mailbox number: 431401

Notes on Data Protection

By submitting your application documents, you acknowledge your consent to the processing of the data contained therein for the Pre-Doc Award selection procedure. You have the right to revoke that consent at any time. The data that you provided in the application will only be used for the selection procedure and, in case of selection and funding, for programme purposes, carried out in accordance with Art. 6 of the General Data Protection Regulation (DSGVO, Datenschutzgrundverordnung). The storage of data is subject to the relevant provisions of the DSGVO on archiving of data.

According to the DSGVO, you have the right to ask for information concerning the processing of your data from the data controller (i.e. the application addressee); you also have the right to rectification, erasure, restriction of processing, as well as the right to object to the processing of the data.

An application via email is considered questionable under data protection law. The applicant assumes full responsibility.
Pre-Doc Award 2020/2021
Application and Programme Details

6 April 2020

Application Details

Pre-doc requirements

Graduates with an excellent academic record
- From Leipzig University and other nationwide and international universities
- From diploma or master’s degree courses or those leading to a state examination
- In the transition period at the end of the university studies, either being
  - shortly before completion of studies (final certificate has to be achieved within the
    first 6 months of the Pre-Doc Award funding period), or
  - maximum of eight months after graduation (date of the certificate is decisive).
- With the intention of a doctorate and interest in a scientific career

Postdoc requirements

- Postdocs
  - of all faculties and research institutions at Leipzig University
  - with a temporary employment contract or a position that is financed by a scholarship
  - in the period of qualification after the dissertation
  - with the main part of their work being of scientific nature
- Junior Professors and Tenure Track Professors from Leipzig University

(Both groups are in the following jointly addressed with the term ‘postdoc’.)

Application Documents

Please provide the following documents, preferably via email, as one pdf-document:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Document title</th>
<th>Explanation and remarks</th>
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| Cover letter   | - 1-2 pages maximum (Times New Roman or similar font, size 11, 1.5 line spacing)  
- Statement jointly written by the Pre-Doc candidate and postdoc summarizing the objectives of the joint work, reasons for the application and detailing the previous and/or planned working relationship.  
- The postdoc is asked to explain the planned support for the Pre-Doc candidate in achieving the joint objectives.  
- At the end of the cover letter both, Pre-Doc candidate and postdoc shall confirm that they have read, and agree to adhere to, the Pre-Doc Award Programme Details (see underneath). |
Project proposal, containing
(1) Research question(s) / Hypothesis
(2) Research objectives
(3) Potential results
(4) Work plan incl. timeline
   (focus: Pre-Doc Award year; dissertation may be considered in addition)
(5) Plans for applying for third party funding for the doctoral project / research project

- 3 pages maximum, including references and graphics (Times New Roman or similar font, size 11, 1.5 line spacing)
- In addition to the specific research question, the broader research context in which it can be classified and to which subject area it is assigned should be outlined
  ➔ The proposal should be self-explanatory (also for an audience not doing research in the same field of expertise) and allow for a classification in the field of expertise and assessment of eligibility
- Should outline the main features of the planned dissertation project, as well as the work in the Pre-Doc Award year
- Does not have to be a final exposé of the later doctorate

CV of the Pre-Doc candidate

CV of the postdoc

List of publications of the postdoc (and, if applicable, of the Pre-Doc candidate)

- 3 pages maximum, if necessary please focus on the most recent and subject-related publications

Pre-Doc: Graduation certificate

- If the degree will be obtained after the application deadline, but prior to potentially starting the Pre-Doc Award funding, please hand in a transcript of records as well as an estimation of date of receiving the final certificate. Once received, please submit it without being asked.
- If the degree will be obtained up to six months after starting the Pre-Doc Award funding period, please provide additional documents (see final line of this table).

Confirmation of support of potential faculty supervisor(s)

This shall not be a letter of recommendation, but rather a signed confirmation regarding the following points:
- Project is known and supported in terms of content
- The best possible ideological and organizational support will be granted (e.g. by granting access to colloquia for the Pre-Doc candidate; integration into the working group)
- Willingness, in case of departure or longer absence of the postdoc, to take on mentoring and supervising tasks during the Pre-Doc Award year, or to find (together with the applying postdoc) a new postdoc tandem partner
- Willingness, in case of success of the Pre-Doc Award candidate, to supervise him or her in the doctoral research / dissertation and to include the postdoc in further supervising, or, if more suitable, to help in finding other supervisor(s).

If you expect to achieve the final certificate of the candidate after the start of the funding period and within its first 6 months, please provide in addition:
- Plausible justification in plain text (half page maximum, Times New Roman or similar font, size 11, 1.5 line spacing)
- Your personal schedule outlining the major steps to be taken until receiving the final certificate from studies (including the period during which any final thesis is evaluated)
- As far as possible documents that provide proof of the statues and the to be expected certificate within the first six months of the funding period (e.g. an extract from the
examination regulations stating the time period you have for preparing the final thesis after its registration and proof of the registration of your thesis
- Transcript of records
- 1-page exposé on the content of the master thesis

**Application Language**

Submissions are possible in either English or German. When applying, please be aware, that, due to the international character of the programme, the preferred communication language for any activities and most of the written communication will be English.

**Selection**

**Evaluation Criteria**

Evaluation criteria are

- Qualification of the candidate and postdoc
- The fit of the collaboration of postdoc and candidate
- The overall quality of the application
- Plausibility and comprehensibility of the proposed research and working schedule
- The potential for acquiring future funding for the candidate

**Who is evaluating the applications?**

The Vice-Rector for Research and Young Academics will appoint a selection committee, which will decide on the projects to be funded. Although this committee is interdisciplinary, it is not possible to represent all subjects.

The committee will include:

- The Vice-Rector for Research and Young Academics
- The referent of the Vice-Rector for Research and Young Academics
- At least three representatives from the Research Commission
- A representative of the Department of Research Services
- The Commissioner for equal opportunities
- If applicable, the representative for Employees with Disabilities

The referent for academic staff development, coordinating the Pre-Doc Award, will take part in the selection commission in a consultative capacity and in the function of protocolling the session.

**Programme Details**

**Pre-Doc Award Programme Timeline**

The application deadline is **21 June 2020**. Notification of the selection process will be given in the second half of July 2020. The administrative steps to prepare for a potential employment are to be
taken shortly afterwards. The start of the programme for all projects shall be 1 October 2020. Exceptions are prone to individual discussion. The Pre-Doc Award programme consists of the individual project activities for each Pre-Doc Award tandem and a number of pre-defined activities for the overall group cohort. The most important of them are the Pre-Doc Award Kickoff Event (October 2020) as well as a Final Symposium towards the end of the funding period (September 2021).

**Expectations of the Awardees**

When selected for funding within the Pre-Doc Award programme, all awardees (Pre-Doc candidates and postdocs) are expected to adhere to the following aspects. In order to assure that all candidates and postdocs are aware of this, a confirmation is requested in the cover letter of the application.

1. **Strive for third party funding:**
   Candidates – supported by the postdoc – shall further develop the doctoral project presented in the application and prepare an application for a doctoral scholarship during the funding period and/or
   The postdoc – in collaboration with the candidate and based on the planned doctoral project – shall apply for third party funding, ideally as the Principle Investigator (PI) of a project that also secures funding for the Pre-Doc candidate.

2. **Participate in the Pre-Doc Award framework programme:**
   Pre-Doc candidates and postdocs shall participate in the Pre-Doc Award events and networking activities, particularly:
   - Kickoff event (half day; October 2020 at Villa Tillmanns)
   - Workshop “Introduction to Scientific Writing” (obligatory for Pre-Doc candidates and voluntary for postdocs)
   - Peer networking and discussion meetings for the participants (frequency to be decided during the Kickoff event with Awardees; likely 90 minutes each)
   - Final symposium (full day; September 2021)

3. **Support public relations for the Pre-Doc Award:**
   Candidates and postdocs shall support the public relations for the Pre-Doc Award by providing related information for respective channels, e.g. the website and Leipzig University’s staff magazine ‘LUMAG’, if requested. They shall also make the Pre-Doc Award visible in the Leipzig University Research Information System (leiris) and “Forschungsbericht” (FOB). They are further encouraged to add the Pre-Doc Award to their personal CVs.

4. **Provide information for the programme evaluation:**
   Candidates and postdocs shall participate reliably in the Pre-Doc Award evaluation. This means, the Pre-Doc candidates and postdocs may keep the coordination informed about the submissions, their status quo and particularly outcome. For a mandatory mid-term and final evaluation, a questionnaire will be provided to ease and standardise the procedure. The final evaluation will include, among general feedback about the programme, the following information for each submission: the submission date, the name of the funding body, the date of the funding body’s answer and the outcome (funding granted or not and if the funding was accepted or not by the Awardees). As the application process may take longer than the Pre-
Doc Award funding period, this also applies for answers received after the Pre-Doc Award funding period.

(5) **Keep your contact data up to date:**
Pre-Doc candidates and postdocs shall inform the Pre-Doc Award coordinating office in case of any relevant change of contact data or employment status.

**Funding Terms**

The funding of the Pre-Doc Award is a position as a research assistant (*Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft, WHK*) with 19 hours per week for 12 months. The candidate will be employed by Leipzig University, Federal State of Saxony.

In most cases, the rate will be the one for WHKs with a master’s degree (or equivalent degree). Should you wish to apply for the Pre-Doc Award funding phase and make use of the option that the final degree will be received within the first six months of the funding period, the rate for WHKs with a bachelor’s degree will apply for this first part of the funding. For graduate students striving for a state exam, the contract, in this case, would start with a position as student assistant (*Studentische Hilfskraft, SHK*). As soon as the final certificate is achieved, both contracts can be changed to WHK (master/state exam).

Detailed information on WHK contracts can be found in the [intranet](#) of Leipzig University.

**Who is who in the Pre-Doc Award**

There are on the awardees’ side at least three people involved in the Pre-Doc Award application and programme: The Pre-Doc candidate, the postdoc, a supervisor/professor.

- **(1) The Pre-Doc candidate**

- **(2) The postdoc**
  
  The postdoc shall function as a mentor for the Pre-Doc candidate, supporting the process and progress, as well as other questions related to the Pre-Doc Award and later dissertation period. If the discipline of the tandem allows, he/she will also be the content-related supervisor of the candidate. For the period after the Pre-Doc Award year, his/her ongoing contribution to the supervision of the PhD is strongly recommended.

  At the same time, the postdoc is an awardee him-/herself. He/she gains access to the programme network and fosters personal supervision skills. Individual advice regarding the postdoc awardee role or personal career pathway may be requested from the academic staff development.

- **(3) The supervisor**

  For administrative handling as well as the planned dissertation, the involvement of a professor is essential.

  He/she, usually the head of the chair, institution or working group, functions as the disciplinary superior of the Pre-Doc candidate. This means, he/she has to sign the employment forms and usually all other official documents and shall support the Pre-Doc in the best possible ideological and organizational way (e.g. by granting access to colloquia for the Pre-Doc candidate; integration into the working group).

  At the same time, in most cases, this person will be the supervisor of the future dissertation project and potentially one of the reviewers of the dissertation.
Other (junior) professors and, depending on the regulations for supervising and reviewing PhD researchers of the faculty, postdocs may later on be involved in the supervision of the PhD, e.g. via forming a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC).

We strongly recommend to prepare and sign a supervision agreement outlining the roles, rights and duties of the above named for the Pre-Doc Award period. The template provided by the Research Academy Leipzig may serve as an orientation for this: [https://www.ral.uni-leipzig.de/informationen-fuer/hochschullehrende/betreuung-von-promovierenden/](https://www.ral.uni-leipzig.de/informationen-fuer/hochschullehrende/betreuung-von-promovierenden/)

**Administrative Steps**

Prior to the employment, the employing institution will have to hand in a “request for employment” (ANTRAG auf Einstellung einer Hilfskraft an der Universität Leipzig) signed by the head of the institution. This form can be found in the intranet. The form shall be amended by the “Anlage: Begründung für Befristungen nach dem WissZeitVG“. Detailed information about steps to take, contact persons and templates for the forms will be provided after the selection of the funded awardees.

**Contact Information**

The Pre-Doc Award is led by the Vice-Rector for Research and Young Academics, Prof. Dr. Erich Schröger. The programme is coordinated by the referent for academic staff development, Dr. Nicole Koburger, supported by Laura Matthes. Please submit your application, preferably via email, as one pdf-document to Dr. Nicole Koburger.

The contact details are:

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<tr>
<th>Programme Lead: Programme Coordination:</th>
<th>Coordination Assistance:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vice Rectorate for Research and Young Scientists</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic Staff Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. Erich Schröger</td>
<td>Dr. Nicole Koburger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+49 341 97-30020</td>
<td>+49 341 97- 35093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:prorektor.forschung@uni-leipzig.de">prorektor.forschung@uni-leipzig.de</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:nicole.koburger@zv.uni-leipzig.de">nicole.koburger@zv.uni-leipzig.de</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Matthes</td>
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<tr>
<td>+49 341 97- 35096</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:Laura.matthes@zv.uni-leipzig.de">Laura.matthes@zv.uni-leipzig.de</a></td>
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Please also read the FAQs for further information.
Pre-Doc Award 2020/2021
Frequently Asked Questions

6 April 2020

Application: Pre-doc requirements

Am I eligible to apply as a candidate if my graduation was more than eight months prior to the time of application?
Yes, well-explained exceptions are possible. In this case, please add an explanation (maximum half a page, Times New Roman or similar font, size 11, 1.5 line spacing) outlining the reasons for the present timing and the motivation of the tandem to participate in the Pre-Doc Award programme to your application documents.

May I apply if I have not yet finished my master’s degree?
Yes. The Pre-Doc Award addresses university graduates, whose final exams (date of degree / certificate) will either be achieved shortly, the latest within the first six months of the funding period. Please note, that your remuneration will be lower if you start the funding period without having a final master’s degree or state exam certificate. Please refer to the ‘Application and Programme Details’ document for further information.

Is a postponed start of the contract possible?
Yes, well-explained exceptions are possible. In this case, please add an explanation (maximum half a page, Times New Roman or similar font, size 11, 1.5 line spacing) outlining the reasons for the planned postponed start to your application documents.

Can I apply as a candidate if I am already on the doctoral candidate list of a faculty?
No. If a candidate is already on the doctoral candidate list of a faculty, then he/she is a doctoral researcher and no longer has the status of being a “Pre-Doc”.

May I apply when I have acquired my degree outside of Leipzig University?
Yes. International and national candidates from outside of Leipzig are highly encouraged to apply, given that – in case of a successful Pre-Doc Award period – the candidate plans to complete the dissertation at Leipzig University. Contrarily, the postdoc has to have a working contract at Leipzig University.

Is it recommended to continue the personal career pathway with the PhD with another university, after the Pre-Doc Award period?
No, the Pre-Doc Award aims to support young researchers in acquiring funding for their PhD at Leipzig University. The application, among other things, involves finding a potential future faculty supervisor and consequently the Pre-Doc period is thought to be a preparatory phase for doctoral research at Leipzig University.

Can I apply without a postdoc?
No, that is not possible.
Application: Postdoc Requirements

May any postdoc apply?

The Pre-Doc Award aims to support researchers in the period of qualifying for a next career step after their dissertation. The main part of the current work shall be of scientific nature and in the majority of cases, they will possess a temporary employment contract or a position that is financed by a scholarship and associated to one of the faculties or research institutions at Leipzig University.

In summary, we address the following researchers and groups:

- R2 – recognized researchers (usually two to four years after the dissertation)
- R3 – established researchers (usually four to eight years after the dissertation), including junior group leaders and researchers with a habilitation certificate (PDs)
- Junior professors, Tenure Track Professors

Is it necessary for the postdoc to have the formal right to supervise/review dissertations?

No, and in most cases this will likely not be possible. During the Pre-Doc Award period, the postdoc functions as a mentor and, where possible, as a content-related supervisor, providing feedback about and instructions for the Pre-Doc candidate’s work.

For the dissertation after the Pre-Doc Award period, it depends on the regulations of the respective faculty if an involvement of the postdoc in supervising and/or reviewing the PhD might be possible in a formal or informal manner, e.g. as a member of a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC).

Please refer to the ‘Application and Programme Details’ document for further information.

May also a Junior or Tenure Track Professor apply in the postdoc part?

Yes. Please see above → ‘May any postdoc apply?’

May a postdoc who participated in the Pre-Doc Award in earlier cohorts apply again?

Yes.

What if the postdoc is leaving or absent for a longer time during the funding period (e.g. contract end, change of work place, parental leave)?

You may still apply in that case.

In case you already are aware of the postdoc leaving within the funding period, the postdoc mentoring and supervision for the time point after leaving shall be explained. In this case, please add an explanation (maximum one page, Times New Roman or similar font, size 11, 1.5 line spacing) to your application documents outlining your plans on how to secure the joint work. It may be that the postdoc is able to continue the supervision from elsewhere. It may also be that a substitute is found in the faculty or that the supporting faculty supervisor (professor involved in the application) steps in for the respective duties.

If the postdoc is leaving unexpectedly within the funding period or is absent for a longer period, the same applies.

In any case we aim to avoid that the Pre-Doc Awardee will be left on his/her own. The faculty supervisor supporting the application confirms to take on mentoring and supervising tasks during the
Pre-Doc year or to find (together with the applying postdoc) a new postdoc tandem partner, should this be required.
In case the postdoc leaving or being absent cannot or does not organize a substitute, the Pre-Doc candidate shall address to the faculty supervisor and / or the programme coordinator, who will then, together with the faculty supervisor and Pre-Doc strive for a solution.

Application: Formalities

Which formalities must be observed for the candidature?
A standard set of documents has to be provided. Please refer to the Pre-Doc Award ‘Application and Programme Details’ document for further information.

What needs to be taken into account in case the final certificate of the candidate is not yet achieved?
There are two scenarios:
- If the degree will be obtained after the application deadline, but prior to potentially starting the Pre-Doc Award funding, please hand in a transcript of records as well as an estimation of date of receiving the final certificate. Once received, please submit it without being asked.
- If the degree will be obtained up to six months after starting the Pre-Doc Award funding period, please provide the requested additional documents outlined in the Pre-Doc Award ‘Application and Programme Details’ document.

How much detail should the application include on the plan for acquiring third party funding?
The plan should be as detailed as possible. One of the evaluation criteria is the potential of the proposed project to acquire funding. To outline steps and ideas about where and when to apply for third party funding is almost as important for the Pre-Doc Award programme as the planned research itself.

Will applications be accepted without a confirmation of support of (a) potential faculty supervisor(s)?
No. The confirmation is an important part of the application. If, for plausible reasons, the confirmation cannot be obtained by the deadline, it may be submitted shortly thereafter, but has to be present in any case prior to the selection committee meeting.

Further aspects

Is it possible to combine two contracts as a scientific assistant (WHK) at Leipzig University at the same time?
No. If you have a 19-hour per week contract (Pre-Doc Award), you cannot have a second WHK employment contract at Leipzig University. It is also not possible to extend the Pre-Doc Award funding phase by reducing the weekly hours.

Is it possible to receive an additional scholarship during the Pre-Doc Award funding period?
This mainly depends on the scholarship provider. Usually, the funding bodies of scholarships allow that the scholar works for 8-10 hours per week. In case you consider applying for a Pre-Doc scholarship as well, please directly address the scholarship provider to ask whether it accepts a WHK job with 19 hours per week.

**Is it possible to leave Leipzig temporarily during the Pre-Doc Award funding period?**
Yes, especially if this is related to your Pre-Doc Award project or research. If you are already planning such a period, please mention these plans in your application (cover letter or additional explanation of half a page maximum). Please illustrate why it will not negatively affect your joint work during the Pre-Doc Award year to acquire funding for your promotion or why it will even benefit these plans.

**May the candidate inscribe as a PhD students during the Pre-Doc Award funding period?**
The Pre-Doc Award programme is targeting a period prior to the dissertation and serves as a preparatory phase. During the Pre-Doc Award year, the preparation phase might already shift towards the first phase of actually conducting the PhD research. Then a registration is possible, in line with the regulations of the respective faculty, each of them maintaining a doctoral list. The enlistment is prerequisite for the registration as a PhD student, which can be enquired at the Student Service Centre (Studenten Service Zentrum, SSZ).
Some scholarship associations require the PhD student status for an application. Of course, in this case, you may seek this status at the relevant point in time. Exceptions are also made for those who need the status of a PhD student to get a visa.

**Does the “Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz” apply for the Pre-Doc Award funding period?**
Yes. The German Act on Fixed-Term Employment Contracts (WissZeitVG) regulates the time limits of contracts in science before and after the doctorate. Without a completed doctorate, a temporary contract is possible up to a period of six years (in medicine nine), as long as the employment serves the employee’s own scientific or artistic qualification. The period preparing a PhD is regarded as a period of qualification and consequently, will count when it comes to sum up times of the potential maximum of years until reaching your PhD certificate.