

GUIDELINES

OF THE HONOURS PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS

AT THE FRIEDRICH SCHILLER UNIVERSITY JENA

Coordinated by the Graduate Academy, the Honours Programme for Future Researchers is part of the “LIGHT, LIFE, LIBERTY — Connecting Visions” strategy of the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. It is funded by the university allowance provided by the Excellence Strategy of the German federal government and the federal states.

1. Objective

- 1.1 The Honours Programme shall promote talented students from all subjects who show an interest in research. The three key objectives are
 - a. to give students a deeper insight into research processes during their studies,
 - b. to enable them to participate in the scientific community, and
 - c. to prepare them for an academic career.
- 1.2 These three key objectives are the basis for the following programme aims: During their participation in the Honours Programme, students shall
 - a. - depending on the research culture - either actively participate in a joint research project and be responsible for a section of the project or carry out their own small research or publication project,
 - b. reflect on their experiences with their own research and the research culture,
 - c. participate in colloquia or working group meetings and conferences or congresses and thus get to know and join the scientific community,
 - d. refine their understanding of their own field through regular interdisciplinary exchange and get an insight into other fields,
 - e. receive individual support and guidance and thus develop and reflect on their own career goals, and
 - f. train research-related key qualifications at an early stage.

2. Call for applications and application

- 2.1 Once a year at the beginning of the summer semester, a university-wide call for applications shall be published, indicating the four to six-week application period.
- 2.2 The call for applications shall contain information regarding
 - a. the funding framework and prerequisites,
 - b. cornerstones of the programme and the maximum duration of funding,
 - c. application deadlines and formalities, and
 - d. further sources of information (e.g. website of the programme, point of contact for advice).
- 2.3 In order to be eligible to apply for the Honours Programme, students must be enrolled at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena.
 - a. High-achieving students of all disciplines and degree programmes with
 - b. a particular commitment to and interest in research who are

- c. endorsed by a mentor from their discipline (professor or advanced postdoc of Friedrich Schiller University, cf. 5.1.1)
- shall be encouraged to submit their application.
- 2.4 Students of Friedrich Schiller University shall be eligible to apply, provided that at the time of application they are enrolled in at least their fourth semester within one field of study and ideally one to two years away from their expected graduation date.
- 2.5 They shall generally submit their application via an online portal provided by the University. The supporting documents mentioned in the call for applications shall be submitted. The minimum documents required are:
- a. a motivation letter,
 - b. a CV,
 - c. copies of the most recent certificates and a current overview of academic achievements, and
 - d. a proposal stating the student's individual involvement in research activities including a roughdraft of their own research project resp. of the subsection of a joint research project, a description of the planned supervision and their intended participation in academic exchange (e.g. participation in working group meetings, colloquia, or conferences). The proposal shall be written by the student upon agreement with the mentor, and it shall be signed by both parties.

The documents must be summarised in a pdf file of no more than 5 MB and submitted in the order specified above.

3. Selection process

- 3.1 Assessment of the application shall be conditional on the timely submission of the complete application documents referred to in 2.5.
- 3.2 The Young Researchers Committee of the Senate of the Friedrich Schiller University Jena shall assess the applications and decide on the admission to the programme. The committee shall decide on the admission to the programme within two to three months after the closing date.
- 3.3 Applicants have no legal claim on the admission to the Honours Programme.

4. Duration of funding

- 4.1 Funding shall be granted for a half year (6 months) starting from the day of admission to the programme. Subject to the extension of the Honours Programme beyond the project duration until 2025, the funding can be extended up to a maximum duration of 2 years. However, the funding ends at the latest at the end of the half-year in which the project described in the application is completed or the degree is awarded (31 December or 30 June). Funded students must prove their affiliation to Friedrich Schiller University by enrolling in a degree programme for the entire funding period. This does not apply to supplementary, extension and additional degree programmes.
- 4.2 If the participant wishes to receive funding for a second period while continuing their studies in the same study programme, they shall submit an interim report on the state of the project containing an application for extension of the funding period no later than four weeks before the end of the first year of funding; this application shall be assessed by a committee of the Graduate Academy. The committee shall thereupon decide on the continuation of funding.

- 4.3 If the student decides — upon successful completion of studies (e.g. having obtained a Bachelor's degree) — to continue their studies in another programme (e.g. taking up a Master's programme), and the work on their project described in the application is continued, an application for further funding can be submitted. A committee of the Graduate Academy decides on the application.
- 4.4 In the event that a participant interrupts their studies (leave of absence due to family reasons, illness, pregnancy, parental leave, stay abroad, etc.), they may temporarily suspend their participation. If they wish to do so, an informal request shall be submitted to the Honours Programme coordinator no later than two weeks before the interruption.
- 4.5 The maximum funding period of 0,5 or 2 years refers to one grant, not to one person. After expiry of the first funding grant, it is possible to apply again with a new project in a regular new round of calls for application. Since this is a new funding grant, the maximum funding period is again 2 years if the application is successful.

5. Structure of the programme

The three cornerstones of the Honours Programme are:

- 5.1 Honours mentoring: involvement in research activities and individual support
 - 5.1.1 Upon successful application, the selected students shall be supervised by the scientists or scholars who endorsed their application. The University invites professors and advanced postdoctoral researchers to get involved as supervising mentors. If a postdoctoral researcher supervises the student, the researcher shall have conducted research for at least two years after their doctorate and shall stay at the University for at least one more year in order to supervise the student. Depending on the research culture, the supervision may comprise either support for the student to carry out their own small research or publication project resp. to actively participate in a joint research project and being responsible for a section of the project. The supervisor may also support the student to get involved in graduate programmes, advanced seminars or doctoral colloquia, congresses, and conferences.
 - 5.1.2 Mentors and students shall meet on a regular basis to discuss questions and plans regarding the student's research project and academic development and career plans.
- 5.2 Honours workshops: key skills and networking
 - 5.2.1 The Graduate Academy will offer several workshops and other events to the selected students. These events will focus on certain topics beyond the standard contents of study programmes. Among others, there will be workshops on scientific writing and presentation, on good scientific practice, on philosophy of science and research ethics, and last but not least, on the very first career steps as a researcher. Taking part in these workshops, the Honours students shall be able to train research-related key qualifications at an early stage of their studies as well as to reflect on their own research and their experience of the research culture. In the workshops and regular networking events, the University also wants to encourage the interdisciplinary exchange and strengthen a sense of belonging to the scientific community.
 - 5.2.2 Participation in these workshops is recommended, but voluntary for Honours Programme participants.

5.3 Honours funds: financial support

- 5.3.1 The funds shall support those activities of the selected students which are not directly related to the requirements of their studies, but are related to their Honours research, such as travel expenses when taking part in conferences, or other material costs.
- 5.3.2 A total of up to EUR 500 or, subject to the continuation of the programme, up to EUR 2,000 may be drawn from the fund for each grant. Each student accepted onto the programme can apply for travel or other material costs of up to 500 euros for the first six months of participation. Subject to the continuation of the Honours Programme after 2025, a further 500 euros can be claimed for travel and material costs for a further six months. If an application for continued funding in accordance with section 4.3 is approved, a further EUR 1,000 may be made available for the second funding period.
- 5.3.3 Unused funds from the first half year or the first year may be transferred to and used during the second period.
- 5.3.4 The Honours funds may be used for travel expenses (travel allowances) and other research-related material costs such as books, laboratory materials or software. Technical devices such as notebooks may be borrowed through the Honours Programme. The terms of use, loan and return shall be set out in a rental agreement. The depreciation values of the devices (purchase value divided by 36) shall be deducted on a monthly basis from the funds the participant is entitled to. If applicable, other material costs may upon individual consultation be reimbursed.
- 5.3.5 In addition, funds shall be available to finance joint initiatives of the selected students, e.g. inviting visiting lecturers to the University or organizing student research congresses. This shall not be set off against the maximum funding of EUR 500,- or EUR 2.000,- per student for their own research referred to in 5.3.2.

6. End of funding within the Honours Programme

- 6.1 Participation in the programme shall end
 - a. if the term of the Honours Programme ends after six months or if no further funding is claimed subject to the extension of the programme
 - b. at the end of the semester in which the project is completed or the degree is obtained
 - c. after any further funding period granted, subject to the extension of the Honours programme, but at the latest after 2 years in total.
- 6.2 At the end of their studies, students will be awarded a certificate confirming their participation and their research and educational activities within the Honours Programme.

7. Communication and Data protection

- 7.1 Communication between students and staff in the programme takes place via the '@uni-jena.de' email addresses.
- 7.2 In connection with the application for the programme, students are asked for their consent to transmit their '@uni-jena.de'-email addresses to the other Honours students for internal communication as well as to external facilitators for the preparation and follow-up of workshops.
- 7.3 Legal information on data protection must be provided in connection with the application via the electronic portal.
- 7.4 Appropriate technical and organizational measures are being taken to secure students' personal data, such as restrictive role and authorization management.

8. Evaluation

The Programme and its individual contents shall be regularly evaluated by the Honours students and the participating professors and postdocs. The results of the evaluation shall be made available to the awards committee.

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