

# 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; student research groups can be supervised by one or two professors or postdocs).
- 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 Students may apply individually or in a research group of two to four students. Students applying to participate in a research group must also submit the application documents listed in 2.6 individually. The research proposal may be drafted and signed jointly by the group.
- 2.6 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 rough draft 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 2.6.
- 3.2 The Early Career 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 year (12 months) starting from the day of admission to the programme. The funding can be extended up to a maximum duration of 2 years. The funding ends with the completion of the project or graduation. The Honours Fund can be disbursed until 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. Further funding can be applied for at the earliest after the end of the first half of the first funding year (from January of a given year).

- 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 1 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.

5.3 Participation in two thematic workshops and the introductory kick-off workshop is mandatory for Honours Programme participants in their first year of funding.

5.4 Honours fund: financial support

5.4.1 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.

5.4.2 A total of up to EUR 1,000 or 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 EUR 1,000 for the first year (12 months) of participation. Research groups also have an additional EUR 1,000 available for group-related material and travel expenses. For research trips within Germany, funded students can also apply for a one-time travel allowance of up to EUR 200, and for research trips abroad, a one-time allowance of up to EUR 500. If an application for further funding in accordance with section 4.3 is approved, a further EUR 1,000 may be made available for the second funding period. In justified exceptional cases, the budget for the granted second funding period may be made available before the start of further funding.

5.4.3 Unused funds from the first year may be transferred to and used during the second period.

5.4.4 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. The Honours Fund cannot be spent for personnel costs (e.g. the employment of student assistants).

5.4.5 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 1,000,- or EUR 2,000,- per student for their own research referred to in 5.3.2.

5.5 Honours Congress: Scientific final event

5.5.1 The Honours Congress is the final event of the Honours Programme, at which academic presentations on the Honours projects are given and academic posters are presented in a poster session. The Honours Congress is open to the entire university community. It takes place annually. Participation in the Honours Congress is mandatory for students receiving funding.

5.5.2 As a final assignment, students may give a presentation at the Honours Congress, present a scientific poster at the poster session, or submit a written final report of at least three pages to the project coordinator.

## 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 a year or if no further funding is claimed
- b. at the end of the semester in which the project is completed or the degree is obtained, provided that the student is still enrolled at Friedrich Schiller University,
- c. upon the student's withdrawal from Friedrich Schiller University Jena,

- d. after any further funding period granted, at the latest after 2 years in total.
- 6.2 After successfully participating in two thematic workshops, the introductory kick-off workshop and completing the final assignment (presentation, poster presentation at the Honours Congress or a written final report), students receive a certificate of participation and of their research and further education activities in the 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 awarding committee.

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