

Guidelines

for the Funding of Early Career Researchers at RWTH Aachen University

Dated December 11, 2019

Please note: This publication is an English translation. Only the German original of these regulations as published in the Official Announcements of RWTH Aachen University (“Amtliche Bekanntmachungen”) is legally binding.

Based on §§ 2 (4) and 16 (1) of the Higher Education Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Hochschulgesetz; HG) in the version of the announcement dated September 16, 2014 (Law and Official Gazette Of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia p. 547), most recently amended by Article 1 of the Act to amend the Higher Education Act dated July 12, 2019 (Law and Official Gazette of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia p. 425, p. 593), RWTH Aachen University (RWTH) has issued the following Guidelines:

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I General

§ 1

Purpose of the Financial Assistance

RWTH Aachen University is proud to offer its early career researchers who are completing their doctoral studies tailored support opportunities (graduate financial assistance) in accordance with these guidelines and within the scope of the funds made available for this purpose.

§ 2

Type and Scope of the Financial Assistance

- (1) Financial assistance is provided in the form of scholarships and allowances. There is no entitlement to these benefits. Funding is subject to the availability of grant funds.
- (2) The awarding of scholarships provided by business enterprises exclusively for the purpose of graduate financial assistance is also subject to these guidelines. In this context, it is possible that, according to the agreement with the scholarship provider, the scholarship may only be awarded to students of a specified faculty and/or department.
- (3) Funding services are grants within the meaning of budgetary law. Reporting on the expenditure of funds is limited to the evidence of funds provided for in or pursuant to these guidelines.

§ 3

Application

Funding services are awarded via an application. Applications should be sent to the University administration. The application deadline for the grant period starting from May 1 is March 15 and for the grant period starting from November 1, it is September 15.

The documents below must be submitted at the time of application. Please submit the documents additionally in electronic form. This should be one contiguous PDF file. Please arrange the printed and electronic materials in the order listed below.

- Application form
- Copy of identity card or passport (not digital, only in paper form with blackened identity card number or passport number)
- Certificate of enrollment in a course of study leading to a doctorate, or a declaration that the certificate of enrollment will be submitted immediately after the scholarship has been approved
- Confirmation of admission to doctoral studies from the relevant faculty
Submission of this document is possible until April 15 (for application deadline March 15) or by October 15 (for application deadline September 15)
- If applicable, birth certificate of the child or children
- Curriculum vitae with the focus of your studies
- University entrance qualification certificate
- Preliminary diploma or intermediate examination or Bachelor's degree
- Main diploma or state examination or Master's degree
Submission of this document is possible until April 15 (for March 15 application deadline)

- or by October 15 (for September 15 application deadline)
- Application synopsis (maximum total length of 10 pages), this includes:
 - Brief outline of the dissertation topic
 - Work plan
 - Schedule over 36 months
 - Expert questionnaire of the supervisor
 - Expert questionnaire of a 2nd professor or a private lecturer
 - Declaration of secondary employment § 9
 - Employment contract as a research assistant

If the application is delivered in person, the original certificates and documents can be delivered with the copies. The copies will then be certified as application documents free of charge. If the application is submitted by mail, it must be accompanied by certified copies of certificates and documents.

§ 4 Awards Committee

- (1) RWTH Aachen University forms an awards committee that decides on the award of the funding and reviews the final report that may be required.
- (2) The awards committee works within the University to support graduate financial assistance in research and teaching.
- (3) The members of the awards committee are:
 1. the Rector or a representative appointed by them,
 2. two professors,
 3. a research assistant with a doctorate,
 4. a student who has completed a university degree.
- (4) The members and their deputies pursuant to Paragraph 3 nos. 2 to 4 shall be appointed by the Rector upon proposal of the senate.
- (5) The term of office of the members and their deputy pursuant to paragraph 3 nos. 2 and 3 shall be two years, of the member and their deputy pursuant to paragraph 3 no. 4, it shall be one year; reappointment is permitted. If a member resigns prematurely, a new member shall be appointed for the remainder of the term of office; the same shall apply to the deputies.

§ 5 Interruption of the Academic Project or the Studies

- (2) The scholarship holder can only interrupt their studies if there is an important reason for doing so. An important reason exists in particular in the following cases:
 - Pregnancy and birth
 - Childcare
 - Care for relatives in need of care
 - Disability or chronic illness

- Long severe illness
 - Military or civilian service
 - Employment in an academic position of up to 6 months in duration
- (3) The scholarship holder informs the University immediately about the interruption and the reason. Payment of the stipend is generally suspended from the time of the interruption.
 - (4) In the event of an interruption due to illness, disability or chronic illness, the stipend may be continued for up to six weeks.
 - (5) If the scholarship holder indicates the end of the interruption, payment may be resumed; the grant may be extended for the period of the interruption. If, due to the duration of the interruption, doubts arise as to whether the academic project can be completed in the remaining funding period, a decision on the extension of the grant shall be made according to the procedure under § 14; the extension may be combined with the continued grant.
 - (6) If a scholarship holder interrupts their academic project or their studies for a period of six weeks before to eight weeks after her childbirth, the scholarship will continue to be paid in full for the period of this interruption upon application. The duration of the approval is extended by the time of this interruption.

§ 6

Revocation of the Notice of Approval

- (1) The notice of approval is to be revoked with effect for the future and the scholarship holder is obliged to repay the scholarship already paid if facts show that the scholarship holder has not made the necessary efforts to achieve the purpose of the funding and is responsible for this. If these facts already existed in the past funding period, the notice of approval can also be revoked with effect for the past.
- (2) The determination that the scholarship holder is not making the necessary efforts to achieve the purpose of the scholarship and is responsible for this will be made by the Awards Committee after a hearing with the scholarship holder.
- (3) The notice of approval shall also be revoked and the scholarship holder shall be obliged to repay the scholarship funds already received if the funding has been obtained by means of incorrect or incomplete information or if they receive further funding in contravention of § 8 (5) or take up a professional activity of a not insignificant scope in contravention of § 9.
- (4) The repayment obligation in Paragraph 1 and Paragraph 3 exists irrespective of whether the grant amount has already been used or spent in whole or in part.

- (5) The notice of approval may be revoked if the scholarship holder has not fulfilled the obligations to cooperate, to provide information and to provide proof of achievement in accordance with §§ 5, 8, 14, and 15.
- (6) Other provisions on the repeal of administrative acts shall remain unaffected.

II Graduate Financial Assistance

§ 7 Type of Funding

The grant is awarded as a basic scholarship.

§ 8 Basic Scholarship

- (1) Within the framework of the basic scholarship, funding can be provided to those who
 1. are enrolled at RWTH Aachen University,
 2. have been accepted as a doctoral candidate by the faculty awarding the doctorate,
 3. are carrying out doctoral studies at RWTH Aachen University.
 4. have achieved academic performance that, overall, far exceeds the average requirements,
 5. are carrying out a academic project that is expected to make an important contribution to research, and
 6. submit a supervision agreement signed by their supervisor.
- (2) The application must be accompanied by the academic achievements to date, an explanation of the preliminary work for the project, and a work program with regard to content and time.
- (3) The fulfillment of the eligibility requirements is examined on the basis of expert opinions, which must be submitted by two professors or private lecturers. At least one reviewer must be a member of RWTH Aachen University.
The faculty awarding the doctorate must provide an opinion on the application.
- (4) The period of time between graduation from a university and the start of the grant may not exceed one year. In the case of training courses in which practical training or vocational preparatory service is required after graduation from a university, the period of time between completion of the practical activity or vocational preparatory service and the start of the grant may also not exceed one year. For parents who have taken parental leave and provide proof thereof, this period may exceptionally be extended by the period of parental leave taken. If the applicant has to fulfill preparatory studies or requirements for admission to doctoral studies in accordance with the regulations governing doctoral studies, this period may be extended upon application and submission of appropriate evidence.
- (5) A scholarship may not be awarded if the applicant, for the same purpose and for the same period of time,

1. receives or has received any other financial assistance from public or publicly funded private entities; or
2. receives or has received private funding

from within or outside of Germany.

- (6) The academic achievements required for the doctorate can be completed outside the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The dissertation project must be academically supervised by a professor or a private lecturer of RWTH Aachen University.
- (7) When granting financial assistance, early career researchers in the natural sciences and humanities are to be given preferential consideration.

§ 9 Employment

- (1) If a scholarship holder is engaged in a gainful employment in addition to working on their academic project, funding according to these guidelines is excluded, unless it is a small-scale job.
- (2) A small-scale job is considered to be a position of up to 10 hours per week.

§ 10 Amount of the Scholarship

- (1) The scholarship consists of a basic amount and a supplementary child allowance.
- (2) The scholarship amounts to 1,400 euros per month (basic amount).
- (3) The scholarship holder receives an allowance of 400 euros per month (child allowance) in addition to the scholarship if they have at least one child to support.
- (4) If both spouses or registered partners receive grants under these guidelines or a grant for the same purpose, the child allowance is granted only once.
- (5) Defined as children are the persons referred to in § 2 (1) sentence 1 of the Federal Child Benefit Act (Bundeskindergeldgesetz).

§ 11 Offsetting of Income of the Scholarship Holder

Income from employment permitted under § 9 shall not be counted towards the scholarship.

§ 12 Allowances for Material and Travel Expenses

- (1) Scholarship holders may receive supplements for material costs, with the exception of printing costs, as well as for travel expenses to support their doctoral studies if these expenses are necessary in preparation for the doctorate and they cannot reasonably be expected to bear the costs.
- (2) No allowances are granted for material resources that are provided free of charge by the University or other institutions.
- (3) Travel expenses include travel costs and increased expenses for meals and lodging. They are to be calculated according to the lowest level of the State Travel Expenses Act.
- (4) As a rule, allowances for material and travel expenses may not exceed a total of 1,000 euros during the funding period.
- (5) Material and travel expenses may be reimbursed on a flat-rate basis, taking into account a reasonable personal contribution by the scholarship holder; in this case, proof of the actual costs incurred may be waived.

§ 13 Duration of the Funding Period

- (1) The basic scholarship amount is usually granted for three years.
- (2) Initially, funding is approved for one year. On the basis of an application for extension, the scholarship is then extended continuously for two years. The scholarship may only continue to be awarded if the academic achievements made up to that point justify further funding.
- (3) In deviation from Paragraph 1, a scholarship may be granted for a shorter period of time if the purpose of the scholarship can be achieved within this period of time or if the transition to another form of scholarship is to be expected thereafter.
- (4) The funding ends at the latest:
 1. at the end the month of the oral doctoral examination,
 2. with the commencement of a professional activity not compatible with § 9.

§ 14 Continuation of the Scholarship

- (1) Before a decision is made on whether to continue the scholarship after the initial funding period, the scholarship holder shall submit a work report detailing their progress made over time, the results of the work to date, a work plan, and a schedule for completion of the project. Further approval may not be granted without submission of the work report.

- (2) The supervisor of the project shall submit a report on the scholarship holder's performance to date. The awarding committee may request the expert opinion of another professor or a private lecturer.

§ 15 Final Report

- (1) Upon completion of the grant, the scholarship holder shall submit a report on the work they completed during the entire grant period within 8 weeks of the end of the funding and explain the results of the project.
If the dissertation has been submitted, notification of this is sufficient.
- (2) If, in exceptional cases, the scholarship holder is unable to submit the dissertation by the end of the funding period, they shall explain the reasons, describe the stage reached in the work and comment on its intended progress. In this case, the scholarship holder is obligated to report in writing on the status of the dissertation once a year – at a date to be determined – for at least three years after funding has ended until the dissertation is submitted.

§ 16 Entry Into Force

These guidelines come into force on January 1, 2020. At the same time, the Guidelines for the Funding of Early Career Researchers dated July 16, 2019 (Official Announcements of RWTH Aachen University No. 2019/101) shall expire.

Issued based on the resolution of the Rectorate dated December 3, 2019.

It is pointed out that, in accordance with § 12 (5) NRW Higher Education Act, any claims regarding a violation of procedural or formal requirements of the regulatory or other autonomous rights of the University may no longer be asserted after one year has elapsed since the official publication of this announcement unless:

- 1) the announcement has not been properly published,
- 2) the Rectorate has objected, prior to publication, to the decision of the committee adopting the regulations,
- 3) the defect of form or procedure has been previously reported in a complaint to the University, specifying the infringed legal provision and the fact which gives rise to the defect, or
- 4) the legal consequence of the exclusion of complaints was not pointed out in the official announcement.

Rector
of RWTH
Aachen University

Aachen, December 11,
dated 2019

sgd. Rüdiger

Univ.-Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. h. c. mult. Rüdiger