

Guide to doctoral scholarships: How and where to apply

1. Where can you apply for a doctoral scholarship?

Graduate Programme:

Graduate Schools: Funding of projects which fit the subject areas of the Graduate School.

Research Training Group: Funding of projects, which fit the main research area of the Research Training Group

- Offers a structured training concept (based at the particular university)
- The application process for scholarships/positions takes place within the respective programme with specific deadlines
- Supervisors are usually assigned through the project
- The funding period is three years
- Scholarship award: €1,000 to €1,365, plus €103 for material costs, €400 child allowance

Selection Process:

Review of applications by the board of the Graduate School/Research Training Group, possibly internal assessments, interview with the board of the GS/RTG, decision

Selection criteria:

Suitability of project to the GS/RTG programme, research quality, original, clear and relevant research question, motivation for doing a doctoral degree, final grades, career stage

Expectations:

Participation in seminars and training programmes, progress reports and interim reports, relocating to GS/RTG, if need be.

Links:

List of current graduate schools and research training groups:

<http://www.dfg.de/foerderung/programme/listen/>

Positions in DFG-funded projects:

http://dfg.de/service/stellenausschreibungen/dfg_gefoerderte_verfahren/index.html

'Begabtenförderungswerk' (organisations in Germany which promote young talented students):

Funding of persons whose character, values and convictions are suited to the particular organisation.

- 13 different organisations (political, religious, affiliated to a trades union, economically oriented as well as ideologically and politically independent)
- Financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Awards scholarships to young people to young people whose talent and character show potential for an outstanding contribution to an academic or professional field as well as social responsibility.

- All subject areas, free choice of projects and the supervisor
- Deadlines: vary depending on organisation, and in some cases may be submitted at any time.
- General length of scholarship 2 years, longest length of scholarship 3 years, or 4 years with a child/children.
- €1,350 plus €100 research costs allowance, family allowance €155 and child allowance €155

Selection process

Normally two stages, consisting of a preselection (formal requirements, demands of particular organisation) followed by selection interviews or selection seminars. The decision is made by a selection committee or board.

Selection criteria

- Quality of research proposal: is it expected to make a meaningful contribution to research? Convincing motivation for the doctoral project.
- outstanding talent for academic work and above average academic record
- Interesting study organisation, swift completion of studies
- Character and engagement
- Appraisal: of the supervisor or expert

Funding:

The study programme is independent of the particular organisation and can include the following elements: symposiums, seminars, workshops, academies, soft skill workshops, language courses, professional qualification, in some cases doctoral programmes (thematic focus), scholarship groups and liaison lecturers at the educational institutions, funding of stays abroad, mentoring programme, alumni networks, funding measures for researchers with children.

Expectations:

All organisations expect reports on the doctoral thesis in the form of progress reports, interim reports or requests for an extension, statements of supervisors or liaison lecturers. In addition, each funding organisation will have their own set of expectations: e.g. active participation in the scholarship group, annual participation in a seminar lasting several days or academies, compulsory participation in seminar programme, proof of continuing social engagement.

Link: Joint website of the 'Begabtenwerke' (organisations in Germany that promote young talented students): www.stipendiumplus.de

Further research possibilities /smaller funding organisations:

Scholarship data bank of the BMBF www.stipendienlotse.de (in German)

Scholarship data bank of the DAAD <https://www.daad.de/ausland/studieren/stipendium/de/70-stipendien-finden-und-bewerben> (in German)

Index of German funding organisations: www.stiftungen.org

PhD Germany DAAD data bank, scholarships and positions

<https://www.daad.de/deutschland/promotion/phd/de/13306-phdgermany-datenbank/>

Examples for subject specific funding opportunities

https://www.dbu.de/stipendien_promotion (area of environmental protection)

<https://www.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/promotionsfoerderung> (humanities)

2. How do you apply for a doctoral scholarship?

Beforehand, you should consider which graduate programme would suit your own interests and proposed doctoral project as well as looking into which funding organisations fit your values and beliefs. You should also take into consideration the various requirements of the funding organisations during the application process.

Application forms

- (online) application forms
- Curriculum Vitae in tabular form/in sections
- Exposé (project description) with bibliography and work and time plan
- Letter of motivation
- Assessments of the supervisor and any further experts
- References on social engagement (if need be)
- Copies of certificates

What is a “good” scholarship application?

- Clear presentation of the motivation for applying for a particular funding organisation/programme
- Convincing exposé (clear and innovative research questions, qualification for this project/ preparation of convincing and realistic work schedule, integration in the research environment, completion possible within funding period)
- Clear presentation of the motivation for the doctoral project
- Convincing presentation of your academic competences

Funding organisations:

- “interesting” C.V.
- Proven ongoing social engagement
- Support of supervisor

3. F A Q : Doctoral Scholarships of the ‘Begabtenförderungswerke’ (organisations in Germany that promote young talented students)

Is a scholarship possible without first-class honours?

An above average grade is necessary: In the case of German qualification, the final grade of ‘gut’ (good or 2.1) or ‘sehr gut’ (very good or 1st) is expected. Beyond this, it is your complete profile that counts including: talent, engagement and character.

Is there an age limit?

Most funding organisations and the DFG have no explicit age limit (exceptions are: Hans Seidl: 32 years, Hans Böckler Foundation: 40 years), but the time after completion of studies counts in some organisations (3-5 years).

Do you have to be a member of a political party?

The political organisations stipulate an active political engagement and political interest as a requirement. By joining a political party, you naturally show your allegiance to a particular organisation. However, it is not an application requirement. Becoming a member of a political party or trades union just before your application will not bring you any advantage, ongoing social and political engagement is expected!

What is meant by engagement?

It is expected that alongside your studies and doctoral degree that you help others and show social responsibility. This should be an active, ongoing and voluntary social engagement, reflecting societal, social political and/or political areas.

How important is the supervisor?

The evaluation of the supervisor is crucial for the decision. It signals the extent to which your supervisor backs your project and supports you.

Can I apply to several organisations?

It is possible to make parallel applications to different organisations, but it must be transparent and well grounded. If you were previously funded by another organisation, you must give good reasons for applying to another organisation. Normally, if your application has been turned down, you cannot reapply to the organisation.

Can I work alongside a scholarship?

5 hours per week, or 10 hours per week in research and teaching are compatible with a scholarship. This and further information is set out in the guidelines of the BMBF on funding opportunities of the 'Begabtenförderungswerke' (organisations in Germany that promote young talented students).

When can I/when should I apply for a scholarship?

You cannot apply before completing your degree (all grades have to be submitted). The doctoral project and the supervisor must be confirmed, initial preliminary work for the doctoral project should be finished. You should already be accepted as a doctoral candidate. The 'Begabtenförderungswerke' do not offer funding for completing your degree and require an application, if possible, at the start of your doctoral degree.

Is it possible to fund doctoral study abroad?

A doctoral degree undertaken abroad may be funded depending on the funding organisation and with a specific justification in favour of the University abroad. In this case, it should be explained: Which alternatives were considered but discarded? Which research connections can be cultivated for Germany?

Cotutelle or binational doctoral degrees are normally funded. Mobility is, as a rule, desired and also supported: Research stays and conference trips abroad can be financially supported, independent of the particular organisation.