

- https://twitter.com/dfg_public
- https://www.instagram.com/dfg_public/
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/DFGScienceTV>

Principles of Effective Career Support in Academia

As the largest research funding organisation and the central self-governing body for research in Germany, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) attaches great importance to promoting researchers at an early stage of their career and has established this as a statutory objective. Through its activities and funding instruments, it provides stimuli for research-oriented and career-friendly structures, plannable career paths, competitive remuneration and resources, equal opportunities and the compatibility of work and family.

In its funding programmes, the DFG takes particular care to select individuals and projects based on a transparent and competitive review process that takes appropriate account of the applicants' respective research experience and career stage.

The DFG awards funding for project implementation and to enable researchers to obtain qualifications at an early phase of their career. Since the DFG is not itself the employer here, it believes the duty of care lies with the relevant supervisors and host institutions, and expects the latter to provide framework conditions that ensure effective career support.

Based on these considerations, the DFG has developed the following principles which it offers as recommendations, both to its member institutions and to all other institutions and individuals that receive funding from the DFG to finance early-career researchers.

These principles are to be understood as a supplement to the guidelines for safeguarding good research practice. They summarise how the situation of researchers in early career phases should be structured and are especially applicable to doctoral and post-doctoral students.

1. Universities and research institutions have clearly established **principles** for the treatment of researchers in an early phase of their career and act accordingly. Among other things, they are guided by **good research practice**. What is more, the rules of good research practice are communicated to doctoral students and postdocs and are proactively embraced on a day-to-day basis.
2. A balance is struck between giving researchers support and allowing them to take on independent responsibility, as appropriate to their career level. They are able to take responsibility for shaping their own career by being given **increasing independence**. They enjoy a status that corresponds to their role and responsibilities and are appropriately involved in decision-making processes.
3. The **individual accomplishments** of each researcher at an early stage of their career – such as in the areas of teaching and writing project proposals or publications – are **adequately** reflected and **recognised**. The assessment of academic performance is primarily based on qualitative standards.
4. Supervision varies according to the career level. Good mentoring includes regular feedback sessions and career counselling. In the doctoral phase in particular, supervision is best provided based on a supervision agreement with defined contact persons and a clear-cut definition of roles, rights and responsibilities. Multiple supervisor allocation is a good way to ensure optimum **supervision at all times** – even in difficult and contentious situations or when one supervisor is absent. There is a code of conduct to ensure effective conflict management, and an independent arbitration board can be consulted if necessary. In addition to supervision itself, mentoring schemes are provided for individual support in career development involving experienced individuals from the academic environment or from other fields.
5. Supervising early-career researchers is a responsible and time-consuming task: professional development schemes and leadership training can help supervisors perform it effectively. Supervisors are role models, they deserve appreciation for providing **sound, dedicated supervision**.
6. The institutions are aware of their responsibility for the quality of research. For this reason, they implement **quality assurance** measures which are an **important part of the educational process**, ensuring adherence to both interdisciplinary and subject-specific standards. This also includes the promotion of an open error culture.
7. Researchers enjoy **attractive conditions**. Above all, this means plannable career prospects, adequate pay and resources, equal opportunities and the compatibility of work and family life. They receive support for successful re-entry or re-exit. Early-career researchers are given access to research infrastructures. In the case of temporary positions for qualification purposes, care is taken to ensure that employment relationships are structured in such a way that the qualification goal is the minimum a researcher is able to achieve.

8. Researchers' **career development is supported by means of suitable measures**: they are integrated in the academic research community at an early stage and receive support establishing networks, for example through attendance at conferences or by going on research stays abroad. They are also given the opportunity to gain teaching experience, which is essential for a university career as well as being beneficial to other career paths.
 9. HEIs and research institutions run **personnel development schemes** and offer suitable support and guidance for various career paths. Programmes are offered for early-career researchers to support them in acquiring subject-specific and interdisciplinary skills – regardless of whether they intend to pursue a career in the academic sector or elsewhere. Career paths leading out of academia are equally worthy of recognition, and academic qualifications are also valuable outside the academic sector, where the vast majority of doctorate holders ultimately continue their careers.
 10. Early-career researchers enjoy **diversity, flexibility and permeability**: equal opportunities and recognition are offered for different career paths. Universities facilitate transitions between career stages and offer support during critical transition phases. They also provide support for moves between sectors, because interchange and practical experience are enriching. Moves between employers, differing forms of mobility and family-related time off are adequately taken into account so as to avoid hindering career progression as far as possible. Internationalism is promoted.
- [Download – "Principles of Effective Career Support in Academia" \(in German only\)](#)
../../../../download/pdf/foerderung/wissenschaftliche_karriere/prinzipien_karriereunterstuetzung.pdf

Last updated: 20 April 2021

© 2010-2021 by DFG

Printable version of a page from the website of the DFG (German Research Foundation)