



# STRATEGY 2025 PROMOTING YOUNG RESEARCHERS

LIGHT, LIFE, LIBERTY – CONNECTING VISIONS



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# 1

## PREAMBLE

The qualification and promotion of young researchers play a key role in a society and an economy that depend for their development potential to a great extent on the successes in education and research. The young scientific talents of today will be the backbone of tomorrow's research. In many areas, the results obtained by young researchers are already making a significant contribution to scientific progress. Their academic expertise and problem-solving ability are in demand not only in academia itself, but also for activities far beyond it. Against this background, the academic community has a special responsibility to society to stimulate at a very early stage the enthusiasm for research of young people interested in science. It should also ensure that they can develop this interest in the best possible way by providing suitable conditions.

With its structures and processes, together with strategies to promote young researchers, Friedrich Schiller University Jena meets this responsibility in an exceptional way. It focuses on developing and establishing binding quality standards throughout the university, as well as a wide range of measures for individual support (Policy and Service).

A dedicated Vice-President ensures that the subject of young researchers is well-established at the highest level of university management. The Vice-President's strategies are implemented and further developed with an emphasis on quality by the Jena Graduate Academy. The University Senate has set up its own committee for young researchers, which decides on individual funding and prepares important measures for improving career planning and for ensuring good employment conditions. The interests of the doctoral candidates' body, which is embedded in the Basic Regulations of the university, are represented by the DR.FSU Doctoral Candidates' Council.

Externally, the close relationship with UniWiND/GUAT stands out. It enables direct involvement in, and cooperation with, national and international developments for the promotion of young researchers. The university is also involved in the *Coimbra Group* and the *European University Association – Council for Doctoral Education* (EUA-CDE).

## 2 PRINCIPLES

**The strategic considerations for the promotion of young researchers and the operational implementation of appropriate measures are guided by the following principles:**

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The basis of any support for young researchers is high-quality supervision for doctoral candidates and reliable mentoring for postdocs.

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All measures are based on the fundamental appreciation of the individual achievements of doctoral candidates and postdocs, as well as the promotion of increasing independence and personal responsibility.

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Attractive conditions are fundamental for doctoral candidates and postdocs to be engaged and dedicated in research and teaching.

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Further qualification, career counselling and personnel development support the diversity of career paths, depending on the career progress achieved.

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Valuing and promoting individual and socio-cultural diversity, gender equality, the compatibility of family and career, as well as avoiding and eliminating all forms of discrimination, are also guiding principles for the promotion of young researchers at Friedrich Schiller University Jena.

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# 3

## CHALLENGES, GOALS AND MEASURES

### 3.1 ATTRACTING TALENTED DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

Recruiting suitable candidates for a doctorate at the University of Jena is a key challenge. This is due to the special requirements of the doctoral phase and the general conditions for a university that is established outside the major cities, but the challenge varies according to the culture of the individual discipline.

In subjects with a shortage of young researchers, raising the university's national and international recognition plays a major role. However, it is just as important to inspire talented local students to pursue a doctorate as an alternative to tempting offers from industry and other areas of society. In subjects with a larger number of interested students, it is especially important to determine how appropriate a doctorate is to an individual's life plan and address the chances of having a career in academia. In all cases, subject-specific professional and personal suitability are essential prerequisites.

#### GOAL

##### **shape the transition from study degrees to doctorate**

Talented graduates of study programmes form an important reservoir of doctoral candidates. Therefore, the goal is to ensure that they start taking an interest in a doctorate during their studies, test themselves and develop their skills. At the latest after completing their initial studies, they should be qualified for a doctorate and be able to make an informed and considered decision to embark on doctoral research at the University of Jena.



## MEASURES

*Research-oriented teaching, talent promotion by teaching staff and university programmes* – The best publicity for a doctorate takes place during earlier university studies. Research-oriented teaching gives students insight into the professional profile of an academic employee. Lecturers have the opportunity to identify suitable students and individually foster their talent at an early stage. In addition, central talent development programmes offered by the university (e.g., Honours Programme) provide intellectual and financial support.

*Research-oriented international Master's programmes, Integrated Master's-doctoral programmes* – International Master's programmes are an excellent tool for attracting international students and preparing them for a doctorate. The research-oriented design of the curricula provides varied, in-depth insight into the academic world, which facilitates the transition to a doctorate. This transition is already part of the structure of integrated Master's-doctoral programmes (e.g., Max Planck School of Photonics). If the success of such integrated models is confirmed, they should be expanded.

## GOAL

### **recruit nationally and internationally**

Doctoral training takes place in an international context. It is therefore crucially important to reach national and international students interested in a doctorate and to recruit them for doctoral research in Jena. To this end, the potential of Jena's research landscape, the university's research profile and its varied activities to ensure good conditions for doing a doctorate need to become better known. The involvement of many researchers in their national and international academic communities is already making a great contribution. However, the university and its location as a whole must become even more distinctive as a place of top-quality research with excellent conditions for young researchers.

Once interested students have decided to do their doctorate at the University of Jena, they should feel welcome from the start and be able to begin their research work without bureaucratic hurdles.

## MEASURES

### *Attracting students interested in a doctorate –*

This package of measures will use all media channels (print, website, social media, film) to provide comprehensive information for people interested in doing a doctorate, and will continually update and expand this information. In addition, individual counselling is offered for German and international students interested in a doctorate. The university participates effectively in international academic associations and forums (e.g., Coimbra Group, EUA-CDE), and uses international fairs for targeted recruitment (e.g., MIT Career Fair, PhD Workshop China). Particularly in graduate schools and research associations, potential doctoral candidates are attracted through structured recruitment, usually in several stages. Activities to enhance the university's visibility are to be even better coordinated and linked to the location, in collaboration with the registered association JenaVerse.

*Welcoming doctoral candidates –* Bundling services for doctoral candidates in a one-stop agency has proven successful and should be continued and expanded as needed (Welcome and Service Desk of the Graduate Academy with intudoc Tutoring Service). A uniform IT-supported framework should be provided for recruitment and welcoming processes, which all graduate programmes and faculties can access.

## 3.2 SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING A DOCTORATE

The doctoral phase is a time-limited period of initial postgraduate research and at the same time a qualification phase for a professional goal within or outside academia. It ends with the candidate either obtaining a doctorate from the faculty or dropping out of the doctoral research project. The challenge for the university is to ensure that all or as many young researchers as possible who have decided to take this career step and have been accepted as doctoral researchers are successful in obtaining their doctorate. If doctoral candidates and their supervisors come to a different conclusion after the doctoral research has started, a decision to discontinue should be made as early as possible.

Successfully obtaining a doctorate is more than just formally completing the doctoral examination procedure. It also involves an appropriate time-to-degree, high academic quality and the highest possible level of subject-specific and transversal qualification in relation to the candidate's individual career goals.



## GOAL

### **complete high-quality doctorates in an appropriate time frame**

Students who have decided on a doctorate should also complete it with high academic quality and within a reasonable time. Doctorates make a substantial contribution to scientific progress. The doctoral examination procedure defined in the doctoral examination regulations guarantees the minimum standard to be met. A high-quality result, however, helps the work to be well-received and valued by the academic community. In this way, publications produced as part of doctorates also become ambassadors of the university and positive advertising for doctorates in Jena.

The doctorate represents a time-limited phase of research activity with simultaneous qualification. Completing a doctorate opens doors to new career paths within and outside the academic system. Swift completion of a doctorate is the basis for good opportunities, both for a further academic career and for entry into other professions. Completing doctorates within a reasonable length of time also helps subsequent doctoral candidates by freeing up time and financial resources for them. Therefore, it is in the interests of the doctoral candidate as well as the academic system as a whole for doctorates to be completed within a reasonable period.

## MEASURES

*Good supervision* – An essential key to a successful doctorate is good supervision by the doctoral supervisor. The relationship between supervisor and doctoral researcher lays the foundation for academically valuable research work carried out in the limited time available. Professional support, regular constructive feedback and joint process planning ensure that a doctoral project progresses. The guidelines for the doctoral phase at Friedrich Schiller University Jena include agreed standards of good supervision.

*Structuring the doctorate* – Structured programmes (graduate schools, research training groups, doctoral programmes), if well designed, offer a suitable framework for swift and successful doctorates. However, moderate structuring can also be helpful for doctorates that are outside these programmes. This includes supervision agreements, double supervision/supervision teams, regular supervision meetings, progress reports, collective recruitment, subject-specific and interdisciplinary qualification opportunities, as well as support for introduction into the research community.

## GOAL

### **create a reliable framework**

Successfully completing a doctorate requires not only professional and personal prerequisites, and a good relationship between doctoral researchers and supervisors, but also supportive framework conditions. It is the university's goal to create and continuously improve these conditions, in particular a reliable employment and funding situation, health-promoting working conditions and opportunities, and effective support structures.

The goal is for doctoral candidates to have continuous funding through funded positions or scholarships to cover their living expenses for the duration of their doctorate, but for at least three years.

The doctoral phase is not always without problems or conflicts. The university aims to help doctoral candidates who encounter difficulties to find solutions, quickly and without complications.

## MEASURES

*Create a reliable employment and funding situation* – The doctoral phase is inherently limited in time. The framework for employment policy is provided by the German Academic Short-Term Labour Contract Act [*Wissenschaftszeitvertrags-gesetz*]. Within this framework, the university organises employment contracts in such a way that at least a half-time position is available for a period of three years. The »Guideline for the Arrangement of Fixed-Term Employment Contracts for Academic Staff at Friedrich Schiller University Jena« was resolved for this purpose and the guideline will be continually evaluated and updated. Limited central funding will continue to be provided in emergencies to help candidates complete their doctorates.

*Effective support structures* – In the event of problems and conflicts, easily accessible support structures are provided and expanded as needed. These include advice on funding, an ombudsman's service for conflicts in the supervision relationship, persons of trust for good scientific practice, and a Mental Health First Aid team.

## GOAL

### **preparation for careers in academia, industry and society**

After successfully completing a doctorate, a person enters a new phase of professional development. Doctoral candidates should be put in a position to make an informed decision about their professional career after the doctorate. Careers can be found in academic and non-academic research, in business, industry and cultural institutions. Doctoral candidates should be given the opportunity to qualify for the various career paths while they are doing their doctorate.

## MEASURES

*Career orientation, career counselling, career talks* – doctoral candidates are offered services to help them find out about career options, the requirements for those careers, their individual prospects and the steps to be taken. Specialist advice through regular career talks with supervisors or other contact persons at the graduate institutions and faculties is supplemented by a variety of centrally organised events, as well as information and counselling services.

*Opportunities for subject-specific professional qualification* – Doctoral researchers achieve professional qualifications through active research, exchanges with the international scientific community at conferences and during research visits, as well as subject-related workshops and further training at the graduate institutions and faculties. Above all, these qualify doctoral candidates for scientific or academic careers at universities, non-university research institutions and research-based enterprises.

*Opportunities for interdisciplinary and generic qualification* – An extensive range of interdisciplinary and transferrable skills qualification

opportunities is provided primarily from a central institution, but also at individual graduate institutions. These include topics such as basic questions of science and humanities, research methods, presenting and publishing, communication, leadership and management, career planning and job applications, languages and higher education teaching qualifications.

### 3.3 MAKING THE MOST OF THE POSTDOC PHASE

After completing their doctorates, academics continue to work at the university in order to contribute to research and teaching. At the same time, the postdoc phase serves as further qualification for a leading academic position. The promotion of young researchers faces the challenge that postdoctoral researchers pursue diverse qualification and career goals at the university, but are usually in a transitional phase due to their temporary positions. Experience shows that the majority of postdocs are unlikely to achieve their university career goals, be it the desire for a permanent position as a mid-level academic or for a professorship. The challenge is therefore to:

- achieve a convergence of desire and reality, and support a well-founded decision for or against a long-term career in academia,
- create transparent and plannable career paths, and ensure reliable framework conditions during the postdoc phase,
- support appropriate qualifications (Habilitation, equivalent achievements, leading a junior research group, junior professorship) and the best possible profile development for an academic leadership position.

## GOAL

### **create reliable and sustainable conditions**

Good and attractive conditions are also essential for the postdoc phase. Although qualification and third-party funded positions usually have fixed terms, the university wants to provide a framework for longer-term planning of working phases and career steps. Appropriate remuneration or funding, a sustainable work-life balance and a constructive work environment should promote the satisfaction, performance, creativity and health of postdoctoral researchers.

## MEASURES

*Guidelines for fixed-term employment* – Guidelines for the fixed-term employment of academic staff ensure appropriate contract durations and an appropriate volume of employment for budget-based and project positions, while at the same time enabling transitional funding. Family-friendly policies and equal opportunities are supported by granting additional time in the case of fixed-term contracts for qualification and extensions within the framework of the German Academic Short-Term Labour Contract Act. Guidelines and their implementation are regularly evaluated and developed further.

*Role of supervisors and central contact points and advisory services* – Supervisors bear direct responsibility for shaping the working conditions and the environment. They are supported in this by Staff Development. In addition, the university offers central contact points and advisory services that are available to postdocs in the event of conflicts, funding problems or work-related crises.

## GOAL

### **support informed decisions on different career paths**

Postdocs usually spend the first one to two years after obtaining their doctorate completing projects from their doctoral research, becoming familiar with new research contexts in Germany or abroad, and seeking information and ideas for future career paths within or outside academia. During this phase, Friedrich Schiller University supports graduates in their career orientation and in reaching a well-founded decision on their professional future, which they make in consultation with their superiors and mentors.

## MEASURES

*Career talks with professors and central career guidance services* – Postdocs have a structured career talk with their superior and another professor, no later than two years after their doctorate. There is a guideline for this in German and English. Guidance on various career options is also facilitated by workshops, individual counselling and events relating to academic careers as well as alternative professional fields (Career Service for doctoral candidates and postdocs).

## GOAL

### **promote academic profile development and growing independence as preparation for an academic leadership position**

The advanced postdoc phase is geared towards qualification and developing a profile for an academic leadership position. This includes formal qualification for a professorship through additional academic achievements (*Habilitation*, equivalent achievements, junior research group leadership or junior professorship). However, it also involves the necessary experience and further qualification in the areas of teaching and supervision, third-party funding acquisition, research cooperation, leadership and management tasks, and academic committee work. Increasing independence in research, teaching and third-party funding acquisition is an essential component of a competitive profile. Post-doctoral researchers should have the best possible chances in application and appointment procedures for academic leadership positions in Germany and abroad through their profile development and qualification at Friedrich Schiller University.

## MEASURES

*Funding programmes and guidance services for the development of the individual academic profile –* The research environment at Friedrich Schiller University inspires and enables outstanding research. Diverse funding programmes support postdocs in acquiring and carrying out their own research projects, and in establishing independent collaborative partnerships in the postdoc phase. Reflection on the individual academic profile (e.g., second research focus, *Habilitation* or equivalent achievements, teaching, mobility, third-party funding, visibility) is supported by supervisors, as well as through additional counselling, mentoring and workshops. All the available services and funding offers from central institutions are brought together and communicated to postdocs in a single package.

## GOAL

### **enable early appointment to a professorship**

Friedrich Schiller University wants to make academic careers attractive, transparent and plannable, and thus contribute to diversity when filling professorships. This includes lowering the academic age for appointment to a professorship and promoting early transitions to professorships.

## MEASURES

*Establishment of tenure-track professorships at Friedrich Schiller University –* as a long-term practice, Friedrich Schiller University advertises some of its professorships as junior professorships with tenure track. Junior professors with and without tenure track are specifically supported in their probationary phase through a mentoring and qualification programme.

*Preparing postdocs to apply for external tenure track professorships –* Postdocs and advanced doctoral researchers are informed about the career path of the tenure track professorship and advised on successful profile development and applying for tenure-track professorships.



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