For PhDs and Postdocs
Department of Geosciences
Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen

By PhD/Postdoc Representatives
(Department of Geosciences)
October 2020
Need help during your PhD/PostDoc?

Where to find help
PostDocs: https://tinyurl.com/tzgwp7f
PhDs: https://tinyurl.com/rdp5xcs

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Stay informed!
https://tinyurl.com/ybd9td4h
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To report technical, factual or other types of errors, please contact the PhD/Postdoc Representatives (contact information listed on page 1 of this document).
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1. What funding opportunities are provided by the university?

There are funding opportunities related to the Excellence Strategy within the University. The Equal opportunity office for the Faculty of Science also provides short-term funding for travel, child care support, HiWi (student assistant) support for women and people with families. For other funding options, check out the Graduate Academy of Tübingen, and the Funding Database for external funding for research in Germany.

2. I am on a 60% work contract but I have to work 100%. What happens to the 40% of my salary?

For PhD students, the promotion is considered “private work”. It is expected that a PhD candidate works a percentage for their project and in the rest of their time they can pursue their doctorate degree (e.g. DFG funded projects are usually between 65-100%) For more information (in German), see the DFG website.

3. Are there any guidelines for postdoctoral researchers interested in starting their own grant?

Guidelines can be different from one funding body to another. However, most of the funding bodies provide a request form for their grants. Official forms (i.e., what a grant should include) for DFG grants can be found on their webpage in English and German. In addition, there is pocket guide concerning postdoc grants offered by Marie Curie actions (EU funded).

4. Does my third-party funding get prolonged in case of parental leave?

Contact the Gender Equality Office/Gleichstellungsbüro (partly in German) or Family Office/Familienbüro. They plan to make some information available online this fall with English translation (written communication with the Gender Equality Office, 13.8.2020).

5. Are there limitations in the number of contracts or years that PhDs/postdocs can be temporary employed by the university?

This is regulated by the “Wissenschafts Zeitvertraggesetz” (WissZeitVG). A person can have up to six years of fixed-term contracts before and after the completion of the doctoral program, respectively (12 years in total). If the PhD program is finished under 6 years, the “unspent time” will be a bonus to the 6 years after the PhD program is completed (example: PhD finished in 3 years → after PhD, 9 years of fixed-term contracts are allowed) (see here, download: ’Ratgeber Befristete Arbeitsverträge in der Wissenscahft, page 14 -15, accessed 23.09.20). Fixed-term contracts with third-party funding are possible regardless of whether or not the upper limits for the time limit for qualification have already been exhausted (see page 18 in the above document).

**Important note:** The above information is just a general guide. The law can be differently applied in different German states or vary depending on the type of funding (e.g., third-party, scholarship or university funding) and position (e.g. ‘akademischer Rats’-position or junior
professorship). We strongly recommend that you seek advice by your faculty or a lawyer to clarify how the law applies to your individual situation.

**Note on COVID-19 situation** - It is announced by the Federal Government that due to the corona crisis it will be possible to extend the maximum length of fixed-term contracts for an additional six months.

6. Are PhD candidates students or employees in Germany?

At the University of Tübingen, PhD candidates have to enroll as students (since 2018; see: reference, accessed 23.09.20). If you are on a work contract, you are both a student and an employee.

7. How are salaries decided?

At the university you are usually employed by the State of Baden-Württemberg. The salary for the public service can be calculated online, depending on employee's tax class, working time, and work experience. The salary for a PhD student depends on the third-party funding and the field of research (e.g., according to DFG (in German), PhD candidates receive salaries between 65 and 100% depending on their field of research.).

8. Can funded PhD contracts be extended after 3 years? If so, under what conditions?

Yes, but this will depend on the project and source of funding.

**COVID-19**

9. Is it possible to extend my contract due to COVID-19?

The university provides information concerning Coronavirus and third-party funding (DFG, DAAD and BMBF) on its homepage. Also, see the note in Question 5.

10. What are the safety measures for our workplace in the University?

Please see the infection protection plan of the University of Tübingen under pandemic conditions OR Hygiene concept for updated safety measures: (Link to PDF, 27.10.2020) Look under heading Internal Information Concerning the University. Some information is only visible when you login to the university intranet.

The information will be modified according to the situation at hand. In general, as of 27.10.2020, a minimum distance of 1.5 m between people should be observed in all thoroughfares within university buildings. Also, face covering is required in university buildings and in the public area near the university. There are some exceptions e.g. if you are in your office and can maintain 1.5-meter distance with another person or in laboratories.

Additionally, “in situations that produce greater amounts of aerosol (e.g. lengthy talks) a face covering must be worn or the distance increased appropriately, as a rule at least doubled to
3 meters”. Also, “the minimum distance must be increased to 3 meters at round tables, seminars, etc., involving contributions from participants, etc. (N.B.: while speaking. Space while seated remains at 1.5 m) if a face covering does not have to be worn for justified reasons” (Hygiene Concept, 27.10.2020).

11. Are there any resources in English for online teaching and technical support in addition to the ILIAS help team?

Please refer to Digitale Lehre and Center for Teaching and Learning at Tübingen University/ Hochschuldidtatik.

12. Does the University provide help to students and employers related to stress management?

The Psychosocial Counseling Service for employees offers advice in stressful situations and conflicts in the corona crisis.

13. What are the rules on wearing masks?

According to the Hygiene Concept (see answer to question #10), a face covering must be worn within university buildings and in university areas open to use by the public (e.g., open areas in front of buildings and pathways between buildings).

Furthermore, “if over an extended period a distance of at least 1.5 m cannot be maintained between individuals, and a face covering is not already stipulated in accordance with the regulations above under A (refer to the link), then a suitable face covering must nevertheless be worn in circumstances where this is not otherwise stipulated (e.g. in the office)” (as of 10.27.2020).

Note - Mund-Nase-Schutz refers to certified masks such as surgical masks and Mund-Nase-Bedeckung refers to cloth masks covering mouth and nose according to BMAS: New SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Safety and Health Regulations (2.9.2020). This information has been confirmed by the administrative personnel from the Abteilungsleitung VIII 2 - Safety Section, Frau Heike Ilg on 2.9.2020.

14. What happens to my salary payment if I have been in contact with an infected person and must isolate?

The University lists external sources under questions relating to Labor Law and COVID-19. It states that wages are paid normally when one is in quarantine (full quote: “In the case of quarantine, you must stay at home and your wages will be paid by the employer as before”, reference, accessed on 2.9.2020).
15. Can I insist on having meetings with my PI during the pandemic? Can s/he insist on having meetings with me?

At the moment, the university advises to avoid meetings in person and make use of conference calls (see section "Public contacts, meetings, events and trips", link accessed on 31.08.2020).

**PhD & Postdoc Work**

16. What is habilitation?

The Habilitation is almost like a second doctorate, though it is not a degree. It is a four to six year period of independent research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities that culminates in writing either as a monograph or several articles of outstanding quality (click here for reference, 11.8.2020). Also, see here for more information (accessed 23.09.2020).

17. When is a Habilitation possible?

Requirements for a habilitation can be found in the Habilitationsordnung of the Faculty of Science ("Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät" in German). Some information about the habilitation process can be found in English. We have asked the Deanery (Dekanat) to provide the “Habilitationsordnung” also in English.

18. What are the general requirements for PhD completion?

Please see Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Science.

19. What are the legal rights of PhDs or Postdocs when publishing articles with professors? Who has ownership over the data produced by PhDs/Postdocs in collaboration with professors?

Please refer to this link (in German, accessed 23.09.2020) for more information. In general, the University owns the data and that the Professor (PI) shares some rights.

20. When should I start to write my PhD dissertation? How is this structured?

You can start writing your dissertation whenever you want. We suggest speaking to a Postdoc mentor from the same field and discussing this with your supervisor.

21. What should I do if my advisor and I do not agree on the number of publications a doctoral degree requires?

To obtain a doctoral degree from our faculty, journal publications are not necessarily required. The requirements for a doctoral degree are summarized in the Promotionsordnung (download under ‘information’ → ‘Promotionsordnung’), paragraph 6. However, for a cumulative dissertation, the PhD Committee (Promotions-Ausschuss) requires at least two manuscripts accepted for publication. Nevertheless, the supervisor decides what is required for a dissertation (find the document ‘Reccomendations for Cumulative Dissertations’ under
'Forms, Policies, and Information' here, accessed 23.09.2020). Alternatively, a monograph can be written (no publication required) but the supervisors have to approve the format. If your supervisor insists on a cumulative thesis with >>2 publications and you think further publications are not necessary to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral degree, you should contact the Promotions-Ausschuss.

22. I am currently outside Germany. Will I be able to defend my dissertation on Zoom?

Yes, online examinations are now allowed (link accessed on 12.08.2020).

23. Are we insured if we work outside business hours and/or on the weekends? If a work-related accident happen, will the insurance company take the responsibility?

For work accidents, click here. (link accessed on 9.8.2020, in German)

JOURNAL ARTICLES

24. When will we have access to publications in Elsevier journals?

As of 12.8.2020, the University library suggests using Interlibrary Loan & Document Delivery Services called FIZ AutoDoc (in German). Read more on Projekt Deal.

25. What online journals does the University library have access to?

Please see the catalogue of Electronic Journals Library.

26. Will there be a local library in GUZ?

As of now (12.8.2020) and according to the university librarian, there will be no library in the GUZ.

SUPERVISION

27. I rarely meet with my advisor. What are the university rules for this?

For PhD candidates, only one meeting per year is mandatory (see supervision agreement; under ‘Forms, Policies, and Information’ → ‘Application for Acceptance’ link accessed on 23.09.2020).

28. What can be done when disagreements occur and no other advisors are involved in the project?

Depending on the type of disagreement, one of the faculty Ombudspersons can be contacted (click here for more information; link accessed on 31.08.2020).
In case of misconduct in science, click [here](https://example.com). (German only; link accessed on 31.08.2020). There is a list of Ombudspersons for download on this website.

**29. If you have complaints about professors’ remarks and behaviors especially with regards to power harassment (not sexual harassment), who can we turn to while we remain anonymous? If we report them, what kind of actions can we expect? Can professors be accounted for?**

Please see our answer to question 30. Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against professors (and civil servants in general) if there is sufficient evidence of misconduct. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, the following penalties may be imposed: reprimand, fine, reduction of salary, downgrading and removal from the position (click [here](https://example.com) for source in German).

**30. In case of conflict with an advisor (including unprofessional behavior), what neutral parties do we have access to for address such issues?**

Please see: [Conflict Mediation Commission](https://example.com) (in German; accessed on 9.8.2020)

**31. Is it legal that my supervisor does not pay me for writing my thesis/publications?**

It is normal that one is not paid for writing a thesis. If your project description, however, includes the publication of papers, the hours spent for writing papers should be paid by the project. You can also refer to our answer to question #2.

**32. Is it possible to change supervisor? How?**

It is possible at any time to change a supervisor. All involved persons have to agree on the change. Please hand in the form “application for acceptance as doctoral students” again with your new supervisor and put a note on it, saying that this is not a new application but a supervisor change. (see page 2 of the document "Information sheet for Doctoral candidates" by clicking [here](https://example.com), link accessed on 23.09.2020)

**33. Is it necessary to be habilitated to serve as a secondary or tertiary PhD supervisor?**

According to the Information Sheet for Doctoral Candidates at the Faculty of Science at the University of Tübingen, the primary supervisor has to be a full-time professor. The secondary supervisor can either be a professor or professor who teaches at a polytechnic college (Fachhochschule), junior professor, retired professor, assistant professor, honorary professor, or visiting professor. (for reference, click [here](https://example.com) ‘Forms and Policies’→ ‘Information sheet for Doctoral Candidates’. Link accessed on 23.09.2020). However, there are exceptions. E.g. the principle investigator of an ERC or Emmy Noether may be main supervisor of PhD candidates in your project. The university/Deanery should be contacted to discuss such specific cases.
WELL-BEING

34. Is there any emergency mental health service provided by the university?

Contacting the Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy in Tübingen (Tel. 07071 / 29-82311) or dialing 112 is referred to as a point of contact for emergencies by Counselling of the Studierendenwerk Tübingen-Hohenheim (see source; accessed on 23.09.2020).

35. What can I do when my advisor fails to protect me from an abusive coworker?

There are 4 steps recommended by the University concerning cases of mobbing, sexual harassment or discrimination. These steps can be found here (download the file ‘Richtlinie Partnerschaftliches Verhalten an der Universität Tübingen’).

These four steps are:

- **First Stage**: Attempt of direct clarification of the conflict situation by the parties/affected persons yourself. For this purpose alone, the advice provided by a body mentioned under "Step 3" can take place.
- **Second Stage**: The persons concerned have the option of applying for immediate or next (head of institute, dean), in whose responsibility also a member of a reasonable climate in the workplace. To support this, in each faculty from the non-academic staff of the faculty has a specific contact person and contact person named.
- **Third Stage**: Complaint to one of the institutions/counselling centers: Personnel Department, Staff committee, Gender Equality Office, Psychosocial counselling center for employees, Psychotherapeutic counselling center for students, Company medical service, Representative body for severely disabled persons, Commission for Ethical Conduct in Science.
- **Fourth Stage**: If no solution could be found at level 3, the data subject may with or without the help of the above-mentioned institutions, the problem case of the Rectorate Commission for bringing partnership behavior to the attention of others.

Note - You can always contact the representatives for PhDs and PostDocs in the Geosciences department.

36. Is there an expert to talk to about issues related to mental health?

You can contact the Psychosocial Counseling Service for University (Contact person available for English counseling: Dr. Annette Mauch, Qualified social worker) (link accessed on 23.09.2020). Students can contact the Counselling of the Studierendenwerk Tübingen-Hohenheim (link accessed on 11.8.2020). For a list of other counseling services, click here. (link accessed on 9.8.2020)

37. What steps should a victim of harassment take and what resources are available to help with facing harassment of any kind?

For sexual harassment, see steps listed by the Gender Equality Office/Gleichstellungsbüro. Also see our answer to question 30.
38. Is there any mentoring program at the university?

For women check the Mentoring and Training program from state funded LaKoG (link accessed on 9.8.2020), and check services offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

OTHER

39. Why are some of the University homepages not translated in English?

We contacted the Dekanat and informed them that it would be helpful to have all the information also in English.

40. Where can I seek help as an international scholar?

See information by the Welcome Center (link accessed on 9.8.2020).

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