

# **DRS HONORS Fellowships, 2014-1 - Program Guidelines –**

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## 1 Program Overview

Dahlem Research School (DRS) is the Center for Junior Researchers at Freie Universität Berlin. Its aim is to increase the awareness of the needs of doctoral candidates and postdocs in general and to implement sustainable structures to systematically support them in their academic career. The two core elements of DRS are a professional development program tailored to junior researchers at different career stages and a fellowship program for outstanding postdocs. For more information please visit [www.fu-berlin.de/en/drs](http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/drs).

The DRS Postdoc Fellowship Program aims to integrate postdoctoral researchers into the university's interdisciplinary and international research projects in an early phase of their career. It provides funding and support for outstanding postdoctoral fellows to conduct their own research project at Freie Universität Berlin.

The HONORS Fellowships are part of the DRS Postdoc Fellowship Program. The HONORS program offers annually up to 10 fellowships, each lasting 12 months. This DRS fellowship program is aimed at candidates who have only recently completed their doctoral studies in one of the DRS' doctoral programs. Research topics are proposed by the fellows themselves, based on the research emphases of their prospective scientific advisors.

## 2 Aim

The DRS HONORS Fellowship Program aims to support junior researchers in the transition to their first postdoctoral position with their own research project. During the program, fellows receive extensive personalized support, along with access to the DRS Professional Development Program. The DRS HONORS Fellowship aims to support fellows in developing their own research project and obtaining longer-term funding. Throughout the HONORS funding period and alongside their research activities, fellows are therefore expected to prepare a grant proposal for follow-up funding.

## 3 Eligibility Criteria

- Recently completed doctoral degree or recently defended dissertation **in one of the doctoral programs of Dahlem Research School**
- Dissertation was defended no longer than 9 months before application deadline
- Doctoral studies must have been completed within 3.5 years (time between begin of studies and submission of dissertation)
- Candidates must be supported by a professor of Freie Universität Berlin who agrees to act as advisor during the time of the fellowship
- Intention of pursuing an academic career with an interdisciplinary and innovative research project
- In order to strengthen the academic networks of Freie Universität Berlin, collaborative research projects with existing or potential partner institutions are highly welcome

## 4 Benefits

The *DRS Postdoc Fellowship Program* includes a monthly allowance and a tailor-made professional development program delivered by Dahlem Research School.

## 4.1 Financial Support

The fellowship is determined by the postdoctoral stipend rates of the German Research Foundation (DFG) and is made up of a monthly base amount according to age group and a monthly research and travel cost contribution. Fellows with children receive a child allowance.

### Monthly base amount according to age group

- Up to 30 Years 1,365 €
- 31 – 34 Years 1,416 €
- 35 – 38 Years 1,467 €

**Monthly lump sum for research and travel costs** 103 €

### Monthly child allowance

- For the first child 400 €
- For each additional child 100 €

In the case of parental allowance provided by the state of Berlin, this will be deducted from the HONORS child allowance.

The financial support as part of the HONORS Fellowship will end with the start of follow-up funding or at the latest after 12 months. An extension of the HONORS Fellowship is not possible. The DRS is to be notified immediately once follow-up funding has been secured.

## 4.2 Ancillary Activities

DRS Honors Fellowships are full-time stipends. The stipend amount is calculated in such a way that it covers fellows' living expenses and allows them to concentrate fully on their research project and on applications for further funding. Ancillary activities are only allowed in exceptional circumstances and only if they do not affect the intended purpose of the stipend. They have to be reported and approved by the DRS. Any additional income may be deducted from the HONORS stipend.

## 4.3 Professional Development

HONORS Fellows are entitled to take part in the DRS Professional Development Program and attend courses in the areas *Academic Performance*, *Management Competencies* und *Career Development*, as appropriate for their career phase.

In addition, the DRS have developed courses and workshops specifically for postdoctoral fellows of the HONORS, REGAIN, POINT and COFUND funding lines. This offer is tailor-made to the needs of postdoctoral fellows and the aims of the DRS Postdoc Fellowship Program.

Attendance at the following two courses is obligatory:

1. **Grants & Funding**
2. **Grants Writing\***

\*If the course *Grants Writing* or *Drittmittelantrag* has already been attended during the PhD program, it is not necessary to repeat it. In this case the DRS should be notified in due time.

HONORS Fellows are entitled to attend courses of the DRS Professional Development Program during the funding period of 12 months.

## 4.4 Supervision

Each fellow will have a scientific advisor to

- provide subject-specific advice during regular meetings
- support their professional development through integration into department/ institute courses and activities

## 5 Selection Process

### 5.1 Eligibility Check

The eligibility check is conducted by the DRS fellowship team. Only complete applications will be peer reviewed.

### 5.2 Peer Review

The peer review consists of two evaluations by two scientific experts. The future scientific advisor of the applicant provides an (internal) review of the application and also appoints two external peers per application. The DRS invites a review from one of the external peers. Both, the internal and the external review, will be based on the same criteria with the following weighting:

- Quality and innovation of the research proposal (50%)
- Convincing statement of motivation with regard to future career aspirations in academia (20%)
- Quality and innovation of PhD thesis (20%)
- Proof of scientific excellence as evidenced by the previous career track, publications, awards, successful funding applications, etc. (10%)

Applications will be ranked according to the average scores given in the peer review and the ten highest scoring candidates will be invited for a short interview.

Special circumstances and personal commitments (especially family-related career breaks) that place applicants at a disadvantage may be considered. An additional 5% can be added to the score for each year of family-related interruption in an applicant's career, up to a maximum of 25%. Part-time positions will be credited proportionally.

### 5.3 Structured Interviews

The structured interviews are conducted by an internal selection board consisting of at least four panel members representing the four main subject areas of Humanities, Social Sciences, Life Sciences and Natural Sciences, recruited from Freie Universität's junior professors, junior group leaders, DRS postdoctoral fellows.

Process: Each interview will last 10 minutes.

- Candidates give a presentation of their project. The presentation should be clear and understandable to non-specialists. (5 min.)
- The panel will ask questions relating to the project and the future career plans of the candidate. (5 min.)

After each interview, the panel will take a further 5 minutes to discuss their comments and agree the final joint score.

Based on the interview scores, the panel prepares a ranking list and makes a recommendation to the Executive Board of Freie Universität. Criteria in the interview are:

- Clarity of research idea and convincing defense of the proposed research project (60%)
- Convincing statement of motivation with regard to future career aspirations (20%)
- Overall quality of candidate's presentation, incl. language and communication skills (20%)

The steering committee (Ständige Kommission - SK) of DRS will approve all recommended applications.

## 5.4 Final Assessment

The final selection is conducted by the Executive Board of Freie Universität Berlin. The assessment is made on the basis of the scores received in the internal and external peer reviews and the structured interviews. Up to five fellowships can be offered in each round (up to 10 per year). The most important criterion is scientific excellence.

## 6 Responsibilities and Services

### 6.1 HONORS Fellows

HONORS Fellows are required to

- implement the research project described in their application. Major changes to the time and work schedule outlined in the application, especially concerning research trips abroad or applications for further funding, should be reported to the DRS as soon as possible.
- plan a longer-term research project at Freie Universität Berlin and apply to German and/or international funding organizations for the necessary funding
- submit a report on their activities to the DRS, co-signed by the scientific advisor, no later than one month after conclusion of the project, referencing. The DRS provides a report template.
- include a reference to the DRS HONORS Fellowship program of Freie Universität Berlin in all publications associated with the project
- participate in interim and final evaluations as well as follow-up information gathering activities
- notify DRS for any and all ancillary activities. All ancillary activities require the approval of DRS.

HONORS Fellows have the opportunity to present themselves and their projects on the DRS Website: [http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/promovieren/drs/drs\\_fellowships/drs\\_fellows/index.html](http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/promovieren/drs/drs_fellowships/drs_fellows/index.html).

### 6.2 Scientific Advisors

#### General conditions

The scientific advisors ensure that HONORS fellows

- are provided with an appropriate workplace in line with the requirements of their specific projects
- are included in courses and events, colloquia, seminars, conferences, etc.

The scientific advisors also

- provide subject-specific advice during regular meetings
- co-sign the final report

#### Application phase

As part of their candidate's application, the scientific advisors provide names and contact details for at least two external experts to peer review the application.

#### Selection process

The scientific advisors provide an internal peer review of the application.

## 6.3 Dahlem Research School

### Call for applications

- Call for applications via DRS doctoral programs and DRS fellowship website
- Electronic application form on the DRS fellowship website

### Selection process

The DRS manages the HONORS selection process and supports all involved parties by

- conducting the eligibility check
- collecting peer review reports
- organizing structured interviews:
  - o Scheduling with panel members and applicants
  - o Provision of space and technical equipment on request
  - o Analysis of interview reports
- collecting written approvals from SK-member/ SK-representative
- obtaining the final decision from Freie Universität's Executive Board

### Fellowship grants

The DRS informs about the grant conditions and makes grant payments.

### Online information for applicants and fellows

The DRS provides extensive information for applicants and fellows:

- HONORS call for applications and FAQs: [www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/promovieren/drs/drs\\_fellowships/honors\\_program](http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/promovieren/drs/drs_fellowships/honors_program)
- Information on the funding program and administrative procedures in the DRS Fellowships wiki: [wikis.fu-berlin.de/display/drsf/DRS+Fellowships](http://wikis.fu-berlin.de/display/drsf/DRS+Fellowships)

### Customized professional development program for fellows

All courses and activities in the professional development program are evaluated and adjusted regularly after a review of content, requirements, and requests. Current offer:

- o Information session on research funding in Germany
- o Workshop on Grants writing
- o Peer coaching on grants writing

## 7 Support

**Should you have any questions, please contact the DRS Fellowship Team:**

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## Appendix 1: Timetable of November 2013 Call

November 2013	Publication of Call
January 2014	Deadline 31/01/2014
February (2 Weeks)	Eligibility Check
February-March (3-4 Weeks)	Peer Review
March-April (3-4 Weeks)	Structured Interviews
April	Final Decision
May	Start of Fellowships

## Appendix 2: Assessment Guidelines

Scores must be in the range 0-5. Marks for each criterion are given to one decimal point.

Interpretation of the scores:

- 0- The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1- Poor. The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2- Fair. While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
- 3- Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
- 4- Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.
- 5- Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

Please use the following structure in your comments:

- Strengths of the proposal (in bullet point format)
- Weaknesses of the proposal (in bullet point format)
- Overall comments

Your review will be treated confidentially and we ask you to please maintain confidentiality with respect to all those involved.

To ensure a timely selection procedure we would like to ask you to complete your independent review within in two weeks and to return it to [fellowship-drs@fu-berlin.de](mailto:fellowship-drs@fu-berlin.de).

## Impartiality Issues (for external reviewers)

Before taking part in the selection process, please check that you are not affected by impartiality issues. Should you not consider yourself sufficiently impartial or appropriately qualified to provide an expert opinion or not be able to submit your statement in the time foreseen, we should be very grateful if you would provide us with the name and address of a competent colleague and return the application documents to us immediately.

You must decline the peer review if you have a conflict of interest or may be perceived to have a conflict of interest in the eyes of a third party. If you have any doubts, you should clarify the matter with the DRS Fellowship Team prior to the start of the peer review process.

Impartiality issues arise when there is a danger that unrelated considerations could influence the outcome of your peer review.

Please note that impartiality issues may exist in relation to:

- the research project
- the applicant or his/her institution

Circumstances leading to impartiality issues may include:

- a family relationship, close personal ties or personal conflicts
- existing, planned or recently concluded close academic cooperation, such as undertaking a joint project or a joint publication within the last 3 years
- direct academic competition with your own projects or plans
- employment related dependency or supervisory relationships (e.g. teacher / pupil relationship) within the last 6 years
- involvement in ongoing or very recently concluded appointment procedures (professorial or other) relating to the applicant (e.g. as applicant or member of an appointment panel)
- personal financial or commercial interests in the funding decision

Should we not receive any indication from you that there are impartiality issues, we will assume that it is your belief that no such impartiality issues exist. In any event, please declare your connections to the institutions and individuals concerned in your review.