

Recommendation by the  
18th General Meeting of the  
German Rectors' Conference  
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**Core Theses for the  
"Guidelines for the  
Advancement of Early  
Career Researchers and  
for the Development of  
Academic Career Paths in  
Addition to that of a  
Professorship"**

**HRK German Rectors' Conference**

The Voice of the Universities

Ahrstraße 39  
53175 Bonn,  
Germany

Tel.: +49 (0) 228 887-0  
Fax: +49 (0) 228 887-110

post@hrk.de  
www.hrk.de

In order to accomplish their complex range of tasks in teaching, research, promoting early career researchers, further education and services, universities require staff with varying levels of qualification who are hired in various forms of employment. For science departments it is essential that innovation, flexibility and quality – including that of the university itself – are ensured. The universities have a responsibility towards early career researchers which requires structured qualification paths that move through defined stages. This means that fixed-term employment contracts are required to continually advance early career researchers and attract more newcomers to the institutions. Fixed-term positions are also available for specific projects. By contrast, permanent employment should be given to relevant, long-term roles. Quality-driven, objectifiable and transparent selection procedures should be established for appointments to permanent positions.

Based on their remit and organisational development, universities set up their staff structure and development in accordance with the following measures:

- I. The initial fixed-term employment contract for research staff must be calculated in due consideration of the researcher being able to achieve their qualification. For positions financed using budgetary resources and held by those studying for a doctoral degree, the employment period is usually at least 24 months with the option to extend by a further 12 months. Doctoral regulations usually stipulate that a doctoral candidate's employment contract should be flanked by a supervision agreement to ensure the framework conditions.
- II. Fixed-term employment contracts after completion of the doctoral degree are used in an initial post-doc phase of continued scientific qualification, described as the "training phase", and in the second post-doc phase of independent research – the "decision phase". If contracts are funded using budgetary resources, the initial fixed-term contract period is usually no less than 24 months and adjusted to the researcher's career goals.
- III. If contracts receive third-party funding, the fixed term of the employment contract is adjusted to each financing phase (the duration of the project). In this process, the various third-party funding bodies should review the different approval procedures, which sometimes differ completely, to ensure that there is suitable balance between the project's research goals and the time frames required by the various phases of the qualification.
- IV. The universities ensure that there are appropriate contact partners and offers to support professional career development through mentoring and coaching programmes, especially in the initial phase after gaining a doctoral degree. They offer opportunities to gain further qualifications and make researchers aware of available

external qualifications. By cooperating with other higher education institutions, non-university research institutions and private companies, universities are opening up opportunities for researchers to get to know various career paths and to try them out in practical terms.

- V.** The universities organise their staff structure in such a way that attractive, permanent positions can be offered to early career researchers. This process involves every person who has a relevant role to play. If cooperation agreements exist between partners, it is ensured that these regulations are observed.
  
- VI.** The universities encourage diversity and have an equal-opportunities approach to access to research positions, contractual framework conditions, career development offers and the development of staff structures.