

Guidelines on permanent positions in academia beyond professorships

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1. Introduction

Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (HHU) employs a large number of academic staff in its faculties and central institutions, who perform tasks in research, teaching and scientific management, and thereby play a key role in shaping the University.

Some of these individuals are employed on fixed-term contracts with a view to obtaining an academic qualification. Such qualifications subsequently enable the individuals to embark on academic careers as well as career paths outside academia. Ongoing qualification within the framework of employment contracts is a key part of the educational mandate of HHU. Other individuals are employed on permanent contracts. In these contracts, the focus no longer lies on obtaining personal qualifications (although ongoing and further education in the spirit of lifelong learning naturally continues to play a role), but rather on the assumption of long-term duties in research, teaching or scientific management. These individuals are predominantly – according to the European framework for research careers – Established Researchers (R3)¹. The job titles/profiles and rights/obligations associated with the positions set out in these permanent contracts are currently very heterogeneous.

The objective of these guidelines is to establish standardised framework conditions for academic staff in the faculties and central scientific institutions with permanent contracts. The description of three job profiles (researcher, lecturer and scientific manager) is aimed at establishing transparent, more plannable career paths and comparable working conditions, and helping academics identify more closely with their own professional role. The formulation and detailing of uniform standards is also aimed at presenting HHU as an attractive employer in order to retain outstanding academics and scientific managers, and improving quality in research, teaching and scientific management.

Permanent academic positions are defined by the faculties in agreement with the University management as part of strategic personnel planning on the basis of current and expected requirements in terms of permanent positions. These requirements result from the teaching and research objectives of a faculty or central scientific institution, strategic University objectives or statutory requirements.²

1 Cf. European Commission Directorate General for Research & Innovation: Towards a European framework for research careers, Brussels 2011: https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers_final.pdf, last accessed on 17 January 2024.

2 More detailed information about this planning process and the ongoing development of the current permanent position concepts in the faculties can be found in the document “Framework for the ongoing development of permanent position concepts”.

2. Job profiles

With a view to the ongoing long-term tasks in research, teaching and scientific management, HHU differentiates between three profiles for permanent academic positions in the faculties and central scientific institutions: researcher, lecturer and scientific manager. In the reality of day-to-day work, there is a certain amount of overlap between these profiles. However, each profile has focuses that characterise it. Those responsible should take account of these focuses when creating and filling permanent academic positions to ensure that the employees holding these positions have clarity about their area of responsibility and that appropriate personnel development measurements can be offered.

The following job descriptions should not be seen as set in stone, nor is it necessary that all the stated activities are performed. The intention is to describe typical and ideal concepts.

2.1. Researcher

Researchers are primarily involved in research. They conduct research, acquire third-party funding, manage third-party funded projects, participate in collaborative projects, publish work and give presentations at academic conferences. They plan and teach classes, and supervise dissertation/thesis projects. Support for research infrastructure facilities is a further possible focus.

Researchers should also take an interest in new developments in research, for example in topics such as open science, IT strategy or artificial intelligence. Ideally, they establish networks in their specialist field at national or international level and seek dialogue with stakeholders in business, politics, culture and society. They should also play a role in academic self-governance.

Researchers spend around 50% of their working time undertaking research tasks. Depending on their involvement in research and other organisational duties, they also have a certain teaching load, which is oriented to that of professors (8 contact hours per week for standard employees/9 contact hours per week for civil servants). If they perform extensive management duties, e.g. in research infrastructure, the teaching load may be lower (e.g. teaching accounts for 25% of their total working time = 4/5 contact hours per week).

2.2. Lecturer

Lecturers are primarily involved in teaching. They get involved in the conceptual development of classes and exams, and realise them in accordance with the latest research and didactic standards. They advise students on study organisation and study-related/career-oriented issues, and supervise dissertation/thesis projects.

They should also network with other teaching staff within the University and ideally take an interest in dialogue and teaching projects with stakeholders from business, politics, culture and society. Lecturers should contribute to the ongoing development of a teaching and learning culture, and promote didactic innovations. They should get involved in strategic developments in teaching such as the design of new study programmes or digitalisation in teaching and play a role in academic self-governance.

Provision is usually made for a teaching load of 8 to 13 contact hours per week. Depending on their involvement in other duties in research or scientific management, a teaching workload of e.g. 50% (i.e. 8 contact hours per week for standard employees/9 contact hours per week for civil servants) or 75% (i.e. 12 contact hours per week for standard employees/13 contact hours per week for civil servants) is conceivable for lecturer positions. In exceptional cases, it is possible to deviate from these specifications and establish a lecturer position with a teaching workload of 100% (i.e. 16 contact hours per week for standard employees/17 contact hours per week for civil servants), as is required in the case of language assistants or lecturers for special tasks.

In addition to their focus on teaching, lecturers can also take on research tasks and e.g. conduct research, publish work, acquire third-party funding and organise/attend conferences. This should usually account for 20% of their working time (insofar as they teach for less than 80% of their working time).

2.3. Scientific Manager

Scientific managers are primarily involved in scientific management tasks. They act as the link between research and teaching on the one hand and the University administration on the other hand.

The area of responsibility covered by scientific managers is heterogeneous and ranges from the management and coordination of larger units in research, teaching and transfer, as well as project, quality and financial management to personnel and appointment management, the development of concepts/strategies, (science) communication and events management. They can acquire third-party funding, publish work and, from the starting point of their working areas, establish an internal and external network in order to bring developments at national and international level to their areas at HHU. If they are involved in teaching and research, they can supervise dissertation/thesis projects. They should also play a role in academic self-governance.

Provision should be made for around 20% of their working time to be spent on research and/or teaching (up to 4 contact hours per week)³. This work should be performed both within a subject and within the framework of e.g. structured graduate education or internal further education (such as in university teaching methodology).

³ If teaching obligations are to be dispensed with due to extensive other activities, this must be set out in the employment contract.

3. Organisational assignment and legal status

Permanent academic positions should either be assigned to the Dean's Office (or a central scientific institution) or to a faculty unit (scientific institution/institute/department/etc.). The Dean or head of the scientific institution/institute may delegate the authority to issue instructions to a professorship on a temporary basis. Direct assignment to the working area of a professorship represents an exception.

When taking a decision about the organisational assignment, account must be taken of the job profile, the issue of whether the individual should stay where they are in the event of a move by their supervisor and opportunities for integrating the individual into team activities.

Individuals are usually assigned to the pay-scale grade E13 of the Public Sector Collective Agreement for the Federal States (TV-L) or A13. Assignment to higher pay-scale grades is possible.

Academic staff with permanent contracts should be assigned research and teaching tasks to be performed independently. The statutory provisions must be observed here.⁴ In these areas, there is then no authority to issue instructions. Within the framework of the assignment, the delineation of tasks must be agreed and questions relating to resources, personal budget and infrastructure access must be clarified.

The right to independent supervision of doctorates for academic staff with habilitation or habilitation-equivalent achievements is regulated in the doctoral regulations of the faculties.

4. Appointment prerequisites

Individuals who are appointed as researchers and lecturers (and thus in phase R3 as Established Researchers) should hold a doctorate and have experience in planning and conducting classes and exams, as well as in supervising and advising students. Proof of qualification to teach should be provided in the form of a list of classes already conducted, teaching evaluations and the completion of further training in university teaching methodology (comprising approx. 60 – 80 work units).

Individuals who are appointed as researchers should usually also have completed a postdoc phase lasting at least two years (phase R2 pursuant to the European framework for research careers) in which they have published work, given presentations at academic conferences and gained experience in acquiring third-party funding.

In exceptional cases, lecturers who do not hold a doctorate may still be appointed where proof of academic achievements comparable with a doctorate and going beyond a basic university degree can be provided instead of a doctorate.⁵ The faculties and central scientific institutions must define what may constitute "comparable academic achievements" before advertising a permanent academic position.

⁴ Currently Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia (*Hochschulgesetz NRW – HG NRW*) Art. 44 (1) Sentence 6 and Art. 44 (2) Sentence 2

⁵ HG NRW Art. 44 (4)

After completing their doctorate, individuals appointed as scientific managers have gained extensive experience in scientific management, possess detailed knowledge of the international funding landscape and, depending on the focus of the position, have further expertise e.g. in strategy development, project management, university teaching methodology or personnel management. A comparable academic achievement (Art. 44 (4) Sentence 1 HG NRW) may replace the doctorate.⁶

5. Recruitment procedure

Recruitment at universities is based on excellence and competition in accordance with the principle of selection of the best anchored in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (*Grundgesetz* – GG). In line with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers, HHU conducts quality-assured, objective, fair and transparent personnel selection procedures and develops criteria for potential professional advancement and ongoing career development.

Permanent academic positions are publicly advertised and separated from individual funding relationships. HHU is striving to fill at least 50% of these positions with women or at least to achieve a ratio of women comparable to the percentage of women with a doctorate in the corresponding subject.

The faculty or central scientific institution submits a job advertisement request for a position to the Personnel Division, which initiates the procedure without a Rectorate resolution, insofar as provision is made for the position in the permanent position concept. The request includes:

- The selection criteria and any special qualification requirements for the position (taking account of the diversity/general requirements of personnel selection criteria pursuant to the principles of good research practice and the HRS4R)
- A draft advertisement text
- A proposal for the composition of a small, gender-balanced selection committee

The candidate is usually chosen by a selection committee (which may be dispensed with in objectively justified exceptional cases) on the basis of the documents submitted by the applicants and a (potentially two-stage) interview process.

The selection committee should comprise the following as a minimum:

- a) A representative of the faculty or scientific institution/institute management, depending on where the position is to be based
- b) A professor from the corresponding subject (where necessary)
- c) A student representative (can be dispensed with if no teaching duties are involved)
- d) Members of representative bodies
- e) Potentially a representative of the Rectorate (for positions of high strategic relevance)

⁶ In rare cases where an individual does not hold a doctorate and cannot provide proof of comparable academic achievements, they shall be taken on as a member of the technical and administrative staff.

All academic staff employed on permanent contracts should possess the potential for continuous development and the ability to adapt to changing framework conditions. Particular attention should be paid to this flexibility and willingness to change in the selection procedure.

6. Scope

The framework conditions described here apply to all permanent academic positions in the faculties and central scientific institutions filled after 1 January 2025.

Mid-level academic staff positions, which are already filled may – in consultation with the incumbent – be modified in accordance with these provisions.

Düsseldorf, 15 February 2024

sgd. Professor Dr Anja Steinbeck

Annex

Further activities performed by researchers may include:

- Archive administration
- Provision, academic supervision and support for/with research methods
- IT infrastructure support
- Supervision of series' of publications or larger-scale publication projects
- Database support and maintenance
- Supervision of measuring equipment, which falls under major research instrumentation
- Budget monitoring, third-party funding and budgets of scientific institutions
- Involvement in the areas of transfer, spin-offs, patents
- Research management
- Review activities for the German Research Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), publishing companies, appointment procedures, etc.
- Management of laboratories and supervision of major research instrumentation/sophisticated techniques, which benefit the entire faculty or departments
- Involvement in external committees, working groups and commissions
- Conceptual development and organisation of conferences
- Science communication and policy advice
- Additional duties such as radiation protection, biosafety, health and safety, data protection

Further activities performed by lecturers may include:

- Supervision of accreditation processes
- Advice on specialist content, periods of study abroad, etc.
- Provision of further education/training offers (e.g. further education for external individuals)
- Involvement in student selection procedures
- Supervision of teaching staff
- Evaluation/recognition of courses completed abroad
- Organisation and conduct of teaching evaluations
- Review/editing of specialist terms in texts
- Study and exam coordination, organisation or planning
- Organisation of events (conferences, lecturer series')
- Support for internships/traineeships, organisation of extended and mandatory internships/traineeships
- Quality management (development, coordination, organisation of quality improvement measures in teaching)
- Room bookings/class management
- Recruitment, supervision and training of tutors
- Study programme development

Sample activity areas of scientific managers:

- Alumni management
- Data security
- Digitalisation projects
- Research data management
- Research management
- Management of central scientific institutions
- Coordination of an academic unit, a study programme, collaborative projects, research groups, Research Training Groups (RTGs), commissions, departments within a Dean's Office
- Marketing
- Personnel and appointment management (personnel planning and selection, recruitment, onboarding, ...)
- Personnel development (conceptual development and realisation of consultation, coaching and further training offers for researchers, as well as external individuals)
- Press and public relations work
- Project management
- Quality management
- Activities in the areas of sustainability, international affairs, equal opportunities and diversity
- Support for researchers in citizen science and service learning projects
- Events management
- Science communication