



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DRESDEN

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GRADUATE
ACADEMY

Dear readers and members!

The Graduate Academy has been offering its members an extensive range of advice and support services for nine months now. We were very eager to see how large the response to our work would be. Something we did not expect, though, was the Graduate Academy already having about 850 members to date.

We are delighted our advisory service and the support we offer have been so well received and that so many junior researchers at our University have chosen to become members of the Graduate Academy. I would like to extend a warm welcome to every new member and hope to see you at our official opening event.

Yours sincerely,

We invite you to the ceremonial opening!

Following the GA's successful start last year, we would like to officially open the central unit for junior researchers at TUD together with our members and high-ranking representatives from science and politics on 7th and 8th May 2014.

For two days, everything will revolve around supporting and promoting junior researchers.

On 7th May, the GA will be officially opened with a ceremony in the Dülfersaal. Apart from our members, we have invited guests from science, politics and the various funding institutions. We are particularly happy that in Prof. Dr. Matthias Kleiner - President of the German Research Foundation until 2012 and from June onwards, President of the Leibniz Society - we have been able to attract a highly renowned leading expert on the German and European science systems as keynote speaker.

He will speak on the balance between freedom, flexibility and (planning) security, as regards junior researchers in particular.

An information day for all junior researchers will complete our program on 8th May. In the Dülfersaal during the morning, important funding organizations such as the German Research Foundation, the Volkswagen Foundation and also selected „Begabtenförderungswerke“ will introduce themselves and their funding opportunities for doctoral candidates and postdocs.

From 11.30 a.m. on, the GA building will be open for everyone interested. At the information desks of various funding organizations, you will obtain hands-on information by talking to their representatives. In a relaxed atmosphere you will be able to exchange views with those who have already received funding. This will be the great opportunity to receive valuable advice on funding opportunities together with tips on how to apply for your own career.

The information day for junior researchers also offers you the chance to meet many other GA members, to exchange ideas and to network. Join us in looking forward to two exciting days. KU

(Foto: ©MAST, fotolia.com)

The Principle of Balance in Science

In his keynote speech on the occasion of the ceremonial opening of the GA on May 7th, Prof. Matthias Kleiner will be speaking on the balance between freedom, flexibility and (planning) security, as regards junior researchers in particular. We asked him for an interview in advance, for our "Three Questions" column.

The ZEIT newspaper asked last year, "Do science, the economy and Germany really need 26,000 doctoral graduates every year?" How would you reply to that?

'Need' is a big word - especially since we as scientists are so used to filling gaps, remedying defects, answering open questions and dealing creatively and innovatively with whatever we find in the world. So, if there were no doctoral graduates, we would, in another way and under another name, educate and promote those who are constructive and critical, who inquire with curiosity, who think and explore, those who take on the phenomena of the world, can open up and explain complex issues and forge new paths. It goes without saying that these people, whom we call 'doctors', are needed – and not only in science.

In your opinion, how should optimal support for junior researchers look like?

Without going into the particularities of the different disciplines, it is - as so often in life - a question of balance when it comes to promoting junior researchers in the best way possible. Creating and maintaining a good balance between independence and supervision is certainly a decisive factor. So what is a good balance between independence and supervision?

In my personal experience, a stable and transparent framework contributes to allowing researchers to move and work freely in order for them to set the course for their own future academic path. They should perform tasks independently. Those of us who are more experienced should follow their activities with



Prof. Dr.-Ing. Matthias Kleiner

(Foto: privat)

interest and an open mind, and aid and advise them whenever necessary. Because in the early stages of our careers, did we not also meet important personalities who pointed us in the right direction and sent us on our way with the necessary knowledge? We walked on our own, however, and at our own pace; which is how it should be, I suppose.

The law regarding the limitation of contracts for scientific employees of higher education institutions and research facilities (WissZeitVG) governs fixed-term contracts in science and research at German universities: Do you consider this law to be useful or do you see a need for modification?

Particularly in science and research, conditions often change quickly and sometimes unexpectedly. In this respect, no ruling, be it legal, administrative or simply arising from habit, is likely to be perfect. You

could still discuss fixed-term contracts in the development of a collective employment agreement for academia, which addresses the particular conditions of science and research. Because it is, of course, unacceptable if a law exacerbates the situation it was originally intended to remedy. The universities, moreover, are called upon to plan more courageously and more long-term. This serves not only their own scientists, who, for their part form the backbone of the universities, but also long-term fulfilment of tasks. This includes spending a specific, high level of personnel funds on longer employment contracts, which still do not have to be permanent straight away. Because in the end, flexibility and timely avoidance of complacency belong to the genuine nature of science and research. Employment law in science, as you might already suspect, is also subjected to the principle of balance. It has to be secure and at the same time allow flexibility.

Calling all doctoral candidates!

The GA's representation of doctoral candidates needs to be kissed awake

So you want have a say, participate and contribute? - Then take part in the Graduate Academy's convention of doctoral candidates at TUD.

What is the convention of doctoral candidates?

One of the GA's central aims is to increase the visibility of TUD's doctoral candidates and to promote their identity as a group. An important instrument in achieving this is the convention of doctoral candidates, the official representation of all members of the GA who are doctoral candidates.

At present, there are an estimated 4,000 doctoral candidates at TUD. What they all have in common is that they are not organized into *one* single group at our University. As a consequence, issues such as the improvement of supervision conditions or other problems cannot be tackled collectively. And this is exactly where the convention of doctoral candidates would like to step in.

The main aim is to ensure a better network of doctoral candidates at

our University in order to identify common interests and to speak up for these.

How does participation work?

The convention of doctoral candidates operates as the representation for all members of the GA who are doctoral candidates. It is elected by them once a year and composed of up to 23 doctoral candidates. A spokesperson chosen by the convention and his/her deputy are permanent GA Board members with voting rights.

In this way, they can raise directly those concerns, wishes and proposals of the doctoral candidates which have been discussed in the convention. At the same time, they are actively involved in important decision-making processes and as such, make a decisive contribution to the future development of the GA.

So you'd like to take part?

Then contact us. You can either stand for election or already participate now in the provisional convention of doctoral candidates. At the moment, this consists of three members (see below) and is involved in organizing the election for the actual convention of doctoral candidates, and in discussing its strategic orientation.

If you are interested and committed, we would be delighted to have you join us in laying the foundation for representation of the doctoral candidates at TUD, and in bringing the convention of doctoral candidates to life by organizing the elections in autumn 2014.

Why not come to a first joint open meeting on 24th April 2014 at 4 p.m. in the GA, Mommsenstr. 7, Room 2 (ground floor)? If you are interested in coming, please send a short reply to:
phd-konventdresden@mail.de



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Introducing our Members

In this edition, we would once again like to introduce you to a GA member in more detail. This time, we have asked a representative of the group of doctoral candidates for an interview. At the moment, he is spending six months abroad for research purposes – also thanks to a GA grant.



Matthias Streller (Foto: privat)

Matthias Streller is doing his doctorate at the Chair of Didactics of Physics at TUD and at the DeltaX School Lab at the Helmholtz-Zentrum, Dresden-Rossendorf. Since January, he has been taking part in a six-month research stay at the renowned Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, thanks to a travel allowance from the GA and a grant from the DAAD.

What expectations did you have when you went to the Weizmann Institute in Israel? And have these been fulfilled?

Admittedly, my expectations were quite high. The Weizmann Institute in Rehovot is, after all, known as a location for top-level research. What has particularly impressed me is the philosophy of the Weizmann Institute, to involve science actively in society and to start promoting young scientists very early.

For this purpose, the Institute has its own department for educational research in the natural sciences, as well as an external learning center, the Davidson Institute.

How much time did you invest in preparing your stay and what challenges did you have to overcome? In your opinion, which do's and don'ts really should be observed?

All in all, I needed about a year for the preparations, but it was worth the effort. In my experience, it is best to start establishing direct contacts to the respective scientists at the location as early as possible, in order to coordinate the research project in good time and in as much detail as possible. As regards the do's and don'ts, I think the most important thing is to remind yourself again and again that, however much you love your own research, you are still a guest.

How is the cooperation with the guest institute organized? Are there important differences between German and Israeli higher education?

It is in the nature of the people in Israel to be very uncomplicated and helpful. This is also reflected in my daily work at the Institute. Problems are solved quickly and with little red tape; often all it takes is to reach for your cell phone. The international cooperation is also an integral part of everyday life. This is illustrated by the fact that of the 250 research groups at the Institute, only 100 are headed by Israelis.

What have you experienced in Israel so far, beyond science? What has surprised you and what have your most impressive experiences been to date?

Israel is impressive in the most varied of ways. Among other things, I was fascinated by visiting Jerusalem, where the old and the new, the cultures and religions co-exist so incredibly closely. For me, at least as fascinating is the Israeli mentality. The people here are so full of the joys of life. Dancing and singing in the street is simply commonplace here. CB

Last but not least:

- **Qualification Program of the GA** for the 2014 summer semester is online. The registration for all events is possible as of now via our Internet site.
- Next **application deadlines** for internal GA funding programs: 15th May and 15th June 2014
- **DAAD call** - from April onwards - don't miss: Application deadlines for Project Funding Programs for postdocs and university lecturers (www.daad.de)
- Apply now for **scholarships for doctoral students** - More information at: Aktuelle Stellen- und Stipendienausschreibungen (Current announcements for positions and scholarships) on our websites
- **Women junior researchers from the 'MINT' sector** - put your name down for the science campus of TUD and the Fraunhofer Society in August 2014 at: www.fraunhofer.de/de/jobs-karriere/karriere/Vormerkung-Wissenschaftscampus2014.html
- Searching for scholarship programs now even more accurate with free use of the **ELFI funding information data base**: <http://www.elfi.info/index.php>

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