

# Directive

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## Objectives of the Strategic Research Fund (Strategischer Forschungsfonds)<sup>1</sup>

HHU regards itself as a research-oriented university. In order to strengthen its position in the competition for research funding and to attract early career researchers or the best-qualified minds, HHU must shape for itself a differentiated research profile that gives it visibility at national and international level and distinguishes it from neighbouring universities. HHU's research profile is defined in the first instance by its research priorities, which are underpinned by research networks funded from extramural sources and which work in a medium to long-term perspective on promising and innovative research topics. Research networks are no substitute for excellent individual research, which continues to be needed as a source of innovations. As a result, HHU's research profile is characterized by a balanced mix of research networks financed from extramural sources and excellent (third-party funded) individual research.

The objective of the SFF is to sharpen HHU's research profile. As funding is limited, it must be invested in a targeted manner and in the expectation that beneficiaries use SFF funds as start-up finance to raise third-party funds.

The funds foreseen for the SFF are provided exclusively from the Rectorate's share of the programme allowance for research projects financed from external funds. The funds available are fixed by the Rectorate each year and distributed over the individual funding lines.

### 1. Funding lines

**The first funding line**, "Early Career Researchers – First Applications for Third-party Funding", helps early career researchers to submit a first application for research funding to extramural funding bodies.

**The second funding line**, "Coordination of Applications for Third-party Funded Research Networks with HHU as Coordinating Institution", makes finance available for the recruitment of coordinators for larger scale collaborative projects.

**The third funding line**, "Strategic Innovations for Research", is at the Rectorate's exclusive disposal for strategic decisions related to research.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Research Fund = Strategischer Forschungsfonds (SFF). For the purpose of better comprehension, the abbreviation SFF is used when referring to the Strategic Research Fund.

## 1.1. Early Career Researchers – First Applications for Third-party Funding

### *Funding objective:*

The purpose of the funding line is to help early career researchers to secure their own FIRST third-party funded research project (individual research or collaborative research project) and thus contribute to their early scientific independence.

### *Funding criteria:*

Eligible for funding are early career researchers who hold a doctoral degree, are in general financed through HHU's budget and who completed their doctorate no more than three years earlier (under consideration of parental or carer's leave).

In the case of applications for a research grant (excluding an application for the applicant's own post), the employment contract in place at the time must last for at least a further three years or be able to be extended accordingly from the point in time onwards when SFF funding is approved.

### *Funding duration:*

Up to a maximum of six months

### *Maximum funding:*

Up to a maximum of € 25,000

### *Funding purposes:*

Funds can be invested as required in personnel, materials or travel. Funds may **not** be used to finance doctoral researchers.

### *Funding conditions:*

- The application must demonstrate plausibly and in detail how the SFF project for which funding is requested will serve to secure an **independent** third-party project. No funds are awarded for research projects with no prospect of raising external third-party funding.
- Preliminary work for an extramural funding application has already taken place that can be completed within a period of six months to such a degree that a respective application can be submitted.
- The sole purpose of funding is to support **first applications**.

### *Evaluation criteria:*

- Very good scientific publications so far
- Innovative, independent and promising research project (distinct from the respective supervisor's research work)
- Extent of preliminary work already undertaken for the third-party funded project

### *Application procedure:*

Applications, which must not exceed 20 pages, consist of the following parts:

- Summary (not more than half a page)
  - The research problem, the objectives and the methodical approach **must** be presented in a manner which is also understandable for persons who are not experts in the field, i.e. the members of the SFF Advisory Committee.
- Current state of research and own preliminary work

- Objective and planned work programme for the future third-party funded proposal  
The innovativeness of the research objectives and the approach **must** be apparent and plausible.
- Detailed justification for the requested funds
- Curriculum vitae (CV) with list of publications

***Review procedure:***

- Applications are checked for their compliance with the funding conditions and the completeness of the required data. Incomplete applications or applications that do not meet the funding conditions are rejected.
- Applicants introduce their projects to the SFF Advisory Committee in a 10-minute, easily understandable presentation, which is followed by a 10-minute discussion with the Committee.

## **1.2. Coordination of Applications for Third-party Funded Research Networks with HHU as Coordinating Institution**

***Funding objective:***

The purpose of the funding line is to support the compilation of full proposals for third-party funded research networks (collaborative EU projects, Collaborative Research Centres, Research Training Groups and Research Units). The research networks must be coordinated by HHU applicants. Applications for preliminary research work are not eligible for funding.

***Funding duration:***

Up to a maximum of six months

***Maximum funding:***

Smaller research networks (about 8-11 sub-project leaders): Up to a maximum of € 15,000

Larger research networks: ( $\geq 12$  sub-project leaders): Up to a maximum of € 30,000

***Funding purposes:***

- Funds for coordinating applications
- Funds for printing applications (if necessary)
- Funds for on-site inspection visits

***Funding conditions:***

- For applications to funding bodies with a two-stage review procedure, pre-proposals are required which have been positively evaluated.
- For single-stage proposals, applicants must submit a convincing project summary.
- HHU is the coordinating institution and must be represented by a commensurate number of researchers (exception: EU proposals with HHU as coordinator).

***Application procedure:***

- For two-stage procedures, applications to the SFF must include the pre-proposal, the funding body's approval letter and the exact date on which the full proposal will be submitted. Applications must include a breakdown and plausible justification of the costs.
- For single-stage procedures, the project summary must include the research profile as well as the skills and abilities of all the applicants in the research network.

### 1.3. Strategic Innovations for Research

#### *Funding objective:*

This funding line allows the Rectorate to support research from a strategic perspective in a flexible and adaptive way depending on the individual case, for example:

- Innovative and interdisciplinary collaborative projects that sharpen HHU's research profile
- Top-up finance for high-level individual research, for example projects funded by the European Research Council (ERC) or the Emmy Noether Programme of the German Research Foundation
- Research infrastructures with strategic implications for HHU

#### *Application procedure:*

Before actually submitting a proposal, interested applicants should contact the Vice-President for Research and Transfer and/or the Chancellor in order to discuss the modalities. It is also necessary to include the Dean's Offices from the outset, since in most cases funding is shared between the Dean's Offices and the Rectorate.

## 2. Proposal submission and closing dates

- For applications in Funding Line 1, "Early Career Researchers", applicants should consult the Proposal Submission Guidelines.
- All application forms can be downloaded from <http://www.forschung.uni-duesseldorf.de/service-und-beratung/beratung-zu-antraegen/interne-foerderungen/strategischer-forschungsfonds.html>
- All proposals must be submitted electronically. The internet-based "Electronic Proposal System" (EPS) is at applicants' disposal for this purpose: <https://www.uni-duesseldorf.de/SFF>. Applications which are incomplete or submitted after the closing date are excluded from the review procedure and rejected on formal grounds. Details can be found in the Proposal Submission Guidelines.
- Applications can be submitted up until the 15<sup>th</sup> of April and the 15<sup>th</sup> of October (cut-off dates). Only those applications are considered to have been entered by due date which have been submitted via the "Electronic Proposal System".

## 3. Review procedure

### 3.1 General principles

All decisions on applications generally lie with the Rectorate.

### 3.2 Procedure for Funding Line 1 "Early Career Researchers – First Applications for Third-party Funding"

- In the case of Funding Line 1, the SFF Advisory Committee is involved in decisions regarding an application's eligibility for funding and the level of recommended funding.
- The Committee draws up a ranking list for the applications considered eligible for support.
- The Committee presents its funding recommendations to the Rectorate.

### 3.3 Composition and modus operandi of the SFF Advisory Committee

The SFF Advisory Committee is appointed by the Rectorate. It is composed as follows:

- Two vice-presidents nominated by the Rectorate
  - The deans of the faculties participating in the SFF (ex officio)
  - Five researchers with documented experience in the evaluation of research proposals
- The term of office of the members is two years. Re-election is possible once.
  - The Rectorate nominates one of the two vice-presidents as chairperson.
  - The SFF Advisory Committee is quorate if over half the members are present. Decisions are taken by simple majority of the members present.

## 4. Entry into force

This directive enters into force on 01.09.2018.

Issued on the basis of the Rectorate's resolution of 30.08.2018

President  
of  
Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

Professor Anja Steinbeck