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## **Guidelines on Good Employment Conditions for Early Career Researchers at the University of Cologne**

3 July 2018

### **Preamble**

As a comprehensive university strong in research, with a focus on internationality and diversity, the University of Cologne considers the education of outstanding early-career researchers its responsibility. In doing so, a main task is the implementation of good employment conditions for academic staff. To implement the *Agreement on Good Employment Conditions for University Staff* (Vertrag über gute Beschäftigungsbedingungen für das Hochschulpersonal, VGB, NRW, 2016), several concrete measures have already been taken in the form of adapting guidelines and regulations as well as strategic guidelines on career paths and academic staff development. Additionally, the University of Cologne has adopted the following guidelines. They apply as a rule. Exceptions are possible in justified cases.

#### **1. Employment preferably as academic staff**

For graduates with a Master's degree or comparable degree, employment as research fellows regulated by the *Collective Agreement for the Public Service* is generally the preferred form of employment. Employment as research assistants shall be avoided as far as possible (cf. Article 4 subsection 3 and 4 VGB).

#### **2. Appropriate employment duration for qualification**

The employment of doctoral candidates should be of an appropriate duration so that the academic qualification goal can be achieved with the adequate qualification and performance. The University of Cologne provides for an initial employment (start of doctorate) of at least two years as research fellows with the qualification goal of a doctorate according to the *Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act* (Wissenschaftszeitvertrag, WissZeitVG). If the contract is not concluded for three years from the outset, the employment shall be extended to a total of at least three years, unless two university professors assess the prospects of success of the doctoral project negatively. A negative assessment must be documented by a statement at the end of the initial employment. In the case of subjects requiring a doctoral period of more than three years in general, the follow-up contract should, if possible, be concluded for the entire remaining period of the qualification phase (cf. Article 10 subsection 4 VGB). In the case of other qualification goals, the duration of the fixed-term contract depends on the qualification period required in each case.

For employments following the completion of a doctorate which serve to qualify for a chair (Habilitation or comparable achievements), a minimum contract term of three years shall apply. As a rule, employment shall be full-time (cf. Article 9 subsection 5 VGB).

### **3. Part-time employment of at least 50 percent**

Part-time employment is only used to the necessary extent or at the request of the employee. In this context, the aim is for doctoral candidates and staff subject to the *Collective Agreement for the Public Service* to be employed in accordance with the guidelines of the German Research Foundation on regular collectively agreed working hours, but at least 50 percent (cf. Article 6 subsection 1 VGB). The University of Cologne provides women and men in science with working conditions that facilitate the combination of academic work and family life. In this context, the request for part-time employment is supported and encouraged in all instances.

### **4. Preparation of the doctorate during working hours**

Within the employment, doctoral candidates shall be assigned tasks to an appropriate extent, but at least one third of the respective working time, which provide the opportunity for independent academic work or serve the preparation of their doctorate (cf. Article 10 subsection 3 VGB).

### **5. Academic staff development by academic leaders**

Continuous staff development is an important task of every academic leader. This promotes academic staff in their qualification phase in academic discourse, in independent academic work and thinking, and advocates for reliable framework conditions and good workplace equipment. This task also includes counselling on the realistic perspectives and possibilities of employment at the university and in the scientific community (cf. Article 8 VGB). This includes regular staff development meetings as well as the facilitation of further and advanced training with regard to career prospects within and outside academia.

### **6. Preference for employees of the University of Cologne and gender equality**

Upon request, employees of the University of Cologne shall be given preferential consideration in the increase of their contractually agreed working hours and in the awarding of permanent positions when filling a corresponding vacant position or one that becomes vacant, provided they have the same suitability, performance and qualifications (cf. Article 6 subsection 2 and Article 7 subsection 4 VGB). The University of Cologne strives for gender equality at all career levels, considering the legal requirements (cf. Section 7 LGG NRW).

### **7. Family-friendly and inclusive fixed-term regulation**

The multiple burden on academic university staff with children who are employed on fixed-term contracts is to be considered through the priority application of fixed-term contracts pursuant to Section 2 subsection 1 *WissZeitVG*. The total permissible duration of fixed-term contracts shall be extended by two years per child in case of the care of children under 18 years of age. The family policy component of the *WissZeitVG* applies to both parents if both are in a qualification phase and both are in a care relationship with the child/children (cf. Section 2 subsection 1 *WissZeitVG*).

An extension of the fixed term by two years is also possible in the case of a disability pursuant to Section 2 subsection 1 of Book IX of the *Social Security Code (SGB)* or a serious chronic illness.

## **8. Extension of the employment contract in good time**

Fixed-term employment shall be extended more than three months before its termination (cf. Article 7 subsection 5 VGB). If a contract extension cannot be implemented before this period, the employee shall be advised of the provisions on early job-seeker notification pursuant to Section 38 subsection 2 SGB III.

Issued on the basis of the resolution of the Rectorate of the University of Cologne dated 3 July 2018.

Cologne, 19 July 2018

The Rector

of the University of Cologne

signed

Professor Dr Axel Freimuth