

## Funding Initiative

## Lichtenberg-Professorships

## Deadlines

[See homepage](#)

## Contact

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## VolkswagenStiftung

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## 1. What is the aim of funding?

The Volkswagen Foundation's funding initiative "Lichtenberg Professorships" combines support for individual persons with the funding of institutions. By offering outstandingly qualified (young) researchers a **tenure track option** at a German university of their choice, grantees are given the opportunity to implement new teaching concepts and carry out independent long-term research in highly innovative areas at the interface of disciplines. For their part, the hosting universities benefit from being able to enhance their strategic and personnel planning.

## 2. Who is eligible to apply?

The funding initiative is **thematically open** and aimed to an equal extent at disciplines in the humanities and social sciences as well as the natural and engineering sciences and medicine. The program is also open to researchers of all nationalities, the prerequisite being that the hosting institution is a university in Germany.

The funding initiative addresses two target groups:

- **W1** professorships as core target group:
  - As a rule the doctorate should have been obtained within the past four years
  - A change of academic environment and location is required, at the latest upon appointment to the professorship
  - Only as an exception it is possible to return (with accordant statement and evidence of an academic independence) to the university where the PhD or the "habilitation" has been received
  - Publication record of independent research following the doctorate
- **W2** professorships, preferably returnees or applicants from abroad
  - As a rule the doctorate should have been obtained within the past seven years
  - Change of academic environment within the past five years, at the latest upon appointment to the professorship

- Only as an exception it is possible to return (with accordant statement and evidence of an academic independence) to the university where the PhD or the “habilitation” has been received
- Successful long-term research experience abroad
- Research interests should not lie within the established core areas of the respective discipline

### 3. Can periods of non-academic occupation be taken into account in respect of the number of years after obtaining a doctorate?

Periods of other occupation, such as parental leave or employment in industry, may be taken into account.

### 4. How many professorships will be granted?

Up to **seven** professorships are available – depending on the evaluation results of each call.

### 5. What are the general frame conditions?

The initiative for submitting proposals can be either on the part of the institution or the person in question, but **the proposal can only be submitted by the applicant for the professorship**. Applications must be accompanied by a written statement on the part of the proposed university and respective faculty or department detailing the frame conditions and the integration of the thematic focus of the new professorship within the overall research context of the respective faculty or department, together with details of the strategic objective in respect of teaching and research and the institution’s personnel planning. In the event that at the time of submitting the application it may not be possible for the university in question to enter into a firm commitment concerning tenure track, the applicant must name two alternative universities, giving reasons for their choice, at which the professorship could be implemented should the first preference not materialize.

A prerequisite for the allocation of funds is that in any case the university enters into a firm **commitment** to progressively assume the successful professorship and its infrastructure, i.e. upon a positive evaluation. The institution must also guarantee that a regular W2 or W3 professorship will be included in the university’s budget for the period following expiry of the funding or under certain circumstances its continuation as an “endowed chair” (see note 15). The contractual agreements pertaining to tenure for the professorship of the applicant are to be concluded at the latest in connection with the evaluation.

### 6. What can be applied for?

Initial funding over a period of five years is available in an amount of **0.8 to 1.5 million euros** per professorship, in accordance with the specific require-

ments of the respective field and the individual applicant's qualifications. The Foundation can be flexible concerning the professorship's configuration and infrastructure. For example, the funds could be expended in the following way:

- W1 or W2 professorship
- 1 post-doc and 1 PhD position or 2 to 3 PhD positions. In the natural sciences it may be possible to apply for an additional position for a technical assistant. As a rule, PhD positions should entail a minimum of 50% of the regular working time. It may be possible to apply for a position with more than 50 % of the regular working time insofar as deemed necessary by the national and international labor market situation within and outside the science system.
- Recurring costs for consumables and travel expenses.
- Non-recurring costs (e.g. for equipment and literature). Under certain circumstances it may be possible to allocate extra funding for large items of equipment which are necessary for the research. It is assumed, however, that the host institution will provide the basic equipment necessary and that large items will be financed by the respective Federal State or within the context of the DFG program "*Forschungsgroßgeräte*".
- Science Communication Measures

Bearing in mind an applicant's family situation, it may be possible to grant funding even for part-time occupation, encompassing a possible extension beyond the normal expiration time of funding. In the case of W1 professorships and sufficient supporting evidence it may also be possible to grant funds to cover the costs of child day-time care (see information on "Family-related benefits").

## **7. What teaching obligations will be expected?**

In order to prevent the holders of W1 professorships having to take on a high teaching load or excessive administrative tasks during the initial funding period there should be a written agreement placing upper limits on such activities for the first three years. Teaching and administrative tasks may play a more prominent role in the following stages of funding.

In the case of W2 professorships, the usual teaching load and administrative effort is expected. However, it may be possible to decrease the time usually deemed necessary for such tasks.

## **8. How much does the hosting university have to contribute?**

The Foundation expects that from the outset the hosting university will make a substantial contribution: This should comprise a basic share from its own budget and the use of resources. In the humanities and social sciences this should include for example access to libraries, archives or computer capacity; Professorships in the natural and engineering sciences should in addition have access to equipment and technical facilities. Furthermore, precise de-

tails are to be supplied concerning the requirement for rooms and laboratories. In the case of W2 professorships the Foundation expects the host university's contribution to be around a minimum of 10 % of the funding amount.

## **9. How are applications to be submitted?**

Applications have to be submitted via the Foundation's Internet portal <https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de> where information and instructions are provided. A list of the documents that need to be included can be found in the "checklist" at the end of this information.

## **10. Which language is to be used when applying?**

**Applications for funding can only be submitted in English.** The Foundation will only process applications submitted in German under exceptional circumstances and with prior approval.

## **11. Is there a deadline?**

Respective deadlines can be found on the Foundation's homepage. As all applications are subjected to a comparative evaluation process it makes little sense to submit applications any length of time before the respective deadline.

## **12. Which steps do the selection and evaluation processes take?**

All applications submitted to the Foundation undergo a process of comparative evaluation by international experts. Following this initial evaluation, a short list is drawn up and selected applicants are invited to the Foundation to present their projects to an interdisciplinary panel of experts. The members of the panel are chosen so as to ensure an objective evaluation of both the specific subject-related issues as well as the interdisciplinary nature of the proposed project.

## **13. What are the evaluation criteria?**

- The applicant's academic qualifications and reputation
- Evidence of independent research achievement
- Innovative character and originality of the research question
- Quality of the academic environment
- Quality of the proposed teaching concept
- Applicant's interpersonal skills and leadership qualities
- Commitment of the host university with regard to taking over the professorship and its infrastructure

## 14. How long does it take before a decision is made?

As a rule it takes about eight to nine months before applicants are notified whether their application has been successful.

## 15. What are the circumstances surrounding evaluation?

At the latest by the beginning of the fifth year of funding the host university and the Volkswagen Foundation jointly initiate an evaluation process with the participation of external experts appointed by the Foundation. A positive evaluation is a prerequisite for tenure (in the event that legal requirements specify an evaluation after three years the process can be conducted internally by the host university).

A positive evaluation opens up two options:

- The Foundation can approve up to three years of **continuing degressive funding**. The form this funding takes and its extent is to be agreed between the university, the professor, and the Foundation at the time of evaluation by the latest. In every case it is expected that the university will contribute half of the continued amount of funding. Upon expiration of the agreed funding period the financing of the professorship and the ancillary costs of human and material resources funded by the Foundation up to that time will be assumed in total by the university.
- The professorship can be continued as an **endowed chair (W3)**. In this event the Foundation will contribute up to 1 million euros as foundation capital. In this case it is assumed that at the same time the university will be able to contribute at least 3 million euros of foundation capital acquired by civilian means in order that the respective professorship can be financed in its core substance by current returns on foundation capital. In every case it must be ensured that the professorship and ancillary costs of human and material resources can be sustainably financed in at least the same amount as during the funding period. Should this model be of interest, it is recommended to contact the Foundation at an early date.

In the event that during the first five years there should be any substantial changes to the circumstances under which the initial application for funding was made, e.g. during the initial five-year funding period the applicant is appointed to a professorship with tenure at his/her home university, there will as a rule subsequently be no further need for evaluation.

## 16. Is it possible to apply again if the first application is rejected?

Unfortunately that is not possible.

## 17. What else is good to know?

As experience shows it takes some time for the various university bodies to pass the resolutions necessary with regard to committing themselves to the

tenure track and its financial implications it is recommended to start with preparations at least six months before the deadline expires.

Following the decision to approve funding on the part of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, as a rule the professorship is to be taken up at the latest six months following approval of funding.

Networking is especially desirable in order to ensure conferencing among the professors and promote dialogue between grantees and the Foundation. To this end the Foundation organizes and supports regular meetings between the fellows and other person-related funding initiatives.

In addition, a diverse range of offers of further education, e.g. media training, conflict management, how to recruit staff, is organized with established partners of the Foundation. The aim is to train the communication and management skill-sets and tools needed to independently lead a research group.

#### Electronic application

Please use the application portal on the homepage of the Volkswagen Foundation in the Internet under <https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en>

Do not forget to print out the signature sheet provided there, to sign and scan it, and then upload it. You will find online instructions on how to use the portal.

## Appendix: Checklist for the application portal (see point 9)

You will need the following information and documents (pdf files):

In the application portal you will find **forms** which must be filled in with details of applicant, the proposed recipient of funds (proposed host university), project title, period of funding applied for, costs, and a legal declaration.

### Attachments (in the portal sequence):

1. Application signature sheet (please print out, sign, and then scan or sign electronically)
2. Cover letter
3. Summary of objectives and substantiation for the overall concept and reasons for choice of university; in German and English (max. one page for each, two separate pdf files)
4. Proposal (not to exceed 25 pages, 12 pt, 1.5 spacing)

*The proposal should include the following details:*

- Detailed description stating the thematic scope of the proposed professorship (substantiation of innovative aspects, also to take into account the status of international research, elucidation of methods and future perspectives pertaining to the research area to be pursued)
- An elaborated concept for proposed research (including work program and time schedule) and for teaching (details of hours involved: minimum two, maximum four hours/week per semester during the first three years for W1)
- Reasons for choice of host institution and description of the academic environment, including any existing collaborations, both at venue as

well as national and international, details of the thematic areas represented by participating scholars

- Details of the contributions to be made by the university and of structural frame conditions (e.g. workshops, archives, availability of equipment)
  - Details of support received elsewhere (projects with titles, life span, amount of funding and funding institution), a delimitation concerning the application made to the VolkswagenStiftung, where appropriate
5. Quotations (if possible just one pdf file)
  6. CVs and list of publications
    - Applicant
    - Professors of importance for embedding the professorship (one page each, if possible only one PDF file)
  7. Publications of the applicant (just one PDF file if possible)
    - in the natural and engineering sciences and medicine: up to five of the most important publications
    - in the humanities and social sciences: up to three examples of work, in the case of monographs excerpts including table of contents (not to exceed 70 pages)
  8. **(Binding) Letter of commitment from the University** (jointly agreed between the university management and the respective faculty and/or department and signed/authorized by these bodies)

**Please request the university to issue the Binding Letter in accordance with the following scheme.**

*The following information is needed (if applicable):*

- a) The strategic concept of respective faculty and department
- b) Detailed strategic objectives and personnel planning for the next five to ten years
- c) Frame conditions and integration of the thematic focus of the new professorship
- d) Details of the university's own contribution as well as the resources and rooms which will be made available
- e) Progressive assumption of costs for the professorship and its infrastructure (positions and other expenses) in the year six to eight (in case of successful evaluation) as well as total assumption of costs (included in university budget) for the W2 or W3 professorship (held by the candidate) and the infrastructure (positions and other expenses) after funding is terminated

**or**

In the event of positive evaluation, continuation of the professorship as an endowed chair, in which case the university has to bring in 3 million euros of foundation capital acquired from the civilian sector. In

this case it is assumed that the professorship and human and material resources will be sustainably financed in at least the same amount as the present funding.

The university does not have to choose between the two alternatives at the time of submitting the application. However, it is an indispensable prerequisite for funding that the university enters into a firm commitment to establish the professorship and the human and material resources on a permanent basis.

- f) **W1 professorships:** Agreement on upper time limits for teaching and administrative duties
- g) **W2 professorships:** details of the co-financing, normally amounting to at least 10 % of the budget.

Should no binding statements of the host institution (see d) to g)) be provided when submitting the proposal the applicant has to state two more institutions where the professorship could be established and give reasons for these selections. In any case, when submitting the proposal a statement of the preferred host institution regarding a) to c) has to be included.

- 9. Justification of the individual budget items in consideration of the equipment already available and in terms of the working plan