



Measures to Strengthen Academic Career Development at the University of Zurich

Adopted by the Extended Executive Board of the University on 27 April 2010

1. Current Situation

The University of Zurich is committed to offering its junior scholars excellent conditions for an academic career. In the past years, many steps have been taken toward achieving this goal; the following three examples give evidence of this:

- The doctoral level of study was reformed. PhD candidates are now generally supervised by a doctoral committee, rather than by an individual supervisor. Alongside completing a major research project, PhD candidates are also required to perform coursework.
- A catalogue of job specifications for junior academic positions was created to regulate the rights and obligations of junior and senior teaching and research associates at UZH. At least 40% of a junior academic's workload must be reserved for research. In addition, regular discussions on progress are to be held between the junior scholar and the doctoral committee.
- The University's own funding instrument for junior scholars, the *Forschungskredit*, was introduced in 2001. PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers can submit an application to receive individual funding for their research projects.

Despite these advances, there remain further steps to be taken to enhance the appeal of an academic career at UZH. Of particular concern are structural or systemic problems: often, the decision to pursue an academic career and the selection of the best candidates takes place at a late stage. For junior scholars, this means long years of financial insecurity, and it puts UZH graduates at a disadvantage in international competition or in view of a career outside the university setting. To alleviate these problems, the Executive Board of the University commissioned the creation of the working group "Committee for Academic Careers" in the autumn of 2008. The Committee is made up of staff from all UZH faculties as well as representatives from the associations for students, non-professorial academic staff and *Privatdozents*.

A plan was put forward in 2009 for consultation at the seven UZH faculties and in University governance; based on the feedback of the persons and offices responsible the plan underwent major revisions before it was adopted by the Extended Executive Board in 2010.

2. Goal

Optimization of conditions for pursuing an academic career aims to enable talented young scholars to choose a career in academia at an earlier stage in their studies, to provide them with access to an academic job (independent group leader, assistant professor), and to help them follow an efficient path to applying for a professorship. Taking the previous achievements as a basis, new measures to strengthen academic career development are situated on three different levels:

- Financial support for junior scholars;
- Personal development of junior scholars;
- Stages in an academic career.



3. Financial Support for Junior Scholars

Status quo: The University's own funding instrument for junior scholars, the *Forschungskredit*, was introduced in 2001. PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers can submit an application at the *Forschungskredit* for funding for their individual research projects. The total amount per annum spent on academic career development is 5 million Swiss francs.

Because financial support of junior scholars is a major priority at UZH, the University raised the annual amount allocated to junior academics in 2011. In addition, plans have been developed to strengthen support of postdoctoral researchers and to initiate an incentive for UZH departments to create assistant professorships. This three-pronged approach for the promotion of junior scholars covers all stages of an academic career:

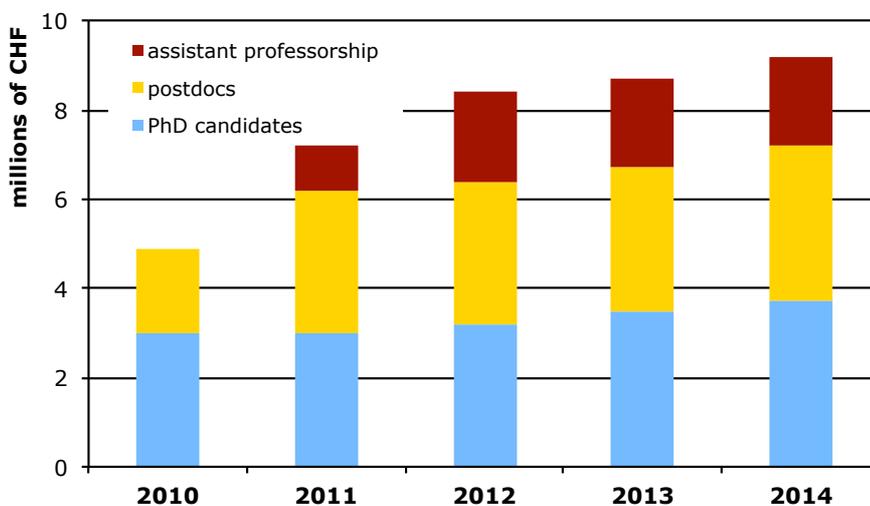
1. Funding for PhD candidates: As was previously the case, PhD candidates can apply individually to finance their research project. Upon approval of their application, they receive funding for their own salary and, if required, for a limited supply of materials.
2. Funding for postdoctoral researchers: As in the past, postdoctoral researchers can apply individually to finance their research project. Postdoctoral candidates may submit an application for funding for their own salary, the salary of a PhD candidate or further employee, and a limited supply of materials.

Measure 1: As of 2011, postdoctoral researchers can apply to the *Forschungskredit* for "protected time" – a period of time reserved for pursuing research. A qualified replacement is found to take on any teaching or clinical duties during this time.

3. Funding for assistant professorships: A position as an assistant professor enables researchers to independently teach and pursue research. It also qualifies them as full members of a faculty. As such, assistant professorships serve as ideal preparation for an application to a full professorship.

Measure 2: UZH faculties are supported in creating assistant professorships through the pool "Matching Funds".

funding through the *Forschungskredit*
annual funds (UZH)





4. Personal Development of Junior Scholars

4.1. Supervision and support

Basic principle: A major part of junior scholars' personal development is the institutionalized provision of supervision and support necessary to help young scholars embark on a successful academic career path.

Status quo: For professorial appointments at UZH, achievements in research and teaching are considered as well as efforts in academic career development.

Measure 3: For appointments to UZH chairs, achievements in the area of academic career development constitute an inherent part of the job profile for the position of professor.

Status quo: Many researchers at UZH are active in the advancement of talented scholars. To further improve supervision during doctoral study, the new regulations for obtaining the doctoral degree provide for doctoral committees rather than for a single supervisor.

Measure 4: Coaching sessions are developed for supervisors of PhD candidates.

4.2. Promotion of female junior scholars

Basic principle: Targeted promotion of female junior scholars is given particular attention.

Status quo: The UZH Gender Policy Code of Conduct was adopted in 2006. Seven principles were issued to ensure that "women and men have the same rights and the same opportunities to develop". A monitoring system for data relevant to ensuring equal opportunity provides valuable information for strategic decisions.

4.3. Mentoring for junior scholars

Status quo: UZH staff members currently participate in six mentoring projects to advance the careers of junior academics. The mentoring projects at the University of Zurich are part of the Swiss Federal Equal Opportunity Programme, and are funded in equal part by both parties. All mentoring projects are subject to a time limit.

Measure 5: Selected mentoring projects which have been incorporated in the organizational structures of the faculties are offered on a long term basis. They are open to all junior scholars.

4.4. Rights and obligations of junior appointees

Status quo: While working in a junior academic position, scholars are given an appropriate amount of time to qualify themselves on the basis of their academic achievements. They have the right to spend at least 40% of their working hours on their research, and they are eligible to receive support in improving their teaching skills.

The rights and obligations of scholars in junior academic positions (junior appointees) are outlined in a catalogue of job specifications. Junior scholars are active in research, teaching, services and in administrative tasks in accordance with the catalogue of specifications.

Measure 6: The individual faculty boards develop suitable measures to ensure adherence to the catalogue of job specifications within their faculty.

Status quo: As a general rule, junior appointees carry out teaching duties, provide services and perform administrative tasks alongside their research activities. As UZH employees, they have the right to an employment reference letter upon ending their employment at UZH. Such employment



reference letters are particularly important for persons applying for positions outside the university setting.

Measure 7: Upon ending their employment at UZH, junior appointees receive an employment reference letter from their supervisor.

4.5. Career counseling

Status quo: Junior scholars may take advantage of regular discussions on their progress with a supervisor or mentor.

Measure 8: Advice from the office Career Services is made available to junior scholars who wish to pursue a career outside the university setting.

The deans of the faculties are required to hold an annual progress meeting with assistant professors, with the results of the meeting put in writing. The deans may delegate the progress meetings to another member of the faculty staff. At present, progress meetings are not held in all faculties.

Measure 9: Progress meetings with assistant professors to discuss the status quo and career prospects are conducted in all faculties. The results of the meetings are to be put in writing and signed by the UZH Vice President responsible.

4.6. Human resources

Status quo: At the University of Zurich, junior scholars have access to a growing selection of instruments to help them develop their personal skills. The Center for University Teaching and Learning at UZH provides a variety of measures to support junior scholars, including training programs, courses, advice and practical tools to help them develop their teaching skills. Courses on acquiring transferable skills are offered by the individual faculties and by the University. Mentoring projects offer additional courses to help junior academics embark on a successful career path. In addition, all UZH employees have access to the Canton of Zurich's continuing education courses, a fact that is not widely known among junior academics.

Measure 10: Junior scholars receive a greater amount of information on the current offers in the area of personal development and continuing education.

5. Stages in an Academic Career

5.1. Introductory remarks

The terms and conditions for junior academic positions are established in the legal provisions of the University of Zurich; the provisions are the result of a lengthy process starting in the 19th century. Until a few years ago the position of “teaching and research associate” was set down in the provisions as the entry-level position for junior appointees – a rather problematic condition, as this term is no longer used in the natural sciences, where the common first junior academic position is termed “PhD candidate”. For this reason, the persons responsible at the Faculty of Science moved to introduce the employment classification “PhD candidate” as an alternative to “teaching and research associate”.

The following recommendations address the question as to whether valid provisions on structuring an academic career at UZH are up to date and effective; they moreover put forward methods to optimize the provisions where necessary and possible. The recommendations are in no way intended to introduce additional terms for structuring an academic career. From the University's standpoint, it is only permissible to formulate conditions which allow for historical peculiarities and which ensure that the diversity of scholarship remains intact.



5.2. Student assistants

Basic principle: Students receive the opportunity to familiarize themselves with scholarly methods through work in a research group or in a professorial department already during their studies.

Status quo: This is generally the case for all students working on their Master's degree. In addition, students in Master's degree programs can work during the semester as a tutor or an "assistant without a degree" in various assignments within a University chair. However, because students in Master's degree programs have a Bachelor's degree, the term "assistant without a degree" is no longer correct.

Measure 11: Students with a Bachelor's degree may be employed as "graduate student assistants" in research and teaching. This allows them to gain experience in scholarly practices and at the same time relieves PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers working as teaching/research associates of some of their duties. "Graduate student assistants" are newly registered in the corresponding salary category (valid for the Canton of Zurich). Responsibilities of student assistants are outlined in a catalogue of job specifications. Upon ending their UZH employment, student assistants receive an employment reference letter.

5.3. Junior academic positions

Basic principle: Junior academic positions serve to help junior appointees acquire professional skills in research and teaching. Junior scholars may be employed as PhD candidates, teaching/research associates, senior teaching/research associates or as assistant professors.

5.3.1. Temporary employment

Basic principle: All junior academic positions are temporary forms of employment.

Status quo: PhD candidates and teaching/research associates may be employed for a maximum of three years. Extensions of up to three years may be granted.
Senior teaching/research associates may be employed for a maximum of six years. Extensions of up to three years may be granted.
Assistant professors may be employed for a maximum of three years. Extensions of one to three years may be granted; in exceptional cases, extensions of up to six years maximally may be granted.

Measure 12: The amount of time required for junior scholars to develop the professional skills necessary for an assistant professorship is shortened with the objective of enabling them to achieve an independent academic position (independent group leader, assistant professor) at an earlier stage in their career.

PhD projects are designed to be completed in three years. The term of employment for PhD candidates is set at a maximum of three years during doctoral study. Extensions of one to one and a half years are possible, with the maximum term of employment lasting six years.

Senior teaching/research associates may be granted extensions of up to six years; in the field of medical services, the maximum extension possible is nine years.

5.3.2. Individual stages

Measure 13: Employment at the stage of postdoctoral research is structured in analogy with assistant professorships. This enables students to choose an academic career either at UZH or outside the university setting and sets selection processes in motion at the earliest possible stage.

Postdoctoral researchers and senior teaching/research associates may be employed for a maximum of three years. Extensions may be granted for up to six years; in the field of medical services, the maximum extension possible is nine years.



5.3.3. Consideration of family obligations

Status quo: The period of employment is extended by the duration of a parental leave (paid parental leave and unpaid vacation).

Measure 14: The maximum period of employment may be extended if proof of family obligations is provided.

5.4. Tenure track

Status quo: Alongside the traditional position of assistant professor, the University of Zurich offers assistant professorships with tenure track. Junior scholars with outstanding qualifications may be appointed to assistant professorships with tenure track, provided the faculty in question has a corresponding chair.

Measure 15: With the aim of winning junior scholars with excellent qualifications for the University and offering them good prospects for a future academic career, UZH faculties that do not offer assistant professorships with tenure track consider introducing the position.

5.5. Professorial qualifications

Status quo: The requirement for appointment to a professorship is a habilitation or equivalent scholarly work in research and teaching.

Measure 16: The habilitation is no longer required in all university subjects and no longer represents the main qualification for a professorship. The requirement for a professorial appointment is proven achievements in research and teaching. The UZH faculties and their institutes/departments specify the required achievements. The option of a habilitation remains open to all UZH faculties.

5.6. Academic careers in clinical work

Status quo: Alongside foundational courses, clinical subjects have great importance at the Faculty of Medicine and the Vetsuisse Faculty. Clinical work includes research and teaching, but to a large degree also clinical services. In addition, a medical specialization through the acquisition of the title "medical specialist" (*Facharzt*) is required. An academic career in a clinical subject is therefore different than a career in a foundational subject.

Measure 17: To meet the specific requirements in clinical work, the Faculty of Medicine and the Vetsuisse Faculty develop a blueprint for an academic career in clinical work ("clinical track").



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