



Proposal Mentoring at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU)

What is the overall objective?

The JGU proposal mentoring program supports early-career researchers applying for third-party funding. The goal is to assist first-time applicants in developing their research profile and scientific independence, improve the quality of their research proposals, and ultimately increase their success with various funding institutions. The program is intended for doctoral candidates in their final phase and for postdoctoral researchers. Both groups can greatly benefit from the experience and knowledge of senior professors or emeritus faculty members. In the long run, proposal mentoring can help strengthen research capabilities and increase third-party funding at JGU.

What are the program goals?

- **Support proposal writing:** Offer guidance and advice from experienced mentors throughout the entire application process.
- **Improve proposal quality:** Give honest and constructive feedback with specific suggestions for improving both the content and formal aspects of applications.
- **Support early-career researchers:** Provide insights into the expectations of funding agencies and develop strategies for approaching third-party funding.
- **Create networking opportunities:** Establish connections with key stakeholders and funding institutions.

Which content will be covered?

- **Development of research proposals:** Phrasing precise research questions, objectives, and methodologies.
- **Feedback sessions:** Critical review of and constructive feedback on draft proposals.
- **Strategic advice:** Assistance in planning an individual “third-party funding career.”
- **Insight into funding cultures:** Sharing knowledge about institutional requirements and unwritten rules in the third-party funding application process.
- **Personal development:** Conveying key competencies such as time management and scientific project management.

What are the conditions?

- **Voluntary:** Participation in the mentoring program is voluntary for both mentees and mentors.
- **Confidential:** Everything discussed will remain strictly confidential.
- **Committed:** Both parties honor scheduled meetings and agreements.
- **Flexible:** Content, schedule and duration of the mentoring are tailored to individual needs. Mentoring generally concludes with proposal submission.
- **Impartial:** Mentors do not have any personal interest in the proposed project.

What is a typical process?

- **Information:** Research Services at the Department of Research and Technology Transfer (FT1) informs early-career researchers about the mentoring program as part of its advisory services and on its website.
- **Matching:** The mentee submits a CV and a short project subscription (1 page) to FT1. FT1 suggests a suitable mentor based on the subject area of the early-career researcher. At least one mentor is available per Faculty. The matching process must take place at least three months before the proposal deadline.
- **Kick-off meeting:** Mentee and mentor meet to discuss goals, content, and the structure of their collaboration.
- **Regular exchange:** Mentee and mentor maintain continuous communication as needed during the proposal stage.
- **Conclusion:** After proposal submission, both parties reflect on their collaboration and the application process.

How are mentors selected?

Mentors are experienced professors, including emeritus members of JGU, with extensive expertise in proposal writing. Mentors and mentee can share a research field, but this is not mandatory. Mentors act independently and do not pursue their own interests in the project.

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