

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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1) What if I do not meet the eligibility criteria (e.g., academic age)?

Candidates who do not meet these requirements are advised not to apply. If a Helmholtz Center wishes to submit an application on behalf of such a candidate (due to compelling reasons for an exception from the rule), it should contact the Helmholtz Head Office to discuss the case.

Fictional examples for how the Helmholtz Head Office calculates academic age

Laura has been awarded her PhD in January 2018. Two years into her postdoc, she has given birth to her child. Her academic age at April 30, 2025, is 5 years and 9 months (18 months are subtracted). She is eligible.

Nikola has been awarded his PhD in August 2018. During his postdoc, he became the father of two children. For each child, he has been on parental leave for 6 months, in which he has focused on his care responsibilities. His academic age at April 30, 2025, is 5 years and 8 months (6+6 months are subtracted). He is eligible.

Ebru has been awarded her PhD in April 2019. In order to care for her children, she has worked part-time (25 %) over the course of one year in her postdoc phase. Her academic age at April 30, 2025, is 5 years and 3 months (1 year of 25% part-time equals 3 months of academic age). She is eligible.

Ryo has been awarded a PhD in April 2018. Due to a car accident with a lengthy recovery, Ryo was not able to do research over the course of 15 months. Ryo's academic age is 5 years and 9 months at April 30, 2025. Ryo is eligible.

2) Can international academic partners and / or private partners be involved in the HIG?

Cooperation with international partners is strongly encouraged, but they cannot receive any funding from the INF. Similarly, cooperation with private sector organizations to enhance knowledge and technology transfer is encouraged, but the latter cannot receive any funding from the INF.

3) Where should I integrate the financial plan for the five years and which financial categories must be specified?

The financial plan must be entered in the ProMeta project management platform. Explanations must be included in the application itself.

The financial plan covers the following categories:

	Total financial budget of the Helmholtz Investigator Group					
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Sum
Own contribution of the Helmholtz Center	0	0	0	0	0	0
personnel costs						0
costs of materials and supplies						0
investments						0
Own contribution of the university	0	0	0	0	0	0
personnel expenses						0
expenses for materials and supplies						0
investments						0
Total budget (Helmholtz Center and university)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Sum
Initiative and Networking Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
personnel expenses at the Helmholtz Center						0
personnel expenses at the university						0
expenses for materials and supplies at the Helmholtz Center						0
expenses for materials and supplies at the university						0
investments at the Helmholtz Center						0
investments at the university						0
Total budget of HIG	0	0	0	0	0	0

Travel expenses can be included under material costs or expenditures. No funding will be granted for overheads. Matching funds should not contain overheads.

The Helmholtz Association aims to offer doctoral researchers regular employment contracts, including social security contributions (see [doctoral guidelines](#)).

4) Can I resubmit an application?

Resubmission is not categorically excluded, but should only be considered if the final selection panel has encouraged the candidate to resubmit. If there is any uncertainty as to whether resubmission is appropriate, the Head Office should be contacted. If a Center resubmits an application, developments and changes since the last application must be described in detail (see Annex 1).

5) What impartiality standards exist for the proposed reviewers?

Impartiality issues and conflicts of interest may exist in relation to the research project, the candidate, or the current and future research institutes the candidate is associated with.

Impartiality issues / conflicts of interest may for example arise if the reviewer:

- is employed by or plays an active role at a Helmholtz Center.
- was the doctoral supervisor and/or the superior of the candidate.
- has a family relationship or close personal ties or contacts with a researcher involved in the application.
- is in close current or planned scientific cooperation with a researcher involved in the application.

- has been in a dependent employment or supervisory relationship (such as a teacher-student relationship at any level up to and including the postdoc phase) with a researcher involved in the application.
- is preparing a proposal or carrying out a project closely related to the candidate's research topic (direct scientific competition).
- has had a joint publication or has been actively engaged in cooperative research efforts with a researcher involved in the application within the last five years.
- has engaged in intensive use of the research center's facilities within the last five years.
- is currently or has been in an employment relationship with the respective Helmholtz Center or the current employer within the last five years.
- is or has been involved in an ongoing or failed appointment procedure with any of the university partners involved.
- has personal commercial interests of relevance to the application.

When you name six potential reviewers, please refrain from nominating only the most prominent scientists in your research field, as it may be difficult to obtain an assessment.

6) When can I expect an invitation to the selection interview?

If you successfully pass the written selection phase, you will be invited to present your proposal at the final selection meeting. Your host Helmholtz Center will be informed approximately four weeks in advance. Shortly thereafter, we will provide the invited candidates with a briefing.

7) How do I get notice of the funding decision?

The host Helmholtz Center will be informed of the funding decision within 2-3 days after the selection meeting. Successful applicants will be notified by the Helmholtz Centers shortly thereafter.

8) How does the evaluation work and when will the position be made permanent?

In the case of funding, a contract is drawn up between the Head Office and the Helmholtz Center, in which it is agreed that the results of an evaluation of the HIG leader must be available after four years of funding. The details of the evaluation (process, evaluation criteria, starting date of permanent contract, etc.) are determined by the Helmholtz Center or in negotiations between the candidate and the Center. It is recommended to clarify all premises as early as possible.

9) What happens if the group leader is appointed to a professorship before the end of the HIG?

If a professorship is taken up, the investigator group can continue as long as it is ensured that the group leader can continue to supervise the group. The salary of the group leader is excluded from the financial planning (to the extent that it is financed by another source) and cannot be transferred to other persons or costs.

10) What is the maximum extension of the funding period?

Normally, periods of leave or downtime accepted as a reason for extending the HIG cannot exceed one year in total. The only exceptions to this one-year maximum are additional periods of maternity and parental leave. If you take maternity and paid parental leave, an additional extension can be granted for the period of maternity leave before the birth of the child (6 weeks) and, for single parents, for the partner's parental leave (2 months). In total, the maximum extension in these cases is 15 months and 2 weeks.