



ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS AT THE LEUPHANA TRANSFORMATION LAB

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Postdoctoral Fellows have the opportunity to prepare systematically for the next stage of their academic careers during their stay of up to two years at the *Leuphana Transformation Lab*. They can gain in-depth knowledge of the distinctive features of the German academic system and research funding landscape, while receiving support in further developing their individual research profiles and securing funding for their next academic career step. The combination of integration into relevant academic communities (the *Leuphana Transformation Lab* and the *Key Subject Areas/Psychology*), individualized career advising, academic staff development opportunities, and professional grant proposal support is designed to help fellows build internationally competitive academic profiles. The program accommodates different personal circumstances and career goals and enables fellows to explore various options for their personal development.

1. Before Arrival

- Leuphana's *Welcome Center*, which is part of the *International Center*, provides support early in the process with immigration and residence matters and with all questions related to arriving in Germany and living in Lüneburg. The differences between fellowship recipient status and employee status are explained early and transparently.
- Fellows contact the leadership of the Leuphana Transformation Lab for a first introduction and connection to their cohort of fellows. They should notify the Lab leadership on their expected time of arrival.

2. Structured Onboarding (Month 1)

- Fellows get settled in the Transformations Lab including getting to know other postdocs and the Lab leadership. They will learn about workspaces and Lab events. Fellows will get acquainted with the Leuphana community and will receive guidance in connecting with different institutes across Leuphana as well as with possible academic mentor/s beyond the Lab.
- Mentorship is an informal relationship between a professor and a fellow. Unless otherwise specified, mentors meet the fellows once per term.
- The *Welcome Center* offers comprehensive support to help international researchers settle in smoothly both at the university and in the city of Lüneburg. This includes assistance with administrative procedures, such as scheduling appointments to register with the city or applying for a residence permit. In addition, the *Welcome Center* guides international researchers through the onboarding process at the



university and helps them find their way around the campus. A program of events running throughout the semester—featuring informational and networking sessions—offers the opportunity to meet other international staff members while also becoming familiar with the university's key service facilities. The program is complemented by language courses that promote the acquisition of German language skills and provide long-term support for social and professional integration.

- In an introductory meeting, Leuphana's unit *Personnel Development for Academic Staff* presents its advising, counseling, and professional development services. Fellows receive an introduction to the German academic system, career paths, and employment models. Together, they reflect on the fellows' prior experience, career goals, and development needs. They also begin discussing the preparation of an academic development plan.
- In an introductory meeting, Leuphana's unit *Research Service* explains the support it provides and the available funding opportunities, particularly options for securing funding for the fellow's own future position. They begin discussing the selection of a grant proposal format and the preparation of a timeline and action plan for developing the proposal.
- In an introductory meeting, Leuphana's unit *Cooperation Service* explains opportunities for knowledge transfer and collaboration with partners from business and society.

3. Developing an Individual Development Plan and Proposal Plan (Months 1–4)

- As part of their work in the Transformation Lab and in close consultation with the unit *Personnel Development for Academic Staff*, the fellow prepares an academic development plan consisting of specific development goals and actions. The plan may include a roadmap for qualification and professional development activities.
- In close consultation with the unit *Research Service* and/or their academic mentor/s, the fellow selects a target funding program (e.g., a DFG Research Grant with the Temporary Position for Principal Investigators module, the Emmy Noether Program, an ERC Starting Grant, or a suitable foundation program) and prepares a timeline and action plan for developing the proposal.

4. Ongoing Proposal Development (Months 5–18)

- The Transformation Lab will be the main site of proposal development. Fellows are expected to develop their understanding of transformation that will support the uniqueness and impact of their proposals through their active participation in Lab activities.
- The goal is to submit a substantial proposal within the first 12 to 18 months. Ideally, the proposal will have completed a successful review by month 24, providing an immediate next-step opportunity after the fellowship.
- Academic mentor/s advise/s the fellow on the proposal and provide/s regular feedback on its progress.



- The *Research Service* supports fellows in preparing their proposals and, where applicable, throughout the review process by providing individualized advising and a range of support formats:
 - Regular feedback on proposal drafts
 - Organization of mock reviews before submission
 - Assistance with submission requirements and formalities
 - Organization of practice interviews for the selection process, if applicable
 - Debriefing on reviewer reports and support with resubmission to an alternative funding program, if applicable

5. Ongoing Skills Development (Months 5–24)

- The fellow completes the program set out in their academic development plan, which consists of:
 - Individual counseling through the unit *Personnel Development for Academic Staff*,
 - Professional development and qualification activities (e.g., research communication, how to apply for a professorship in Germany, and interview training),
 - Conference participation,
 - and much more
- Fellows meet regularly with the unit *Personnel Development for Academic Staff* to review progress in implementing their academic development plans and adjust them as needed.
- In addition, fellows are welcome to participate in regularly scheduled Lab-organized development opportunities such as:
 - Workshops on presentation skills,
 - Creative methods workshops,
 - Creative writing workshops,
 - and much more

6. Peer Exchange and active participation in the Lab (Months 1–24)

- The Lab offers a robust peer-support network of other postdocs, external fellows, and invited guests. The directors and the academic coordinator of the *Leuphana Transformation Lab* help to promote suitable forms of peer support (e.g., an internal peer review process). Fellows are invited to utilize this network to support grant writing through:
 - participation in colloquia,
 - Self-organized writing groups,
 - Self-organized reading groups,
- Fellows also benefit from the wide range of events and opportunities for engagement offered by the *Leuphana Transformation Lab*, including:
 - “Transformation Dialogues” event series: Engaging with invited experts in transformation research,
 - Conferences and further events: Exchanging ideas and co-creating with the academic community,



- Opportunities for joint publications with Lab members and researchers from the broader project context (Key Subject Areas and Psychology),
- Participation in exclusive events with international senior research fellows to be invited
- and much more

7. Transformation Fellows Network

- A shared email distribution list and regular virtual meetings establish and strengthen a network of current and former Transformation Fellows.
- Former fellows can serve as ambassadors or mentors for new cohorts and provide access to their respective institutional networks.

8. Quality Assurance

- The directors of *Leuphana Transformation Lab* evaluate the program's success after the first two years and annually thereafter and report the results to the *Presidential Board* of Leuphana through the Vice President for Research and Academic Qualification. Potential success criteria include proposals submitted by fellows, invitations to selection interviews, funding granted, publications, growth of the academic networks, and subsequent career paths.
- The directors of *Leuphana Transformation Lab* hold individual status meetings with the fellows. Fellows provide feedback on both the support program and the *Leuphana Transformation Lab's* program. The findings are incorporated into the reports to the *Presidential Board*.