

Summary minutes

10th Round Table for the Advancement of Junior Scholars at TU Berlin, 17 December 2019

Topic: *Career development for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers*

Together with the TU-DOC Office for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Services, vice president for strategic development, junior scholars and teacher education, Professor Dr. Angela Ittel held three round tables to address topics relevant to junior scholars in the winter semester 2019/20.

The round tables are a continuation of the eight round tables that took place in the winter semester 2018/19 and the summer semester 2019 as part of the [Strategy for the Advancement of Junior Scholars at TU Berlin](#) passed by the Academic Senate in July 2018. The objective of the round tables is to open a dialog with target groups involved in the advancement of junior scholars for the discussion and development of their ideas and measures in this area.

The round tables in the winter semester 2019/20 accompanied the implementation of *the 2019/20 Action Plan for the Advancement of Junior Scholars*, which is oriented toward the Strategy for the Advancement of Junior Scholars at TU Berlin passed by the Academic Senate in July 2019. The Action Plan includes measures for the advancement of junior scholars which are to be implemented in 2019-2020.

The 10th round table on 17 December 2019 focused on:

Career development for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers

All participants contributed to an intensive discussion of the topic and their contributions are reported in the following summary:

Alternative career pathways in academic research:

- Participants inquired about options for continuing an academic research career without a professorship: in principle, a career path including a permanent position outside a professorship is possible, but the number of available positions is strictly limited, therefore it cannot be considered as a general pathway; however it is evident that there is great interest in attractive alternative career paths outside professorships.
 - It was reported that postdoctoral researchers who have successfully obtained their doctorates at TU Berlin are often employed in temporary projects and appointments at the University and, after six or more years, increasingly encounter problems of career progression; there is a wish to see the advisory services offered by the faculties, supervisors and central offices provided at an early stage to allow individuals to identify alternative career options.
 - Participants also inquired about Habilitation requirements: a general recommendation cannot be made here, as this is very subject-dependent; there is a need for the University services to provide sufficient information on potential career options as well as for sufficient information within the framework of supervision relationships and individual consultations.
 - In response to questions raised about doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers applying for their own funding: a general statement is not possible here, as this is highly dependent on the subject. A further problematic aspect is that doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers are only able to acquire their own funding to a limited extent without the support of their supervisors; the extent to which doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers can apply for their own funding and increase their autonomy in this respect was discussed openly.
- **Helpful formats for career development**

- Participants reported that workshop formats with a duration of 2-4 hours specifically addressing career development and strategies for progression are considered very helpful (examples included information events organized by the Berlin universities of applied sciences or the DAAD).
- It was further reported that participants consider an increased exchange with alumni of TU Berlin in their respective field of research to be helpful. They also expressed a desire for increased networking opportunities (including individual contact with alumni).
- Participants favored open discussions with supervisors at an early stage and without fear of negative consequences, including advice on alternative career options outside of academia following completion of a doctorates.
- It was also suggested that working with external research partners within an individual research project also provides helpful exposure to alternative career options.

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