

## Good to know

### Practical Information for Participants of HGS-HIRe



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## The Deal

### What is the HGS-HIRe deal?

The idea of HGS-HIRe is to provide structured doctoral training for all doctoral students who do research associated with GSI and FAIR. To fill this endeavor with meaning here is the deal:

Participants have the right to participate in all HGS-HIRe events as e.g. lecture weeks, power weeks, soft skills seminars, graduate days, the perspectives events and they benefit from their HGS-HIRe travel budget. In addition they can apply for the HGS-HIRe abroad program.

In return, participants agree

- to participate at minimum in one HGS-HIRe Scientific training event (lecture week or power week) per year of participantship
- to participate in one HGS-HIRe soft skills event per year of participantship
- to participate in the annual HGS-HIRe Graduate Day
- to hold a HGS-HIRe PhD committee meeting every six months

## HGS-HIRe Events

### How do I register for an event?

The HGS-HIRe events are usually announced by email and in our regular newsletters, you can browse the HGS-HIRe calendar of events on the HGS-HIRe web page or look for upcoming events on the front page of our website. If you are interested to join an event simply send an email to [info@hgs-hire.de](mailto:info@hgs-hire.de). If a slot is available the HGS-HIRe team will confirm your registration and will contact you about further details of the event.

### What if I cannot attend an event but I registered?

HGS-HIRe events do cost money. To guarantee a high standard in organization and education quality the Helmholtz Association together with GSI and the partner universities are spending quite some tax payers money to pay for the HGS-HIRe program. We are obliged to devote these resources of the Graduate School responsibly.

We know that most of the HGS-HIRe participants understand this very well and are very professional when it comes to registration and attendance. With more than 300 participants in HGS-HIRe we had to learn however that we need a system to avoid unnecessary costs. We prefer to rather be able to spend more money for the participants who actively participate than to pay for people who do not show up at the events.

But plans and commitments may change or people get sick. We therefore came up with the following system:

If you registered for an HGS-HIRe event and cancel more than 10 days before the event, costs are on us.

If you cancel within the 10 days before an HGS-HIRe event you previously registered for, or do not cancel at all, but do not show up, we will deduct your fraction of the total cost of the event from your personal travel budget.

In case of sickness there is no cost deduction of course, you need to hand in a doctor's attestation in this case.

More information can be found at the HGS-HIRe web page under "Top 10 Questions on the HGS-HIRe Program" in the FAQ section.

## **Participantship**

### **When does my participantship start?**

PhD Committee meeting dates and travel budgets are bound to the start of participantship in HGS-HIRe. The participantship starts on the day the *acceptance and welcome email* is sent by HGS-HIRe. Please note that usually this date is not the date your doctoral funding starts. Many people confuse the two dates and look up their starting date in the working contract. As participantship in HGS-HIRe is independent on your source of funding the two dates usually are different.

### **When does my participantship end?**

HGS-HIRe participantship regularly ends with the day of your thesis defense. Please let us know about the date once you know so we can stop bothering you with PhD committee reminders, etc..

After your defense please send us a copy of your thesis and let us know that you indeed graduated by sending us a copy of your doctoral certificate.

Afterwards we issue your HGS-HIRe participation certificate including a List of training events you participated in.

### **Is there life in HGS-HIRe after graduation?**

We are establishing an HGS-HIRe alumni network to provide information and contact opportunities for HGS-HIRe alumni and would therefore like to stay in touch with you even after graduation.

Alumni networks are very valuable on various levels, being it for career opportunities, professional networks as well as more personal issues. Nostalgia usually only sets in after a decent time of convalescence but staying in touch is certainly a good idea. We regularly invite alumni to the HGS-HIRe Graduate Days, maybe you would like to stay on the jobs-email list, would like to be engaged as lecturer or in the perspectives series – or maybe you are looking for a job or have something to offer and this way you know where to start the search.

## **HGS-HIRe Self-Service Center**

### **What is the Self-Service Center?**

The Self-Service Center is an electronic platform on the HGS-HIRe website where you can hand in selected HGS-HIRe documents online. This way we save time in processing your requests by avoiding sending paper documents back and forth and we can respond much faster.

Currently you can file travel reimbursement requests and a large part of the data sheets we need at the start of your participantship to get all necessary personal, academic, legal and potentially scholarship information into our system to be able to accept you as a participant and to provide you with suitable offers and information.

All personal data are stored and used by HGS-HIRe in consideration of the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

### **How do I use the Self-Service Center?**

At first you need to login to the Internal Area for participants of HGS-HIRe:

<https://hgs-hire.de/internal/part/index.shtml>

The necessary login information for this internal area is sent to all new participants by email shortly after acceptance as a new participant.

Once you continue to the Self-Service Center you can find various documents available for online filing. If you are ready to submit any of these forms you need to sign this document by name and signature-key at the very end of the document. The necessary combination of name and signature-key is mailed to you as well, shortly after your start in HGS-HIRe. We strongly recommend to keep this email for further use.

## **PhD Committees**

### **What is a HGS-HIRe PhD Committee and how does it work?**

A HGS-HIRe PhD-committee consists of

- the participant
- the official supervisor at the university
- a second, external HGS-HIRe-supervisor  
(not necessarily the second referee for the thesis)
- a senior mentor

The external supervisors should not come from the immediate vicinity of the working group of the official supervisor, i.e. not the same institute or subgroup at GSI or your university. To pay tribute to the interdisciplinary character of the

school we encourage the choice of an external supervisor with experimental background for theorists and vice versa. The external supervisor does not necessarily need to be a member of HGS-HIRe, he/she needs to hold a PhD degree at least. If the participant receives doctoral funding from GP-HIR/GSI either the official supervisor or the external (HGS-HIRe-)supervisor needs to have an affiliation with GSI.

The senior mentor should be a knowledgeable expert in the field who can support the participant in questions related to the current thesis, future perspectives and career planning if advice is requested. It can be a senior scientist or an experienced postdoc. The mentor does not necessarily need to participate in every meeting of the PhD committee though as an official member he/she may choose to attend if he/she deems his/her presence helpful or necessary. Participants and mentors should be in contact on a regular basis. The mentor does not necessarily need to be a member of HGS-HIRe.

The HGS-HIRe PhD committee meets every six months and the members of the committee must be approved by HGS-HIRe once at the beginning. Please indicate the proposal for the HGS-HIRe PhD committee members on data sheet V that is part of the HGS-HIRe Starter Pack. The forms of the starter pack can be obtained and electronically filed at the HGS-HIRe web page via the Self-Service Center (→ Internal Area for Participants → Starter Pack Forms). If necessary more information can be provided at the bi-monthly HGS-HIRe info session. You will receive an email from HGS-HIRe once the PhD committee is approved.

The first meeting should be held within the first two months of the thesis project. The committee discusses the current status of the project, mid- and long-term plans and expectations, both from the official supervisor as well as the participant. At the end of the meeting the current status is summarized on a [standard form](#) (→ Organisation → Forms) and a time plan is set up for the coming six months.

The protocol has to be submitted to HGS-HIRe, preferably the original by post or a scan by email. In the next meeting - after six months - this protocol is used as input for discussion to see if the working plan was met or to discuss why and how it could not be realized and what this means for the next steps in the thesis project.

It should be emphasized that the purpose of the meeting is not simply a report by the participant to the supervisors but a critical assessment by all parties involved to help the participant to prepare a better thesis in an adequate time frame.

It is the initial task of the participant to arrange for possible external (HGS-HIRe-)supervisors and mentors. This should be done in close contact with the official supervisor.

Though HGS-HIRe will remind the participants about the due date for the next meeting of the PhD committee it is under the responsibility of the participant to schedule the meeting self organized. HGS-HIRe allows for a grace period of plus/minus one month around the due date of the meeting.

### **What else do I need to know about HGS-HIRe PhD Committees?**

If you are searching for an external supervisor keep in mind that you actually have to meet. Several people made good experience with Skype or other communication tools. External supervisors working at foreign institutions are in principle possible but in practice it is quite difficult to make appointments. Some people are confused with the term that the external supervisor should 'not come from the immediate vicinity of the working group'. This does not mean, of course, that the external supervisor should come from an unrelated field. The meetings are only productive when the external supervisor can contribute, so he/she should be familiar with your science. The idea is to bring in something extra. Some point of view different from what you already get by talking to your working group members. If the external supervisor is too close to your working group than his/her opinion is heavily biased and potential problems in the thesis project will remain undiscovered.

External (HGS-HIRe-)supervisors and mentors are not reimbursed for this service by HGS-HIRe.

## **Travel Budget**

### **What is the HGS-HIRe travel budget?**

Each participant in HGS-HIRe has his/her own travel budget to participate in conferences or workshops. The participant decides how the budget should be used and applies for his/her travel money via the HGS-HIRe Self-Service Center. The supervisor will be automatically notified of the application and has to approve the use of the travel budget. We therefore strongly suggest to discuss the travel plans with the supervisor in advance. The travel budget must be used to enhance the proficiency of the participant. It should allow the participant to go to scientific conferences or workshops he/she could not attend otherwise. It cannot be used to cover travel expenses for data taking shifts or collaboration meetings, as an example.

### **When can I apply for the travel budget?**

One can only apply for the annual travel budget for conferences and workshops if one participates actively in the HGS-HIRe program. Specifically one can apply for the travel budget if:

- 1) In the past year of participation two PhD committee meetings have been held and both protocols are filed with HGS-HIRe. (does not apply in first year of participation)

- 2) A PhD committee meeting was held in the past 6 months at date of travel
- 3) In the past year of participantship one has participated in one HGS-HIRe soft skills event (does not apply in first year of participantship)
- 4) One has participated in a HGS-HIRe soft skills event in the past twelve months at date of travel if a course was available
- 5) All data sheets have been received by HGS-HIRe and all documentation is complete

**Example:** For participant X the first year of participantship in HGS-HIRe ends July 1, 2018 . By July 1, 2018 the participant did not participate in a HGS-HIRe soft skills event and only held one PhD committee meeting in the past year. He/she will not receive any HGS-HIRe travel budget for his/her second year. If in the second year all five conditions are fulfilled, he/she can apply for HGS-HIRe travel budget in the third year again.

### How can I apply for my travel budget?

Making use of the travel budget is a two-step process. Before the trip you have to file a travel reimbursement request, after the trip you have to file a travel expense report. Both forms can be found in the HGS-HIRe Self-Service Center.

Here is how the process works:

#### Before the trip

- Fill in the travel reimbursement request form online, which can be found in the Self-Service Center (→ Internal Area for Participants → Travel Reimbursements → Travel Reimbursement Requests).
- If desired, an advance payment is possible up to 80% of the estimated costs. Please indicate on the form that you ask for an advance and include a cost estimate.
- Once you submitted your request your supervisor is automatically notified via email. If he/she has concerns regarding the travel request he/she has to send an email to HGS-HIRe. Otherwise the request is approved by your supervisor.
- Once your request is approved by HGS-HIRe you will receive a confirmation via email. You need this confirmation before the trip in order to be reimbursed afterwards.
- Submit the request early enough. A minimum of two weeks before the trip is strongly recommended.



## After the trip

- The *travel expense report* form can be found in the Self-Service Center (→ Internal Area for Participants → Travel Reimbursements → Travel Expense Reports). Please fill in the form electronically and send us a printed version with your signature.
- Send original receipts (no copies!) including boarding passes, stamped train tickets and a confirmation of your participation in the event to Susanne Steiner (contact information see next chapter).
- The report has to be filed within two months after the trip.
- Please do not staple the receipts together, but stick them on a A4 paper sheet.
- Always specify the starting/ending date and time (!) of the trip. This is mandatory for calculation of the daily allowance (full day, part day, etc.).
- Specify the number of meals included in the hotel bill, conference fee, etc. All meals without additional costs need to be listed.
- The HGS-HIRe daily allowance for Germany is 24 Euros per full day.
- The HGS-HIRe daily allowance for travel abroad is the maximum tax-free amount. The rates are set by the German Government. To look up current rates you can search for “Pauschbeträge für Verpflegungsmehraufwendungen” on the web.
- A billing report will be prepared by HGS-HIRe and send to you by email.
- Confirm your acceptance of the billing report by email to HGS-HIRe and we can transfer your reimbursement to your bank account.

## Can I extend my trip for private purposes?

You are allowed to add a private stay to your travel plans if the private stay is at least one day shorter than the conference or workshop, i.e. the official travel.

**Example:** If the conference lasts 7 days plus 1 day for travel to and one day for travel back from the conference, i.e. 9 days in total, you are allowed to stay a maximum of 8 days more for private purposes. The reasoning is that the business part of the trip is then longer than the private part. Naturally, all accommodation costs or other related costs during the private part are not paid by HGS-HIRe, neither is the daily allowance.

## Whom should I contact?

For information on your travel budget, travel reimbursement requests and confirmations please write an email to [info@hgs-hire.de](mailto:info@hgs-hire.de) .

If you have finished your travel expense report, please send it, along with all original travel documents to:

Susanne Steiner  
HGS-HIRE c/o FIAS  
Ruth-Moufang-Str. 1  
60438 Frankfurt/Main  
Germany

## How much money do I have in my travel budget?

The general HGS-HIRE travel budget rate is set by the HGS-HIRE Executive Council for all participants. It cannot be modified individually. Travel budget not used until the end of the year of participantship is void. The current (by July 1, 2018) personal travel budget is 1000 Euro per year of participantship. Modifications in the HGS-HIRE travel budget rate only get into effect with the start of a new year of participantship. The travel budget is only available within the first 3 years of participantship.

**Example:** Participant Mr. X started as a new participant February 1, 2017. His first year of participantship is Feb 1, 2017 - Jan 31, 2018. The general HGS-HIRE travel budget on February 1, 2017 was 1000 Euro per participant. Mr. X can use up to 1000 Euro from his HGS-HIRE travel budget until January 31, 2018. If his trips are more expensive he has to find additional sources for funding. If he spends less the remainder of the travel budget is void.

On February 1, 2018 the second year of participantship starts for Mister X. In the meantime the HGS-HIRE Executive Council has decreased the general HGS-HIRE travel budget to 800 Euro per participant (only in this example). Mister X can therefore now spend 800 Euro for the coming year.

## Can I save my travel money for future use?

As mentioned before it is not possible to save unused travel money for future use. However, we introduced a grace period for cases where the conference/workshop is very close to the beginning of a new year of participantship. If the first day of the conference/workshop is within 2 months of your new year of participantship, you can still use the remaining travel budget from the previous year. However, it is important to let us know beforehand, i.e. before the end of the current year of participantship that you plan to use your old year's budget.

**Example:** Participant Ms. Y started as a new participant March 25, 2017. Her first year of participantship runs from March 25, 2017 - March 24, 2018. If she wants to attend a conference between March 25, 2018 and May 24, 2018, she

still can use the old year's travel budget. If the conference starts May 25, 2018 she has to use the new year's travel budget.

## **Doctoral Funding**

### **Does HGS-HIRe grant any working contracts or scholarships for doctoral students?**

The very simple answer is: No, HGS-HIRe does not grant any doctoral funding. We do however help with the organization of doctoral funding from HIC for FAIR and the cooperation contracts between GSI and the partner universities. The idea is that we try to work behind the scenes to make life easier for you if you receive funding from any of these sources. You only have one central point of contact for all your questions concerning doctoral funding, that is HGS-HIRe. No need to run around and try to identify the right person to ask, no need to worry about complicated funding systems and different rules and regulations. That is all done for you by the HGS-HIRe team.

### **What do I need to know about the procedures for doctoral funding?**

After negotiations with our partner programs providing the doctoral funding, we have achieved the following benefits for all participants in HGS-HIRe:

- All partner programs of HGS-HIRe providing doctoral funding agree upon common rules to grant funding. Current information about funding rates and conditions can be found at the HGS-HIRe website.
- Scholarship holders with one or more children receive a child supplement (see <http://hgs-hire.de/application/info/rates.shtml> for current rates). HGS-HIRe arranges for the payment of the child supplement as soon as the scholarship holder notifies HGS-HIRe of the child birth and handed in a copy of the birth certificate.
- The scholarship contracts of mothers and fathers can get extended, if requested, for up to 12 month on top of the usual scholarship term of three years. This extension is, however, subject to the general agreement of funding by the corresponding scholarship program.

There are a few things to keep in mind concerning your doctoral funding.

We usually try to keep track and to send you and your supervisor reminders or emails in time but it does not hurt if you watch out yourself for the dates when your current contract expires, as an example. Mistakes do happen and you should not assume that everything is in order if you do not get any news.

If your current contract ends we recommend to talk to your supervisor and make him aware two months before the end of the contract. Maybe you can even drop us a reminder email as well. Your supervisor has to initiate the new

contract with HGS-HIRe and the funding source. This usually needs some time.

If you graduate before the end of your contract the contract terminates with the end of the month you graduate in. That's why it is important to let us know once you graduate by oral examination (defense of your doctoral thesis). If you receive overpayment because you forgot to inform us about your graduation you have to pay back the money. Legally this is a contract fraud so let's try to avoid any unpleasant situation for everybody involved.

### **How much vacation do I have when I have a scholarship?**

If you are recipient of a scholarship from one of our partner programs, e.g. GSI/GP-HIR or HIC for FAIR you don't have any vacation. That is because a scholarship contract is not a legal working contract. That does not mean however that you need to stay in office all year long. Talk to your supervisor and find an appropriate time to take a break. It should fit with the work planning in your group and your thesis project, both, in length and time. You don't need to notify HGS-HIRe when you go on vacation. Picture postcards are welcome, though...

More information can be found at the HGS-HIRe web page under "Top 10 Questions on Funding" in the FAQ section.

## **Organization**

### **What else do I need to know?**

If you are new to HGS-HIRe, you need to fill in the data sheets from the HGS-HIRe Starter Pack which can be found in the Self-Service Center (→ Internal Area for Participants → Starter Pack Forms). All personal data are stored and used by HGS-HIRe in consideration of the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

We need this information within the first six weeks of your participantship. Among others the information is used for various reporting lists to funding agencies and the organisation of our program. Please help us to get your name and information in the system in time so we can avoid unnecessary trouble.

The same is true for your PhD committee. We need the proposal within the first six weeks of your participantship. We will approve the committee by email to you if it is adequately following the HGS-HIRe rules.

If you get married or welcome an offspring to your family we need to know as this is usually connected with funding increases. Please let us know immediately in order not to delay the payment. If we receive information too late it is impossible to pay the supplement backdated.

If you have any modification in your health insurance we need to know immediately. Please take this very seriously.

If you have any questions regarding HGS-HIRe, it is a good idea to join the bi-monthly HGS-HIRe Info Sessions. They are announced via email and on the website and give you all the relevant information. Furthermore these sessions are the perfect occasion to ask organisational questions. If you are new to HGS-HIRe it is highly recommended to join an Info Session within your first couple of months as a new participant.