

## **Written Commentary**

06.11.2020 | President's Office

### **1. Employment and working conditions of assistants at the University of Basel**

Employment and working conditions are essentially the same for assistants with a master's degree or doctorate as for project assistants. These conditions are based on the provisions of the Regulation for Academic Personnel at the University of Basel (*Ordnung für das Wissenschaftliche Personal an der Universität Basel*, OWP). The main difference is the duration of employment, which depends on the assistant's function. In accordance with the OWP, a position for an assistant with a master's degree is limited to one year with the option to extend by three years; a position for an assistant with a doctorate is limited to two years with the option to extend twice by two years, if not pursuing a Habilitation (postdoctoral qualification), or by four years if pursuing a Habilitation. Until the OWP was revised in December 2019, project assistant positions were limited to the duration of externally funded research projects. As of 1 January 2020, they are limited to the duration specified in the doctoral/postdoctoral agreement.

By adapting the OWP and supplementing existing doctoral agreements (among others) to incorporate details of the funding plan and duration of employment and by introducing a new postdoctoral agreement, the University of Basel has increased transparency and commitment for both doctoral students/postdocs and supervisors by ensuring that mutual expectations are aligned and set out in writing. On 1 January 2020, a transparent, university-wide process was implemented for employing and supervising doctoral students/postdocs that regulates individual steps to ensure standardized conditions and high-quality supervision.

### **2. Extending employment in justified cases**

In justified cases, it is possible to extend employment by a maximum of one year beyond the maximum duration of four years for doctoral students and six years for postdocs (OWP, Section 23). By providing this option, the University of Basel enables faculties to be flexible in their response to special circumstances. When the OWP was revised, the wording was refined to make it clear that a doctoral/postdoc position can be extended to accommodate family responsibilities in particular.

Wording since 1 January 2020 (OWP Section 23, clauses 1 and 2): "If it is absolutely necessary for academic training, and in particular in the case of family responsibilities, the position may be extended for a maximum of one year in justified cases."

The process of extending employment beyond the maximum duration is clearly regulated. The faculties must submit a written explanation to the Human Resources Office along with the personnel request. A meeting is held between the doctoral student/postdoc and supervisor before this point;

the contents of the meeting are recorded in writing in the doctoral/postdoctoral agreement and form the basis for the process that follows.

### **3. Extending employment in the event of parental leave or military/civilian service**

The duration of employment is extended by the amount of time required to fulfill family responsibilities or military/civilian service. In the case of project assistant positions, the funding situation must be clarified beforehand. The extension request is to be submitted to the Human Resources Office. All important information relating to parenthood is also provided in the “Parenthood: information for employees and supervisors” brochure available from [Family Services](#), section of the Diversity Office. Also worth mentioning are the University of Basel’s “[get on track](#)” funding to reduce the workload of doctoral students with children, and the “[stay on track](#)” funding for highly qualified postdocs in the first phase of motherhood. The local HR teams will be happy to answer any questions on the process of extending employment terms ([www.unibas.ch/dezhr](http://www.unibas.ch/dezhr)).

### **4. Further extension of employment**

Doctoral and postdoc positions lead to qualifications. To enjoy good international career prospects, it is important that early career researchers move onto the next stage of their careers within an appropriate timeframe. The regulations on maximum employment terms for doctoral students/postdocs at the University of Basel are aligned with national and international common practice and should be maintained. In exceptional cases, the faculties have the option to continue employing assistants as research associates once they reach the maximum duration of employment.