

# DOING TRANSITIONS DOING TRANSITIONS DOING TRANSITIONS

## ‘Doing Transitions’

### The Constitution of Life-Course Transitions

German Research Foundation (DFG) Research Training Group 2105  
Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main and Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen

#### Training Programme

Spokespeople:

Prof. Dr. Andreas Walther (Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main)

Prof. Dr. Barbara Stauber (Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen)

Funding Period: 01.07.2021 - 31.12.2025

[www.doingtransitions.org](http://www.doingtransitions.org)

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN



GOETHE  
UNIVERSITÄT  
FRANKFURT AM MAIN



## Table of Contents

1. Training concept.....	2
1.1. Potential occupational fields for graduates .....	2
1.2. Study Programme .....	3
1.3. Communication and knowledge management across sites .....	10
1.4. Guest and Mercator Fellows.....	11
1.5. Postdoc integration.....	12
1.6. Research students .....	13
1.7. International Fellows .....	13
1.8. Alumni involvement and transition between cohorts .....	14
2. Supervision and career development, equal opportunities, organization and quality management .....	14
2.1. Call for applications and selection procedures.....	14
2.2. Support concept and career development .....	15
2.3. Equal opportunities in academia.....	17
2.4. Organisation.....	19
2.5. Quality management .....	20
3. The Research Training Group's Setting.....	20
3.1. Academic Priorities of the Participating Universities .....	21
3.2. Interuniversity cooperation .....	23
3.3. Non-university cooperations .....	24
3.4. Support from the involved universities .....	24
3.5. Distinction from Collaborative Research Centers/to a preceding Research Training Group.....	25

## 1. Training concept

The training and supervision concept for the Research Training Group's Early Career Researchers (ECR) is based on the 'Doing Transitions' research programme and its objectives. The starting point is the continuation and further development of a sustainable, innovative, internationally visible and transdisciplinary research and training platform for the reflexive transition research projects (cf. Walther et al. 2020). The training concept takes 'Doing Transitions' expanded practice- and difference-inspired theoretical perspective into consideration and includes the dimensions of interpersonality, temporality and materialities in all areas of competence.

The concept takes up key aspects from the first funding phase but it has also been modified. While the basic distribution of elective and compulsory elements (see Fig. 2) as well as the corresponding balance between targeted and guided training across the entire programme, access to tailored offers for the completion of the individual projects as well as the space and time for individual styles of work have proven successful, necessary changes were also identified in extensive partnership with and the co-determination of the previous cohort and the help of internal and external evaluations (see appendix). These changes related to the proportion of compulsory courses in the first two years of the programme and to the early definition of supervision tandems. The work and results report (p. 11ff.) describes the changes that were made in more detail. These changes have already been enacted in the second cohort's training programme.

The training concept for the second cohort is also based on an interdisciplinary approach and a constant and constructive dialogue between the participating disciplines of education, sociology and psychology. In cross-site events, the fellows will receive central insights from all participating disciplines and can further develop them. To this end, the group of applicants has been expanded in terms of discipline and themes, and the international environment has been strengthened and the international network expanded through the potential inclusion of Mercator Fellows. Accordingly, the training concept contributes to the research training group's international appeal and promotes the development of interdisciplinary cooperation. At the individual fellow level, the focus is on developing their disciplinary profile and the realisation of their dissertation and postdoctoral research projects. The training environment provides fellows with the opportunity to position themselves in the field of transitional research as well as career planning in addition to support for their own individual research projects. Career planning includes consideration of both potential university and non-university career trajectories.<sup>1</sup> Projects are selected according to criteria based directly on the Research Training Group's overarching goals.

The training and supervision programme is imbedded at both sites and supports exchange and collaboration between them. A steering committee coordinates and integrates the offerings across both sites (see 5.4.) and responds flexibly to the needs of the individual research projects. Informal exchange is promoted and cultivated at all levels to ensure opportunities for collegial networking, social and cultural understanding and intellectual profile development.

### 1.1. Potential occupational fields for graduates

The Research Training Group's research programme elaborates on how transitions are gaining relevance in various academic disciplines, research and social fields as well as in policy and practice. Corresponding to this development is a growing labor market in the fields of science, politics/administration and educational or psychosocial practice. The complexity of transitions and the associated contradictions and inconsistencies in the execution of transitions

---

<sup>1</sup>Like those outlined in the original institutional proposal, the application for an extension of funding is based on the following questions: How to get the best students for the programme? How to keep them in the programme? What will they get? How to bring them on track after the programme? We thank our 'critical friend' Rick Settersten (Oregon State University) for this formulation.

require that researchers as well as other experts and professionals reflect on how transitions are produced, to think of them as phenomena across the lifespan, to recognize connections between the phases of life, to assess consequences and—also interdisciplinarily—to design adequate measures. In this way, the Research Training Group fellows will be prepared for a wide range of academic activities both at universities and education and social science institutions as well as in associations and the administration of education and social sectors. The increasing importance of life course and transition theory approaches is evident in the fields of education research, childhood and youth research, adult education and ageing research. In different fields of education, health and social work—e.g., daycare centers, schools, school- and work-related youth social work, educational support, adult and further education, employment administration and labor market policy, as well as care and work for the elderly—there is an increasing demand to conceptualize transition-related services from a life course perspective and to organize them in cooperation with other actors. Relationality thus becomes the basis of professional everyday practice (cf. <https://relapp.org/>).

A challenge for the design of the training programme and career advancement is that the outlined developments are not necessarily reflected in specific fields, job titles and job descriptions. By regularly reviewing and commenting on current job postings, the fellows will be trained to read and make relevant connections between their skills and employers' needs.

## 1.2. Study Programme

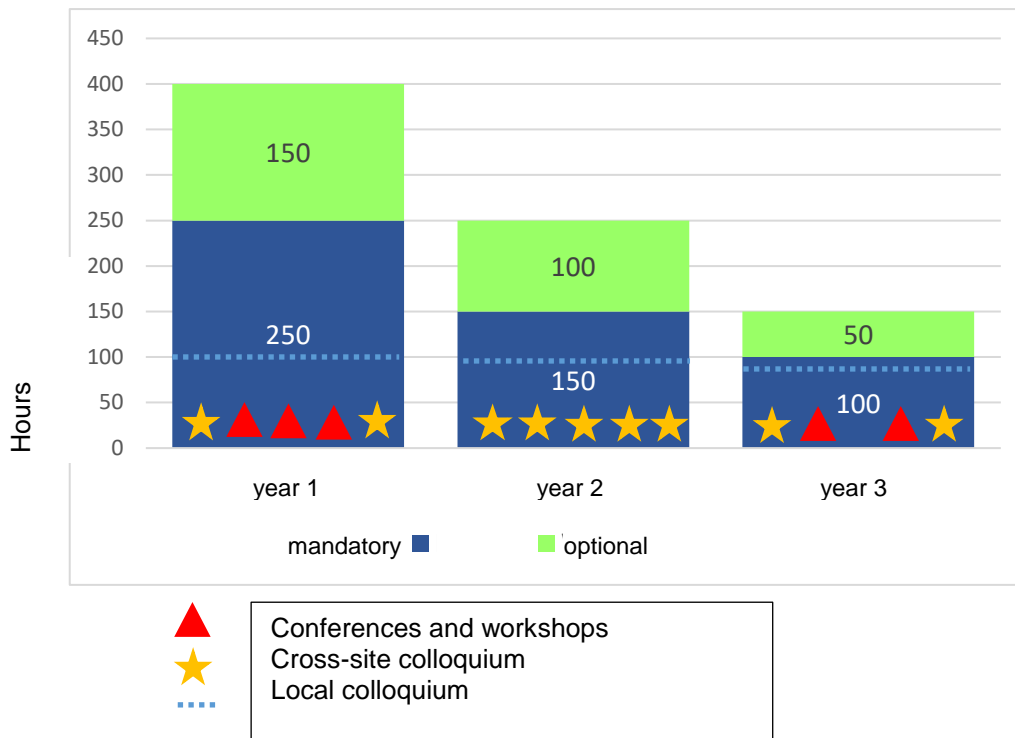
The study programme accompanies the doctoral and postdoctoral phase over a period of three years with offers that are coordinated in terms of content and organization and primarily support the fellows in completing their research projects but also offers opportunities for the acquisition of additional qualifications. It consists of courses on theory, the state of research, methodology and methods and provides opportunities for fellows to discuss their individual projects in various constellations. Additionally, the fellows are encouraged to participate in external offers (e.g., attend conferences and methodological workshops) or to organize their own events. The programme is structured around a kick-off event and five areas of competence: state of research and theoretical foundations, methods and methodology, reflection and supervision, internationalisation, networking and securing results, and key academic competencies.

Many of the course offerings are cross-locational and will be held as block courses. Along with organisational reasons, this structure facilitates the development of guiding questions and coherence in the research training group. Moreover, such cross-site events have been shown to strengthen informal exchange and social engagement as well as networking and cohesion in the Research Training Group. Compared to the application for the establishment of Doing Transitions, the study programme's time demands, which decrease over time from the first to the third year has proven successful, was again slightly reduced<sup>2</sup> in order to provide for additional time for the fellows' own projects. Electives can be chosen based on their relevance for the respective doctoral project, which fellows will regularly discuss with their supervisor (see Figure 3, Tables 2 and 3 as well as 5.2).

---

<sup>2</sup> This was also recommended in the expert reports and was the result of a review board vote.

Figure 3: Distribution of compulsory and elective training programme (including preparation)



The programme’s design can be outlined as follows (using the third cohort as an example): In the *first year*, the fellows acquire the theoretical and methodological foundations as well as the competences necessary to complete their own research projects. In the *second year*, the focus is on the discussion of conceptual and research-related questions. In the *third year*, the fellows’ completion of their own research projects will be flanked overarching theoretical discussions that focus in particular on the dimensions of relationality of transitions. This will help to ensure that the final research projects are theoretically embedded in Doing Transitions’ theoretical framework. This phase will be framed by a workshop as well as an international conference during which the fellows will present and discuss their results.

In addition to regular colloquia at the sites and the fellows’ self-organised workshops and meetings, five cross-site events (mainly in the form of conferences and workshops) are planned for the first year and five cross-site colloquia are planned for the second year and two for the third year. This will be followed by a workshop and one (final) conferences (potentially at the beginning of the following year). The participating professors, fellows, associates as well as research students will plan and participate in all events, which will also be used for content- and methodology-related exchange as well as for tandem supervisory discussions.

**Table 3: Overview of the training programme’s compulsory requirements (based on the first cohort’s experience, 2017-2019)**

Targeted Competences	Duration	Format	Participating faculty	Semester									
				1	2	3	4	5	6				
<b>Kick off</b>													
Team familiarisation, overview of projects, development of the working structure, methodological needs assessment	3 days	Kick-off-Workshop	All applicants										
<b>Competence area 1: State of research and theoretical foundations</b>													
Status of transition and life-course research	3 days	Conference	All applicants as well as guest researchers										
Theoretical workshop: Doing Transitions I: The Relationality of Transitions: Relationships, temporality, and materiality.	4 days	Workshop	All applicants as well as guest researchers										
Mercator Fellow Guest presentation	---	Guest presentation	Listed guests (See 4.4)										
<b>Competence area 2: Methodology and methods</b>													
Methods Workshop (for example, situational analysis)	3.5 days	Workshop	All applicants; Guest academic invited in consultation with the doctoral fellows and depending on need										
<b>Competence area 3: Reflection and monitoring of individual research projects</b>													
Regular participation in site-based colloquia as well as participation in 8 cross-site colloquia - Draft dissertations: Design and Data Collection - Reflection on the research process - Project-related data collection and analysis - Reflection and presentation of results	14 days, 4 hours per day  8 x 2 days	Local colloquium  Cross-site colloquium	All applicants  All applicants, fellows and guest research in consultation with doctoral fellows										
<b>Competence area 4: Internationalisation, networking and securing results</b>													
Theoretical workshop: Doing Transitions II: Relational Constitution*	2.5 days	Workshop	All applicants; guest researchers										
International conference: Doing Transitions II: Final conference, ‘Findings and desiderata of transition research’*	3 days	International conference	All applicants; guest researchers										
<b>Competence area 5: Key academic competences</b>													
Online tool for academic projects; teambuilding, research ethics, data protection, career planning (Participation in consultation with supervision tandems)	4 x 1 day	Workshops	Applicants, Goethe Research Academy for Early Career Researchers (GRADE), Research Academy of the University of Tübingen, external offers										

\*Duration does not include time needed for preparation and follow-up

**Table 4: Demand-dependent elective offers and additional training programme formats**

<i>Type of offer</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Competence area</i>
Doctoral Working Groups (Doc-AGs)	Self-organised by the fellows	1, 2, 3
Workshops	Self-organised exchange by the fellows with invited external facilitators	1, 2, 4
Consultation with external researchers	Self-organised by the fellows, contacts can be potentially supplied by the participating professors	1, 2, 3, 4
Participation in meetings, (methods) workshops and conferences	In consultation with supervisors, participation in conferences, particularly presentation of fellows' own research projects	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Research stays with relevant research groups in Germany and internationally	Need- and topic-dependent; up to two-month stays for the purposes of data collection, collaborative analysis and the discussion of initial findings	1, 2, 3, 4
Supervision	Possible opportunities: positioning in the academic context (and, if applicable, in the research training group), reflection on challenging empirical material or research processes	3, 5
Career coaching	Individual or group-organised coaching	5
Seminar series	'Researching Transitions' (self-organised) weekly or block seminar	1, 2, 4, 5

The training programme is comprised of the following content and formats:

#### *Kick-off*

A kick-off meeting (3 days) provides the participants with the opportunity to get to know each other, for team building, for finalising the training programme for the coming years and to introduce the training formats. In addition to a general introduction, the individual dissertation projects will be presented and discussed in terms of good academic practice. A tableau of the topics, approaches, theoretical and methodological orientations represented in the research training group will also be presented. Any needs for methodological training, theoretical and empirical foundations will be elicited, and corresponding programme elements will be planned. The fellows will also initiate the formation of the Doc-AGs.

#### *Competence area 1: Theoretical foundations and state of research*

Competency Area 1 includes two required sessions on the theoretical foundations and development of the Doing Transitions concept. Additionally, the first sessions of the local colloquia will offer an opportunity to discuss classic transition research texts and the further theoretical advancements of the Doing Transitions approach.

*International conference on the state of knowledge of Doing Transitions I/III:* A 3-day international conference, 'Doing Transitions III' will be held in the second month. During this conference, former fellows will present their work and discuss it with relevant (inter)national transition researchers as well as experts of specific thematic perspectives (for conferences I and II, see Working and Results Report, pp. 11, 14, 23). The new fellows will present their projects during a poster session (see [www.doingtransitions.org/dtveranstaltungen](http://www.doingtransitions.org/dtveranstaltungen)).

*Theory Workshop Doing Transitions II:* At the end of the first semester, a 3-day workshop will be held on the theoretical foundations of the Research Training Group with renowned (inter)national speakers: on the one hand, the basic perspectives of relationality and reflexivity will be introduced, and on the other hand, the forms involved in the constitution of transitions, (1) Interpersonal Relations, (2) Temporality and (3) Materialities, as the key foci of the second phase will be presented and discussed. The goal is to establish a common content positioning and to strengthen the research training group's identity both internally and externally.

Moreover, the fellows will be expected to gain an understanding of the theoretical perspectives and the state of research relevant to their projects. The fellows' supervisors will be the first point of contact in terms of selecting relevant literature and choosing the most relevant academic events to participate in. The fellows can also participate further in this process through the Doc-AGs and by inviting guest speakers.

### *Competence area 2: Methodology and methods*

Competence area 2 aims at training the fellows in methodology and methods for their own projects as well as expanding their research method profiles. For this purpose, the fellows' respective needs will be identified during the kick-off event and an individual learning programme will be defined.

*Methods workshop:* Based on the exposés and the needs assessment, a workshop on the cohort's data collection methods and analysis, including methodological foundations, is mandatory for all fellows. The goal is to achieve a shared level of knowledge that enables joint discussions of all projects. Simultaneously, this will help members of the cohort to distinguish their methods from other possible approaches. A central aspect of the workshop is the introduction to methodological aspects of relational analysis such as situational mapping according to Clarke (2012). Without necessarily aligning the own project design to it, the fellows can thus become aware of the manifold relations of their own research object, and possible relations as well as the limits associated with their own epistemological interest and research design. (Inter)nationally recognized experts in transition research methods from various disciplines will be invited to participate in this workshop, in particular young researchers in the career phase after having completed their doctorates.

In this area of competence, the fellows are expected to expand on and deepen their methodological knowledge through electively selected offerings. This can be done either within the framework of existing graduate programmes (especially GRADE, LEAD, Quali-Net WISO, Quanti-Net WISO or DIPF), in smaller workshops organized specifically for, with and/or by individual or multiple fellows or by attending external courses. The DocAGs could accordingly be used for self-directed research workshops.

### *Competence Area 3: Reflection and monitoring of individual research projects*

In accordance with faculty' supervision of the individual fellows' research projects (see section 5), the additional offerings not only serve the collective academic advisement and support but will also contribute to the further discussion of the research training group's overarching questions. In this respect, the fellows' active participation in planning elective events has been proven successful.

The *research colloquia* form the research training group's core infrastructure. This is where fellows and professors meet on a regular basis outside of individual supervision. There are differences in terms of location and composition, frequency and function: At each *site*, four-hour *colloquia* will be held every two weeks as central forums for the individual projects and their specific requirements. The focus will be on the needs of the individual fellows, who will present the status of their own work to the site group at least once a semester. The goal is to work together on each project's current challenges. In addition, the colloquium serves as a platform for the discussion of project-specific as well as cross-project topics and can be used to clarify ad hoc theoretical, methodological or research strategy issues. Some sessions are also designed as research workshops to jointly discuss empirical material. Finally, thematically relevant research



projects will be presented at each site or developed in discussion with the fellows. The site colloquia also explicitly serve to support research students (see 3.4. and 4.5.).

In addition to conferences and workshops (competence area 1 and 2), the participating faculty and fellows will also meet eight times, alternating between the two different sites or a third-party location outside the university environment. The *cross-site colloquia* will start at the end of the first year, beginning with a research colloquium that will take stock of the current research process. In the second year and at the beginning of the third year, the focus of the cross-site colloquia will be on discussing the individual projects within the overall context of 'Doing Transitions'. All fellows will present their work at least once in the second year, focusing on the questions and problems they might have in their own research process. It has been proven effective to not only present the work in plenary sessions but also to conduct a more in-depth discussion in parallel, smaller working groups. A *workshop format* was developed and proven fruitful in the first cohort during which the participating professors present their current work on transition research for discussion.

It has also proven useful to dedicate a cross-site colloquium explicitly to the transition from data evaluation to generalization and re-theorization—this will also support the fellows in taking a look at interrelationships between their dimension of research with other dimensions and to contour and formulate the contribution of their respective research projects to the 'Doing Transitions' concept.

*Doctoral working groups (DocAGs):* In order to provide the opportunity for individually tailored offers and to promote the fellows' early research independence, the fellows can join together in self-organised, thematically or methodologically focused DocAGs. These groups can either discuss questions of common interest in a few meetings or develop continuous research workshops that facilitate collaborative data interpretation and peer feedback (peer mentoring). The research training group supports cross-site DocAGs with both travel funds and video conferencing opportunities (see also 4.3.).

*DocAG Workshops:* Especially in the second year of funding, DocAGs have the opportunity to organize 1.5-day seminars, workshops, or research workshops themselves, as well as to invite relevant guest researchers\* and discuss their own projects with them. In addition to the research training group's resources, DocAGs can also use GRADE infrastructure and funding and the University of Tübingen's guest lecture structure for this purpose, if these events are also open to other ECR.

#### *Competence area 4: Internationalisation, networking and securing results*

The Research Training Group allows for (inter-)national transdisciplinary exchange across all phases: through international fellows (see section 5), through visiting scholars, through exchange partnerships with other ECRs, through participation in and contribution to (inter-)national meetings and conferences, and through research stays abroad. Although the focus at the beginning will be primarily on input from external experts, as the research training group progresses it becomes increasingly important for the fellows and all participants to communicate the results and developments of the research training group externally and to contribute more broadly to transition research. The applicants' wide-ranging *international* contacts (see also section 6.) are a great resource that the fellows can actively use to bring international perspectives into the research group and to feed the group's results into international debates. An Advisory Board comprising international experts (see section 5.4) will provide regular feedback on the progress of the overall project.

*Conference participation:* The doctoral and postdoctoral researchers are encouraged to participate in workshops and congresses in order to network (inter)nationally. Although doctoral candidates are encouraged to focus on their orientation in the research field at the beginning of the programme, they are expected to participate in conferences beginning in the second year with

their own contributions or posters.<sup>3</sup> Appropriate encouragement and support are part of the supervision model and related costs are included in the budget. As such support is predominantly offered to male doctoral candidates (Korff/Roman 2013), female doctoral candidates' participation in conferences should be particularly encouraged and supported.

*Networking:* In addition to attending conferences, contacts with other early career researchers in Germany and abroad are to be established and then deepened. In this context, exchange with thematically related Research Training Groups should be further developed, namely with the DFG Research Training Groups 'Consequences of Social Service Work' (Siegen), 'Precaution, Foresight, Prediction. Contingency Management through Future Action' (Duisburg-Essen), 'Innovation Society Today' (Berlin) or the doctoral college, 'Right-wing Populist Social Policy and Exclusionary Solidarity' (Tübingen), funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation. This can lead to collaborative projects, events and publications.

*Research stays abroad:* Where appropriate for individual projects, the fellows have the opportunity to arrange a one- to two-month research stay in Germany and abroad, either to collect data on internationally comparative research topics or to establish a cooperation with scholars whose expertise promises added value for the fellow's own work. With selected international cooperation partners, the mutual exchange that proved to be fruitful during the first cohort will be furthered.

*Theory Workshop Doing Transitions III:* In the third year, a 2.5-day workshop will be devoted to the question of what the individual research projects have found and what this contributes to overall theory building. Accordingly, the research training group's contribution to transition research will be ensured and the doctoral and post-doctoral researchers are to be given suggestions for the generalized interpretation of their findings and the conclusion of their work. Renowned international scholars will be invited as discussants.

*International conference Doing Transitions IV (3 days):* At the end of the third cohort and the second funding period, the Research Training Group will present its research findings to the national and international academic public. The reflections and discussions of the workshop Doing Transitions III will be continued and combined with the second and third cohorts' contributions in an English-language book publication.

#### *Competence area 5: Key academic and professional competences*

In cooperation with the respective location's graduate academies' programmes, the training concept includes offerings on the following key competencies:

*Key academic competences:* In the introductory phase, all fellows will receive in-depth training in the key competencies of academic work, literature research, time management, data protection and research ethics and data management. The DFG's 'Guidelines for Ensuring Good Research Practice' (2019) provides orientation. GRADE offers an online tool for review and certification in the area of 'Good Research Practice', which is also open to the Tübingen fellows and which all fellows must complete in the first six months.

*Academic writing:* During the writing phase, fellows can use individual and collective offers from GRADE and the Writing Center at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main as well as the Graduate Academy of the University of Tübingen. For questions of research writing, the Methods Center at the University of Tübingen's ongoing Summer School, 'Writing in Qualitative Research' can be used. Additionally, formats such as retreats at external locations as well as intensive writing programmes ('shut up and write') with individually predefined goals in a collective writing atmosphere have proven successful from the second year on.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Posters* are an established form of academic presentation. They offer early career researchers low-threshold access to the academic community. At the kick-off meeting, the fellows will complete a workshop and create an English-language poster based on their exposé. Posters allow the fellows to present their work at international conferences as well as other national and international meetings relevant for the field.

*Presentation:* From the beginning, fellows will be supported in presenting their research appropriately on national and international levels via workshops on academic presentation (e.g., poster design, lectures, use of media).

*Participation in teaching:* The doctoral students have the possibility but are not obligated to participate in teaching. In addition to taking over individual sessions and participation in the form of team teaching, *lecture series* (e.g., in the Master's Programme in Education) proved successful during the first cohort. A postdoc and/or a professor must provide an organizational and content-related framework and the doctoral candidates design individual sessions in close relation to their own research.<sup>4</sup>

*Theory-Practice Dialogue:* Transition-related research findings are highly relevant for practice and policy. The field of transitions has strong practical applications and the dialogue with representatives from politics and practice is an element of academic professionalism. At the end of the project, these practical references will be discussed in a public event with participants from research and practice as well as former fellows (see 4.7). Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that all fellows will continue their academic careers after completing their doctorates.

*Communication, cooperation, team building:* Both for the active use of and participation in academic exchange within the Research Training Group as well as for preparing for later work in teams and networks, the fellows will have the opportunity to participate in workshops on communication, teamwork and leadership skills. The kick-off meeting and the cross-site colloquium include sessions on team building.

*Publications:* As part of their supervision, the doctoral and postdoctoral researchers will receive support and guidance in planning formats and venues for publishing their results with the aim of gaining early visibility. Doctoral candidates who are not working on a monograph but on a cumulative journal-article based doctorate are introduced earlier and more directly to the production of articles in peer-reviewed journals, etc., through relevant workshops at both sites. However, in view of the limited funding period, it is important to carefully balance expectations regarding publishing during the dissertation and to limit them to relevant or rather low-threshold publication opportunities. Such opportunities include, for example, edited volumes that are produced following the study programme's workshops or conferences in the research training group's series, 'Reflexive Transition Research - Doing Transitions' published by the Barbara Budrich Verlag (see Working and Results Report). The fellows' monographs can also be published there without an individual printing subsidy. Another publication venue is the series Transition and Coping Research (Beltz Juventa; the research training group's spokespeople are co-editors).

*Coaching:* The doctoral and postdoctoral researchers have the opportunity to obtain support from external experts and to get advice regarding problems in the PhD process, professional challenges and career planning. Both GRADE and the research training group offer organized, professionally supervised individual coaching sessions. For female doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, the equal opportunities offices at Goethe University and the University of Tübingen offer additional coaching (see 5.3 and 6.1).

### 1.3. Communication and knowledge management across sites

Both the cooperation across the two sites and the intended internationalization of the Research Training Group require a diverse, functional and user-friendly Internet-based electronic infrastructure. The original plan to organize communication and knowledge management exclusively via the website has proven to be impractical in everyday life and has thus been replaced by other functions.

- The research training group's *website* is primarily used for presentation and communication to the outside world. All participants are introduced here, public events are announced and regular reports on the research training group's developments are published.

---

<sup>4</sup> Such sessions also generate interest among students to apply as research students.

- For internal communication and as a cross-site storage location for all relevant organizational and content-related materials and data (especially programmes, protocols, organization-related documents, working papers and literature), a password-protected cloud (*PowerFolder*), provided by the Frankfurt site, will be used. In this way, fellows who are currently abroad or former fellows can also be given access.
- *Video conference rooms* are available at both locations, which smaller groups such as the DocAGs or the steering committee can use for direct communication between meetings at one of the locations. International guest researchers can also be reached via video conferencing. The technical infrastructure at both universities, including support, is excellent in this respect and has already proven itself in exceptional situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

The components of communication and knowledge management across the sites are systematically interlinked with the study programme. All participants will receive training on how to use each of the components at the beginning of the training programme.

#### 1.4. Guest and Mercator Fellows

The Research Training Group is transdisciplinary and internationally oriented. Visiting scholars are integrated into the Research Training Group through individual guest lectures, contributions to the various events and in other forms throughout the training programme. The fellows will be involved in the selection of the guests to be invited.

In view of role model functions and an equality policy perspective, the highest possible proportion of female guest researchers will be invited. Selected international guest researchers will be integrated into the research training group's research and training programme on a longer-term basis via *Mercator Fellowships*, beginning at the latest in the second semester. This format proved very successful in the first cohort, insofar as it ensured an intensive exchange with researchers beyond participation in the individual training programme offerings.

Table 5 is intended as an initial list which will be expanded and supplemented over time. Visiting scholars will be invited based on the topics the researcher works on and the methods they use, on the researcher's complementarity to the research training group's expertise, and increasingly in consultation with the fellows. Particular attention will be paid to inviting excellent postdoctoral researchers who work on transitions and aspects of relationality.

**Table 5: Potential Visiting Scholars**

Name	Discipline	Institution	Thematic relevance for Doing Transitions	Role
<b>Interpersonal relations</b>				
Settersten, Richard	Sociology	Univ. Oregon	Young adulthood, ageing	Guest lecturer
<b>Time and Temporality</b>				
Gerstorff, Denis	Psychology	Humboldt-Univ. Berlin	Late-life well-being, 'Terminal Decline' / 'Terminal Drop'	Guest lecturer
Jordheim, Helge	History	Univ. Oslo	Multiple Temporalities	Guest lecturer
Baars, Jan	Sociology	Univ. Utrecht	Temporalities and ageing	Guest lecturer
Blue, Stanley	Sociology	Univ. Lancaster	Time, Institutions, Health	Mercator Fellow
Lovatt, Melanie	Public Health	Univ. Stirling	Temporality, health, palliative care	Mercator Fellow
<b>Spaces, bodies and materialities</b>				
Boll, Tobias	Sociology	Univ. Mainz	Bodies, objects, ethnography	Guest lecturer
Buffel, Tine	Sociology	Univ. Manchester	Ageing and place, participatory environmental methods	Mercator Fellow
Ekerdt, David J.	Gerontology	Univ. Kansas	Things, possession, relocation	Guest lecturer
Esser, Florian	Education	Univ. Osnabrück	Spaces, relationality	Guest lecturer
Höppner, Grit	Sociology, Social Work	Kath. HS Münster	Objects in social work, bodies, material gerontology, gender	Guest lecturer
Hui, Allison	Sociology	University of Lancaster	Social practices, relational geography, mobilities research	Guest lecturer

Name	Discipline	Institution	Thematic relevance for Doing Transitions	Role
Lanzendorf, Martin	Human Geography	Univ. Frankfurt	Spatial transitions, mobility	Guest lecturer
Schadler, Cornelia	Sociology	Univ. Wien	New Materialism, Parenthood	Guest lecturer
Tervooren, Anja	Education	Univ. Duisburg-Essen	Objects/Spaces in childhood	Guest lecturer
Urban, Mona	Sociology	Universität Bremen	Health, new technology, material gerontology	Mercator Fellow
<b>Life course, life ages, transitions</b>				
Bernardi, Laura	Sociology	Uni. Lausanne	Life-course research	Guest lecturer
Dyk van, Silke	Sociology	Univ. Kassel	Sociology of ageing	Guest lecturer
Evans, Karen	Education	Univ. London	Agency, education, life changes	Guest lecturer
Ferreira, Vitor S.	Sociology	Univ. Lisbon	Ritual, bodily practices	Mercator Fellow
Gabriel, Thomas	Social Work	FH Zürich	Stay-at-home careers	Guest lecturer
Grenier, Amanda	Sociology	University of Toronto	Transitions across the life course, im/mobilities, temporalities, care	Guest lecturer
Imdorf, Christian	Sociology	Univ. Basel	Transitions in work, survey and panel research (TREE)	Mercator Fellow
Jurczyk, Karin	Sociology	DJI Munich	Doing family, Lifestyle	Guest lecturer
Korbin, Jill E.	Anthropologie	Case Western, Cleveland	Childhood research, media	Guest lecturer
Main, Gill	Sociology, psychology	Univ. Leeds	Childhood, wellbeing	Mercator Fellow
Raithelhuber, Eberhard	Education	Univ. Salzburg	Transitions, ethnography	Guest lecturer
Riach, Kathleen	Sociology	Monash Univ.	Transitions, organisations, bodies	Guest lecturer
Schröer, Wolfgang	Education	Univ. Hildesheim	Transition and youth research	Guest lecturer
Walper, Sabine	Psychology	DJI Munich	Childhood and family	Guest lecturer
<b>Research Methods</b>				
Brüderl, Josef	Sociology	Univ. Munich	Family panel (pairfam), panel, experience and sequence data analysis	Guest lecturer
Jergus, Kerstin	Education	Univ. Braunschweig	Discourse analysis	Guest lecturer
Langer, Antje	Education	Univ. Paderborn	Ethnography	Guest lecturer
Rose, Nadine	Education	Univ. Bremen	Biography research	Guest lecturer
Schmidt-Hertha, Bernhard	Education	LMU Munich	Mixed-methods designs	Guest lecturer
Tiefel, Sandra	Education	Univ. Magdeburg	Grounded Theory, Biography research	Guest lecturer
Vogl, Susanne	Sociology	Univ. Wien	Mixed methods, childhood, ageing	Mercator Fellow
Wrana, Daniel	Education	Univ. Halle	Discourse analysis	Guest lecturer

## 1.5. Postdoc integration

Postdoctoral fellows fulfill four important functions in the research training group: (1) producing research that is more systematic methodologically and grounded in theory, advancing the development of a relational perspective in transition research; (2) fostering and supporting academic careers in transition research up to and including professorship; (3) enhancing the research training group's visibility through high-quality publications in recognized journals and conference papers, even early in the funding period; (4) serving as role models for the doctoral researchers in terms of implementing, applying and advancing the 'Doing Transitions' approach and filling the role of early career researcher. In order to fulfill these functions, postdoctoral researchers require similarly comprehensive and tailored support as the doctoral researchers, consisting of demand-driven presentations, regular feedback on their projects as well as the possibility to invite external speakers or to attend conferences or workshops in order to discuss their work with relevant experts. Particularly in view of the fact that most postdoc projects are article-based, career support and publication planning will be even more closely intertwined than they are for doctoral students.

It is essential that the postdocs are not instrumentalized for the supervision of PhD candidates. The time they require to complete their projects must be structurally ensured. Postdocs should be able to use the funding to position themselves visibly in the field of transitional research and to develop and plan their careers.

In addition to the above-mentioned areas of competence, other areas of competence necessary for an academic career are central in the postdoc phase: in particular, visibility in the academic community, internationalization and networking, third-party funding, publications and teaching (see Table 6). Moreover, postdocs will receive support from research assistants (for, e.g., transcriptions). This also ensures that postdocs have the time for the core area of research activities and career planning.

**Table 6: Elements of the Postdoc Training Programme**

Mentoring	2 x per year (as well as when necessary) the postdoc's progress will be discussed with two thematically related members of the research group
Visibility in the academic community	Funding for conference attendance and research stays
Networking and internationalisation	Support from the participating professors (promoting them on the academic stage, bringing them along, e.g., to conferences, inviting them to participate, e.g., in conferences); inclusion in the professoriate's institutionalised networks (e.g., FFIA, IAW, Minerva, GRADE Center Aging); GRADE postdoc peer groups; peer mentoring in programmes such as 'Pro Academia' (Mentoring Hesse).
Acquisition of third-party funding	GU RSC/faculty support with writing proposals; postdoc funding opportunities at universities, e.g., GU Focus Program A/B (start-up funding – research assistances & travel expenses, proposal mentoring, workshops); GRADE workshops on various aspects of external funding proposals.
Publishing	Possibility to publish in the joint book series; GRADE language editing for English publications; assumption of Open Access costs by the participating universities
Teaching	Departmental/faculty/ professorial support; opportunity to supervise MA theses; continuing education in teaching and teaching certificate programs (e.g., from IKH in Frankfurt).
Career planning and support	Substantial informal mentoring by the entire professoriate ('safe space'); mentoring programs 'Pro-Academia' (Mentoring Hessen), Athene (University of Tübingen); GRADE career platform for postdocs

## 1.6. Research students

Research students can be flexibly integrated into the *training programme* based on their participation in the site-based research colloquia. This includes participation in selected workshops and conferences, support for master's theses on transition-related issues, including discussing their work in the colloquia. It is important that work- and communications forms are sensitive to students' differences in experience and status.

## 1.7. International Fellows

International fellows are both a target group and an important resource for the Research Training Group. They not only offer opportunities for intercultural dialogue within the Research Training Group but can also open up access to research fields outside the German-speaking world. Non-German-speaking fellows have the opportunity to write their papers in English and present their work and contribute to discussions in English. International applicants will also have access to free German courses at the universities (e.g., through GRADE). They also receive special support in gaining access to the German-language academic system. Additionally, the graduate

academies and international offices at both sites offer a wide range of services specifically for newly arrived international doctoral candidates (see 5.1).

## 1.8. Alumni involvement and transition between cohorts

Even if it can be assumed that the former fellows will continue to feel connected and committed to the Research Training Group, it is important that the ongoing alumni support continues. The fellows will be systematically supported after their funding has ended and they have completed their doctorate, for example through:

- Support until they complete the doctorate (incl. publication)
- Section for former fellows with personal pages on the Research Training Group's website
- Access to selected folders in the cloud
- Invitation as guest lecturers to present their work as early career researchers
- Regular information about the Research Training Group's events and publications
- Special publication and career development workshops after the end of the funding period
- Involvement in publication and research projects

This alumni work is a regular item on the professoriate's regular meetings' agenda and is supported by the coordinating committee. This career transition support for doctoral graduates is a task that the professorship specifically addresses.

In this way, the alumni are productively integrated into the Research Training Group's further network and the transition between the cohorts is proactively shaped by them. In particular, the combined participation at the international conferences *Doing Transitions I/III* has provided an opportunity for the fellows to get to know each other and exchange ideas across cohorts and locations. For the management of internal transitions, former fellows are a valuable resource in at least three ways:

- First, they have experienced completing a PhD in the context of a research training group and are experts in the field of transition research as well as in terms of the *Doing Transitions* research perspective. Against this background, they are invaluable as discussants or speakers in the context of the Research Training Group's conferences and workshops. This is especially true for those who have remained in the academic system after their doctorate and continue to actively conduct research.
- Second, the alumni can inform the current doctoral candidates about the professional fields in which they have established themselves and the possible career prospects. In individual cases, the alumni can also be asked to act as mentors who accompany the fellows during the first or last months of their doctorate and during the phase of professional integration.
- Third, the alumni themselves are part of a shifting social and academic discourses on transition research. In the participating disciplines, new differentiations and foci (on children, adolescents, adults, the elderly, but also with regard to the perspective of relationality) have developed, which promise new perspectives and possibilities for the Research Training Group in dealing with current research topics as well as for practice.

## 2. Supervision and career development, equal opportunities, organization and quality management

### 2.1. Call for applications and selection procedures

#### *Target group and selection criteria*

The Research Training Group is aimed at highly qualified and motivated graduates who are interested in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary transition research, as well as at doctoral candidates who are already qualified in this field. In particular, the Research Training Group seeks to recruit early career researchers from the fields of education, sociology and psychology as well

as those from related disciplines provided they want to complete a doctorate in the disciplines represented in the Research Training Group and are sufficiently qualified to do so in accordance with the doctoral regulations. Special emphasis is placed on recruiting international applicants (see 4.2. and 5.2.). The overarching selection criteria include previous academic and research achievements as well as the doctoral proposal's consistency and fit in terms of content (the DFG guidelines on 'Ensuring Good Research Practice' also serve as orientation here). This means

- *with regard to the applicants*: their academic profile, their academic achievements and their content-related and methodological competences, the innovativeness of their project as well as their personal motivation and willingness to cooperate with the research group;
- *with regard to the Research Training Group's research interests*: the respective project's expected contribution to one of the three main research areas (doctoral candidates) as well as to the question of their interrelations (postdocs); the three forms of relations (interpersonality, temporality, materiality) as well as the different life phases should be appropriately represented and the topics and perspectives should also meaningfully complement the Research Training Group's first and second cohorts' previous research.
- *With consideration of equal opportunities* (see 5.3).

Six PhD students and one postdoc will be selected per site.

The following requirements apply to *doctoral candidates*: a degree in education, psychology, or sociology with above-average grades; above-average methodological skills and research experience; profound knowledge in at least one topic area of transition research; very good English skills; letters of reference from two professors; a qualitatively convincing exposé that promises a further contribution to one of the Research Training Group's foci.

For *postdocs*, the following also apply: a very good or excellent doctorate; excellent skills in research methods and knowledge of transition research; publications in national and international peer-reviewed journals; a qualitatively convincing exposé that shows the potential to make a theoretical and research-methodological contribution to the analysis of interrelations of dimensions of relationality in the constitution of transitions.

*International applicants* must demonstrate a willingness to learn German within the first year and to participate in discussions of German-language papers (this is especially important where discussion of qualitative data is involved, cf. 4.7).

For the selection of *research students*, above-average previous academic performance, the engagement with transitional topics, an appropriate topic for the master's thesis, a comprehensible interest and the motivation for an academic career are decisive.

### *Selection process*

The selection process will begin with advertisements in the weekly Germany newspaper, *Die Zeit*, the online portals, academics.com and academics.de (for postdoc positions at the beginning of 2021, for doctoral positions in summer 2022). Furthermore, national and international journals and portals as well as relevant professional societies' newsletters and the professorate's international networks.

All professors will participate in the application review process. Applicants who meet the formal and content-related criteria (in the case of doctoral positions, approximately twice as many as the advertised positions) will be invited to interviews with at least three consortium members who are working on themes similar to the applicant's proposed topic. All interviews will be documented according to a standardized protocol. On the basis of the selection committee's recommendations, the professors will decide together on who will fill the positions.

## 2.2. Support concept and career development

### *Supervision of the Fellows*

The fellows' *individual* support and supervision over the course of their research projects is undoubtedly one of a Research Training Group's central tasks and success criteria. At the



beginning, the focus is on the submitted exposé, the structure of the work, methodological and theoretical specifications as well as the respective project's temporal structure. Additionally, the fellows' further methodological and theoretical training or their position in the university and academic community will be discussed. As the work progresses, the topics of data analysis and processing as well as the presentation of results become relevant, as well as questions of career planning, conference participation and publication projects or preparation for the PhD defence.

The fellows should be involved in decisions about the supervision constellation. Since it cannot be assumed that they are already familiar with all the professors involved in the Research Training Group, the professorial committee will propose a provisional supervisor who will take over the supervision in the first phase. Within the first year, the fellows have the possibility to propose a different supervision constellation. The explicit option to change supervisors is a consequence of the results of the external evaluation and the fellows expressed preferences (see work and results report, section 21). Generally, the supervision tandems should be from both locations, i.e., consist of one professor from Frankfurt and one from Tübingen. This arrangement proved successful, as it means that there is always a supervisor who can be contacted directly on site and at the same time cross-site collaboration is structurally supported. The cross-site events (colloquia, conferences, workshops) will be systematically used for discussions between the doctoral researchers and their supervisors, and between the postdocs and their mentors. Time slots will be scheduled for these meetings, which will allow for at least quarterly supervisory discussions.

In addition to individual support, the research training group is also characterized by the fellows' *collective supervision and support*. In principle, all members of the Research Training Group are available to the fellows as contacts and feel jointly responsible for the success of each dissertation (see the policy paper co-formulated first-cohort fellows, which has since been further developed). The supervision also includes the fellows' integration into the respective university as well as the development of professional perspectives beyond the doctorate or habilitation. In addition, peer-to-peer support from the other fellows is an important resource.

For each location, a professor from one of the participating institutes is elected as ombudsperson to mediate any conflicts that might occur between the fellows and the professors.

#### *Performance reviews*

Dialogical measures to monitor the individual dissertations' progress and success are integral components of the supervision concept. These are based on common milestones (see 5.5) and on the DFG's 'Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice' (2019). The bi-weekly on-site colloquia (at least once every six months) offer a relatively low-threshold space for the fellows to discuss their own work, which creates transparency about their research progress without putting the fellows under too much pressure to present and justify their work. The variety of topics that will be dealt with in the colloquia allows for the discussion of individual aspects of the research project, such as research methods or individual methodological questions, in which the presentation of the fellows' research progress. Based on the method-related needs assessment that will be undertaken at the beginning of programme, learning arrangements oriented towards the fellows' individual requirements or their research will be agreed upon. For international students, the supervision will also include questions about their language acquisition, integration and transnational career planning.

#### *Agreements on the rights and obligations of the members of the research training group*

At the beginning of the funding and at cross-site workshops, regular discussions will be held on rights and obligations and the division of labor between all those involved in the research training group. These are incorporated in the updated policy paper in terms of quality assurance (see 5.5.). The fellows' duties consist primarily of the goal-oriented completion of their research project, on-site presence at one of the locations, active participation in the training program and the organization of joint events. In addition to their rights as employees, they are entitled to well-equipped workplaces, binding, regular supervision and high-quality events within the framework of the training programme. The professors are committed to safeguarding and guaranteeing these rights.

### Career planning

The supervision concept not only refers to the research the fellows produce within the framework of the Research Training Group, but also to the support the fellows receive in terms of their career and career planning beyond the doctorate or habilitation. The doctoral and postdoctoral researchers are actively supported in effectively managing their research projects and planning their next career steps. Regular discussions with the supervisor tandems therefore also focus on

- subject-related career perspectives resulting from the research project;
- related presentation and publication planning;
- reflection on networking opportunities and activities;
- voluntary participation in university teaching (e.g., in a lecture series, cf. 4.2).

In addition, the fellows are encouraged to take advantage of career-related offers outside the research training group's supervision in cooperation with training programmes available from GRADE Frankfurt and the Graduate Academy of the University of Tübingen, such as individual coaching (see also 4.2, competence area 5, and 5.3).

#### *Follow-up prospects: Start-up and finalisation funding*

In order to support the post-doctorate transition, fellows who have proven to be particularly suitable for an academic career during the funding period will be given the opportunity to continue working on their own transition research in a position as a research assistant (see section 7. Modules). Such fellows should use the *start-up* funding to write their own project proposal. Selection criteria include an excellent dissertation and a research topic that significantly contributes to Research Training Group's academic goals. The fellows can apply for start-up funding with a project outline. The professorial board will review the applications and award funding according to the available funds.

*Finalisation funding:* Fellows who do not complete their dissertations or postdoctoral projects within the funding period can apply for a six-month funding extension. The prerequisite is confirmation from the supervisors that the case is one of personal or academic hardship and that it is realistic that the fellow will complete their dissertation within 6 months. The professorate will decide whether to award the funding.

### 2.3. Equal opportunities in academia

For Doing Transitions as well as for Goethe University of Frankfurt and Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen, *Gender Equality* and *Diversity Policies* are indispensable prerequisites for and attributes of the development of excellence in research, teaching and the promotion of young researchers, and are among the central steering instruments of both universities' administration.

In gender studies, *Frankfurt* has received international recognition through the Cornelia Goethe Center for Women's Studies and the Study of Gender Relations (CGC, represented in the RTG by Prof. Sarah Speck). The Center for Gender and Diversity Research in *Tübingen*, which is also internationally oriented, focuses on the intersectional expansion of gender perspectives.

Both universities achieved the top rating in the implementation of the DFG's research-oriented equality standards in 2011 and 2013. The University of *Tübingen* was awarded the Familiengerechte Hochschule (family-friendly university) certificate in 2014 and 2017 and is a member of the Dual Career Netzwerk Baden-Württemberg (Dual Career Network of Baden-Württemberg); Goethe University of *Frankfurt* was awarded the family-friendly certificate four times between 2005 and 2018, and submitted successful applications to the Federal and State Women Professors Programme I, II and III. In 2012, 2015 and 2018, the University of Frankfurt was also awarded the 'Total E-Quality-Predicate'. It is a member of the Charta der Vielfalt (Diversity Charter), Lokales Bündnis für Familie (Local Family Alliance), Familie in der Hochschule (Families in the University), Erfolgsfaktor Familie (Family Success Factor) and Dual Career Netzwerk Deutschland (Dual Career Network of Germany) networks. Both universities have extensive and growing childcare facilities in terms of daycare centers and excellent municipal

infrastructures in the area of early childhood and all-day care. In addition to regular childcare services, both campuses offer all-day and flexible childcare access.

At Goethe University of *Frankfurt*, the Gender Equality Office offers counselling and workshops in the area of diversity policies and oversees the adherence to gender and diversity policies. The Gender Counselling services is a member of the nationwide Gender Counselling Network and serves as a contact for collaborative projects on gender equality issues and oversees a coaching pool for young women academics. The large cross-university program, ‘Mentoring Hessen: Women in Science and Business’ offers women career support at all levels. The Family Service office advises university staff on how to reconcile work and family life, offers a dual-career service, and is working to further expand the university’s family-friendly infrastructure. It oversees a network of students and doctoral candidates with children (‘Goethe Kids’), offers workshops on work-life balance, and provides advice on and assistance with caring for dependents. Childcare is available for the overlap between university semesters and school breaks as well as during conferences and workshops.

The Family Office at the Eberhard Karl University of *Tübingen* offers a comprehensive advisory service on balancing studies, career, research and family and coordinates the university’s numerous initiatives within the framework of the Family Friendly University Audit. In cooperation with the municipality and other local providers, short-term childcare spaces are provided to meet the needs of visiting researchers. The Equal Opportunities Office is also a member of the nationwide Gender Counselling network and advises applicants and research federations. The Athene Programme for female postdocs on their way to professorships offers funds for research that can be used flexibly for student research assistants, conference attendance or research organization. In addition, individual coaching is offered that focuses on academic careers and offers opportunities for networking, peer coaching and the acquisition of research-related, interdisciplinary skills.

The Research Training Group attaches great importance to gender equality. The doctoral candidates can participate in all of the two universities’ offers. The two participating universities’ equal opportunities offices also support the Research Training Group in the development and implementation of its concept for equal opportunities.

In awarding fellowships and filling positions, the Research Training Group follows the cascade model with the goal of achieving the same proportion of women among graduates (for the doctoral positions) or postdocs (for the postdoctoral positions) in the participating disciplines. Therefore, the goal is to fill at least 75% of the PhD positions and—in light of the particular difficulties young women researchers face in further developing their career after their PhD—both postdoc positions with women. Potentially suitable national and international women researchers are invited to apply. Other diversity criteria will also be taken into account.

The group of applicants consists of eight women and three men (see Table 7). In addition, their awareness of gender equality is documented in their writings and their involvement in university administration (e.g., in their membership in the Cornelia Goethe Centre at the University of Frankfurt or the Center for Gender and Diversity Research at the University of Tübingen).

**Table 7: Applicants according to position, gender and those with school-aged children**

Participating researchers	Total		Total (%)		With school-aged children
	M	F	M	F	
W1* Professors		1		100%	1
W2 Professors		1		100%	1
W3 Professors	3	6	33%	66%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>4</b>

\*see the information on Jun. Prof. Dr. Ursula Offenberger’s involvement until 31.12.2025 in section 1.3 and 3.5.

For the implementation of its Gender Equality and Diversity Policy, the Research Training Group cooperates closely with both universities’ Equal Opportunity Offices and is involved in the Gender

Counselling Coordination Office for Equal Opportunity Measures in Research Federations (Koordinierungsstelle Gender Consulting für Gleichstellungsmaßnahmen) at Goethe University. In particular, the following initiatives are planned:

- *Mentoring, Training, Coaching*: In Frankfurt, female (post-)doctoral researchers have access to the mentoring programs from Mentoring Hesse including ProCareer.Doc, ProAcademia and ProProfessur. GRADE offers training for female doctoral candidates, especially at the beginning of their doctorate and during the transition to the postdoc phase. In Tübingen, the Athene Programme offers needs-based coaching, peer coaching, and career planning training for female doctoral and postdoctoral researchers.
- *Gender and Diversity Competence*: Both professors and early-career researchers have the opportunity to take advantage of gender and diversity awareness training at both sites.
- *Work-life Balance*: Childcare is provided for the children of the Research Training Group's members and guest researchers during conferences, workshops, colloquia as well as outside of normal working hours. Additionally, a parent-child room is available in Frankfurt. In general, attention is paid to compatibility with family time when scheduling events. This also applies in the case of caring for relatives.
- *Guidance and support during pregnancy*: During pregnancy, fellows will receive counseling as well as support from a student assistant, if possible, in order to be able to continue their research.

In the organization of the training program, special attention was generally given to ensuring that all fellows can participate and contribute equally. Female fellows are encouraged to make the best possible use of the training program, including gender equality initiatives, for their own projects and for their career planning.

## 2.4. Organisation

In the first funding phase, professors and fellows developed a *policy paper* which defined the Research Training Group's structures and its members' rights and duties. As with the 2nd cohort, this paper will be discussed with the 3rd cohort and, if necessary, adapted to changing needs. Among other things, agreements were made on the roles and responsibilities of the following bodies:

- The two *spokespersons* equally represent the Research Training Group externally and coordinate the steering committee's work. Since the coordination of a RTG is rather academic management than pure administration, they are supported by one coordinating research assistant per site (total share of 100% - 80% DFG funds and 20% university funds, see section 7.2).
- The *steering committee* plans and coordinates the Research Training Group's offers and processes. It consists of four professors (2 per site), three fellows (1 doctoral student per site and 1 postdoc) and one of the two coordinators. It meets regularly, at least every two months, and uses the inter-site events for this purpose or communicates in between via video conference.
- The *plenum* comprises all Research Training Group members. It meets at all cross-site events and discusses organizational issues as well as the training programme's thematic orientation.
- The *Professorate* consists of all involved professors. At least every six months, questions of supervision and training are clarified here.
- The *council* comprises all fellows and is the forum for their self-organization and representing their interests in the Research Training Group. The fellows organise *jour fixe* for the organisation of the research colloquia and workshops at both sites, which is followed by meetings after the inter-site research colloquia and workshops. This makes it possible to discuss training needs, conference planning or the organization of working groups.
- An international advisory board consisting of Laura Bernardi (Lausanne), Kathleen Riach (Monach), Rick Settersten (Oregon), Wolfgang Schröer (Hildesheim), Bettina Dausien (Vienna), and Eberhard Raitelhuber (Salzburg) provides advice and external feedback (see Appendix).

The policy paper also defines the jointly developed rules for collaboration as well as the assurance, as per an agreement with both universities, that all professors will keep an agreed day of the week free from teaching and academic administration tasks in order to guarantee that they can participate in the research training group's events. The research training group's organization is committed to the principles of cross-site integration, flexibility in terms of the fellows' support and training needs and the efficient use of financial and time resources (e.g., through alternating meetings at the two universities, meetings 'halfway' between the two and intensive use of Internet-based offerings for content exchange).

## 2.5. Quality management

Both the Research Training Group's fellows (see 5.2.) as well as its study program and the support services are evaluated regularly, and the results are taken into account in further planning.

*Quality dialog:* Flexible forms of internal evaluation are central to quality assurance. In order to further develop and continuously improve the program in dialog with the fellows, the steering committee will regularly develop evaluation formats, the results of which are validated and discussed at cross-site events and included in further planning and coordination. Additionally, the fellows' feedback and concerns will be continuously addressed in the committees so that they can be reacted to quickly. Most importantly, the input events in the first year will be systematically evaluated in order to derive lessons learned for subsequent events.

In terms of quality assurance, the Research Training Group follows the DFG's 'Guidelines for Assuring Good Research Practice' (2019). The research, training and supervision program includes *milestones*, which, however, due to the diversity of the research projects, are not specific requirements, but offer instead occasions for thematizing central aspects during the fellows' discussions with their supervisors.<sup>5</sup>

*External evaluation:* The internal quality assurance is complemented by an external evaluation, which surveys the fellows in the middle of the third year. The external, formative evaluation of the 1st cohort provided extremely important feedback (see Results and Work Report: 21) and concrete suggestions for the further development of the training and support program, all of which have been included in the application for funding extension. Central components included the training programme offerings, its benefits for the fellows, communication culture, the relationship between workload and workload relief, the supervision ratios as well as the implementation of gender equality goals (gender monitoring).

## 3. The Research Training Group's Setting

The Doing Transitions Research Training Group is established in an academic environment of research-strong universities as well as dynamically developing infrastructure in the field of the academic advancement of young researchers. In the DFG ranking, the universities ranked fourth and fifth in third-party funding in the social sciences and humanities in 2014-2016. The main reasons for the conception of the research training group across two sites are the outstanding expertise and complementarity of the applicants' profiles, which was furthered strengthened in terms of sociology for the funding extension application, the experience in collaborative research and in the supervision of early career researchers—not the least in the first funding phase—and the quality of the existing infrastructure at both universities:

---

<sup>5</sup> Milestone 1: Conference as transition between the cohorts (month 2); Milestone 2: Completion of foundational training (methods/theory/research status), consolidation of supervision constellations, successful start of survey, publication planning (month 10); Milestone 3: Completion of survey, outline of theory/methods chapter, career/publication planning (month 18); Milestone 4: Completion of evaluation, discussion of preliminary findings with external experts, career/publication planning, outline of results chapter (month 27); Milestone 5: Outline of final chapters (month 33); Milestone 6: Final conference (month 36).

- The *Goethe Research Academy GRADE* offers Early Career Researchers at Goethe University Frankfurt a comprehensive training program in academic writing, communication, time and project management, key competences and career development as well as individual coaching, networking events and language courses. Some of GRADE's offerings are specifically aimed at the Research Training Group's fellows. The GRADE Centers "Ageing", "Education", "Gender" and "Social Sciences" are particularly relevant.
- *The Graduate Academy of the University of Tübingen* has a variety of support open to the fellows including the Doctoral Research Development Programme (in the topics of research & responsibility, communication & management, career development) as well as the Researcher Development Programme for postdoctoral researchers (teaching, leadership & management and career development).
- At the Frankfurt site, the departments of Education and Social Sciences as well as Psychology cooperate with the *German Institute for International Pedagogical Research (DIPF)*. In the field of empirical educational research, the DIPF offers a range of training courses in methods—especially quantitative methods—for young researchers, which are also open to the fellows within the framework of the cooperation.
- At the Tübingen site, the graduate school *LEAD (Learning, Educational Achievement, and Life Course Development)*, funded by the DFG until 2019, offers a research and training program for doctoral students and postdocs, especially with regard to quantitative research methods and support in transferring knowledge into practice.
- The *Tübingen School of Education* with its research section organizes and realizes relevant research for teacher education, schools and teaching. Drawing on Tübingen's research strength in education (at the Hector Institute for Empirical Educational Research, at the Institute of Education, at the Methods Center, at the Leibniz Institute for Knowledge Media or at the International Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities), the School of Education promotes the systematic cooperation in the subject of didactic and education research as well as an interdisciplinary research culture in the teacher training.
- At the Faculty of Social Sciences and Economics in Tübingen, the *Methods Center* is a platform for method-related research and advice, exchange, cooperation and teaching, such as the Spring and Summer Schools developed in the QualiNet and QuantiNet networks. The Research Training Group has a direct personnel connection to this network via Ursula Offenberger.

### 3.1. Academic Priorities of the Participating Universities

With 46,300 students, *Goethe University Frankfurt am Main* is one of the largest universities in Germany. It combines excellence and internationalism in research with the goal of being a comprehensive university open to increased student numbers. A central aspect of research funding in recent years has been start-up funding for collaborative projects, from which the research training group *Doing Transitions* has also benefited with a total of over 45,000 euros. In the university's current process of sharpening its research profile, the Research Training Group is a central element of the 'Dynamics of Global Orders and Social Transformations' profile. Thematic connections to other collaborative projects exist, for example, to the Cluster of Excellence, 'Formation of Normative Orders', which, like *Doing Transitions*, examines the production of social structures. The Institute for Social Research is of enormous importance for theory development and empiricism in the social sciences. With Professor Sarah Speck, *Doing Transitions* has a direct personnel connection here as well as to the Cornelia Goethe Centrum, another important institution in the field of gender studies and the advancement of young female researchers (see 5.3). With the *Research Service Centre*, Goethe University has considerably expanded its research-related services, and highly qualified, specialized advisors are available to research training groups.

*The Department of Education* consists of the content pillars of heterogeneity and pedagogy of life phases. In recent years, the topic of transitions across the life course has emerged as a focal point and has been incorporated into the target agreements and strategy discussions with the university administration. The department has more than tripled its third-party funding in recent

years. This framework, which is relevant to the Research Training Group, is supported in particular by the Institutes of General Education and Social Pedagogy and Adult Education, which are also involved in the Research Training Group and also conduct research on all life phases. Accordingly, the department has financially supported Doing Transitions during the application and initial funding phases and will continue to do so. The Department has also long been involved in the advancement of young researchers through start-up and finalisation fellowships for doctoral researchers. The Frankfurt members of the Research Training Group also have a range of experience in collaboratively supervising doctoral candidates.

The Institute of Sociology at the *Faculty of Social Sciences* is one of the most important sociology institutes worldwide and has a broad thematic and methodological diversity. Of particular relevance for the Research Training Group are the foci 'Social Structure, Social Inequality and Education' and 'Gender, Diversity and Migration', both of which are represented in the Research Training Group.

The following research institutes will work closely with Doing Transitions:

- The *LOEWE Center*, 'Individual Development and the Adaptive Education of Children' (IDeA) is a cooperation between Goethe University with the DIPF and the Sigmund Freud Institute. It researches individual development processes in children and examines the effectiveness of approaches to individual learning support (Andresen, Becker). The fellows can also use the center's methodological training programme.
- The *Social Pedagogical Research Center*, 'Education and Coping in the Life Course' researches adolescents and young adults' transitions. Here, the training of young researchers is integrated into teaching, practical and basic research as well as the further development of methodological approaches to transition research (Walther).
- The *section on family research* has established itself through numerous national and international research projects on the living conditions of children as well as through the reappraisal of and research on sexual abuse. Here, transitions in early childhood and transitions into talking about abuse experiences are analyzed (Andresen).
- The *Frankfurt Forum for Interdisciplinary Research on Ageing* combines social sciences and education, psychological, legal, medical and economic perspectives in order to research quality of life conditions in ageing processes. Research on newly emerging transitions in old age are the central to the forum as well as the advancement of young researchers (Oswald).

*Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen* is one of the oldest universities in Europe but also embodies a modern, internationally and research-oriented university with the goals of Research, Relevance and Responsibility. Around 27,200 students from Germany and abroad are currently enrolled there. The university's development has been recently underscored by its success in the federal and state governments' excellence competitions for funding, which Doing Transitions also benefitted from in its start-up and implementation phase up to the granting of final funding. The University of Tübingen has expanded its research-related services and counselling offerings and, in this process, established the *Methods Center* at the Faculty of Social Science and Economics, which supports Doing Transitions extensively.

The Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences is represented in Doing Transitions on the one hand through the *Institute of Education* with the departments of Social Pedagogy and General Pedagogy. In particular, the master's programmes Research and Development in Social Pedagogy/Social Work, Adult Education/Continuing Education, and Education: Culture - Politics - Society, with their life-course-related profile, are an ideal context for Doing Transitions. On the other hand, the *Institute of Sociology* with the professorship for micro-sociology and the inter-faculty *Methods Center* with a focus on Qualitative Methods and Interpretative Social Research are also part of the Research Training Group. One cooperative project is General Studies. In Winter Semester 2019/2020, the series, 'Embattled Knowledge, Situated Cognition: Glimpses behind the scenes of science' (*Offenberger, Rieger-Ladich*) was offered. In the Summer Semester 2021, General Studies will feature Doing Transitions. Relevant research contexts include:

- The *Center for Counseling Research* (Bauer) analyzes transitional counseling and multiprofessional cooperation (DFG project and practical projects on the cooperation field of youth welfare and school and school social work) in the context of continuously evaluated, video-based development of counseling competence.
- The research focus, *Biographical Transition Research* (Stauber), which bundles research projects on the processing of transitions (DFG), on risky youth cultural practices (DFG project including DFG continuation project) and on educational transitions in the context of migration (DFG D-A-CH project).
- The research *focus on micro-sociology* (Schober), which resulted from DFG-funded research on early childhood educational processes and family transitions.
- The *Methods Center* (Offenberger), which provides methods advisory services for ongoing faculty research projects and conducts research on method development as well as on socio-ecological, organizational, and university transformation processes, incorporating gender, organizational, science, and technology studies.
- The *Center for Gender and Diversity Studies*, which develops ongoing workshops and events on current issues in gender studies (Stauber; Rieger-Ladich).

Both sites have extensive experience in the joint supervision of doctoral and post-doctoral theses, which has been furthered by the Research Training Group.

### 3.2. Interuniversity cooperation

The cooperation between the universities, faculties and institutes involved in the Research Training Group is based on long-standing, thematically relevant research collaborations, particularly that between its two spokespeople, on smooth and open cooperation between the two university administrations during both the application process and the implementation of the first funding phase, as well as on a work process characterized by a high degree of transparency and reliability on the part of the involved professors. On a *thematic level*, the following relevant cooperative projects are ongoing or have been completed (see also 3.5.):

- The EU project, *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe on Transitions in Educational Trajectories* (GOETE) (2010-2013) (Walther et al. 2016);
- The development of the thematic field of 'Transition Guidance' (cf. Walther/Weinhardt 2013; Bauer/Weinhardt 2015);
- The DFG project, *Transition Processing*, on the pedagogical rationales of the processing of labor-market-related transitions (EB 531/1) (Chyle et al. 2020);
- The evaluation, *Counselling at Career Start* (Berufseinstiegsbegleiter; BMAS; 2009-2014), which served as the basis for a dissertation in the first cohort (Hirschfeld 2020);
- The co-edited handbook, *Transitions* (Schröer/Stauber/Walther et al. 2013), as well as the series, *Transition and Coping Research*, Beltz Juventa Verlag.

In addition, the faculty involved in the Research Training Group have experience in the collaborative supervision of doctoral dissertations, not the least in the cross-site supervision in of Doing Transitions fellows.

At the *administrative level*, both university administrations have provided start-up funding for the preparation of the pre-application, for the application to fund the Research Group's establishment and the application to extend funding. In addition, they have also agreed to ensure comparable conditions for the Research Training Group from the first and second funding phases (see 6.4.).

Finally, the *cooperation between the group of professors submitting the application* has been an extraordinarily positive experience of research collaboration for all participants. The eight-year cooperation since the beginning of the first application has been characterized by a high level of reciprocal inspiration and appreciation. The working groups, plenary sessions, video conferences and retreats have developed a strong sense of solidarity and collegiality and has fostered intensive exchange on theory, research methods and experiences. This culture of cooperation is



reflected in the establishment of the Research Training Group, in alternating cross-site events, in the shared hosting of Mercator Fellows, in the collaborative supervision of doctoral theses, in jointly organized international conferences on transition research, and in the publication of the series, *Reflexive Transition Research - Doing Transitions*, at the Barbara Budrich press (Walther et al. 2020).

### 3.3. Non-university cooperations

The Research Training Group can rely on a well-established and tightly-knit network of non-university collaborations and cooperation partners. The Frankfurt site has institutional cooperation agreements with, among others:

- The German Institute for Pedagogical Research (see above)
- The Martha Muchow Foundation (childhood research) at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences

The Tübingen site has the following institutional cooperations with non-university research institutions:

- German Youth Institute (DJI)
- Institute for Knowledge Media (IWM)
- Institute for Applied Economic Research (IAW)
- Gender Research Institute (tifs) Tübingen

Both locations also have broad ERASMUS networks (in education and sociology Frankfurt has 70 partner universities in 21 countries, while Tübingen has 35 universities in 19 countries), which are open to research students, doctoral candidates as well as postdocs for research stays abroad.

Finally, the applicants have a broad and dense network of research collaborations in Europe, Asia, North and South America, which also position the Research Training Group internationally and enable the fellows to engage in academic exchange and research stays (see 4.2.). This is especially true for research on young adults' transitions (EU projects, YOYO, UP2YOUTH, GOETE, YOUNG\_ADULLLT and PARTISPACE), childhood transitions (Project, Indicators of Children's Wellbeing) and in old age (Frankfurt Forum for Interdisciplinary Research on Ageing Network). The Research Training Group also has special connections to the Lehigh, Bethlehem, Oregon State and Texas Tech universities, as well as Lubbock (USA), National Chi Nan (Taiwan), Tel Aviv (Israel), Bologna and Genoa (Italy), Lund (Sweden), Birmingham and Glasgow (UK), Helsinki (Finland), Montreal (Canada), Monash University Melbourne (Australia), Instituto de Ciencias Sociais Lisbon (Portugal), Institute of Education London (UK), and Ecole des Hautes Etudes de Santé Publique Rennes (France).

Moreover, both universities have connections to sub-disciplinary and junior researcher networks within the framework of professional societies (DGfE, DGS).

### 3.4. Support from the involved universities

The university administrations, departments/faculties as well as institutes at both sites have committed to providing the Research Training Group with the following support and services:

- Financial grants for the completion of dissertations or post-doctoral projects in cases of personal and academic hardship amounting to a total of up to 24 full-time person-months per location (up to a maximum of 6 months).
- Financial grant from the Department of Education's programme funding at Goethe University to increase coordination across both sites.
- Support from the secretarial services as well as from student assistants employed by the participating institutes, especially for events, amounting to approx. 200 hours per year per site.

- Provision of appropriate and closely located working spaces for all fellows and the coordinating office.
- Reduction in each spokesperson's teaching load by two semester hours per week.
- Childcare facilities and gender equality initiatives (see 5.3.).

Additionally, Goethe University of Frankfurt has agreed that fellows at both sites can use all GRADE services while Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen has agreed to their use all university counseling and training (see section 4.).

### 3.5. Distinction from Collaborative Research Centers/to a preceding Research Training Group

At Goethe University, there are thematic connections to the Cluster of Excellence Normative Orders, whose graduate program, however, primarily supports doctoral candidates in the completion of projects in Cluster's thematic fields; transitions in the life course are rather a marginal topic.

Prof. Dr. Barbara Friebertshäuser (member of the RTG in the first funding phase) was involved as spokesperson in a previous Research Training Group, *Public Spheres and Gender Relations Dimensions of Experience*, at the Cornelia Goethe Centre. Apart from the connectivity to its social constructivist perspective and the experiences of the former spokesperson, the two research training groups are unrelated in terms of content.

At the Tübingen location, the Doing Transitions Research Training Group cooperates with the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme, Right-Wing Populist Social Policy and Exclusionary Solidarity (funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation), but its question about the making and shaping of transitions has a decidedly different thematic focus, both theoretically and in the associated concrete research questions.

The profile is even clearer vis-à-vis the LEAD research network, as its programme is primarily oriented toward empirical education research and addresses doctoral researchers working on learning, achievement, and lifelong development.