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New policy for the internal funding programme for initial, own-contribution and project funding from the Research and Transfer Pool (RTP) as of 1 January 2024

Ladies and gentlemen,
dear colleagues,

External funding plays a key role in enabling additional research and increasing the visibility of the University of Passau not only in academia but also in politics, business and society. To this end, the University has written into the higher education accord 2023—27 the goal of increasing the acquisition of third-party funding, particularly for large-scale projects in prestigious research programmes such as the DFG programmes at the national level and, at the European level, ERC grants and EU collaborative projects, where the University should take a coordinating role.

With the research pool, the University of Passau has an established and effective tool for the internal funding of third-party proposals and projects, which it intends to keep developing further to achieve the aforementioned goals. Following discussions in the Extended University Executive and the Research Advisory Board, the University Executive adopted the "Research and Transfer Pool Policy" on 20 December 2023. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the main changes. For your detailed review and further information, a copy of the policy is enclosed with this letter. You can also find details on this policy at the following link: <https://www.uni-passau.de/en/research/research-services/research-pool>.

Three funding lines with new "Project Funding" pillar for research independent of third-party-funding

Funding can still be applied for from the Research and Transfer Pool (RTP) at any time in the "Project Proposal" and "Own Contribution" funding lines. A new funding line for "Project Funding" (Section 7 RTP) was established to provide direct financial support for research projects. It differs from the other funding lines in that a selection process is carried out on specific dates during the year. We will announce these dates in a timely manner. The first call for applications is expected for summer semester 2024. This funding line, which can be utilised independently of any applications for external third-party funding, was launched to better accommodate the rich diversity of research conducted at the University of Passau, which is not always as much within the focus of third-party-funding providers. All three funding lines are available to professors and early career researchers alike.

Enhanced flexibility of the use of funds in the "Proposal Funding" funding line: cost types and duration

In future, RTP funds can be applied for and used to cover all costs incurred in connection with preparing third-party-funding proposals (Section 3 RTP). This means that these are no longer restricted to certain types of costs, such as personnel costs for graduate teaching and research assistant or student assistant positions. From now on, you will be able to use these funds for professional support staff positions, for example.

Moreover, the grant period for RTP funds now ends at the end of the term specified in the approval letter; it no longer ends automatically with the submission of the third-party-funding proposal. Thus, the RTP funds can be used until the end of the grant period, even after submission of the third-party-funding proposal to the funding organisation, provided that the expenditure of the RTP funds is directly related to the planning and development of the third-party-funding proposal indicated in the RTP application and/or that it substantially and perspicuously increases the chances of approval for said proposal (see Section 5(3) and (5) RTP).

Modified maximum proposal and funding amounts in the "Proposal Funding" funding line (phased model)

In principle, you can apply for RTP proposal funding for any research-related third-party-funded project to finance the initial project-planning and proposal-writing stages. To further support the objectives set out in the Higher Education Accord, it will become possible in future to apply for different funding ceilings based on various factors including the chosen funding body, participation of collaborating partners or the scale of the project design (Section 5(1)1 RTP). A new application for an essentially identical third-party-funded project is only possible if the maximum funding amount was not fully utilised when the RTP application was first approved (Section 5(2) RTP).

Notifying Research Services of changes to the planned third-party-funding application in the funding line "Proposal Funding"

As before, approvals for funding from the Research and Transfer Pool relate exclusively to the call for proposals or the funding programme of a third-party funding provider named in the application as well as the related third-party-funding proposal (Section 5(6) RTP). If you decide not to submit the third-party-funding application or to submit it having made fundamental changes (e.g. with persons or institutions other than those named in the application, with a significantly different funding amount or in relation to a different call for proposals or in a different funding programme), the Research Services Division must be informed of this decision immediately (Section 5(9) and (10) RTP).

Grounding knowledge and technology transfer projects in the "Own Contribution" funding line

In the new RTP policy, knowledge and technology transfer projects are explicitly grounded as a funding objective in the "Own Contribution" funding line. This means that projects focusing exclusively on knowledge/technology transfer are eligible for funding in the same way research projects are (Section 6(1) RTP).

Capping of the "Own Contribution" funding amount to a maximum of 10% for all third-party-funding providers

Until now, a maximum of 10% of the project costs could be applied for as own contribution from the research pool for EU structural fund programmes (e.g. Interreg). This has now been extended to include all third-party-funding providers and third-party-funding programmes. Moreover, the 10% cap can be exceeded for structure-building projects that are deemed to have outstanding strategic importance for the University (Section 6(1) RTP). The new policy also clarifies that this provision refers to the eligible project costs attributable to the University of Passau. In the case of Interreg, for example, this means that a maximum of 10% of the eligible costs, i.e. the sum of EU funding and the required own contribution, can be applied for under the RTP to cover the own contribution on a pro-rata basis. Potential additional personnel costs that are not covered by the EU cost rates, however, are not part of the eligible costs.

Consideration of financial requirements in the approval process

The RTP aims to maximise the number of high-quality third-party-funding applications and projects. In order to make efficient use of the limited funds available, they should primarily be used in cases where, without the additional funding, it would not be possible to submit a third-party-funding proposal or only one of a significantly reduced quality. This will potentially allow applicants with few resources of their own, such as early career researchers, to benefit from higher funding rates. However, chairs that have their own resources or receive higher levels of support from TG73 from ongoing, successful third-party-funded projects should contribute some of their own resources to the development of the third-party-funding proposals within their means (Section 2(6) RTP). In future, the amount of funding applied for from the RTP in each specific case will, therefore, be a core component of the guidance given to applicants by the Research Services Division and form part of the grant decision for RTP funds.

Transitional provision

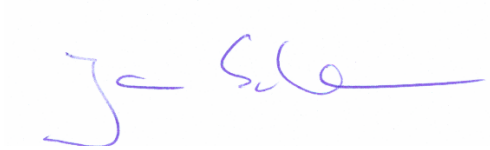
Research-pool applications that have already received approval will continue to be handled according to the previous policy (Section 8 RTP). If you have submitted a research pool application in the "Proposal Funding" funding line in the past, a new application for an essentially identical third-party-funding application in the RTP is only possible if the maximum funding amount according to Section 5(11) RTP was not exhausted when the funds from the research pool were approved. In this case you can, if required, apply for the remaining difference between the previously approved funds and the maximum funding amount in accordance with Section 5(11) RTP (corresponding to Section 5(2) RTP).

As before, you should make allowance for the length of time an application from the RTP needs to go through the approval process. Therefore, please submit your application in good time, and after consultation with the Research Services Division staff, using the online form (<https://www.uni-passau.de/en/research/research-services/research-pool/research-pool-application-form>). This will be available online from 10 January 2024.

If you have any questions about the RTP or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Research Services Division Team, who will also advise you on funding opportunities for your project idea and the corresponding third-party-funding proposal at an early stage of your deliberations. Please take advantage of this offer and approach Research Services early on. Feedback on your experiences with the new RTP is always welcome!

I am delighted that the RTP policy has enabled us to take a step forward in terms of content and funding to support the objectives formulated in the Higher Education Accord and would like to invite you to make extensive use of the opportunities arising from the new policy.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Schumann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Jan Hendrik Schumann
Vice President for Research