Technology
Arts Sciences
TH Köln

Funding guideline STEM Match – Shaping female futures in science

Juli 2026

1. Objective

The funding aims to spark interest among female Bachelor's students in STEM subjects (faculties 06 to 12) in pursuing an academic career. To this end, they are given an early opportunity to work as student research assistants within a faculty or institute. This position, held alongside their studies, helps provide financial support throughout students' studies while also reducing psychological and social barriers to an academic career. Early integration into academic culture, together with a personal connection to an experienced supervisor, is intended to foster openness toward an academic career of one's own and support the development of professional networks within academia.

This funding is part of the Female Professors Program 2030. It aims to help increase the proportion of women and gender-diverse individuals (women*) at the qualification levels leading to a professorship, as women* remain significantly underrepresented in STEM subjects.

2. Target group

The program is aimed at women* who remain underrepresented in academic STEM careers due to gender-based attributions. For reasons of readability, this document uses the terms "student" and "professor" to refer to women in these roles.

At the time of application, the student must be enrolled in at least her 4th semester of study. Additional diversity characteristics that may contribute to an intersectional compounding of structural disadvantage will be given positive consideration in the selection process.

3. Type of funding

The faculty, institute or professor receives financial support for employing the student research assistant, amounting to 7 hours per week for a duration of 10 months (contract period from April 2027 to February 2028).

Shortening the contract period is only possible in justified exceptional cases and after consultation with the professor and the project management, as this may reduce the effectiveness of the funding. Postponing or extending the funding period is not possible. Working materials must be provided independently; funding through the project for this purpose is excluded.

4. Funding and selection criteria

Formal requirements for funding eligibility:

- Only tandems consisting of Bachelor's student from her 4th semester onward (having successfully completed her 3rd semester) paired with a professor (a so-called STEM Match) are eligible for funding.
- Each student or professor may apply as part of only one STEM Match per funding cycle. Multiple applications within different tandems are not permitted.
- The STEM Match must belong to Faculties 06–12 of TH Cologne.
- Application documents must be complete.
- Submission must meet the deadline.

Quality criteria for selecting tandem applications:

- Coherence and depth of reflection in the student's motivation letter
- Fit with the funding approach and objectives
- Appropriateness of the task description (clear proximity to research and integration into an academic environment)
- Plausibility of academic supervision and a positive working relationship

5. Application process

Applications are submitted jointly by the student and professor as a tandem (STEM Match), no later than February 12, 2027. All documents must be submitted by the deadline in a single PDF (without application photos) via email to marie.neher@th-koeln.de. Applications may be submitted in either German or English.

Documents required from the student:

- Motivation letter (max. 1 page) addressing the following points:
  a. What do you hope to gain from participating in this funding program?
  b. To what extent do you identify with the group seeking to increase diversity among academic staff?
  c. A description of your academic progress to date, your expected duration of study, and (if applicable) your current career goal.
- Tabular CV, incl. outline of previous appointments as a student research assistant
- Current transcript of records
- Informal declaration of consent to participate in anonymized surveys, including beyond the funding period

Documents required from the professor:

- Motivation letter (max. 1 page) addressing the objectives of the funding program (see section 1)
- A brief, concrete description of the tasks assigned to the student
- Signed "Declaration of commitment" (see PDF template)
- Disclosure of all internal funding previously received at TH Köln (e.g., PLan_CV)
- Informal declaration of consent to participate in anonymized surveys, including beyond the funding period

6. Selection procedure for funding decisions

A limited amount of funding is available for the project. Depending on the number of applications received, a competitive selection process may result. Selection is made on a criteria basis using the application documents, according to the funding and selection criteria outlined in Section 4.

Submitting an application does not create any entitlement to funding. Reapplication in the following cycle is possible.

7. Obligations for applicants

- The student research assistant is formally employed through the respective institute, or faculty; the required documents must be submitted independently to the Human Resources Department in accordance with the standard hiring procedure.
- The faculty or institute will provide all working materials necessary to carry out the tasks specified in the task description.

- Tandems are asked to participate in the kickoff event on April 23, 2027, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM, held on-site in Cologne at the start of the funding period, as well as in an online check-in after approximately five months. Further details will be provided with the letter of approval.
- At the end of the funding period, both tandem partners submit a personal experience report. The report submitted by the supervising professor additionally includes an assessment of the student research assistant's academic potential and the prospects for possible continued employment.
- Applicants commit to participating in anonymized surveys for the purpose of evaluating the project, including beyond the project period.

8. Contact and support

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