

Freie Universität  Berlin

Distinguished

Freie Universität Berlin's Winning Projects
in the Excellence Initiative



Top Research, Made in Germany



Freie Universität Berlin has been very successful in the German federal and state Excellence Initiative: five graduate schools and three clusters of research have been accepted for funding. Of the latter, two are in the humanities – a situation

that is unique in Germany – and the third in medicine. In addition, Freie Universität is one of nine German universities to receive funding for its strategy for the future – “International Network University.” The decision in the Excellence Initiative is an acknowledgment of the success of the strategy that Freie Universität Berlin has been pursuing since its foundation in 1948. During its founding years, situated in West Berlin, separated physically from the Federal Republic of Germany, Freie Universität was reliant upon its connections with organizations and personalities in Germany, Europe, and the entire world, in order to survive academically and intellectually. What started out as a necessity for survival rapidly became a strategy for success, and the policy of internationalization emerged as a guarantor for academic excellence. With its new funding, Freie Universität will continue to pursue the same strategy – providing benefits for both Berlin-Brandenburg as a center for science on a regional level and Germany as an international center for research.

Prof. Dr. Dieter Lenzen

President of Freie Universität Berlin

The Excellence Initiative



2

The federal and state Excellence Initiative was established in 2005 with the aim of improving top research at universities in Germany. The funding period is five years. Altogether 1.9 billion euros are earmarked for funding top research within the framework of the Excellence Initiative between 2006 and 2012. Evaluations were

made in two rounds of approval for three funding lines. First, graduate schools: the structured Ph.D. programs for educating junior researchers each receive on average one million euros annually. Second, excellence clusters: the interdisciplinary research alliances receive grants in the amount of roughly 6.5 million euros annually. Third, strategies for future development: their goal is to improve top research at universities in Germany to make it more competitive at an international level. Eligible for funding in this line are all measures that put universities in a position which enables them to develop further the areas where their performance is already outstanding at an international level and to establish the university's position among the best international research institutions. One prerequisite for a university to be approved to receive funding for its future development strategy was approval for at least one excellence cluster and one graduate school. In the first round of competition, three universities were approved for institutional funding, and six additional ones were added in the second round.

Freie Universität was selected for its institutional strategy in the Excellence Initiative and is now one of nine universities of excellence in Germany. Freie Universität was successful with its future development strategy of an "International Network University." Two excellence clusters and four graduate schools were also approved for funding, as well as one cluster and one graduate school at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, the medical school operated jointly by Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität. In addition, Freie Universität participates in a cluster at Technische Universität Berlin on catalysis research.



3



Freie Universität Berlin's institutional strategy as that of an *International Network University* has developed out of its founding history and tradition: Freie Universität was founded in 1948 by students and professors with assistance from the U.S.A. and the support of Berlin politicians. The foundation of the new university was a reaction to the extreme restrictions placed on students and faculty at the communist-controlled university in the eastern sector of the city. Due to this legacy, Freie Universität is committed to freedom. Freie Universität will fulfill this commitment with its concept of an International Network University – because international networks are simultaneously the goal of and the prerequisite for academic freedom.

The basis for the expansion of its networks is the cluster strategy that Freie Universität Berlin began implementing in 2003. In the future, a Center for Cluster Development will facilitate this process by extending the research networks of Freie Universität and identifying new areas

for future research. By providing a network for junior researchers, the Center for Graduate Studies in Dahlem Research School coordinates the university's structured Ph.D. programs in accordance with international standards. In addition, the Alliance of Berlin Graduate Schools, set up by the three large universities, works to further improve the education network for junior researchers in Berlin.

The Center for International Cooperation is the interface of the international network at Freie Universität Berlin. This center coordinates the over 130 active international partnerships of the university. In addition, this center works with branch offices around the world, e.g., in New York, Beijing, Moscow, and New Delhi. These offices function as recruitment centers to attract young scholars to Berlin as a center for research and exchange through research clusters at Freie Universität. The development strategy as that of an International Network University will sustain research and education meeting the highest standards – at Freie Universität and in Berlin-Brandenburg as a science region.



Excellence Clusters

About Language and Emotions

The research program of the cluster *Languages of Emotion* is devoted to the study of the relationships between emotions and symbolic practices. What and how we “feel,” is greatly influenced by language and images. Emotions facilitate or hamper our language acquisition; conversely, language competence affects emotional communication. Emotion research of the past 20 years has for the most part neglected the role of language, as has language research the role of emotions. The interdisciplinary approach of this cluster aims to change this state of affairs.



Our use of symbols and our affective dispositions have in common the tendency to reach out beyond the bounds of the possible, toward the fictive and imaginary realms. The arts are thus a natural area for research in this cluster.

The four fields being investigated are: the relationship between emotions and language, including sounds and images; the specifically artistic practices and poetics used for portraying affects; the correlation between emotional and linguistic competence as well as disturbances in these areas; affect modeling at the level of cultural codes.

The cluster brings together scholarship from more than 20 disciplines, all of which have their own traditions of affect-oriented thinking. Several outstanding non-university research institutions are collaborating in this cluster, including the Max Planck Institutes for Human Development, for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, for Evolutionary Anthropology, and the Center for Research in Literature and Culture.

Studying Antiquity



8

Two universities – four non-university Berlin research institutions – one project: The excellence cluster *Topoi – The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations* unites the various institutions in Berlin that perform outstanding research on antiquity. There is no other location in Germany where the cultures of the ancient world are as visible as they are in Berlin: The Museum Island displays

the Pergamum Altar and the Ishtar Gate with its Processional Way from Babylon in addition to many other well-known monuments. Berlin is also home to the head office of the German Archaeological Institute that carries out and sponsors research and excavations in all the present-day countries of the ancient world. In the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy ancient inscriptions and texts are edited and interpreted. The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science studies systems of knowledge in antiquity. Not least important, Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität offer a unique combination of subjects that study the cultures of the ancient world, including Egyptology, Ancient Middle Eastern Studies, various ancient archaeologies, Classical Studies, history, and philosophy. This cluster aims to study the relationship between space and knowledge in the civilizations of the Middle East and of the regions surrounding the Mediterranean and Black seas during the period covering the 6th millennium B.C. to about A.D. 500.

Breaking New Ground in Neurosciences

How can multiple sclerosis be stopped? How can stroke damage be diminished or prevented? What causes dysplasia of the brain leading to, for example, epileptic seizures? In the excellence cluster *NeuroCure* 25 scientists from Charité, a joint department of Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität, both universities, the Max Delbrück Center, the Deutsche Rheuma-Forschungszentrum, and the Leibniz Institute for Molecular Pharmacology are working to improve the quality of life for patients with neurological disorders. The NeuroCure researchers will first turn their attention to stroke, multiple sclerosis, and developmental disturbances in the central nervous system. These diseases have many underlying mechanisms in common, an understanding of which is needed for the development of an effective therapy. This interdisciplinary project at Charité has six areas of research, in general each headed by a basic researcher and a clinician. This structure facilitates the rapid transfer of new research results into the development of new therapies. Close interdisciplinary collaboration between research and clinic, flat hierarchies, improved education, and cooperation between all the neurosciences, are implemented in the NeuroCure cluster.

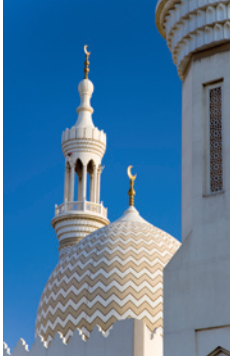
9



The *Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School* of Freie Universität Berlin is the only graduate school of literary studies that was approved for funding in the Excellence Initiative. In this school 30 outstanding Ph.D. students of various fields of literary studies receive three-year fellowships. In addition, 15 Ph.D. students are accepted who have a fellowship from another source. The focus of the research is on an internationally oriented, comparative literary criticism that studies texts of diverse languages and cultures. By emphasizing comparative methods, the graduate school is adopting an aspect of research in literary studies that has been pursued successfully at Freie Universität for many years. The method is characterized by a modern conception of analysis that makes it possible to embrace the diversity of the languages, study literary history in the context of a modern history of knowledge and consciousness, and give a theoretical foundation to teaching the basics of poetological principles, genres, styles, and rhetorical strategies of literature. Instruction is handled by co-teaching teams. As a great deal of the program is practice oriented, it is expected to facilitate the graduate students' careers in research or the transmission of literature.

Graduate Schools





What is Islamic about the “Islamic world”? To what extent does Islam influence the culture, law, and politics of the societies that we call “Muslim” or “influenced by Islam”? These issues of academic and sociopolitical interest are the central themes that will be investigated at the *Berlin Graduate School of Muslim Cultures and Societies*. The emphasis is on a systematic and comparative investigation of the diversity within Islam, on how

it has changed over the course of history, and on emerging global networks of Islamic cultures and societies. This extends beyond the Middle East to include countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central, Southern, and Southeast Asia as well as the Muslim Diaspora in Europe and North America. A contributing factor to the diversity is the variety of intercultural interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The faculty of the graduate school includes approx. 20 scholars in the humanities and social sciences from Freie Universität, Humboldt-Universität, and the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies (ZMO). In addition, Freie Universität Berlin is hiring new contingent professors of Islamic law, Islam in Europe, and Muslims in Southern and Southeast Asia. Besides its close group of collaborators in Berlin and Germany, the graduate school cooperates with over 30 partners around the world. It admits 15 doctoral students each year. The in-depth academic education in conjunction with the teaching of practical skills will qualify graduates for positions of leadership in academia, the media, and politics as well as in the cultural and business sectors.

The Graduate School of North American Studies started its structured doctoral program in the fall of 2007. Eleven outstanding candidates are granted fellowships each year. The program is dedicated to a comprehensive and interdisciplinary analysis of the social, economic, and cultural changes facing North American societies at the beginning of the 21st century. Scholars from the following disciplines are involved in teaching and mentoring: cultural studies, literary studies, history, political science, sociology, and economics. Interdisciplinary dissertation projects are encouraged. The program is advertised internationally. It aims to prepare highly qualified and promising doctoral students for academic careers in universities and research institutions as well as in public and private organizations. The language of instruction is English.



New Strategies in the Development of Therapies



The *Berlin-Brandenburg School for Regenerative Therapies (BSRT)* is a joint initiative by clinicians, biologists, and engineers. Its objective is the targeted differentiation of cells for the purpose of stimulating endogenous tissue regeneration in the treatment of acute and chronic diseases. This presents a challenge to traditional strategies for the

development of therapies and places new demands on traditional conceptions of education: Biologists and engineers will develop new combinations of cells, medications, and technical products out of conventional implants such as joint replacement prostheses. These processes require bioengineers who are able to understand complex biological processes as well as biologists who have an understanding of the technical components of the therapeutic approaches. Finally, practicing physicians are confronted with completely new types of implants and therapies for which they have not previously been trained. Working out new approaches to these requirements for education and research is a major objective of this graduate school. The graduate school will be closely associated with the Berlin-Brandenburg Centre for Regenerative Therapies (BCRT) – an interdisciplinary institution supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Helmholtz Society, with a focus on translating new conceptions in regenerative therapy into practice. The program represents the collaborative activities of numerous universities and non-university institutions in the Berlin-Brandenburg region.

Mathematics in Motion

The Berlin Mathematical School (BMS) is a joint graduate school of the three outstanding mathematics departments at the universities in Berlin: Freie Universität, Humboldt-Universität, and Technische Universität.

Together they attract talented students from all over the world to study at the Ph.D. program in Berlin. Since 2006 the BMS is funded as a graduate school in the framework of the German Excellence Initiative. The BMS offers

an excellent environment for graduate studies within the broad scope of expertise in mathematics of Berlin, while also providing a structured and sophisticated study program with English as the language of instruction. Students have access to the opportunities offered by all of Berlin's Research Training Groups (Graduiertenkollegs) and other ongoing research projects, e.g. the DFG Research Center MATHEON "Mathematics for Key Technologies," the Weierstraß Institute for Applied Analysis and Stochastics (WIAS), or the Zuse Institute Berlin (ZIB). Besides their advisers, BMS students have mentors for the whole duration of their studies. Along with the excellent academic support by internationally renowned professors of all three universities, including four Leibniz laureates, the BMS offers support in non-mathematical issues ranging from housing to visas or child care as well as language courses. At present, roughly 130 students are working towards their Ph.D., almost a third of whom are female and 45 per cent come from abroad.



International Network University	4
Languages of Emotion	7
Topoi – The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations	8
NeuroCure – Towards a Better Outcome of Neurological Disorders ...	9
Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies	11
Berlin Graduate School of Muslim Cultures and Societies	12
Graduate School of North American Studies	13
Berlin Brandenburg School for Regenerative Therapies	14
Berlin Mathematical School	15

Published by the President's Office of Freie Universität Berlin, 2009
www.fu-berlin.de | www.excellence-fu.de

Design: unicom-berlin.de
 Printed by Heenemann GmbH & Co KG

Photographs: Ausserhofer, David (1, 3); Bernard, iStockphoto (7); Bringmann, Andrea (11); Dahl, Ulrich (14); DAI, Orient-Abteilung/Wagner, Irmgard (8); Görner, Reinhard (16); Luxenburger, Martin, Merz Pharma (9); Macroman, Fotolia (4); Mühlebach, Daniel, Fotolia (12); Nick, Photocase (5); Recklinghausen, Philipp von (Cover); Wanzenmacher, Bernd (6, 10, 13)

Cover Photograph: Designed by Lord Norman Foster, the Philological Library was opened in 2005.

www.excellence-fu.de

