KIT Graduate Excellence Program (GradExcPro) – FAQ

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This document provides additional information and guidance on selected aspects of the GradExcPro call. For detailed information on eligibility requirements, the selection and matching process, and how to apply, please refer to the **GradExcPro website**.

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1. Application and Selection

1.1. How do I find a Graduate School at KIT that's right for me? What if I don't find one?

The participating Graduate Schools cover a broad range of disciplines at KIT. GradExcPro provides information on the **11 participating Graduate Schools**, as well as **a searchable database** of affiliated supervisors and research groups.

When deciding which Graduate School may be the best fit, please consider:

- your academic background
- your research interests and proposed research idea
- the Graduate School's research focus
- its associated supervisors and research groups

If none of the Graduate Schools appear suitable, you may select "None" and explain your reasons in the GradExcPro Application Form. In the event of admission to the program, we will work with you and your prospective supervisor to identify a suitable Graduate School or other doctoral program that supports your academic and professional development.

1.2. How do I find a suitable supervisor to include in my application?

Applicants are asked to identify up to two prospective supervisors before submitting their application. To support this process, GradExcPro provides access to the **GradExcPro Supervisor Database**, which contains profiles of KIT researchers affiliated with the participating Graduate Schools and interested in supervising doctoral candidates. The database can be searched by Graduate School, KIT Department, and (research) keywords.

In addition, applicants may explore the websites of the **KIT Departments**, **KIT Institutes**, and **participating Graduate Schools** to identify researchers whose expertise aligns with their academic background and research interests. Further information and relevant links are available on the **GradExcPro website**.

You do not need to contact prospective supervisors as part of the GradExcPro application process. The matching of applicants and supervisors is coordinated by the GradExcPro Team and the participating Graduate Schools as part of the selection process.

1.3. Do I need to contact potential supervisors before submitting my application?

No. You do not need to contact prospective supervisors as part of the GradExcPro application process. The matching of applicants and supervisors is coordinated by the Karlsruhe House of Young Scientists (KHYS) and the participating Graduate Schools and forms an integral part of the matching and selection process. Therefore, direct inquiries to potential supervisors regarding a GradExcPro application are generally not necessary and may not be taken into account during the matching and selection process.

To support applicants in exploring potential research environments and identifying suitable supervisors, GradExcPro provides a **searchable database** of participating researchers.

1.4. Can I apply if I have not yet completed my degree and/or received my final degree certificate?

Yes. Applicants who have not yet been awarded their degree at the time of application may still apply. However, by **February 1, 2027**, you must submit documentation confirming that you have completed all degree requirements and received all final grades. This documentation must include a complete transcript of records covering all completed coursework, examinations, and final grades.

If your official degree certificate has not yet been issued by February 1, 2027, you may still be eligible to apply. Once available, the degree certificate must be submitted to **GradExcPro@khys.kit.edu**. Please note that the degree certificate must be submitted before taking up the position.

Documents that are not issued in German or English must be accompanied by a certified translation.

1.5. Do I need to submit proof of English language proficiency?

Yes. Applicants must have English language proficiency at CEFR level B2 or higher. English proficiency may be demonstrated through one of the following:

- a recognized language certificate (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English qualifications)
- a university degree taught in English, or an official statement from the awarding institution confirming that English was the language of instruction
- other comparable documentation demonstrating English proficiency at B2 level or higher

If English proficiency cannot be verified from the submitted application documents, applicants may be asked to provide additional evidence.

1.6. Do I need German language skills?

No. German language skills are not required for participation in GradExcPro. However, learning some German can be helpful for everyday life in Germany and may broaden your professional opportunities during and after your doctorate, particularly if you are interested in pursuing a career in Germany. Participants can take advantage of **German language courses** offered at KIT, and the Karlsruhe House of Young Scientists (KHYS) can provide information on suitable language learning opportunities.

1.7. What are my chances of receiving funding?

It is not possible to estimate an individual applicant's chances of receiving funding in advance. GradExcPro is a competitive funding program, and funding decisions are based on the outcome of the selection process and the funding available in the respective call.

1.8. When will I receive a decision on my application?

Applicants will be informed by email when a decision relevant to their application has been made. This may include, for example, a notification that an application is ineligible or incomplete, an invitation to interview, or the final outcome of the selection process.

Applicants selected for interviews can expect to be contacted in late January 2027. Interviews are scheduled to take place between February 2 and 5, 2027. Final funding decisions are expected in early March 2027.

1.9. Will I receive feedback on my application?

Due to the expected number of applications, detailed individual feedback cannot generally be provided. Applicants will, however, be informed about the outcome of the relevant stages of the selection process and the final funding decision.

2. Initial Steps after Selection

2.1. Does selection for GradExcPro funding also mean that I will be accepted as a doctoral researcher by the relevant KIT Department?

Acceptance as a doctoral researcher by the relevant KIT Department is required before you can commence your doctorate. The formal decision on acceptance as a doctoral researcher remains the responsibility of the respective KIT Department.

However, successful GradExcPro applicants will generally meet the requirements for acceptance. The program applies rigorous eligibility criteria and a multi-stage selection process, including academic review and evaluation by prospective doctoral supervisors. As a result, applicants selected for funding will usually fulfill the requirements for acceptance as a doctoral researcher.

Please note that acceptance also requires submission of the relevant degree certificate.

2.2. How can international applicants obtain support with visa, relocation, and settling-in procedures?

KIT's **International Welcome Office (IWO)** provides information and support on visa and residence matters, health insurance, accommodation, administrative procedures, and other aspects of relocating to Germany and settling in Karlsruhe.

To access these services, please register in **Mobility Online**.

2.3. What happens if I am unable to start between April and June 2027 due to visa, employment, admission, or other administrative delays?

A delayed start does not automatically affect your funding. Successful applicants are expected to *take all reasonable steps* to enable the timely commencement of funding and to complete any required administrative procedures as soon as possible. However, *delays may occur due to factors beyond the applicant's control*, such as visa procedures, employment processes, doctoral acceptance procedures, export control requirements, or delays in the issuance of degree certificates.

If a delay becomes foreseeable, applicants should inform the GradExcPro Team *as early as possible*. Whether a delayed start remains compatible with funding will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the reasons for the delay and its expected duration.

2.4. Do I need to enroll as a doctoral student at KIT, and are there any other fees?

No. Enrollment as a doctoral student is not required for participation in GradExcPro or for the commencement of funding. There are no tuition fees for pursuing a doctorate at KIT.

Within two weeks of receiving your acceptance as a doctoral researcher from the relevant KIT Department, you must either enroll as a doctoral student or, if eligible, apply for exemption from enrollment. Since GradExcPro participants are employed at 75% FTE, they generally meet the requirements for exemption from enrollment.

Enrollment is associated with certain benefits, such as student discounts, but also requires payment of the applicable semester fee (currently approximately EUR 200 per semester). Doctoral researchers who are exempt from enrollment do not pay this fee.

Further information on enrollment and exemption options is available **here**.

3. GradExcPro Funding

3.1. How is GradExcPro related to the State Graduate Funding (Landesgraduiertenförderung)?

The Baden-Württemberg **State Graduate Funding (LGF)** is a long-established and excellence-based funding scheme for doctoral researchers. Starting in 2027, the State Graduate Funding program at KIT is implemented through GradExcPro. The program follows the fundamental principles of the State Graduate Funding Act (LGFG) and the LGF Statutes of KIT, while taking into account the specific characteristics of employment-based funding as outlined in the GradExcPro Call for Applications.

3.2. What should I consider regarding additional professional activities and other significant commitments during the funding period?

Additional professional activities and other significant commitments are permitted provided they do not adversely affect progress on the doctoral project. Such activities may include, for example, taking on additional employment, consulting work, freelance activities, teaching commitments, self-employment, board memberships, or other time-intensive responsibilities.

Activities or commitments that may substantially limit the time available for doctoral research should be discussed with your doctoral supervisor and brought to the attention of the GradExcPro Team.

3.3. Can the GradExcPro funding period be interrupted?

Yes. In justified cases, an interruption of the GradExcPro funding period may be approved. Examples include research stays abroad, parental leave, or other circumstances that temporarily prevent progress on the doctoral project.

Funded doctoral researchers should contact the GradExcPro Team as early as possible if such circumstances arise. Requests for an interruption of the funding period are assessed on a case-by-case basis by the GradExcPro Committee. If an interruption is approved, the funding period will normally be extended by the approved duration of the interruption.

Please note: Maternity leave does not need to be requested as an interruption of the funding period and is handled automatically.

3.4. How is maternity leave handled?

The GradExcPro funding period is automatically extended by the duration of the statutory maternity protection period under applicable German law.

Funded doctoral researchers are asked to inform the GradExcPro Team as early as possible so that any program-related implications can be addressed in a timely manner. Matters relating to the employment contract are handled in accordance with the applicable regulations and procedures of KIT and the host institute.

3.5. What happens if I need more than three years to complete my doctorate?

GradExcPro funding is intended to support doctoral research for a period of three years. Please note that completion of the doctorate within the three-year funding period cannot be guaranteed.

Funded doctoral researchers who anticipate requiring additional time to complete their doctorate are encouraged to discuss possible follow-up funding options with their doctoral supervisor at an early stage.

4. Reporting Obligations

4.1. What reporting and documentation requirements apply during the GradExcPro funding period?

Please note that the reporting obligations during the funding period are currently under review. The reporting and documentation requirements outlined below are therefore provisional and may be adjusted. Funded doctoral researchers will be informed of the final requirements at the start of the funding period.

Funded doctoral researchers are required to submit:

- **a doctoral project and work plan (maximum five pages)** within the first four months of the funding period. The document should outline research objectives, planned work, milestones, and an indicative timetable. The work plan must be accompanied by a brief written confirmation of support from the doctoral supervisor.
- **a mid-term progress report** approximately 18 months after the start of funding. The report should summarize scientific progress achieved to date, explain any major deviations from the original work plan, and outline the planned work for the remainder of the funding period. A brief assessment by the doctoral supervisor must also be submitted.

Funded doctoral researchers are required to comply with all reporting and documentation obligations defined by the program. Failure to provide the required reports or evidence of satisfactory progress may result in a review of the funding status and, where appropriate, a reduction or termination of funding.

4.2. What reporting and documentation requirements apply after the GradExcPro funding period?

No later than six months after the end of the GradExcPro funding period, funded doctoral researchers must submit *either*:

- **confirmation from the responsible KIT Department** that the dissertation has been submitted; *or*
- a brief **final report** outlining the results achieved, progress made, remaining work, the expected timetable for completion, and any publications resulting from the funded research.

After completion of the doctoral project, a copy of the doctoral certificate and doctoral diploma must be submitted to the GradExcPro Team.