



## **Terms and Conditions of the Research Training Group Social Order and Life Chances in Cross-National Comparison<sup>1</sup>**

University of Cologne

Updated June 30, 2013

### **Part I: Purpose and Institutions**

- § 1) Purpose
- § 2) Members of the Research Training Group
- § 3) General Assembly
- § 4) Advisory Board
- § 5) Chairperson and Executive Board

### **Part II: Allocation of Stipends**

- § 6) Advertisement and Application
- § 7) Selection Process
- § 8) Stipend Amounts
- § 9) Duration of Grants
- § 10) Extension of Stipends / "Trading time for money"
- § 11) Termination or Interruption of Grants
- § 12) General Requirements
- § 13) Provisos

### **Part III: The Research Training Group Program**

- § 14) Participation Requirement
- § 15) Advising
- § 16) Progress Monitoring

---

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, the masculine pronoun form will be used throughout this document.

## Part I: Purpose and Institutions

### § 1) Purpose

The governing body of the "Social Order and Life Chances in Cross-National Comparison (SOCLIFE)" Research Training Group is the University of Cologne Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences. The purpose of the Group is the research-oriented education and training of young academics in an inter-facultative program. To this end, it allocates grants for the investigation of problems related to the themes studied in the Research Training Group.

### § 2) Members of the Research Training Group

- (1) Full members of the Research Training Group include
  - a) Founding members (*Antragsteller*) of the Research Training Group,
  - b) co-opting affiliates of the University teaching faculty as defined in § 4 par. 2, letter (e), and
  - c) graduate students.
- (2) Graduate students (par. 1, letter (c)) are stipend holders of the Research Training Group as well as persons who have been accepted to the Research Training Group according to the conditions in par. 3, letter (a).
- (3) Upon request, the advisory board may accept the following persons as members of the Research Training Group:
  - a) Doctoral candidates of the University of Cologne whose work may be directly incorporated into the themes addressed by the Research Training Group;
  - b) Interested professors from the University of Cologne as well as other universities and research institutions whose work may be directly incorporated into the themes addressed by the Research Training Group;
- (4) In addition, doctoral candidates of the University of Cologne, other universities or non-university institutions whose dissertations deal with problems in the context themes addressed by the Research Training Group may be entitled to the status of associate members of the Research Training Group upon request. They will then be entitled to participate in Research Training Group events.

### § 3) General Assembly

- (1) The general assembly is composed of full members of the Research Training Group as defined §2 pars. 1a and 1b and two graduate student representatives as defined in §2 par.1c. It deliberates over improvements in the educational program and in internal exchanges. It presents requests to the Group's chairperson, who can then submit them to the advisory board.
- (2) The chairperson calls a general meeting of members once every semester. The meeting constitutes a quorum when at least half of the group made up of the lectur-

ers specified in §2 pars. 1a and 1b as well as two graduate student representatives as specified in §2 par. 1c is present. Extraordinary meetings may be called upon the request of at least four members, two of whom must be lecturers. An announcement and an agenda for the meeting must be delivered to the members at least 7 days prior to the meeting date.

- (3) The existence of a quorum is determined at the beginning of each meeting. An absolute majority of those present is required to reach a decision; in the case of §4, par. 2, letter (e), the absolute majority of members of the general assembly is required. Voting takes place by means of an open show of hands.

#### **§ 4) Advisory Board**

- (1) The advisory board is made up of the Research Training Group instructors defined in §2 par. 1, letters (a) and (b).
- (2) The duties of the advisory board are as follows:
  - a) Selection of a chairperson and a representative from among the members of the advisory board;
  - b) Deliberation and decision-making with regard to the research and training program;
  - c) Decisions concerning the granting of scholarships and stipends as well as all other questions related to this matter;
  - d) Decisions regarding the acceptance of graduate students as defined in §2 par. 1, letter (c);
  - e) Decisions regarding the acceptance of new full members as defined in §2, par. 1, letters (a) and (b).
- (3) Meetings of the advisory board are called by the chairperson of the Research Training Group as necessary. The board constitutes a quorum when at least half of the full members as defined in §2, par. 1, letters (a) and (b) are present. Extraordinary meetings may be called upon request of at least four members of the advisory board. An announcement and an agenda for the meeting must be delivered to the members at least 7 days prior to the meeting date.
- (4) The existence of a quorum is determined at the beginning of each meeting. An absolute majority of those present is required to reach a decision. Voting takes place by means of an open show of hands.

#### **§ 5) Executive Board**

- (1) The executive board consists of
  - a) the chairperson of the Research Training Group and
  - b) the deputy chairperson (vice-chair) of the Research Training Group.

- 
- (2) The term of office for the chairperson and the vice-chair is three years; they may be re-elected.
  - (3) The chairperson functions as the public representative of the Research Training Group. He compiles the annual statement of accounts for the DFG and reports to the advisory board. The chairperson is in charge of the ongoing business of the Research Training Group. He is responsible for the accounting and bookkeeping of the financial resources provided to the Research Training Group as well as for making decisions regarding changes in financing procedures during the current funding period.
  - (4) The chairperson organizes and coordinates the Group's research and training program, devises the Research Training Group degree program and organizes colloquia and supplemental courses.
  - (5) The chairperson prepares the agenda for meetings of the advisory board and compiles the necessary documents for decision-making with regard to
    - the training and research program,
    - the granting of stipends, including the extension or termination of stipends,
    - the participation of professors in the Research Training Group as well as the acceptance of instructors according to §1 par. 1 letter (b).
  - (6) The chairperson has a deputy, or vice-chair. The chairperson and vice-chair constitute the executive board of the Research Training Group.
  - (7) The vice-chair of the Research Training Group represents the Group's chairperson if the latter is unable to carry out the duties of his office

## Part II: Allocation of Stipends

### § 6) Advertisement and Application

The Research Training Group advertises its grants and stipends nationwide. Special consideration should be given to individuals transferring to the School from other institutions. Applicants are expected to demonstrate above-average qualifications as well as interest in the problems examined in the context of the Research Training Group subject matter. Applications may be made using the SOCLIFE Research Training Group's online application form. The following documents should be included in or attached to the application:

- a complete CV;
- notarized copies of school reports (university admission authorization, university diploma);
- in the case of applicants whose native language is not English, proof of proficiency in English in the form of a report which expresses the applicant's degree of competency in the language. Alternatively, if the applicant has studied at a school or university in an English-speaking country for a period of at least six months, he may submit proof of his stay in that country;
- a two- to three-page summary of the applicant's diploma or master's thesis;
- a description of the applicant's areas of research interest and an outline of his proposed dissertation as well as an explanation of how his own research goals may be integrated into the thematic focal points of the Research Training Group (approx. 5-10 pages);
- two letters of recommendation from full professors in SOCLIFE's standardized format.

### § 7) Selection Process

The advisory board will implement the following steps toward the awarding of stipends:

- Advertisement of stipends in the appropriate media;
- Making applications available for scrutiny by all instructors;
- The executive board pre-selects the applicants who will be invited for personal interviews;
- Personal introduction of each applicant at a forum made up of instructors and the graduate student representative. The applicant will describe his research interests and provide a brief presentation of his project (approx. 15-20 minutes), followed by a discussion;
- Selection of those candidates who will be offered a stipend based on their written documents and personal presentation.

If necessary in individual cases, a telephone interview may take the place of the personal introduction.

### **§ 8) Stipend Amounts**

- (1) Under the conditions of § 3 No. 44 EStG, stipends are non-taxable. They do not represent any form of employment. Stipends are not subject to social security payments since they do not represent a remuneration as defined in § 14 SGB IV.
- (2) Stipends are allocated in the amount of EUR 1,365.00 plus a subsidy of EUR 103.00 for material expenditures. In addition, it is possible to obtain family subsidies and supplementary child allowances.
- (3) Subject to application and verification, the School may assume the costs of expenditures directly connected to the research process (teaching and learning materials, archival material, travel, etc.). Applications must be made during the funding period in question. Decisions on covering costs will be made by the executive board.

### **§ 9) Duration of Grants**

- (1) The maximum time period covered by the stipend is 36 months.
- (2) Stipends are initially granted for a period of one year.
- (3) If the dissertation plan presented at the end of the first year (Proposal) and the result of the first year's work (Significant Piece of Work) are endorsed by both advisors and accepted by the advisory board, and if the certificates of performance for the first year have been successfully completed, the stipend will be extended for an additional two years.
- (4) If the advisory board does not accept the results specified in § 9 Abs. 3 without reservations (e.g., if the board expresses doubt as to whether parts of the dissertation plan are realizable), it has the one-time option of conditionally extending the stipend for an initial maximum time period of six additional months. A final extension of the stipend to the maximum grant period will then be subject to the student's fulfillment of the conditions specified by the advisory board.

### **§ 10) Extension of Stipends / "Trading time for money"**

- (1) Grant recipients with children may claim an extension of the stipend for the maximum grant period and/or a child care subsidy if they are living in the same household with their child or children at the time that the grant period begins and if at least one child is under twelve years of age (before his/her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday) at that time. This rule also applies if the stipendiary's first child is born during the grant period.

- (2) In the case of pregnancy during the grant period, the grant recipient may already claim an extension if the time at which she would be entitled to claim maternity protection leave in accordance with the maternity protection law as updated on June 20, 2002 occurs during the grant period.
- (3) The extended stipend will equal the full amount of the previously granted stipend; that is, of the basic amount of the stipend plus the subsidy for material expenditures and supplementary child allowance.
- (4) Children of the grant recipient's spouse or partner may be taken into account if the stipendiary can credibly prove to the University that the child or children in question already lived in the same household with the stipendiary before the beginning of the grant period (e.g. verification from the residence registration office).
- (5) In the case of additional children for whose birth the stipendiary could claim maternity protection during the grant period, stipendiaries have the option of extending the grant period for an additional three months (in accordance with compulsory maternity protection).
- (6) As an alternative to extending the stipend, grant recipients also have the option of converting the unused months of the possible extension period into means of financing verified child care costs ("trading time for money"). The maximum monthly amount available for this purpose is equal to the amount of the student's basic stipend, not including subsidies for material expenditures or supplementary child allowances. This option is intended to motivate stipendiaries to move forward with their doctoral work or their projects as quickly as possible. In order to receive financing for child care costs as a replacement for the extension of a stipend, the student must provide the University with concrete documentation of child care costs. Settlement is conducted according to current tax regulations. Childcare provided in kindergartens, day care centers, after-school child care facilities, nurseries, etc., as well as the employment of nannies or childcare workers, babysitters or au pairs – including employees who provide schoolwork supervision in the home – are all eligible for financing under these rules. Costs which are not covered under this provision include expenses for teaching materials or private tutoring; expenses for the acquisition of special skills (e.g., music lessons); expenses for sports or other recreational activities as well as club memberships or meal costs. Expenses for childcare provided by family members (e.g., grandparents or siblings) are not covered under this provision.
- (7) In individual cases, if a stipendiary is determined to have special child care needs, additional funding for child care may be provided – for example, in the case of extraordinarily high child care costs due to multiple births or a child's illness. In such individual cases, a potential increase in the child care subsidy must be approved by the administrative office of the DFG.
- (8) Grant recipients are free to choose whether they wish to receive an extension of the stipend, the "trading time for money" option, or a combination of the two options.

**§ 11) Termination or Interruption of Grants**

- (1) The grant period will end no later than:
  - a) the end of the month in which the disputation or the final oral examination takes place within the process of conferring a doctorate. In the case of necessary revisions to the dissertation, the funding period may be extended by up to three months, provided that the maximum funding period has not yet been reached;
  - b) the end of the month in which the grant recipient assumes employment which is not reconcilable with the DFG guidelines for the granting of stipends under the auspices of a research training group, and which he intends to continue beyond the remaining period of his grant.
- (2) In the case that the research process is interrupted – for example, because the grant recipient intends to assume temporary employment which is not reconcilable with the DFG guidelines and whose duration is shorter than the student's remaining grant period – the executive board must be informed immediately. Payment of the stipend will be discontinued as of the date upon which research is interrupted. Payment may resume when notice is given of the continuation of research.

**§ 12) General Requirements**

Upon accepting a stipend, the recipient is required:

- a) to concentrate his work on the project described in the dissertation plan and to participate in SOCLIFE Research Training Group events;
- b) not to accept any employment which exceeds an occasional negligible income from research activities, up to a maximum amount of EUR 6,000.00 per year;
- c) to report on the progress and results of his studies and to make an appropriate contribution to the final report on the Group's overall process which the executive board is required to present to the DFG;
- d) where possible, to make the results of the studies supported by the stipend available to the public, and in doing so, to make reference to the support provided by the DFG.
- e) In addition, the grant recipient is required to inform the executive board in writing if:
  - his research project is interrupted, altered, completed ahead of time or discontinued;



- he receives remuneration for his research activities due to the contribution of a third party, or if a third party obtains a financial profit from the funded research activities with the approval of the recipient;
- he is awarded a stipend from another source;
- he assumes any form of gainful employment or self-employment. The grant recipient shall then be obliged to disclose the amount of income he obtains.
- if any other changes in his personal circumstances occur which may be relevant to the receipt of his stipend.

The SOCLIFE Research Training Group reserves the right to regularly monitor the statements presented by the stipend recipient.

### § 13) Provisos

Stipends shall be awarded under the condition that:

- a) the stipend may be revoked if research work is not assumed by the date stipulated;
- b) the grant may be revoked and the recipient required to repay any funding he has received if he does not comply with the conditions of the grant and/or the general requirements specified under § 12 during the funding period;
- c) the stipend may be revoked for important reasons or because the necessary conditions for the successful completion of the project are no longer available;
- d) the guidelines for the stipend may be altered or expanded upon and that current stipends may be modified non-retroactively to suit altered circumstances.

Stipend recipients are required to present the executive board of the Research Training Group with an express statement of their agreement to the above conditions. This agreement shall be recorded in writing in the form of a Letter of Agreement signed by the individual recipient. The grant agreement shall take effect only upon receipt of the Letter of Agreement.

## Part III: The Research Training Group Program

### § 14) Participation Requirement

Graduate students are required to participate in the courses offered by the Group. All details are determined by the Research Training Group Program, which is devised by the executive board and which constitutes a part of these guidelines.

### § 15) Advising

Advising is carried out in three different forms: (1) by the advisors, (2) through workshops and research colloquia and (3) through mentors.

- (1) In the course of the first semester, *two advising instructors* are recommended to each grant recipient. The first advisor is primarily responsible for advising the student and should come from the field; the second advisor should come from a related field (e.g. sociology or economics). The grant recipient and his advisor should meet for an advisory session at regular intervals.
- (2) Upon request, the grant recipient may change his advisor one time; however, the advisor may not be replaced during the last year of the grant period. The stipendiary is required to submit a letter to the executive board stating the reasons for the requested change. Upon consultation with the stipendiary's advisors, the board will then decide whether the student's request can be met.
- (3) In the context of colloquia and/or workshops, each grant recipient will be given the opportunity to present his ongoing or completed research projects to an academic audience and to discuss them with university instructors, graduate students and in some cases, with other researchers.
- (4) If the program is at an advanced stage, each newly beginning grant recipient shall be assigned a third year stipendiary from the same branch of study who will provide him with guidance as a *Mentor*.

### § 16) Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring for grant recipients is carried out in three different forms: (1) by the advisors, (2) by the advisory board and (3) by the executive board of the Research Training Group.

- (1) For each academic year (from October until the following September), the grant recipient must present the executive board with a list of the courses he has attended, accompanied by records of those courses. The deadline for submitting a course list for the preceding academic year is December 15 of that year.

- (2) Three months after the beginning of the grant period, grant recipients (together with their respective advisors) must prepare an agreement on the objectives they wish to achieve within the framework of the proposed dissertation (Target Agreement). All Target Agreements must be submitted to the executive board. The executive board will determine the deadline for submission.
- (3) At the end of the first academic year, the grant recipient must present both of his advisors with (i) a list of all the objectives he has reached (Achievements) in the first academic year, (ii) a work plan for the second academic year, (iii) a result (Significant Piece of Work) from his work in the first academic year, and (iv) a dissertation plan (Proposal) for the two remaining academic years, containing questions, a theoretical approach, hypotheses and testing methods. All documents must be submitted to the executive board. The executive board will determine the deadline for submission.
- (4) At the beginning of the second year, the advisors shall provide a brief *written* commentary on the stipendiary's progress in the dissertation plan (Proposal) and the Significant Piece of Work. The advisors' comments will be submitted to the executive board, which will then present them to all of the advisors in the SOCLIFE Research Training Group for the purpose of approving an extension of the stipend (see § 9 (3)).
- (5) At the end of the second year, the grant recipient will present his advisors with (i) a list of all the objectives he has reached and (ii) a work plan for the third academic year. All documents must be submitted to the executive board. The executive board will determine the deadline for submission.