

# White Rose University Consortium: College of Arts and Humanities

## Arts and Humanities Research Culture in Germany

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### Conferences and Seminars

#### *Information about Conferences*

It is in your own best interest to try and already attend conferences during your PhD studies. Especially if you are planning for a career in academia, but also simply to be able to write a 'better' thesis: Through participation in conferences, you meet people who work in your field, you build up a network that might come in handy later, and you hear about the latest research before people will have published on it. Therefore, students are generally expected to participate in conferences and workshops – anything that might broaden your academic horizon.

The best place online to find conferences, or rather, have calls for papers etc. find you, is [h-net](#). Sign up for example H-Germanistik and you will receive daily emails covering anything from edited lists and websites, peer reviewed essays, multimedia materials, and a room for discussion for academics and the interested public. These are very similar in their purpose to lists like e.g. 'german-studies' on jiscmail, but instead of covering UK-wide events, the H-lists are most useful when you are based in Germany, Austria, Switzerland or the U.S.

On top of this, you will learn about conferences as you go along with your research; from colleagues, posters put up around university, and fellow doctoral students.

#### *Conference funding*

If you hold a scholarship, this will often also pay for your costs incurring when going to conferences. However, you might still have to write a letter of motivation, and explain why this conference is important to your project, i.e. you will have to plan ahead. Best is to ring your Stiftung to find out how to go about securing conference funding as soon as you know of one that you would like to attend.

Here is advice by the [University of Erlangen](#) where else is worth trying for conference funding. Your own university might have put together a similar list with funding bodies/ ideas. There might be a limited amount of money the department itself manages to fund trips (normally for staff, but

it would be a possibility if you are employed as a research assistant), and there are other opportunities again if you want to go abroad for a conference; in this case, the DAAD is certainly worth a try.

Also, if the conference you would like to attend takes place somewhere in Germany, getting accepted to it often means the organisers will reimburse travel and hotel costs incurring to you. Seek clarification if you are unsure.

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## **Presenting and Publishing Research**

### *Presentations and Academic papers*

There will be the Kolloquium in the context of which you can present your work to academic peers of your institution. Often, there will be a departmental lecture series and other event series in which you can present your work to a larger audience, including other lecturers and students of your institution. These are open to the wider public, too. The University of Münster's English Department, to give just one example, runs regular open lectures in the evenings. A recent one was the lecture series 'CROSSOVERS: Postcolonial Studies and Transcultural Learning' they ran in the summer semester of 2012.

Presentations are structured very similarly to those you might have given or heard at UK institutions. Depending on the type and size of the conference (as well as your subject area), conferences might be held in German, English, both, or a third language. Just like in the Anglophone realm, papers you give at a conference are normally around 20 minutes in length. You will be expected to give a talk that is engaging yet professional and, above all, academically sound.

You will have the opportunity to organise your own conferences and workshops, especially if you are one of a group of doctoral researchers in a department, or integrated in a graduate school. It is also very likely that you will be able to help organise a conference hosted at your home institution. This will involve writing and sending out the call for papers, grouping abstracts into panels, communicating with participants, and eventually, making sure that things go smoothly on the day of the conference.

Generally, if you have an idea, i.e. you would like to organise a specific workshop for a certain reason, do not hold back with it. Ask your supervisor how to turn your idea into reality – you will benefit from the experience, and it will look very good on your CV.

### *Publishing*

While there are no official requirements for you to publish during your PhD, just like conference participation, it says something about the interest in the academic community in your topic as well as its general research impact when you already publish during your PhD. It will most likely increase your chances to secure a post-doc or similar position afterwards.

If you find it daunting to publish within a big journal, or simply no one has come along yet to ask you to write a book chapter for them, then a good way of getting into the habit of publishing/ disseminating your work is by writing an article for a good, i.e. peer-reviewed, postgraduate journal. You can find these kinds of journals online. For philology students, the open access journal [Textpraxis](#) is an example for a good journal to start publishing with. Textpraxis publishes contributions in both German and English.

German and English are the two most widely used academic languages within German-speaking countries. It depends on your subject area if the bias is more towards German or more towards English. In Germanistik, the study of German literature, culture and language, German is by far the most common language to present and publish in. In English and American Studies, it is English. In the sciences, it is often English.

However, what you may find is that you are writing in one language, e.g. for publication in a postgraduate online journal, but you submit two abstracts to be placed in front of your article – one German, one English.

It is unusual to receive funding for translation or proof-reading. For proof-reading it is common to approach university friends and ask them to read a chapter each for you. This, of course, is on top of what your supervisors have read and commented on over the years. Translation costs may be covered by your publisher should you be negotiating with one about publishing your thesis.

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## **Publication of PhDs**

At universities in Germany, it is a prerequisite for you to be allowed to carry the title of Dr. phil. that your thesis will be publicly accessible. Traditionally this was officially met by depositing the required number of printed copies specified by your university in their library. Nowadays, it is probably more desirable and easier to fulfil this demand by opting for electronic submission through the internet. Your university will have guidelines for this; see for example the website of the [University of Göttingen](#).

Just like is the case in the UK, the tendency today is towards electronic publication. However, this does not yet replace the publication of the thesis as hard copies. Rather, electronic possibilities exist alongside traditional publication.

A lot of universities, including Göttingen, therefore also run their own university press, giving you the option to publish with them. This might be a good solution for you if you are keen to actually hold a book in your hands after three or more years of work but cannot afford the time and money to publish with a bigger or more renowned publisher; also, many Promotionsordnungen still demand you publish in paper form, even if this can seem a formality and might be covered by leaving a small number of copies of your printed thesis with your university library.

## *Publishers*

The most prestigious way of publishing your thesis is with a publisher specialising in work from your field; often you will have come across these houses' names because some of what you have been reading in the past years has been published by them. In literary studies, publishers that are known to also publish PhDs are, for instance, deGruyter, Niemeyer, Narr, Fink, Peter Lang and Springer. To be sure of publishers' reputations (there are some dubious ones out there!) and the help they offer when it comes to layout and editing, talk to your supervisor for advice. Your supervisor will further be able to give you an idea of the costs involved; these may vary from very little to around 10,000 Euros for getting your PhD published. With view to that kind of money, it is all the more important to take the right decision – also considering which career path you are heading for, and if it is truly necessary to publish with a 'big' publisher (which may well be the case if you are planning to stay in academia).

Because of the possibly very high costs involved, make sure you look out for funding to support the publication of your thesis. E-fellows points out that the DFG (German Research Foundation) is worth a try for funding to support your publication, which in German is often called a 'Druckkostenzuschuss'. Other Stiftungen where you can apply for some support are the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, the Fazit Stiftung, the Geschwister Boehringer Ingelheim Stiftung and the Fonte Stiftung (they all have a web presence and are easily found through google).

The doktorandenforum further points out that on top of that, there is some money (often a few hundred Euros) to be had from [Verwertungsgesellschaft Wort](#), a copyright collective – their website is in German only. Also, make sure to research subject-specific funding bodies (especially smaller and therefore less well-known ones) that may support publications of doctoral theses.

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## **Knowledge Transfer Activities**

PG students are not encouraged to present their research outside academia to the same extent as in the UK environment. However, an understanding of the relevance of open lectures, exhibitions and other inclusive events exists, and these kinds of activities are valued. If you have an idea for a public engagement activity, and while 'public engagement' might not be a buzz word in Germany just yet, most likely you will get the support to go ahead with it.

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## **Glossary**

### *Academic abbreviations and acronyms*

The most extensive list of academic titles and their abbreviations is to be found on [German Wikipedia](#).

### *Academic terms*

**Kolloquium:** Type of class with an emphasis on advanced conversation and discussion about a subject matter, to generate ideas, and different to a seminar or lecture or tutorial in that these are often geared towards exam preparation.

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### Web Links

The best place online to find out about conferences is [h-net](#).

[Textpraxis](#) is an open access journal for philology students to start publishing their research.

The [University of Göttingen](#) website contains guidelines about publishing your thesis electronically.

[Verwertungsgesellschaft Wort](#) is a copyright collective that financially assists researchers with the publication of their theses.

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