

FAQ – RTG 2906 PhD Positions

1. I've read the advertisement for a position but I still have questions about the project, who can I turn to?

In the table below you will find the email address for each PI listed alongside the RTG project they are leading. Please feel free to contact the relevant PI with any question(s) you may have.

Project A1	Prof. Hannes Rakoczy	hannes.rakoczy@psych.uni-goettingen.de
Project A2	Dr. Oliver Schülke	oliver.schuelke@biologie.uni-goettingen.de
Project A3	Prof. Julia Fischer	julia.fischer@dpz.eu
Project A4	Prof. Anne Schacht	schacht@psych.uni-goettingen.de
Project B1	Prof. Michael Wibral	michael.wibral@uni-goettingen.de
Project B2	Dr. Claudia Fichtel	claudia.fichtel@gwdg.de
Project B3	Prof. Sascha Schroeder	sascha.schroeder@psych.uni-goettingen.de
Project B4	Prof. Nivedita Mani	nmani@gwdg.de
Project C3	Prof. Viola Priesemann	application.priesemann@ds.mpg.de
Project C5	Prof. Fabian Sinz	fabian.sinz@uni-goettingen.de

On December 10th, 1 pm to 2:30 pm CET, we will hold an online information event - feel free to join us. RTG representatives will be present to answer any questions you may have about the positions or about the application process in general. In case you are interested in attending please register [here](#) and we will send you a link via email.

2. I am interested in multiple projects; can I submit an application to more than one project?

Absolutely, feel free to submit more than one application. If you are applying to more than one position, you will need to submit multiple applications and we kindly ask you to indicate in your cover letters all positions that you are submitting an application for.

3. I don't 100% fulfil the profile requirements, should I still apply?

The profile requirements are intended as a guide; if you feel you are a good fit for one (or several) of the positions, we very much welcome your application.

4. I don't speak German but the job advertisement says German language skills would be advantageous – should I still apply?

We welcome applications from qualified international applicants. If the job advertisement states that German language skills would be advantageous, this is an indication that the position would involve communication with members of the public (e.g., for the purposes of participant recruitment/test sessions). For example, in Project A1, the successful applicant will run studies with young German-speaking children. For this position some German language skills would be helpful, however this is no exclusion criterion as international applicants who do not fulfil this criterion will be offered the necessary aid (e.g., student assistance) to be able to successfully achieve the project's goals.

RTG 2906 is an international environment and the majority of your work will be in English. Your expertise in the field, English language skills and motivation for the position carry far more weight than your current German language skills.

5. I have my own idea for a project on curiosity and would rather do this than what the project suggests, should I apply?

The project outlines are intended as a basis to provide you with a foundation to build upon; the PIs appreciate the importance of working on a project that you are highly invested in, and are therefore open to all ideas and suggestions you bring with you. The direction each project ultimately takes will be decided by you (together with the guidance of your main supervisor and members of your interdisciplinary Thesis Advisory Committee).

6. I have not completed my Masters yet, but will be done by Autumn 2026, can I apply?

Please note that you must provide a Master's degree certificate (or a provisional Master's certificate) before the position begins. We are more than happy to accept applications from students who are close to completing their current studies.

7. My Masters is not in one of the fields mentioned in the advertisement, should I still apply?

The fields listed in the advertisement are intended as examples – if you feel you have the required theoretical background to excel in the project of your interest, please go ahead and apply.

8. I have not worked on curiosity before, should I still apply?

Yes, by all means - we do not expect that you will have worked on this exact topic previously. If you have relevant experience in Cognitive Science or one of the affiliated fields then please apply – you will acquire the necessary knowledge and “grow into” your topic over the course of the PhD.

9. What documents do I need to submit with my application?

We ask you to submit a letter of motivation and curriculum vitae, alongside certified copies of your degree certificates and English language certificate.

In case you are not able to attain certified copies of your degree and language certificates by the application submission date, we still welcome your application. Please be aware however, that in general, presentation of either the original degree certificates, or a certified copy of your degree certificates is required for employment % enrolment in a Göttingen University Graduate program. Information specific to language certificates can be found in the answer to question 10 below.

10. Could you clarify the English language requirements?

Every advertised position requires proof of proficiency in English. This is because English language skills are a requirement of the University of Göttingen graduate program that you would be enrolled in. Please note that there are different requirements for each programme:

1. Behavior and Cognition (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/663102.html>)
2. Systems Neuroscience (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/664681.html>)

3. Theoretical and Computational Neuroscience (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/about+us/87725.html>)
4. Computer Science (PCS) program (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/111942.html>)
5. Data Science program (PDS): (<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/691749.html>)

Note that in case you do not have an official language certificate that attests to your English proficiency, most of these graduate programs accept the successful completion of an English-speaking study program as evidence of proficiency - see some examples below:

1. Behavior and Cognition: “the successful **completion of an English-speaking study program** is accepted”
2. Systems Neuroscience: “If English is not your first language, you need to provide proof of proficiency in English at level C1 of the CEFR (or equivalent, e.g. **completion of an M.Sc. degree in English** or IELTS Band 7).”
3. Theoretical and Computational Neuroscience: “Candidates have to be fluent in written and spoken English. Candidates whose mother tongue is not English can demonstrate sufficient knowledge of English e.g. **by having completed MSc studies in English** or by internationally recognized tests such as TOEFL or IELTS or equivalent achievements. During online application, applicants can indicate proven higher education in English or a reasonably long stay in an English-speaking country, if applicable.”

In case you completed your M.Sc. studies in English, we would ask you to indicate this clearly in your application and we would require a certified copy of your degree certificate before you would be able to begin a position. In case this does not apply, i.e., in case you did not complete your M.Sc. studies in English, we would need you to present us with a language certificate.

Join us for our online information event in December! We are more than happy to answer your questions about how to prepare your application. To sign up for the event please register [here](#).

11. I don't know what a CV should look like, where can I find out?

For questions on how to structure a great academic CV feel free to join our online information event on December 10th please register [here](#)). Alternatively, feel free to send your CV-related questions to this email address (rtg2906@unigoettingen.de).

12. What kind of information should be in my motivation letter?

The motivation letter should provide the selection committee with information about you and your background and why you are suited for the position. This letter should clearly state your previous experience and how it relates to the field and project in question, and why you are interested in applying for the position in question. Please indicate in your letter, which project(s) you are applying for.

Your motivation letter should not exceed two pages. This letter is your first opportunity to impress the selection committee with your communication skills and your ability to structure a document – use this chance!

13. The project I am applying for requires me to submit my application online via the OBM portal. When I click on the portal link, the page appears in German – how do I fix this?

In the top left-hand corner, you will see two flags - these allow you to toggle between German and English.

14. Do I submit two different applications if I am interested in two projects?

Yes, and please clearly state in the motivation letter that accompanies each application that you are applying for multiple projects. We kindly ask that you explicitly state the project number of all position you are applying for, e.g., A1, C2, in *each* motivation letter you write.

15. What does it mean when a position is advertised as a 65% or a 75% position?

E13 TV-L refers to the pay scale in the German public sector that is used in the field of academia and research. The associated percentage listed in the job advertisement indicates the compensation that is typically provided for PhD researchers in the field in question. The pay scale is set in keeping with guidelines provided by the funding body based on offering competitive positions in the different fields.

For more information on the TV-L pay scale, you can take a look online, e.g.: https://www.jobs-beim-staat.de/tarif/tv-l_e13. If you require further explanation about the pay scale, feel free to reach out to rtg2906@uni-goettingen.de.

16. Who would I be working with, who will be my main supervisor?

The main supervisor associated with each project is listed in the table supplied in answer to question 1 of this document. In addition to this person, you will be supervised by an interdisciplinary Thesis Advisory Committee, consisting of researchers from different fields. You are also likely to be working in a diverse scientific team composed of e.g., postdocs, master and bachelor students and student assistants.

The 11 RTG 2906 doctoral projects in the second cohort have a common start date. This means 11 doctoral researchers will begin their projects together, as a cohort. The major advantage of belonging to a cohort, is that you are enmeshed in a supportive network of friendly colleagues from the very beginning of your PhD.

17. The qualification programme seems quite extensive, can I do this and complete a PhD at the same time?

The elective and compulsory courses and workshops are designed to complement your research. You can pick and choose from the elective courses depending on your current workload to ensure that you have enough time to focus on and progress your individual research projects.

Courses will be offered at strategic timepoints during the PhD so as to complement the stage you are at in your research. For example, at the beginning of the PhD, all doctoral researchers will take part in a compulsory *Good Scientific Practise* workshop, and we will offer useful elective workshops at this stage e.g., on such topics as *Project management* and *Work-life balance*. Both towards the beginning, and at the end of the PhD when you are writing your dissertation, you will be able to sign up for courses on *Scientific writing*.

18. What exactly does a PhD entail? What will the working day of an RTG 2906 doctoral researcher look like?

A PhD entails dedication, perseverance and hard work but you are never alone in the endeavour – you will have the support and guidance of your supervisor as well as a group of PIs who will function as your thesis committee.

Scientists in RTG 2906 have flexible working hours, i.e., you will have the freedom to structure your working day to optimise your productivity. This said, within each lab or department, there are certain events that take place on a regular basis that you are also expected to attend; Most departments have regular (often weekly) lab meetings, lab lunches and journal clubs, and most supervisors will set up regular one-on-one meetings.

The structure of your day will fluctuate depending on the stage of the PhD you find yourself in. Towards the beginning of the PhD, you might devote a lot of your working hours to reading scientific papers and devising your experiments. By the end of your first year, moving into your second year, you can expect to devote many hours to collecting data or running test sessions, and drafting manuscripts. Towards the end of third year, you will spend a lot of your time at the desk writing up your final dissertation.

Throughout the PhD, you will take part in a diverse range of workshops, methods courses, retreats and conferences; in general, it will be up to you to manage your time and decide which events to sign up for (and when), although for some of the larger decisions (e.g., signing up for conferences) you may be expected to consult with your supervisor in advance.

19. What is unique about working on a PhD in Germany?

There are many advantages to working on a PhD in Germany and we list a few of these below:

- PhD programs in Germany are highly structured and on average, of a shorter duration, compared to other countries (e.g., the US). In Germany it is common for doctoral researchers to complete their degree within 3 - 4 years, while in the US the average time taken to complete is between 5 and 7 years. In RTG2906, Supervisors ensure that the work-load of doctoral researchers is such that completion within 3-4 years is feasible.
- The science research setting in Germany is highly international. Germany attracts high-calibre students from around the globe and the University of Göttingen (GAUG) is no exception; GAUG boasts an international student population of approximately 4,500 students from 138 countries.
- Relative to other countries (e.g., the U.S), working on a PhD in Germany generally means more time spent on individual research and less time devoted to teaching duties. In RTG 2906, while it is true that you will spend the far majority of your time on your individual project, the PIs acknowledge that having some teaching experience on your CV is advantageous for your career prospects. For this reason, teaching (e.g., in the form of supervising undergraduate students) will likely still be a component of your doctorate, but it will likely play a lesser role for you compared to doctoral researchers in other countries.

20. What support is there for international students at Göttingen University?

International students are warmly welcomed by the University of Göttingen *International Office*. The team at the International Office provide valuable advice when it comes to figuring out administration procedures (e.g., they are on hand to guide you through questions you may have about matriculation or the visa process), and they are extremely helpful when it comes to finding accommodation in Göttingen's tough housing market. For an overview of the different types of

support the international office offers, you can visit this website: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/502946.html>). Advice specifically aimed at in-bound international doctoral researchers can be found here: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/595584.html>.

In general, the International Office, together with various cooperation partners, holds regular events and fosters a great international community, ensuring that all new arrivals quickly find their footing in the city of Göttingen and can organically grow their own support network. For upcoming events and ongoing initiatives offered by the International Office you can check out this link: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/196392.html>

21. What support is there for students from more diverse backgrounds during the application process and during the PhD?

RTG 2906 is hosting an online information event to ensure that students from more diverse backgrounds have all the support they may need during the application process. This information event (touched upon already in answer to many of the preceding questions), will take the form of a drop-in session where RTG 2906 representatives will be on hand to answer all of your queries, large or small. The session will take place on December 10th, 1 pm to 2:30 pm CET. Everyone is welcome to join, but to be able to judge interest in advance and be able to provide you with a link to the event, we kindly ask you to register [here](#).

During the PhD, every effort will be made to ensure researchers from diverse backgrounds receive the support they need to succeed. For more information on how the RTG will achieve this, you can visit the Equality tab on the RTG 2906 homepage:

<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/equality/681637.html>