

# Statutes on assistant professorships at TU Darmstadt with and without tenure track

*Unofficial reading version (Nichtamtliche Lesefassung)  
The official German statutes on assistant professorships can be found  
on the TU Darmstadt [website](#)*

## Legal bases:

Section 70 *Hessisches Hochschulgesetz* (HessHG – Hessian Higher Education Act), the *Grundordnung* – Constitution of TU Darmstadt. In all other respects, all currently existing regulations for assistant professorships at Technical University of Darmstadt remain unaffected.

On the basis of Section 70(2) sentence 3 of the *Hessisches Hochschulgesetz* (HessHG – Hessian Higher Education Act), dated 14 December 2021, GVBl. I S. 931, Section 7(1) sentence 1 and Section 7(4) no. 5 of the *Gesetz zur organisatorischen Fortentwicklung der Technischen Universität Darmstadt* (TU Darmstadt Act – Act on the ongoing organisational development and advancement of TU Darmstadt), dated 05 December 2004 (GVBl. I p. 382), as last amended by Article 4 of the Act, dated 14 December 2021 (GVBl. p. 931 (985)), the Executive Board of Technical University of Darmstadt issues the following statutes on 04 April 2024.

## 1. Definition of terms

At TU Darmstadt, the term **tenure track** describes a definite-term appointment including a **target agreement** (“Entwicklungszusage”, Section 70 HessHG) towards the appointment to an indefinite professorship. In order to maintain a nationally and internationally accepted reference framework, the terms **tenure track** or **tenure** stand exclusively for the following. **Tenure track** refers to the entitlement of an assistant professor to participate in a tenure procedure. **Tenure** means the appointment of the assistant professor to a tenured (permanent) professorship.

## 2. Principles

At TU Darmstadt, assistant professorships with tenure track are for a fixed term of up to six years. The transition to a permanent professorship requires a successful, quality-assured evaluation based on clearly defined and transparent criteria. Granting tenure depends exclusively on the criteria defined in Section 5 of these statutes. In the event of a positive tenure decision, the assistant professor will be appointed to a tenured professorship. The value (W2/W3) of the tenured professorship will be determined during the approval process of the tenure track professorship. If it is intended to be W2 at the time of approval, it is possible to establish the tenured professorship as W3 in the framework of the tenure procedure if outstanding achievements and suitable structural conditions exist. The Executive Board will decide on this at the request of the department.

## 3. Establishing assistant professorships

### 3.1 Purpose and objective

Assistant professorships at TU Darmstadt are organised as a so called “Qualifikationsprofessur ohne oder mit Entwicklungszusage (tenure track)” in accordance with Section 70 HessHG. They are used to qualify researchers at the R3 phase for a permanent professorship in accordance with the recruitment requirements specified in Section 68(2) HessHG.

### **3.2 Requirements**

In accordance with the *Hessisches Hochschulgesetz* (Hessian Higher Education Act) in its currently valid version, the recruitment requirements for applicants to assistant professorships are those pertaining to qualification professorships.

### **3.3 Professorial appointment procedure**

For appointments to assistant professorships, the regulations of the TU Darmstadt for professorial appointments apply in their currently valid version in addition to the regulations of the *Hessisches Hochschulgesetz* (Hessian Higher Education Act).

### **3.4 Organisation and duration of assistant professorships**

The value (W) of assistant professorships is usually as follows:

- a) Assistant professorships that are established as W2 professorships with tenure track are used as an instrument of early recruitment for a tenured professorship at TU Darmstadt.
- b) Assistant professorships that are established as W1 professorships without tenure track are used as an instrument of academic support for researchers in the R3 phase to prepare them for a professorship outside TU Darmstadt. On a case-by-case basis, these Assistant professorships without tenure track also also possible as a W2 professorship.

The duties of the assistant professor in teaching are reduced in favour of independent research (according to Section 70(3) sentence 4 HessHG). Details are regulated by the *Lehrverpflichtungsverordnung* (Hessian teaching load ordinance).

The term of an assistant professorship is usually six years. When early-career research group leaders are appointed to a W1 assistant professorship without a tenure track, the term of the assistant professorship can be less than six years in specific cases, but must be at least five years.

## **4. Mentoring**

In consultation with the Senate, the President appoints a group of professors at TU Darmstadt as mentors for assistant professors with and without tenure track. After their appointment, assistant professors can select a mentor from this group. The mentor must be from another department of TU Darmstadt and must not be involved in evaluating decisions about the accepted mentee. Accompanying mentoring is optional.

## **5. Assistant professorships with tenure-track**

Tenure for assistant professors with tenure track is granted solely on the basis of having fulfilled the university-wide quality criteria. These criteria are:

- Appointment of the assistant professor according to Section 68(2) HessHG to a professorship at TU Darmstadt as a basic prerequisite.
- The assistant professor is one of the top researchers in the field at a comparable stage of their career. This is demonstrated by fulfilling the objectives set out in the target agreement in the three performance dimensions of *research, teaching and leadership*.

### **5.1. Target agreement for a tenured professorship**

A target agreement is concluded between the Executive Board, the respective department and the assistant professor. This agreement is the basis for the tenure evaluation. It is signed by the President, the chairperson of the respective department and the assistant professor. The objectives of the target agreement, which is to be written in English, are part of the three performance dimensions *research, teaching and leadership*. The Executive Board defines a binding template for such a target agreement, which allows for a field-specific adaptation to each professorship.

## 5.2 Feedback meetings

During the tenure track, there are feedback meetings with the assistant professor. The primary objectives of the feedback meetings are to guide the assistant professors in a reflective manner and to enable them to perform well throughout their tenure-track phase. In addition to the target agreement, all other requirements for a permanent professorial appointment are also discussed. This is to ensure that assistant professors receive regular feedback and guidance in terms of a positive tenure procedure and the development of their potential.

A maximum of two persons from the departments conduct these meetings. The departmental chairperson is responsible for determining who will conduct the meetings. These persons must be permanently appointed members of the group of professors. The departments try to ensure that there is continuity in staffing during all meetings for each assistant professorship. At the request of the assistant professor, additional persons can also participate in the meeting. A representative of the tenure committee office (Unit IA) takes the summary minutes. Each meeting focuses on one of the three primary topics (*research, teaching and leadership*). Their order is determined individually when drawing up the target agreement. Beforehand, the professorial appointment committee makes a proposal in its appointment report. The order of primary topics can be changed if needed during the tenure track phase. However, it should be noted that the meeting on the primary topic of *research* must take place in year three or four after being appointed. A professorial member of the tenure committee must attend this meeting in addition to the department conducting the meeting. Furthermore, the department should ensure the quality of the professional assessment of the state of development in the primary topic of *research* with the help of another expert in the field who is not a member of TU Darmstadt. The regulations concerning (potential) conflicts of interest that apply to professorial appointments must be observed. Any costs incurred must be borne by the respective department. As a preparatory measure for all meetings, the assistant professor is to submit a brief overview of his or her development since starting work or the last meeting. As a result of the meetings, the respective assistant professor's needs for support are identified, as are the achievements to date and those still to be achieved, particularly as specified in the customised target agreement. As a result of the meetings, assistant professors will receive a clear indication of their progress towards a positive tenure procedure.

The tenure committee regularly obtains an impression of the development of all assistant professors based on the summary minutes and its participation in the feedback meetings. The departments are required to provide information to the tenure committee at any time. To guide the assistant professors towards a positive tenure procedure as early as possible, the tenure committee can take the following steps on a case-by-case basis:

- Obtain independent expertise (e.g. external expert reports) at its discretion or at the suggestion of the department or the assistant professor.
- Send select members of the tenure committee to feedback meetings.

Also the Executive Board can send individual members to feedback meetings.

## 5.3 Tenure Committee

The tenure committee of TU Darmstadt comprises the following roles: The chairperson (vice president responsible for early careers in the R3 phase), four members of the group of professors, one member of the group of research associates (WiMi), one member of the group of students and one member of the group of administrative and technical staff (ATM).

Each role of the tenure committee mentioned above, with the exception of the chairperson, is held by two people. The President, in agreement with the Senate, appoints the members for three years or one year (for students). The chairperson specifically determines the composition as mentioned above for each tenure procedure. This is to avoid, that persons on the tenure committee participating in the tenure procedure belong to the same department as the assistant professor to be evaluated. In accordance with the regulations above and in consultation with the chairperson of the tenure committee, the members of the tenure committee can stand in for each other at specific meetings.

The Executive Board will appoint a person from among the vice-presidents to take over the chair if the chairperson of the tenure committee belongs to the same department as the assistant professor to be evaluated, if there is a potential conflict of interest or if the chairperson is unable to chair the procedure or specific meetings for other reasons (such as illness). The chairperson is responsible for managing and

coordinating the tenure procedure. In the event of a tie, the chairperson of the tenure committee has the casting vote.

If any semblance of a conflict of interest among the members of the tenure committee arise, the person concerned must not take part in the procedure. If the semblance of a conflict of interest arises in an ongoing procedure, the chairperson will replace the respective member.

#### **5.4 Application for initiating the tenure procedure**

The decision to appoint an assistant professor to a tenured professorship depends on the outcome of the tenure procedure (according to Section 70(2) HessHG). Assistant professors with tenure track can apply for initiating a tenure procedure. However, they are free to refrain from submitting an application.

The application to initiate a tenure procedure is usually submitted by the assistant professor concerned to the President of TU Darmstadt one and a half years, but no later than one year before the end of the assistant professorship. The application can be withdrawn at any time during the procedure without having to state reasons.

If a qualified external appointment to a tenured professorship or other outstanding achievements are available, the procedure can be initiated earlier and the tenured professorship can be taken up earlier. This is decided by the President at the request of the respective department.

A tenure self-evaluation report written in English by the respective assistant professor must be submitted along with the application for initiating a tenure procedure. The self-evaluation report is to address the achievements with regard to the concluded target agreement and any additional achievements during the tenure track. A curriculum vitae, the list of publications and the available results of teaching evaluations as well as certificates of continuing education measures must be submitted along with the self-evaluation report.

The President forwards the application of the assistant professor to the department concerned asking for a statement. The department's statement contains:

- An evaluation of the achievements of the assistant professor as perceived by the department
- Four proposals for external experts (both female and international)
- Resource planning for the permanent professorship

The statement of the department requires the approval of the department council. The President forwards the application of the assistant professor, the opinion of the department and the target agreement to the tenure committee for initiating the tenure procedure.

#### **5.5 Initiating the tenure procedure**

The tenure procedure is usually based on the following steps:

- a) The tenure committee meets in a timely manner after initiating a tenure procedure, taking into account deadlines for the soonest available Senate meetings. It draws up an expert assignment and obtains at least two external expert reports, usually including at least one international expert report. Part of the expert assignment is, among other things, the request to place the assistant professor in a peer group of international researchers at a comparable career stage. The tenure committee sends the expert reports to the department concerned giving it the opportunity to comment within a two-week period.
- b) The tenure committee assesses the fulfilment of the criteria stated in Section 5 on the basis of the target agreement, the self-evaluation report, the statement of the department and the external expert reports. The Gender Equality Officer and, in the case of severely disabled assistant professors, the representative body for people with special needs also have the right to consult these documents and state their opinion. Optionally, the tenure committee can choose to hold meetings with decision-relevant persons (and groups). It can also decide not to hold these meetings.

- c) The tenure committee then submits a reasoned decision proposal to the President. It submits the proposal along with the documents referred to above. Following the decision, the Executive Board submits the recommended decision to the Senate asking for a favorable opinion.
- d) After a positive tenure decision, the President conducts appointment negotiations for a tenured professorship.

## **6. Assistant professorships without tenure track**

For assistant professorships without tenure track in accordance with Section 70(5) HessHG, the following applies:

### **6.1 Evaluation procedure**

Assistant professors are assessed during their appointment regarding their competence and achievements in research, teaching and personal skills in an evaluation procedure (“interim evaluation”).

### **6.2 Objectives**

The evaluation provides proof of fulfilling and demonstrating additional academic research achievements according to Section 68(2) No. 1 HessHG.

### **6.3 “Interim evaluation” procedure**

The assistant professor initiates the evaluation procedure (“interim evaluation”) by submitting a self-evaluation report, including teaching evaluations. These documents must be submitted no earlier than two years and no later than three years after starting appointment.

The departmental office is responsible for this evaluation. It can establish an evaluation committee for this purpose. The departmental office or the evaluation committee obtains two external expert reports. On the basis of the self-evaluation report and the expert reports, the department or the evaluation committee determines the fulfilment of the additional research achievements in accordance with Section 68(2) No. 1 HessHG.

## **7. Regulation on joint appointments**

If an assistant professor has been appointed in joint agreement with a non-university research institution, the tenure committee can be extended by two advisory members of the non-university research institution in the respective procedure. The existing cooperation agreements between TU Darmstadt and non-university research institutions remain unaffected by this. In specific cases, they will be supplemented by a respective supplementary agreement.

## **8. Coming into force**

These statutes come into force with the decision of the Executive Board on 04 April 2024 and will be published in the *Satzungsbeilage* (appendix to the statutes) of TU Darmstadt. For assistant professors who have already been appointed, the regulations that were in force at the time of their appointment apply, unless they request to be treated in accordance with these new statutes.

Darmstadt, 04.04.2024

Prof.'in Dr. Tanja Brühl

– President –