

# A NEW INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR FRIAS: LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE



*From right to left:*

**Prof. Dr. Bernd Kortmann**

*(Academic Director  
Humanities and Social Sciences)*

**Prof. Dr. Hermann Grabert**

*(Academic Director  
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**Prof. Dr. Gunther Neuhaus**

*(Vice Rector for Research)*

**Dr. Carsten Dose**

*(Head Administrator of FRIAS)*

By its very nature academia is dependent on change but at the same time requires continuity. Striking a balance between these two aspects is a challenge faced by all academic institutions, and most particularly by universities. As an integral part of the university, FRIAS is also contributing to this task: through its new structure, the Institute hopes to become a permanent and reliable source of stimuli for university research and academic debate. The prerequisites are present: fundamental decisions reached by the university's committees, and primarily by the state, have provided the financial security and support so important to this venture. The new FRIAS strategy unites the productive elements of the Institute's work to date with new opportunities for all disciplines and an increased dynamic for selecting areas of thematic focus. Together, these elements provide excellent conditions for success.

The most significant component of the new strategy, which has been formulated over recent months by a working group led by Prorector Prof. Gunther Neuhaus and debated widely by university bodies, are the

FRIAS research foci. These bring together ten to 15 fellows for a limited period to work on a joint research topic, which must display a high degree of contemporary academic relevance. These foci are selected by means of competitions within the university. The intention behind these awards is to achieve tangible advances in innovative topic areas, to highlight new research trends at the University of Freiburg and to promote international networking within these research areas. Naturally, the funding should also provide the impetus for further activities that may in turn lead, for example, to joint applications to external funding bodies.

Two promising, interdisciplinary foci have been selected for the 2014/2015 academic year (see inset).

Not every innovative topic, however, requires the collaboration of a dozen or more academics. Support given to smaller teams of two or three researchers have also proven extremely fruitful. Such teams are very well-suited to attracting international experts to Freiburg and involving them in research projects.

This funding format is now already being implemented in collaboration with the Institut d'Études Avancées de Strasbourg (USIAS).

Fellowships provide academics with the opportunity to focus exclusively on their own research topics for a specific period of time. They are intended to honour outstanding academics, but also provide an extremely productive means of promoting research, as they afford fellows the time that they so desperately need, and that is otherwise in such short supply in everyday university life. Where Freiburg's own fellows are concerned, fellowships were never intended to entail a full withdrawal from all other duties, with the result that many of them have taken on *part-time fellowships* with half their normal teaching obligations. Although it would be desirable to also call for applications from Freiburg-based academics working outside the main research foci, our limited budget currently does not allow this. Nonetheless, extensive funding received from EU programmes enables us to do precisely this for academics from abroad. The EU funding which FRIAS successfully secured last year shows great recognition and important support of our work. The processing of the first FCFP fellowships is underway; up to 20 Junior and Senior Fellows respectively from abroad will be able to conduct research in Freiburg for one year, with the programme lasting a total of four years. This will provide Freiburg's research community with the opportunity to approach specific colleagues from international networks and encourage them to pursue a research stay in Freiburg.

## **FRIAS RESEARCH FOCI FOR THE 2014/15 ACADEMIC YEAR**

In December 2013 a committee of international experts selected two research foci for the 2014/2015 academic year:

"Designed Quantum Transport in Complex Materials" is dedicated to the interdisciplinary analysis of quantum design principles with regard to their long-term use in technologies for converting light into energy that are efficient, cheap to produce and sustainable. Researchers from the Institute of Physics, Institute of Physical Chemistry and the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems (ISE) are collaborating on this area of research focus.

"Dynamic Alignments and Dealignment in Global Southeast Asia", covered predominantly by the field of cultural and social science, pursues multidisciplinary research into the social, political and economic processes of transformation in a region whose course of development is of considerable political relevance. The disciplines involved are those of political science, economics, ethnology, and Asian history.

Each area of research focus will receive funding for twelve months. Detailed presentations of the two research foci and the people behind them will feature in the 10th edition of FRIAS News. More detailed information can also be found on the FRIAS website.

FRIAS sees itself as a forum for exchange that transcends national and disciplinary borders. In future it also aims to increase its support for dialogue between academia, politics and various social groups. The new event format entitled "Freiburger Horizonte" will create a forum for discussion where topics of high social relevance can be debated in a context of academic expertise. This format is superbly suited to showcase the myriad research achievements of Freiburg University with respect to their social significance. Furthermore, it draws on both External Fellows and alumni of the Institute. It will also be particularly important to involve students in these discussions. The building of such bridges will also be documented by additional event formats such as the FRIAS Fellows'

lecture series that is set to begin in the coming summer semester. These academic events at FRIAS will be open to students and junior academics with all relevant information being available on the FRIAS website. This will make FRIAS an even more valuable addition to teaching at the University of Freiburg.

FRIAS will continue to make an important contribution to supporting early-stage academics. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that exchanging knowledge with respected colleagues greatly assists young researchers in developing their own academic profiles. For the time being, Junior Fellowships will chiefly be awarded to international candidates. Depending on the outcome of additional funding applications, the

intention is also to fund junior research groups in collaboration with the Freiburg university faculties. Applications for a junior professorship will include the opportunity to form a small junior research group. This funding model has already proven itself to be extremely successful in the past. Finally, providing funds to hold conferences at FRIAS, for which applications may be submitted by young academics from all Freiburg's university faculties, concludes the range of measures devoted to early-stage academics.

FRIAS recognizes a unique opportunity in its geographical position in the Upper Rhine Valley. Consequently, the Institute seeks to contribute substantially to strengthening academic collaboration within this region. The aforementioned programme of *joint fellowships* conducted together with USIAS (cf. p. 10-11) provides vital impetus for this. Plans are also being devised to involve the University of Basel. As an active member of the Network of European Institutes for Advanced Study (NetIAS), as well as a driving force within and founding member of the international network of University-Based Institutes for Advanced Study (UBIAS), FRIAS has excellent contacts with renowned collaborative partners and intends to exploit these more extensively during this new phase. Contact with alumni of the Institute should also be cultivated, as they act as ambassadors for the University of Freiburg throughout the world.

Shortly before the end of the calendar year, the Rector named the two new academic directors, Prof Hermann Grabert and Prof Bernd Kort-

## NEW ACADEMIC DIRECTORS

### **Prof. Dr. Bernd Kortmann**

Bernd Kortmann is a professor of English linguistics at the University of Freiburg and has been Dean of the Faculty of Philology since 2010. He pursues research in fields including semantics, linguistic typology and English grammar. Kortmann was a Senior Fellow of the FRIAS School of Language and Literature from 2008 to 2009.

### **Prof. Dr. Hermann Grabert**

Hermann Grabert is a professor of theoretical physics at the University of Freiburg. His work focuses on the fields of nanostructures, nanomechanics, energy transfer and quantum dissipation. He was Director of the School of Soft Matter Research at FRIAS from 2007 to 2013.

mann (see inset). Together with the Prorector for Research, Prof Gunther Neuhaus, and Head Administrator Dr Carsten Dose, they will be responsible for the ongoing implementation of the new institutional strategy outlined here. The academic autonomy of the Institute, particularly with regard to the selection of fellows, shall remain unaltered. Plans are being formulated to include in the new statutes an academic advisory board composed solely of international members from outside the Institute as well as a governing body that will act as a supervisory board by taking strategic decisions. Members from both within and outside the university will work together here under the leadership of the Rector. This management structure will guarantee that a balance between independence of and collaboration with the university.

The elements of the new institutional strategy have been devised so as to best complement the university's existing structures for promoting

research. They provide new stimuli while simultaneously ensuring continuity in the successful work of the Institute. FRIAS wishes to be a place of research and vigorous debate, whose stimulating effect resonates out into the university and beyond into the international academic community. In future, this will be the benchmark of its success.

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