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RUN DISCOVERY STUDENT ACADEMY

(01.12.2025)

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1. Introduction

The RUN-DIS Student Academy is a comprehensive mentoring program tailored for late-stage B.Sc. students, M.Sc. candidates, and young researchers (1st year of their PhD or similar) embarking on their academic journeys. This program is crafted to empower participants with essential skills, personal development strategies, and a robust foundation in research and development (R&D) to excel in a research-driven setting.

Spanning nine months and comprising a maximum of 150 hours, the Student Academy combines engaging online sessions with an immersive week of in-person collaboration. Through a diverse array of activities, including lectures, personalized mentoring, hands-on project development, and networking opportunities, the program aspires to cultivate growth and stimulate innovation. Additionally, participants will gain valuable insights into what is needed for a successful career in research, helping them determine whether this path aligns with their aspirations and interests. In addition, the program provides a tailored opportunity for personal development and a unique chance to improve skills that are crucial for research. All efforts are closely aligned with the European Agenda's core pillars of Green Transition, Social Inclusion, and Digital Transition.

As a picture is worth a thousand words, let us phrase it in the expression of the 1st edition which was held in 2025:

2. Target Audience

The Student Academy Mentoring Program is designed for research-oriented students who are in the late stages of their B.Sc., any stage of their M.Sc., or are young researchers in the first year of their PhD. Additionally, the program invites applications from junior research staff who combine their lecturing assignments with research or work full-time as researchers on a project basis.

Participants should be driven by curiosity, a passion for solving complex challenges, and a strong motivation for personal and professional growth.

If you are passionate about diving deep into research, this program offers the perfect opportunity. Over the course of nine months, it will provide you with the skills, network, and clarity needed to make informed decisions about your future in research. For junior researchers already in the field, the program offers a tailored opportunity for personal development and to improve skills that are crucial for research.

The program is particularly aimed at those who:

- Have a strong motivation to invest time and effort into their personal and professional development.

- Are eager to work on project ideas that align with key European priorities: the Green Transition, Social Inclusion, and the Digital Transition.

- Seek guidance and mentorship from experienced professionals in academia and research.

- Are ready to develop essential skills defined by the Research Comp of the European Union

- Have the opportunity to take part in the offline week at FHV, Austria, from May 18th to May 22nd (funding available via each RUN-EU partner institution)

This program will give you the structure, mentorship, and hands-on experience to explore your potential in research, whether you are determining if it is the right career path or seeking to enhance your existing skills and impact as a researcher.

3. Program Structure

The Student Academy is structured around a monthly combination of skill trainings, mentoring sessions, and other program points (such as a kick-off event, status updates, and presentations), each designed to support specific learning objectives and competencies. In addition to these structured activities, participants are expected to dedicate time each month to self-directed project work.

3.1 Components of the Program

1. Skill Trainings: Skill Trainings are targeted learning sessions focused on building critical competencies necessary for a successful career in research and development. These sessions are delivered through expert-led lectures and interactive workshops. The skills covered in these trainings range across the defined competencies of the Research Comp of the European Union, e.g.:

- **Personal Development**: These sessions are aimed at helping participants build resilience, improve self-management, and navigate challenges in academic and professional settings. For instance, participants will learn how to handle the pressures of research, manage their time effectively, and work through potential challenges in their career journey.

- **R&D Skills**: These trainings focus on essential research and development techniques. Topics include teamwork in research settings, project and time management, scientific writing, and planning for academic careers. Participants will gain practical insights into how to organize their research, develop strategic project plans, and write effective research papers.

- **Communication Skills**: Communication is a key component of any researcher's toolkit. In these sessions, participants will learn storytelling techniques for research, how to craft compelling presentations, and how to present their findings to both academic and non-academic audiences.

The Skill Trainings are designed to complement the participants' project work by providing them with the knowledge and tools they need to move forward with their research ideas.

2. Mentoring Sessions: Mentoring Sessions offer personalized guidance from experienced mentors who are professionals or academics in the field. Each participant is paired with a mentor from a different university, ensuring exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences. The mentoring sessions are designed to:

- Provide guidance in the program.

- Offer advice on navigating the research environment.

- Support the development of both personal and academic skills.

- Help mentees reflect on their career aspirations and make informed decisions about their future in research.

These one-on-one sessions allow participants to discuss their goals, the progress in the program, challenges they encounter in their project work or research career paths and opportunities for further growth. Mentors also provide constructive feedback on research ideas, methodologies, and presentations, ensuring that participants receive practical support throughout the program.

3. Program Points: Program Points are key events in the Academy's schedule, including:

- **Kick-Off Event:** The Kick-Off event marks the official start of the program. Participants are introduced to their mentors, peers, and the Academy's structure. They also have the opportunity to present an initial idea for their project and receive feedback from mentors and fellow participants.

- **Status Updates:** Held in months 3 and 5, these events allow participants to present the progress of their projects. They share updates on their work, discuss challenges, and receive feedback from their peers, mentors, and program partners. These updates are critical for keeping the participants on track and ensuring that they are making meaningful progress.

- **Academy Week (Offline):** From May 18th to May 22nd 2026, participants attend an intensive in-person week focused on project work, skill-building workshops, and networking. This week provides a unique opportunity for participants to collaborate, receive hands-on guidance from mentors, and make significant advancements in their projects. The offline week will be hosted by FHV – Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences in Austria.

- **Final Day Event:** At the conclusion of the program, participants will deliver a pitch that gives a concise overview of their research and its key findings as well as their personal development. This final event is designed to offer participants an opportunity to reflect on their entire experience, showcase their work, and highlight the skills and knowledge gained throughout the program.

4. Fireside Chat: Fireside Chats offer participants an informal yet insightful opportunity to engage directly with prominent figures from academia, industry, or policy. These sessions are designed to foster an open dialogue where students can learn from the experiences and perspectives of distinguished presidents, renowned scientists, and industry leaders who are shaping the future of research and innovation.

5. Self-Directed Project Work: Each month, participants are expected to dedicate time to advancing their project, which is the cornerstone of the Student Academy. Projects must align with the European Agenda's pillars of Green Transition, Social Inclusion, and Digital Transition, and should be both innovative and feasible. The self-directed project work involves:

- **Research:** Conducting background research on the chosen topic.

- **Development:** Planning and executing the project idea.

- **Analysis:** Reviewing the results of the project, identifying challenges, and iterating on solutions.

- **Collaboration:** Working with peers and mentors to refine ideas and address obstacles.

The project work is supported by the Skill Trainings and Mentoring Sessions, which provide participants with the knowledge and guidance they need to successfully complete their projects. Throughout the program, participants are encouraged to regularly reflect on their progress, adapt their approaches as needed, and actively engage with their mentors and peers for feedback and support.

The project work can and should be something that is relevant in or for the daily work of the participants. M.Sc. and PhD students might work on their theses, researcher might work on their existing project work, etc. The focus is on improving the daily project work and on applying learning from the Student Academy directly into once daily work.

3.2 Program Timeline and Details

Month	Program Components	Description
March 2026		
24.03.2026	**Kick-Off Event** (1 Day - online)	- Introduction to program structure and objectives. - Networking activities to get to know their mentors and peers. - Project concept introduction: Each mentee presents their preliminary project idea.
April 2026		
	Mentoring Session	First individual mentoring session.
	Skill Training	Specialized modules to deepen understanding of research methodologies.
	Fireside Chat	Informal session with three presidents from academic and industry sectors, fostering open dialogue on leadership in research.
May 2026		
	Academy Week (Offline)	A 4-day intensive session held in-person, is a cornerstone of the program. During this week, participants will: - Focus intensively on their research projects. - Participate in additional skill workshops and interactive sessions, including hands-on project work. Combine skills training, project development, and mentoring.
June 2026		
	Skill Training	Specialized modules to initiate participants into relevant research methodologies.
	Fireside Chat	Informal session with three RUN-EU scientists.
	Mentoring Session	Second individual mentoring session.
July 2026		

	Skill Training	Specialized modules to initiate participants into relevant research methodologies.	
August 2026			
	Skill Training	Specialized modules to initiate participants into relevant research methodologies.	
	Mentoring Session	Second individual mentoring session. ○	
September 2026			
	Status Update (Half-Day - online)	Project progress presentation and discussion of challenges.	
	Fireside Chat	Informal session with a renowned scientist.	
	Skill Training	Specialized modules to initiate participants into relevant research methodologies.	
October 2026			
	Fireside Chat	Informal session with a renowned scientist.	
	Skill Training	Specialized modules to initiate participants into relevant research methodologies.	
November 2026			
	Skill Training	Specialized modules to initiate participants into relevant research methodologies.	
	Mentoring Session	Fourth individual mentoring session.	
December 2026			
15.12.2026	**Final Day Event** (3/4 Day - online)	Participants will: • Deliver a 5-minute project pitch, articulating the key findings and contributions of their research. • Reflect on their skills and experiences from mentoring, lessons learned and presenting a summary of their personal development. • Engage in a 10-minute discussion on their progress and future directions.	

3.3 Program Schedule and Key Dates

The Student Academy follows a structured timeline to ensure a balanced progression through the program's milestones. Key dates include the program start, offline sessions, and final

assessment. Additionally, online sessions are scheduled to accommodate participants' availability.

- **Program Start:** The program begins on March 24th 2026. Accepted participants will receive all relevant materials and a detailed schedule ahead of this date.
- **Online Sessions:** Online sessions will take place from Tuesday to Thursday, starting at 6:00 PM (CET). A full schedule with exact dates and times will be provided after program enrollment.
- **Offline Week:** The offline week is scheduled from May 18th to May 22nd 2026. It will be held at FHV – University of Applied Sciences, Austria.
- **Final Assessment:** The program concludes with the final assessment on 15th December 2026.

Please note: Just apply for the Student Academy if you can 100% ensure that you are available during these key dates and that you are able to travel to Vorarlberg, Austria for the offline week (please also ensure that you can solve visa issues (if any) and/or ask you employer if you can take a week of for the offline week).

4. Project Work

Projects developed during the program must align with the **European Agenda's** key pillars:

- Green Transition
- Digital Transition
- Social Inclusion

Each participant is expected to work on an innovative, feasible, and impactful project idea that fits within these categories. Mentors will support the development and refinement of these projects throughout the program.

The project work conducted as part of the Student Academy can and should be integrated into the participants' regular curriculum, such as through a Bachelor's or Master's thesis or any other project work that is obligatory within the study course of the participant.

5. Certification Requirements

To complete the program, participants must meet the following criteria:

- Attendance in a minimum of 4 mentoring sessions.

- Completion of 7 out of 8 skill trainings.

- Participation in at least 2 out of 3 fireside chats.

- Attendance at the Academy Week, Kick-Off, and status update.

- Participation in the final day event and submission of requirements.

6. Application Process and Deadlines

Applications for the Student Academy Mentoring Program will be accepted beginning from December 1st 2025, with the submission deadline set for January 15th 2026. Prospective participants are encouraged to submit their materials early to ensure full consideration. Latest announcement of the confirmation of participation will follow on February 3rd 2026.

In a first step, please contact the responsible person for the Student Academy at your institution to get valuable information about the application process at your University. The contact persons are as follows:

- Howest: Tine Wyckhuys und Lies Vanhaelemeesch
- TUS: Patrick Murray and Joanne Prout
- NHL Stenden: Leanne Jansen-Schreurs and Willie van der Galiën
- UBU: José María CÁMARA
- HAMK: Annukka Pakarinen
- FHV: Markus Preißinger
- IPL: Clara Espirito Santo
- IPCA: Helena Torres and Sandra Costa
- TUL: Markéta Rous
- UGAL: George Ifrim and Iuliana Aprodu

If you have general questions, you might also contact run-student-academy@fhv.at

You can also come to the Q&A-session on January 8th from 03:30-05:00 pm (CET):

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MDhhNzQ4ODYtOTJmOS00ZjUyLWFiMDItN2UyMWJiNzczMDg5%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f1a37aa0-95bd-45c6-bf99-c9b063cdba18%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2264a35043-17c0-4efb-893b-538eb3f9962d%22%7d

The applications are then reviewed centrally by the RUN-EU Research Expert Network, which also decides on admission based of the criteria listed under point 7.

7. Admission Evaluation System

The admission process for the Student Academy is rigorous and designed to assess a candidate's suitability across four key components: CV, Motivational Letter, Project Idea, and Self-Reflection. Each component is evaluated to ensure alignment with the goals of the Academy, as outlined below:

7.1 Curriculum Vitae (CV) (Maximum 2 Pages, 20 points)

To evaluate the student's academic, professional, and extracurricular background, and how these experiences align with the goals of the Student Academy.

For maximum points, the CV is highly relevant, well-structured, and showcases extensive experience, skills, and achievements that align with the student academy's goals.

7.2 Motivational Letter (Maximum 1 Page, 30 points)

To understand the student's motivation, commitment, and fit for the student academy, as well as their goals and passion for personal and professional growth.

For maximum points, the letter is deeply insightful and well-articulated, showcasing strong motivation, clear goals, and a compelling case for why the student is an excellent fit for the academy.

7.3 Project Idea (Maximum 1 Page, 30 points)

To evaluate the creativity, feasibility, and potential impact of the student's project idea, with a specific focus on how well it aligns with the European Agenda's three pillars: Green Transition, Digital Transition, and Social Inclusion.

For maximum points, the project idea is highly creative, realistic, and has strong potential for impact. It is clearly aligned with one or more of the European Agenda's pillars **-Green Transition, Digital Transition, and Social Inclusion-** and includes a feasible plan for implementation.

7.4 Self-Reflection (Maximum 1 Page, 20 points)

To evaluate the student's ability to reflect on their career aspirations using the RUN-EU PLUS Researcher Skills Evaluation Tool. This tool will support you in recognising your existing skills and expertise as a researcher and assist you in identifying your training needs for the development of skills required by your chosen research career.

For maximum points, the reflection is deeply insightful, demonstrating significant learning and a clear understanding of how the "RUN-EU PLUS" career tool has influenced their perception of a research career path. The student explains how he/she would assess his/her potential and interest in research based on the result. And how the tool has helped him in this assessment.

Researcher Skills Evaluation Tool:
https://link.webropolsurveys.com/Participation/Public/b9a4f21f-7424-42fe-bd6a-29c86a18183f?displayId=Fin3023467

8. Offboarding and Future Networking

Upon completion of the program, participants will be granted access to an exclusive Cloud of Knowledge portal, which provides ongoing visibility into research networks and opportunities. Additionally, participants will join a LinkedIn group for networking, job offers, and professional connections.

9. Costs and Scholarships

The program does not offer ECTS credits. Instead, participants get a high-quality mentoring program without any costs. Participants are expected to dedicate their time and effort as a form of compensation for the benefits gained from the mentoring, skills development, and project work opportunities provided.
Costs for the offline week will partly be covered by the respective RUN-EU alliance partner.

10. Certificates and Accreditation

Participants who complete the program successfully and achieve all the criteria will receive a certificate of participation.

11. Conclusion

The Student Academy provides a platform for young researchers to engage in meaningful project work, enhance their personal and professional development, and contribute to pressing societal issues. By the end of the program, participants will have gained a clear sense of whether research is the right path for them, and they will have built lasting relationships with mentors and peers in the research community.

12. Application

Apply now: https://forms.office.com/e/G8PQFygkY2