



LUDWIG
BOLTZMANN
GESELLSCHAFT
Career Center



LExA

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE
AWARD IN RESEARCH

NOMINATION GUIDELINES

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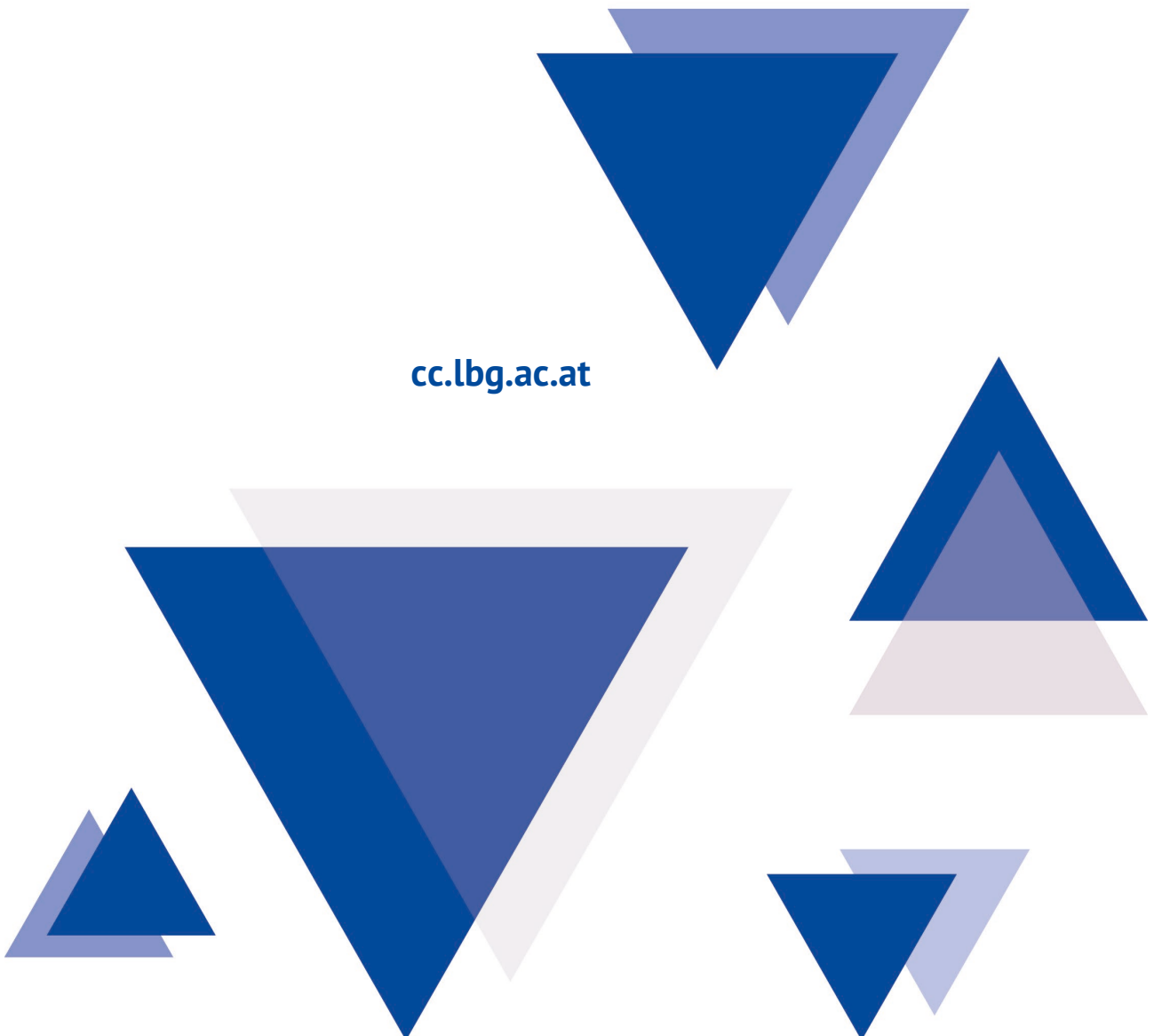


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LExA Award – Nomination guidelines

Background

The step to leadership can be a real challenge for scientists. For many years, it was more about proving oneself in the respective field of research by acquiring professional knowledge and a very high level of commitment. Many have therefore not been prepared how to lead a team, and often do not specifically strive for leadership responsibility as the next career step. (Sapienza, 2004).

The competitive nature of the scientific system tends to give leadership positions to those with the greatest scientific impact and success (e.g., a high number of published papers), which may lead to a prioritisation of subject expertise over other important skills. As a result, many researchers attain leadership positions without possessing the necessary leadership skills (Bronner, 2018; Buller, 2015). In contrast to industry, where strategic talent management and leadership training have long been established, academia has largely neglected these areas (Buller, 2015).

In addition to generally applicable leadership requirements, leaders in R&D are confronted with specific challenges that arise from the working and structural conditions of the research environment. Leadership tasks in the scientific environment are challenging due to high performance pressure, uncertain output, complex organizational structures, and hierarchies. Research generates new knowledge and is not comparable to calculable and plannable industrial processes. Additionally, working conditions are often uncertain (Rehbock, 2020). At the same time, leaders in the scientific environment are expected to meet high professional standards (Welzig, 2021).

A modern leader's challenge is not only to advance their own research career, but also to take responsibility as a mentor for young researchers' career development and for transferring and sharing knowledge (e.g., by teaching, supporting open innovation in science, or science education). The responsibility to act as mentor as stated by the Reform on Research Assessment (2021), is often not perceived sufficiently.

In 2017, the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft identified *Modern approaches to leadership & management and individual career paths* as one of its strategic goals (Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft, 2017). The Career Center of the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft has been supporting scientists in Austria for years in the development of modern leadership skills through tailor-made programs, exchange forums, mentoring and coaching opportunities. The LBG Career Center aims to improve the visibility of leadership and develop necessary competencies in a structured way, with the goal of bringing sustainable change in the system in the long term.

LExA is intended to underline the relevance of leadership in academia since its introduction 2023.

The LExA - Leadership Award in Research, seeks to highlight leaders who have effectively navigated these challenges while maintaining a positive approach. Individuals that serve as role models and inspiration for young researchers, contributing to better conditions for research and subsequently achieving improved research results (Sapienza, 2004; Rehbock, 2020; LERU, 2012).

The jury focuses specifically on leadership skills, which involve influencing and motivating others through one's own vision, positive attitude, and role model effect, to contribute and develop in line with individual strengths. Management skills, such as the ability to manage and control people, processes, and resources efficiently, are not the focus (Kotter, 1990; LERU, 2012).

"A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for recognising the potential in people and ideas, and has the courage to develop that potential" – Brené Brown

“A great person attracts great people and knows how to hold them together” – Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

“The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers.” – Peter Drucker

Selection process

Who can be nominated?

Researchers from the close research environment can be nominated (e.g. universities, non-university research institutions, spin-offs) who have at least 2 years of leadership responsibility.

In 2026 the award features 2 categories again: (Emerging) Leaders and Experienced Leaders. Leadership roles require different levels of experience and expertise at various levels. The two categories ensure a standardised assessment of characteristics across individual criteria, making it easier to compare and evaluate.



Illustration: Change in leadership tasks according to leadership level (Source: Glatzel, 2023)

During the selection process, the jury will evaluate the nominations received in two categories and select one winner per category:

Emerging leaders

This profile includes approximately:

- 2 to (approx.) 5 years of leadership responsibility;
- e.g. team leaders, project leaders, research group leaders;
- Leaders of a small to medium-sized team/group.

Experienced Leaders:

This profile roughly comprises:

- Leaders of scientific teams or projects over a longer period of time, usually more than 5 - 10 years;
- e.g. head of research, department, institute, professors or similar positions with comprehensive responsibilities for the management & leadership of research projects and teams;
- Leaders of a department/organisation, management of large teams.

Who can nominate?

The nomination must be submitted by **at least 2 people** who can provide a well-reasoned assessment of the nominee's leadership contribution and its impact. Suitable nominators may include colleagues, team members, or superiors with a first-hand understanding of the nominee's leadership work.

Jury

An international jury of experts evaluates the incoming nominations based on specific criteria. The selection process occurs in two steps. In the event of a large number of submissions, the LBG Career Center will make a preliminary selection.

The jury members review and rank the nominations individually in the first step. Then, they hold a joint meeting to agree on a winner.

The decision on granting the award is made at the sole discretion of the board of the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft and is valid to the exclusion of any appeal.

In 2026, the jury will be composed as follows (in alphabetical order):

- **Kerstin Dübner-Gee:** Head of Department Human Resources Development & Opportunities of the Max Planck Society, co-editor of the professional journal "Developing Personnel in Higher Education and Science", board member at German Scholars Organization.
- **Dr. Markus Ebner:** Founder of the Positive Leadership PERMA-Lead Model, Keynote Speaker, Trainer and Coach, Teaching and Research at the Universities of Vienna and Klagenfurt and University of Applied Sciences Vienna.
- **Dr. Markus Hammer:** Director of Learning, Functions Leader and Operations at McKinsey & Company, Lecturer at TU Graz, Institute for Innovation and Industrial Management.

- **Prof. Dr. Anette Mayer:** economist with extensive academic leadership experience, has held roles including Vice-Rector at FOM University and founding Rector of the German Open Business University in Berlin. She is active in TU Berlin's Science Management program and the Berlin University Alliance, holding key leadership roles.
- **Claudia Müller:** Head of the Leibniz leadership academy, many years of experience in the field of science and organizational and personnel development; former Chancellor of BTK University of Art and Design
- **Prof. Dr. Carsten Schermuly:** psychologist who researches future of work, empowerment, leadership and power dynamics at SRH University of Applied Sciences. Expert in personnel selection and development; award-winning psychologist and HR thought leader. Director of the Institute for New Work and Coaching at SRH University of Applied Sciences.

Profile

We are looking for inspiring leadership personalities with a vision who proactively fulfil their responsibility as mentor, role model and coach for their team (and other stakeholders). They should have a positive influence on their team members, enabling them to flourish in their respective strengths and develop their full potential.

Selection criteria

- Candidate is a **role model** for others and demonstrates a high level of professionalism and integrity.
- Candidate has a clear **vision** and makes it comprehensible to team members how their work relates meaningfully to the mission, vision and goal of the university/institution.
- Candidate **inspires** others to work collaboratively and creatively to advance the research mission.
- Candidate creates a work environment that promotes **equality and diversity**.
- Candidate focuses on their **strengths** and those of the staff and supports them to develop these strengths further and to specifically bring them to use.
- Candidate strives to build **positive relationships** with staff/colleagues, supervisors, subordinates and stakeholders to promote engagement, cooperation and knowledge sharing.
- Candidate is **accessible** to their team and creates an environment of trust where employees are encouraged to show ownership and initiative and are not afraid to make mistakes (error culture).
- Candidate fulfils their **coaching and mentoring role** and supports staff in their career development and in building sustainable professional networks.

The defined selection criteria have been formulated based on extensive literature and background research on current leadership models and approaches. Moreover, insights from discussions with experts in leadership were considered, specifically tailoring the criteria to the requirements of leaders in the academic environment.

Consulted general models on leadership include the *Full-range Leadership, Management Roles* (Mintzberg, 2010), and *Positive Leadership* (Cameron, 2013; Creusen et al, 2011; Seliger, 2020). These models developed from *positive psychology* (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and gave rise to further approaches, such as the *PERMA Model* (Ebner, 2019), which was subsequently developed for the academic background (Buller, 2013).

It also considers the findings of the *Research Assessment Project* (ERA, 20-21), which suggests that the discussion of leadership in science should include more qualitative metrics, including peer review, community involvement, mentoring, and teaching.

Finally, other documents and guidelines from the research environment were considered, such as the *Charter and Code for Researchers* or the *Researcher Development Framework /Lens for Leadership* by Vitae (2011), an organization in the UK that has been conducting research and providing advice on career support for researchers for 50 years. Specific leadership models from universities were used for comparison (LERU, 2012).

Submission

In your submission (see [submission form](#)) please describe clearly and comprehensively, using specific examples (e.g. everyday life, situations, projects, processes, measures, etc.), why you consider the nominee to be an exemplary leader.

Why do you consider them to have exemplary leadership skills? What positive changes do the nominee's leadership skills bring to the performance of the research team? How do you recognize their exemplary leadership skills?

- Please include **all** criteria mentioned in the form. This is the only way the jury can award points to all criteria and take them into account in the overall result.
- Submission via the LBG platform, [Crossfound](#) (upload possible approx. from February until May 22nd 2026, link will be available on the homepage: cc.lbg.ac.at/lexa).
- **Submission form, 2-4 pages** with max. **13,000 characters** incl. spaces.
- The nomination must contain sufficient information so that no additional inquiry is required.
- The selection criteria serve as orientation and describe in more detail the facets in which outstanding leadership can be demonstrated. Please try to address the criteria whenever possible.
- The **call will be open until May 22nd 2026**.

Additional evidence

Necessary:

- **CV of the nominee;**
- **Declaration of consent** of the nominee(s) / submitter(s) / reference(s) (form);
- If necessary, the jury may request additional recommendations from other persons who can support the nomination.

Optional:

- Completion of leadership training or conflict management training (to be credibly demonstrated);
- Taking up executive coaching sessions (to be credibly demonstrated);
- Conducting appraisals/ development conversations and regular feedback discussions with the team during the year (to be credibly demonstrated);
- Activities as a mentor (mentoring talks, participation in mentoring programmes, active commitment and promotion of junior staff, etc.), to be credibly demonstrated;
- Involvement and engagement in networks (to be credibly demonstrated);
- Videos (e.g. by the team), photos (e.g. of team events), etc.;
- Additional information that supports the application (optional).

Award

All nominees will be notified of the jury's decision **by the end of August 2026** at the latest.

The winner in the (Emerging) Leaders category and in the Experienced Leaders category will be each awarded with the LExA Award and will each receive prize money in the amount of €4,000, which should be used for team development measures.

Award ceremony

The award ceremony will take place in a festive setting on **24.09.2026**, LBG's annual autumn event. Numerous stakeholders from the RTI system will be guests. During the award ceremony, a short film documenting the two winners will be presented, announcing their win. The award will be ceremonially presented by the BMBWF (Federal Minister Eva-Maria Holzleitner).

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