

20 Years of NAWI Graz

Cooperation instead of Competition – For twenty years, TU Graz and the University of Graz have been pooling expertise and resources in natural science research and teaching in the NAWI Graz network. A showcase project that is unique in Austria.

Ines Hopfer-Pfister

Joint studies formed the basis for success. Whereas 20 years ago each university offered separate degree programmes, 22 degree programmes are now run jointly. Around 5,300 students make use of this broad spectrum.

The joint doctoral programme within the NAWI Graz Advanced School of Science (GASS) enjoys a high status, with over 600 doctoral students currently being taught. Doctoral candidates are integrated in the inter-university doctoral schools and profit from supervision from the teaching staff of both universities.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH TOGETHER

Joint teaching saves time that can be invested in research, and around 450 research projects are run in the NAWI Graz network. The 36 participating institutes raise 34.6 million euros in third-party funding, which corresponds to an increase of around 120 per cent since 2006. Joint NAWI Graz professorial appointments have also become common practice. Currently, 36 Section-98 professors have been appointed in joint procedures.

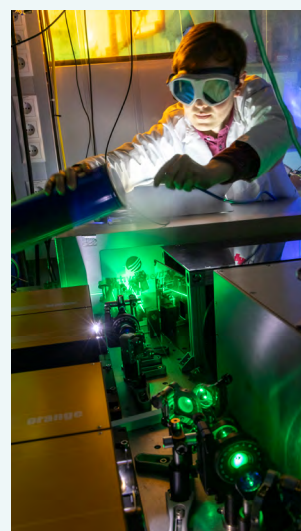
In addition, NAWI Graz also focuses on large inter-university collaborative projects such as special research programmes and doctoral programmes (DK). The doctoral programme Molecular Enzymology was one such successful joint project; it ran from 2005 to 2019 with a funding volume of 13.5 million euros.

The Austrian Science Fund doc.funds project Discrete Mathematics in Teams, which will train 12 doctoral students, will start in October. Each doctoral student is supervised by two researchers

on an equal footing, with 19 supervisors from TU Graz and the University of Graz involved. “By bringing together pairs of supervisors, we can work on new areas of research that have not previously been available in Graz,” says Michael Kerber (Institute of Geometry). The research projects are cross-faculty, but also cross-university.

SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

Research is currently being conducted in 28 “central labs” (central labs pool thematically related equipment in one place) and core facilities (individual large-scale appliances that several research groups need) in accordance with international standards; around 160 appliances have been purchased and utilised in partnership. One of the oldest shared central labs is the Central Lab for Water, Minerals and Rocks, which was



launched in 2011. Dorothee Hippler from the Institute of Applied Geosciences heads this central lab: “A valuable place for scientific collaboration, development and exchange,” says the researcher. “Through this central lab, previous and current research projects can be supplemented by innovative and challenging, but also sophisticated analytical methods from the field of isotope geochemistry,” she emphasises.

A SHARED PATH INTO THE FUTURE

With the construction of the **GRAZ CENTER OF PHYSICS (GCP)**, the cooperation project has now been taken to a new level. The ground-breaking ceremony for this inter-university centre, which will unite the physics institutes of TU Graz and the University of Graz from 2030, took place in June 2024. In addition to the GCP, which is currently being built on the University of Graz campus, four other institutes of TU Graz and the University of Graz will also cooperate even more closely with each other in the **NAWI GRAZ GEOCENTER** (planned for Campus Inffeldgasse). ■

