

Queen's Psychology's Nikolaus Troje unites with Biomedical and Molecular Sciences department faculty members Gunnar Blohm and Doug Munoz as part of "The Brain in Action" research project. "The Brain in Action" has been funded by The German Research Foundation for another four and a half years.



Brainy international research collaboration receives renewed funding

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Renewed funding from the German Research Foundation means the International Research Training Group "The Brain in Action" project will carry on with its work for another four and a half years. Funding from the foundation was set to end in April 2018.

An international research collaboration uniting two German universities and three Canadian universities, including Queen's, will continue its important work studying how perception and action interact and how they are processed by the human brain.

The main goal of this research training group is to deepen our understanding of the neural systems and processes that underlie perception and action in everyday living – for instance, how the brain processes the sensory and motor signals involved in reaching for a cup of coffee and the feeling involved in touching it.

At Queen's, the project unites faculty members Gunnar Blohm and Doug Munoz of the Biomedical and Molecular Sciences department with **Nikolaus Troje of the Psychology department**. The three are currently supervising seven Queen's PhD candidates, and co-supervising several German doctoral students at the Philipps-Universität Marburg and Justus Liebig Universität Giessen. York and Western Universities are the other two Canadian institutions involved in the research group. "We are grateful for the renewed funding, which confirms the value of our work and in the relationships being formed between our students, institutions, and countries" says Dr. Blohm. "Merging the distinct academic cultures of the two countries has been a valuable learning and networking experience for our students. I am sure that many collaborative initiatives will continue to happen long after they graduate."

The two German universities boast 25 PhD candidates and 12 faculty members working on the project. As part of their studies, the students spend several months learning in Canada.

“I really appreciate the welcoming and helping Canadian culture. My colleagues at work and my housemates have helped me to feel comfortable in the first weeks,” says Christoph Lenk, one of the German students currently studying in Canada. “My master’s studies in biomechanics, motor control, motion analysis, and perception led to an interest in perception in virtual reality. I am glad that I can exchange experiences with other young researchers in Canada and in Germany on this field of research.”

The aim of research training groups such as this one is to prepare PhD candidates for careers outside academia by bolstering their transferrable skills. So far, many of the graduates have gone on to work in the science or high tech fields. Parisa Abedi Khoozani, an international Queen’s PhD candidate who is working on the project, is hoping to teach science in Canada once she graduates.

“I am currently in Germany on my second visit as part of this research group, working with another collaborator who is also researching computer neuroscience,” says Ms. Khoozani. “The exposure to different fields and different areas of research has been interesting and beneficial. This opportunity has been as much about the learning as it has been about forming connections, and I hope to continue collaborating with my German colleagues in the future.”

In addition to the German Research Foundation funding, the “Brain in Action” research training group is supported by a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) CREATE grant.

Learn more about this international research training group on the School of Graduate Studies’ [website](#).

[Read the Queen's Gazette story](#)