2027 Academic Award for Drone Studies

In times of major geopolitical challenges, the issues of **European security and sovereignty are of strategic relevance** in both national and international considerations and decision-making. In this context, the further development of technological capabilities – **drones and drone safety in particular** – is of special significance.

Drone technologies are rapidly transforming a wide range of sectors, from mobility, logistics and infrastructure to agriculture, environmental monitoring and emergency response. At the same time, advances in artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, sensor technologies and data analytics are opening up entirely **new possibilities for the development and application of unmanned aerial systems**.

Against this background, the University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol, the Franco-German University (FGU) and the research group COMTESSA from the University of the Bundeswehr Munich are launching the **2027 Academic Award for Drone Studies** to recognize outstanding academic work contributing to the future development and application of drone technologies.

The award aims to encourage graduates and young researchers to explore the potential of drones from different scientific and disciplinary perspectives. Particular emphasis is placed on **innovative, interdisciplinary and application-oriented** approaches that contribute to technological progress as well as to the responsible and beneficial use of drone technologies.

The prize is worth **€1,500** and will be awarded for an outstanding Bachelor's, Master's or PhD thesis completed at a higher education institution in Europe.

> **Fields:** Engineering and technology; computer science and artificial intelligence; natural sciences; environmental sciences; economics and social sciences; and related disciplines.
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> **Topics:** Drone technologies; unmanned aerial systems; autonomous flight; artificial intelligence and robotics; drone applications; sensing and data analysis; safety and regulation; sustainability; and other innovative interdisciplinary applications involving drones.

The award is intended to promote academic excellence. It recognizes exceptional academic achievement, aims to increase the international visibility of innovative, interdisciplinary scientific work and emerging talent in the area of drone technologies and draws attention to outstanding **research made in Europe** in this rapidly developing field.

1. Award Criteria

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- The submitted work must be a successfully completed **Bachelor's, Master's or PhD thesis**.
- The thesis must have been completed at a **higher education institution in Europe** (graduates of binational or international study programmes are welcome).
- The submitted work must have a clear connection to **drone technologies, drone applications or unmanned aerial systems**.
- Applications from all academic disciplines are welcome. Particular consideration will be given to work demonstrating an **interdisciplinary approach**.
- The thesis should demonstrate a high level of **academic quality, methodological rigour and originality**.
- Particular attention will be given to the **innovative character and potential impact** of the work, including its scientific, technological, economic, environmental or societal relevance.
- The motivation letter should explain the significance of the submitted work, its contribution to the field and the applicant's motivation to apply for the award.

Applications will be evaluated by an international jury appointed by the award partners.

2. Award Ceremony

The award ceremony will take place **in Paris in autumn 2027**, bringing together the winner and representatives of the award partners. Travel, accommodation and catering for the awardee will be covered.

Further details regarding the date, venue and programme of the award ceremony will be announced separately.

3. How to Apply

Applications must be submitted **by 31 December 2026**.

All application documents must be submitted **in English and in PDF format** and should include:

- **Bachelor's, Master's or PhD thesis**
- **Motivation letter** – maximum 500 words
- **Short biography** – maximum 500 words

The motivation letter should briefly describe the relevance, innovative contribution and potential impact of the submitted thesis and explain why the work should be considered for the 2027 Academic Award for Drone Studies.

Applications should be sent electronically to: **rektorat@hok.ac.at**