

## FAQs for scholarship applicants

Bear in mind that professors at Swiss academic institutions receive numerous email requests to act as research supervisors for Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship holders. Your careful preparation and your targeted approach once you have completed your enquiries will raise your chances of attracting a professor's interest and possibly of receiving a positive answer. The following information may be useful before you decide how to approach a potential academic supervisor.

### Who can help me find an academic supervisor?

As an applicant, you are responsible for finding a suitable research supervisor (professor). Neither the secretariat of the Federal Commission for Scholarships nor the international office at the universities can help you find an academic supervisor for your application for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship. We recommend you look for a suitable research supervisor by reading up on university websites and talking to any contacts you may have at your own academic institution.

### What should I do before contacting a professor?

- a) Make sure that the prospective academic supervisor actually works in your field.
- b) Make sure that you possess all of the qualifications required for the intended scientific collaboration. Find out, for instance, what requirements must be met in order to obtain a master's degree at the university in question.

Finding a professor who is willing to supervise you can be a major challenge. It can take several weeks or even months.

See: <https://youtu.be/kp4NnqZ2T00>

### How should I go about contacting a professor?

Be well prepared and focused. Make direct contact with a professor and declare your interest in collaborating in a specific research project. Tell the professor what you have studied so far and that you are applying for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship. All enquiries should be accompanied by the following documents, as a minimum: short CV, letter of motivation, 2-3 convincing letters of reference, research plan (2-3 A4 pages), all in correct English.

### How many times am I allowed to submit a scholarship application?

If your application is not awarded a scholarship, we suggest not more than two additional applications for the same scholarship type.

### Why there is no Art scholarship offer for my country of origin?

These scholarships are available to students from a limited number of countries only.

### I do not fulfill all the application criteria, is there any other possibility?

On behalf of the Swiss Government, no other funding scheme is available. Maybe the following link might be of interest for you: <https://www.studyinswitzerland.plus/scholarships/>

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## FAQs for academic supervisors

You are a professor at a Swiss academic institution. Foreign students and postgraduate researchers contact you to ask if you will act as their academic mentor or supervisor and host professor. The following information may be useful to you in deciding how to deal with such a request.

### Why do FCS scholarship applicant contact professors in Switzerland?

Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are intended as Switzerland's contribution to preparing the next generation of professors and researchers in the country of origin. This is particularly crucial and important for doctoral students from developing countries or in countries that lack a strong tradition of PhD studies. Personal relations are an essential element in providing access to Switzerland's academic institutions and networks. Each application for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship must therefore be backed by a professor who has agreed to supervise the research, integrate the scholarship holder into their team and provide good research conditions.

### What does supporting an FCS scholarship applicant involve?

The decision to act as academic supervisor or not is entirely up to you, of course. If you decide to do so, please bear in mind that giving your support is a commitment. In other words, if you choose to support a candidate, it means that you are familiar with his/her research project, you have discussed it with the applicant, and the research project relates to the research that you conduct in your department or laboratory. It is also important to realise that your support is not just a personal commitment: indirectly, it reflects on the research carried out by your institution, which places a double burden of responsibility on your shoulders.

### How do I provide support to an FCS scholarship applicant?

Please send a letter describing in sufficient detail the research proposal, your relation to the candidate and possible future collaboration, and enclose your short CV. This confirmation of support should be written on paper with an official letterhead showing your institution's official contact details.

### Should I support more than one candidate?

Do not assume that you will increase the chances of success by supporting several applicants: the FCS has a clear preference for solid support to individual applicants as opposed to noncommittal support for multiple applicants. The FCS recommends that academic supervisors support 1 or 2 applicants per academic year only.

### What is the role of the academic supervisor?

If you agree to act as an academic supervisor, you agree to supervise the scholarship holder during their whole research stay (12 months for research fellows and post-docs or 36 months for PhD scholarship holders). You agree to integrate the scholarship holder into your team and provide good research conditions (lab space and access to infrastructure, library etc.). PhD thesis supervisors should do their utmost to ensure that adequate funding is available after the scholarship so that the thesis can be completed within a reasonable timeframe (1 or 2 additional years maximum). To comply with the rules of your university please enquire about its internal regulations before deciding to support a Swiss Government scholarship holder.

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### You do not find the answer to your question.

Please carefully read the eligibility criteria and conditions on our website  
[www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships\\_eng](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_eng)

05.06.2023

# Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Scholars and Artists

## «Will you be my supervisor?»

**You are a professor at a Swiss academic institution. Foreign students and postgraduate researchers contact you to ask if you will act as their academic supervisor and host professor. The following information may be useful to you in deciding how to deal with such a request.**

- The Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students FCS (abbreviated as ESKAS in German and CFBE in French) sincerely thanks all potential academic supervisors for attentively choosing their candidate for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship and for giving them careful support.

### Scholarship applicants are looking for host professors

- All Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are supervised by a professor. Therefore the first step in the application process for the scholarship candidate is to find a professor at a Swiss academic institution **willing to act as their supervisor** for the scholarship and support the research project.
- The FCS encourages candidates to find their supervisor on their own for their scholarship research project. There is no specific support offered in this bottom-up matching process.
- The supervisor **evaluates the academic suitability** of a candidate (incl. language skills) and **must endorse the research proposal** (including the time-frame), which is a central component of the application.
- The applicant has to reach an agreement with the supervisor. The **letter from the professor stating why** she/he is willing to **support and supervise** the PhD thesis or the (postdoctoral) research is a mandatory element of each application for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship.
- Eligibility for supervision must comply with the rules of the university.
- Without such support the scholarship application is not complete and will therefore be rejected.
- **The decision to act as academic supervisor or not is entirely up to you, of course.**

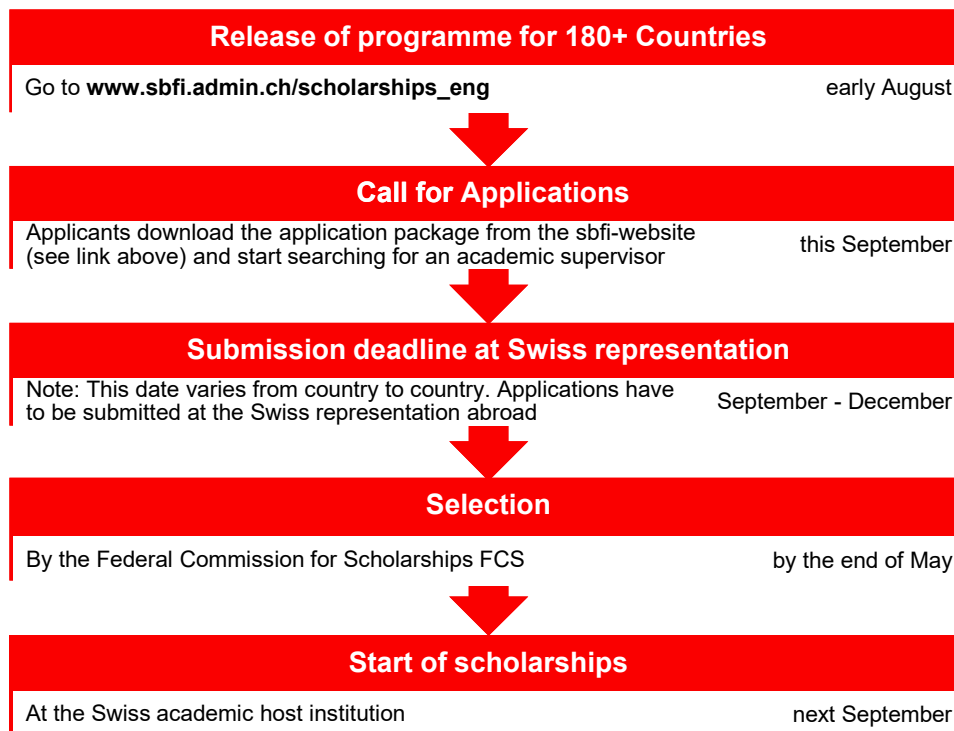
### The academic supervisor:

#### A success factor and a role with responsibilities

- **If you agree** to act as an academic supervisor, you agree to supervise the scholarship holder during their whole research stay (12 months for research fellows and postdocs or 36 months for PhD scholarship holders). PhD thesis supervisors should do their utmost to ensure that adequate funding is available after the scholarship so that the thesis can be completed within a reasonable timeframe (1 or 2 additional years maximum).
- During the scholarship holder's stay in Switzerland, the Confederation together with the international relations office at your university and you as academic supervisor are responsible for them.
- As host professor **you agree to integrate the grantee into your team** and provide good research conditions (lab space and access to infrastructure). With consent of the FCS, a supplementary salary to the scholarship grant is possible up to a certain level. The scholarship cannot be used as top-up to an existing full employment.
- **Field research** is possible **for PhD scholarship holders only** and with accepted fieldwork request by FCS. No co-funding by FCS neither for fieldwork nor for attending conferences.
- Not accepted as academic supervisors for postdoctoral scholarship applicants are their previous PhD mentors and co-directors for the co-tutelle PhD at a Swiss university.
- **Major selection criteria** are the candidate's academic profile, their research capacity, and motivation plus the originality and methodological soundness of the research proposal as well as the quality and context of supervision and the potential for future academic cooperation. The FCS recommends that you **support 1 or 2 applicants per year only**.
- The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are prestigious and highly competitive. The expected success rate is around 15 to 20 percent.
- **A letter of sufficient scope from the host professor** should describe the research proposal, the relation to the candidate and possible future collaboration. A short CV from the host professor should be enclosed.
- Your thoughtfully drawn-up host letter **could be the decisive element in the scholarship application**.

## Application procedure

- Yearly release of the call in August. Preparation of application and submission in autumn. Peer reviews of applications during winter. Selection and announcement of decision in Spring. Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships run from 1st of September each year.



- Each year since 1961 the Swiss government has awarded **postgraduate scholarships** through the FCS to foreign scholars, now from over 180 countries. The following types of scholarships are offered: research fellowships, PhD- and Postdoc-scholarships as well as Arts scholarships (for selected countries only).
- Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are awarded for a period of **12 months**. Only PhD scholarships can be extended (up to 36 months at most). For PhDs lasting longer than 36 months the academic supervisors are expected to help organize a follow-up funding solution.
- Once the scholarship has come to an end, holders** are supposed to **return to their country of origin**. Finding employment in Switzerland after the end of the scholarship contradicts the intention of the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship, which is to promote brain and talent circulation.
- For detailed eligibility and exclusion criteria please consult the information online** (see link below).

## Further information

Can be found at: [www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships\\_eng](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_eng)

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### Contact us

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