



Al-Khwarizmi KAUST Fellowships

The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with support from the European Science Foundation (ESF) launches a competitive doctoral fellowship scheme to welcome students from the European continent for a research journey to a top international university in the Middle East. The applications will be evaluated via an independent peer-review process managed by the ESF.

CALL FOR AL-KHWARIZMI DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

The Al-Khwarizmi Graduate Fellowship scheme invites applications for doctoral fellowships, with the **submission deadline of 22 January 2021, 17:00 CET.**

The selected applicants will be offered generous stipends and free tuition for Ph.D. studies within one of KAUST academic programs. Strong applicants who were not awarded a Fellowship but passed KAUST admission requirements will be offered the possibility to join the University as regular Ph.D. students with the standard benefits that include the usual stipends and free tuition.

TERMS OF FELLOWSHIPS

- The duration of the Fellowships is three years. Extensions may be considered in duly justified cases.
- The Fellows receive a USD 38,000 annual living allowance.
- The Fellows are provided with free tuition, free student housing on campus, relocation support, and medical and dental coverage for the duration of the Fellowship.
- Each Fellowship includes a supplementary grant of USD 6,000 at the Fellow's disposal for research-related expenses such as conference attendance.
- The academic progress of the Fellows will be reviewed on an annual basis. The Fellowships may be terminated if the Fellows fail to meet KAUST academic requirements for Ph.D. students.
- The applications must be submitted in two steps, with the formal documents and transcripts to be submitted to KAUST Admissions in Step 1, and the research proposal to be submitted to the ESF in Step 2. Both steps should be completed in parallel before the call deadline.

| Apply now!

RESEARCH TOPICS

The proposed research can be within any topical area of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) represented at the three academic divisions of KAUST:

- [Biological and Environmental Sciences and Engineering \(BESE\)](#)
- [Computer, Electrical and Mathematical Sciences and Engineering \(CEMSE\)](#)
- [Physical Sciences and Engineering \(PSE\)](#)

The applicants are advised to explore KAUST research topics before applying. During the proposal preparation phase, the applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the prospective advisors of their Ph.D. projects to discuss their research plan. The lists of the advisors can be found here:

- [Advisors in BESE](#)
- [Advisors in CEMSE](#)
- [Advisors in PSE](#)

HOST ORGANIZATION

The Al-Khwarizmi Graduate Fellowships are named after the 9th century Middle Eastern mathematician whose major works introduced Hindu-Arabic numerals and the concepts of algebra into European mathematics. Al-Khwarizmi worked at the "House of Wisdom", the world-leading center of the scholarship at that time. KAUST, an 11-year-old international university conceived as a modern successor to the historical House of Wisdom, will host the Al-Khwarizmi Fellows. The University focuses on the advancement of science and technology through cutting-edge research integrated with graduate education in science and technology areas. Being a multi-cultural environment, with over 100 different nationalities on campus, the University strives to serve as a beacon of

knowledge that bridges people and cultures for the betterment of humanity. KAUST features a modern, self-sufficient campus on the coast of the Red Sea with state-of-the-art research infrastructure. As a small graduate-only university, KAUST emphasizes research excellence; it ranks #1 in the world in QS ranking in the category of "Citations per Faculty" and #1 in the a3 ranking of top 20 universities under 20 years of age.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must hold an [MSc degree \(or equivalent\) in mathematical or physical sciences, computer science, or engineering](#). Applications from candidates in the process of completing their MSc studies will be accepted. Still, the Fellowship award will be subject to candidates presenting their MSc degree certificates to the KAUST Office of Admissions within six months after the call deadline.
- Applicants must submit a research proposal following a pre-defined template (see Step 2 of the application process). Only one application per candidate is allowed. Only complete proposals in which all sections are filled with relevant information will be evaluated. Proposals with missing information will not go to the peer review stage.
- Applicants must have demonstrated excellence in their previous studies. A minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale or equivalent during the MSc studies is required. The equivalent of GPA can be calculated for grades obtained in other systems such as ECTS based on various resources available online, such as the [tables provided by the OECD](#).
- The proposed research topic must be in an area represented in any of the three academic divisions of KAUST.
- Applicants must pass all [KAUST admission](#)

[requirements for the Ph.D. degree program](#).

- Applicants must be either nationals or residents of one of the [47 member states of the Council of Europe \(CoE\)](#).
- Good command of English evidenced by a minimum TOEFL score of 79 on the IBT (Internet Based Test) or 6.0 on the IELTS (International English Language Testing System). A TOEFL or IELTS score is not required if the applicant received a degree from an accredited institution in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, or New Zealand.
- A separate interview may be conducted to assess the applicant's motivation and good fit for the program and the University.
- [The application must be submitted in English before 22 January 2021, 17:00 CET](#).

The selection of applicants will involve international peer review. The applicants are invited to familiarize themselves with the selection process specified [here](#).

Help Desk

[Submit an inquiry to the Doctoral Fellowship Help Desk](#)

Application

and



selection
process

OPEN CONFIGURATION OPTIONS

APPLICATION PROCESS

The applications must be submitted in two steps, with the formal documents and transcripts to be submitted to KAUST Admissions in Step 1, and the research proposal to be submitted to the ESF in Step 2. Both steps should be completed in parallel before the call deadline. They have the following requirements.

- **Step 1:** applicants must submit an online application for studies at KAUST via the [Admissions' website](#) before the call deadline.
 - The following documents must be included:
 - Curriculum Vitae including information about studies, employment, career breaks, academic awards, and, where available, a list of publications and publication abstracts (max. 2 pages),
 - Degree certificates and official transcripts from all university-level institutions attended,
 - A short statement of purpose (max. 1 page), where the applicants must indicate why they are applying for the Al-Khwarizmi Fellowship, the topic of the research proposal, and the name(s) of the potential thesis supervisor(s), if known at the time of application,
- **Step 2:** applicants are required to submit a research proposal in PDF format (max. 5 pages) via the ESF Portal [add hyperlink] before the call deadline.
 - Three letters of recommendation from professors or advisors who know the candidate (max. 1 page each),
 - Proofs of English (certificates of GRE and/or TOEFL test taken within three years of the application).
 - This proposal will define the applicant's Ph.D. thesis's theme if he/she is awarded the Fellowship.
 - The proposal must follow the [template provided here](#).
 - While it is not mandatory, the applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their prospective supervisors at KAUST to familiarize themselves with their research and technical capabilities. This information will help the applicants in devising a feasible work plan.

SELECTION PROCESS

1. ELIGIBILITY CHECK

Upon receipt of the proposals, an eligibility check is performed by KAUST. The proposals which pass the eligibility check are evaluated in a two-stage selection process using the below-defined scores and criteria.

2. EVALUATION SCORES

All criteria are evaluated according to the scale 1 through 5, based on the definitions recommended by the [European Peer Review Guide](#):

- 1 - Poor: "The criterion is addressed inadequately, or there are serious inherent weaknesses."
- 2 - Fair: "While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses."
- 3 - Good: "The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary."
- 4 - Very Good: "The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible."
- 5 - Excellent: "The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor."

3. STAGE 1 – INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

Each application is reviewed by two independent experts assigned by the ESF based on matching expertise to the proposal topic. The experts will assess the qualifications of the applicant and quality of the research proposal based on the following criteria:

- **Criterion 1.**
Qualifications of the candidate:
Sub-criterion 1.1: previous academic performance of the applicant (evaluation based on the applicant's CV

including awards/prizes in recognition of excellence in studies, participation in internships and external schools and courses, awarded student fellowships, etc.).

Sub-criterion 1.2: previous research output, if available (participation in research projects, co-authorship of conference contributions and scientific publications, any other relevant research activities).

Sub-criterion 1.3: evaluation of the applicant's motivation and personal qualities based on the letters of recommendation and the applicant's statement of purpose as well as potential impact that the fellowship would have on the applicant's career development.

- **Criterion 2.**

Quality of the proposed research:

Sub-criterion 2.1: scientific quality and novelty of the proposed research.

Sub-criterion 2.2: appropriateness of the methodology, feasibility of the project and clarity of the workplan.

Sub-criterion 2.3: expected impact of the proposed project.

Each sub-criterion is evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5. The total score (/30) is obtained as the sum of the averaged scores for each criterion provided by the two independent evaluators' individual evaluation reports. **The applicants with a total score of 20 and above will be admitted to stage 2 of the evaluation process.**

In cases where one of the two experts has evaluated the application above the threshold of admission to stage 2, while the other expert has scored the application by seven or more points below the first expert, the respective Selection Committee will examine the two assessment reports. The Committee will decide which of the two individual evaluation reports shall take precedence and use those scores as the final

scores of stage 1. If the final score is below the threshold of 20 points, the application will not be considered in stage 2.

Rebuttal: the applicants are entitled to submit a rebuttal after receiving the reviewer's comments from the ESF. The rebuttal offers the opportunity for applicants to provide clarifications on factual errors or misunderstandings that may have been made by the reviewers while assessing the proposal. The Selection Committee will decide which applicants are invited to stage 2 taking into account the review reports and the rebuttal.

Feedback to applicants after stage 1:

Upon completing the individual assessment and rebuttal stages, the ESF will send all applicants anonymized reviewers' comments and notification of either having passed or not to stage 2.

4. STAGE 2 – CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Interviews with the Selection Committees will take place online. Three Committees will be established corresponding to the disciplines of the three academic divisions of KAUST. Each Committee will consist of appointed faculty members of the respective Divisions. Each Committee will establish a separate ranking list of candidates taking into account the proposals, the referee reports and rebuttal. Decisions will be taken by consensus, where needed a simple majority procedure will be used. The interviews will be scheduled shortly after the shortlisted applicants have been informed by the ESF of going to stage 2.

The interviews will consist of:

- a short 15-minute presentation by the candidate, including:
 - personal career motivation,
 - academic and research achievements,
 - the proposed research project,
- questions by the Committee, aimed

at clarifying the candidate's career objectives, background knowledge, and his/her ability to carry out the proposed research.

- Based on the interviews and scores received in stage 1, the Selection Committee will score each candidate with a mark between 1 and 5 for each of the above-listed criteria.

5. FINAL DECISION AND FELLOWSHIP AWARD

The stage 2 evaluation score will establish the final ranking. Each of the disciplinary Committees will establish a separate ranking list. The top candidates in each ranking list will be offered a Fellowship. A reserve list of candidates will be drawn in case awarded candidates decline the fellowship.

Feedback to applicants after stage 2:

KAUST will inform each applicant about the selection outcome, which will include providing an evaluation summary report from the respective Selection Committee. The high-scoring applicants who will not be offered a Fellowship will have the option to join KAUST as regular Ph.D. students with the standard KAUST student benefits and stipends if they pass all admission requirements.