

Starting scholarships for international doctoral candidates

– Frequently Asked Questions –

What are the prerequisites for an application?

- non-German citizenship
- university-qualifying degree (e.g. school-leaving certificate) obtained outside Germany
- degree qualifying for doctorate (e.g. Master) completed or near completed
- commitment from a supervisor at Goethe University to supervise your project
- Candidates must have either submitted an application for doctoral funding or received a funding commitment from their supervisor.
- Eligibility is limited to candidates at the start of their doctorate. This means those who are actively preparing their doctorate as well as those in the first year of their doctorate.

Which degrees are important for the application and need to be enclosed?

- The *university-qualifying degree* needs to be obtained outside Germany. This is usually your school-leaving certificate. In any case, it is not a university degree but *the certificate that allowed you to start your first degree program (Bachelor or Master) at a university*. This is necessary to establish your eligibility, because eligibility is limited to candidates with an international educational background. Once your eligibility is established, the certificate plays a very minor role in the evaluation of your application.
- The *degree qualifying for doctorate* needs to be completed or near completed. This is usually your Master's degree. Thus, include a copy of the degree qualifying you for a doctorate (if completed, with grades) or a transcript of records (if degree pending). This is necessary to establish your eligibility as well as your academic excellence.
- A Bachelor's degree certificate *may be included* to support the evaluation if the Master's degree certificate is not yet available.

What do you mean by funding application / funding commitment?

The selection of applications for funding is based on the prospects for the establishment of the doctoral project at Goethe University (amongst other things). Thus, we need to know how you intend to fund your doctoral project after the three-month Starting Scholarship. You can document your plans and prospects in two ways:

- In case you plan to fund your doctorate with a (long-term) scholarship, you can apply once you have submitted an application for such a scholarship at a funding agency. In this case, submit a confirmation of receipt of your application from the agency (and information on the results of the application, if available).
- In case you plan to fund your doctorate with an academic staff position and your supervisor can provide funds for such a position, submit a letter of commitment from your supervisor that he will fund your project.

In case your application for long-term funding has been submitted but rejected, we do not encourage you to apply for a Starting Scholarship. In this case, the application does not establish good prospects for the establishment of the doctoral project at Goethe University and thus you will have few chances to be selected for funding for a Starting Scholarship.

Who will decide on my application?

The applications are screened and summarized by members of the central GRADE support unit. The GRADE Board of Directors makes the final decision based on the supplied summary material and the original applications. The Board of Directors includes faculty members from different academic fields and also PhD and postdoc representatives.

When will I get feedback about my application?

We will try to process the applications as quickly as possible. The selection is made by the GRADE Board of Directors after a careful review. Therefore, it might take 6-8 weeks until a final decision is reached.

What are the criteria for the evaluation? What should I emphasize in my application?

The main criteria for the evaluation are

- the scientific potential of the candidate,
- the scientific quality, feasibility and careful planning of the dissertation project and
- realistic prospects for the establishment of the doctoral project at Goethe University.

Thus, you should carefully consider the following points when preparing your application:

- Explain your potential as a promising young researcher in your CV (e.g. mention scholarships, honors and awards, if applicable: publications and conference contributions).
- Explain your research project clearly and succinctly in the proposal (research question, scientific methods, working plan and timetable).
- Plan the funding for the whole duration of your doctoral research, together with your supervisor, and

- either submit a confirmation of receipt of your application for funding from a funding agency (and information on the result of the application, if available),
- or provide a letter of commitment for funding from your supervisor.

If applications are comparable in terms of their academic merits, social aspects and the financial situation can be considered as additional selection criteria.

Why do I have to specify my current contract situation and details about other scholarships?

To a certain extent, starting scholarships can co-exist with other types of funding. But for legal reasons, you cannot receive a starting scholarship and have a full-time-employment or have a second scholarship at the same time. Permitted forms of employment during a starting scholarship include:

- An employment of up to 16 hours / month with an income of no more than 6.000 € / year, if the content and purpose of the employment are clearly different from the scholarship
- Teaching assignments at the university
- An employment as a scientific assistant at the university of no more than 42 hours / month

Detailed guidelines can be found in the „[Guidelines of the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main on awarding stipends to doctoral candidates and post-doctoral candidates](#)“. We are required to check for and take into consideration any double financing.

What if my contract situation changes after the submission of my application?

The starting scholarships can be combined with other types of support under certain conditions. Since we need to find a specific solution for each single case, it is important that you inform us about any changes concerning your positions, scholarships, and contracts after your application has been submitted. Otherwise, we cannot ensure that the starting scholarship can be disbursed.