

FRIAS Early Career Fellowship Programme
FRIAS Senior Fellowship Programme

- Information for reviewers in the selection process for FRIAS fellowships 2025/26 -

In order to eliminate potential or actual bias and conflicts of interest, reviewers are selected carefully and in line with the bias criteria suggested by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

The main criteria for a conflict of interest are:

- first-degree relatives, spouses, those in unions similar to marriage, other personal relations or conflicts
- economic interest in the funding decision
- current or envisaged close collaboration with the applicant
- supervisory relationships with the applicant
- planned application or implementation of a project with a closely-related topic of research

Contact for the FRIAS Review Process and the FRIAS Fellowship Programme:

peer-review@frias.uni-freiburg.de

INTRODUCTION

The University of Freiburg, one of the strongest research universities in Germany and member of LERU (the League of European Research Universities), offers a new fellowship programme. About 15 fellows per year (early career and senior scholars) from all disciplines are given the opportunity of spending three to ten months working on their own research project at the university's research college, the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS).

Since its inauguration in 2008, more than 600 fellows have stayed at FRIAS. The Institute supports internationally outstanding researchers with academically excellent and innovative research projects through individual or group fellowships. FRIAS unites research in the humanities and social sciences, the natural and life sciences, engineering, and medicine.

For the fellows, the programme offers outstanding research opportunities, not only in the research environment of an internationally highly competitive university, but also with the added advantage of being part of a community of fellows from different disciplines at FRIAS.

PROGRAMME DETAILS

I. Types of fellowships

The FRIAS Fellowships address excellent researchers from all disciplines and are intended for academics of all nationalities, including scholars from the University of Freiburg.

The programme comprises one scheme directed at Early Career researchers (completed PhD plus a maximum of eight years of post-doctoral experience) and one scheme directed at senior researchers (completed PhD plus a minimum of eight years of post-doctoral experience or a tenured professorship or an equivalent permanent position). In general, the senior scheme supports fellowships lasting three to eight months. In the Early Career scheme, researchers may apply for fellowships of four to ten months.

II. Conditions

Successful applicants will become FRIAS Fellows with all the corresponding rights and obligations for the requested funding period.

III. Application procedure

Researchers apply exclusively through the online application portal. The following application materials are required:

1. Project proposal

The compulsory structure of the project proposal is as follows:

- I. Research field, title, and short abstract of the research project
- II. Aims, theoretical framework and methodology of the project
- III. Work plan and feasibility (time schedule and projected costs)
- IV. Innovative potential, originality, and relevance of the project
- V. Issues concerning research ethics
- VI. Bibliographical references

2. CV
3. Publication list
4. Copy of the PhD diploma
5. Letter of support (identifying a host laboratory in Freiburg where their research project can be carried out; only applicable to experimental scientists)
6. Experiment sketch and timetable (applicable only to experimental scientists)

IV. Selection procedure

The selection of fellows under the FRIAS Fellowship Programme is highly competitive and strictly merit-based. The selection process is organized as a multi-stage procedure. Applicants are informed after each step of the selection process.

1. Basic eligibility check.

In order to be eligible for application, candidates must fulfil:

a) Formal eligibility criteria

Early Career Fellowships: complete application dossier in English, completed PhD plus a maximum of eight years of post-doctoral experience, international experience (six months abroad or a Master's/PhD from a different country), research project that can be supported at the University of Freiburg and is not excluded from funding due to ethical issues.

Senior Fellowships: complete application dossier in English, completed PhD plus a minimum of eight years of post-doctoral research experience or a tenured professorship or equivalent permanent position, international experience (six months abroad or a Master's/PhD from a different country), research project that can be supported at the University of Freiburg and is not excluded from funding due to ethical issues.

b) Basic academic quality criteria (minimum requirements for publications, minimum requirements regarding the international experience of the candidate, requirements regarding the internationality of the project).

Applications that do not pass the eligibility check are **not** evaluated by peer reviewers.

2. International peer-review by external referees.

All eligible proposals are forwarded to minimum two external experts in the respective field - at least one is from abroad - who evaluate the research project and the CV. These experts are selected in line with the following criteria (based on criteria defined by the German Research Foundation, DFG):

- no formal affiliation to the university at present or in the last five years
- familiarity with the area
- distance from the applicant (non-bias)
- broad overview of the research landscape

The determining selection criteria in the merit-based, internationally oriented, peer-review selection process are the **academic excellence of both the applicant (40%)** and **the project proposal (40%)**. **Personal qualifications (20%)** with regard to international expertise, leadership skills, and interdisciplinary interest are also taken into account during the evaluation.

These criteria apply to early career as well as senior applicants. All reviewers are asked to give a clear rating on the application on a prepared evaluation sheet:

- 5 Excellent** – relevant criteria are fully met and exceeded
- 4 Very good** – relevant criteria are fully met
- 3 Good** – relevant criteria are met, but with shortcomings
- 2 Fair** – while relevant criteria are met, weaknesses are clearly visible
- 1 Clearly below average** - relevant criteria are not sufficiently met

Taking into account the above-mentioned criteria, the application will receive an automatic average mark.

Additionally, the working environment in Freiburg is considered (adequate resources, suitable research environment, added value to conducting research at FRIAS/University of Freiburg).

The reviewers are asked to give a written assessment on the applicant's CV and the research proposal.

The evaluation report can be returned via the reviewer's personal account in the online application portal. After the reviewer has confirmed the willingness to evaluate the proposal, they will receive an email with a registration link to the Mobility Online portal. After registration and login to the portal, the complete application dossier can be accessed. The evaluation questionnaire can be completed online and directly submitted via the Mobility Online account.

3. Final selection by the FRIAS' Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)

Fellows under the FRIAS Fellowship Programme will be finally selected by the FRIAS Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). This board consists of up to 11 internationally renowned academics from different disciplines (https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/en/the-institute/committees/scientific-advisory-board?set_language=en), all from outside the University of Freiburg. The Board is independent in its decision making.

Based on the original proposals and the expert reviews, the SAB makes a final ranking list. The SAB is asked to guarantee the above-mentioned criteria.

The top candidates will be selected for funding under the FRIAS Fellowship. They will be offered a Senior or an Early Career Fellowship at FRIAS. Usually, the earliest starting date for fellowships will be September 1, 2024.

Upon request, applicants will receive summaries of the anonymised assessments of their proposal.

Calendar of implementation of the current selection process

International peer-review	10/2024-1/2025
Final selection by SAB	2/2025

4. Ethical issues

The FRIAS Fellowship Programme considers both the need to ensure freedom of research and the need to protect the physical and moral integrity of individuals and the welfare of animals.

In order to identify ethical issues at an early point in the application process, all applicants are required to fill in the “FRIAS Fellowship ethical issues table”. Furthermore, applicants are requested to explain in detail in the project outline any ethical issues arising from their proposed research. Applicants should explain how these will be addressed, so as to conform to national ethical principles.

A preliminary screening during the eligibility check also scrutinizes potential ethical issues, even if they were not pointed out by the applicant, to identify proposals requiring ethical evaluation.

In addition, experts in the international peer-review procedure are asked to indicate relevant ethical issues raised by the proposal.

If the application successfully passes through the formal selection procedure, the project proposal is referred to the University's Ethics Committee (EC) in case any potential issues are identified. The same procedure applies if ethical issues arise during work on a given project. The EC issues a decision that may include requirements and restrictions. This decision is binding under the employment contract and different laws. As soon as the decision is issued and if it does not stand in the way of the project, the fellowship is offered to the applicant. If the requirements and restrictions are extraordinarily difficult to fulfil, the SAB has the authority to turn down an application on these grounds.