

KAUST Global Fellowship Program

Application Guidelines – Call 2027

www.kgfp.kaust.edu.sa | kgfp@kaust.edu.sa | Applications (Concept Note) open: September 1

The KAUST Global Fellowship Program (KGFP) is an initiative from the Office of the Vice President for Research aiming to attract and support early-career researchers towards a fully independent research career. As an internationally recognised Fellowship, it supports and empowers early career scientists and engineers to unlock their full potential by turning their research into real-world solutions for the benefit of the Kingdom and the world.

The Program complements and advances current research activities at KAUST in line with the University's strategic research areas of focus: Food; Water; Energy; Health; AI; and Red Sea.

NOTE: These guidelines are updated periodically. Always ensure you are reading the latest version before applying. Contact: kgfp@kaust.edu.sa

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SECTION 1: ELIGIBILITY

1.1 Applicant Requirements

To be considered for this Fellowship, applicants must meet ALL of the following criteria:

PhD Degree: Applicants must have been awarded a PhD from a well-recognised university within four solar years (e.g., those applying in 2027 must have received their PhD in January 2023 or later). Applicants with a pending PhD must complete it before the Fellowship starts, but not necessarily at the time of application.

KAUST Alumni: KAUST Alumni (MSc/PhD) are not eligible to apply.

Selected Publications: Applicants must submit up to two (one mandatory, one optional) first-author or joint-first-author research papers published in a peer-reviewed journal. Conference publications may be accepted depending on the applicant's field. A full publication list should be included in the submitted CV.

Not accepted: papers in preparation or submitted but not yet published, non-English papers, and conference presentation abstracts or similar.

Potential Host PI: At Stage 1 (Concept Note Submission), applicants should indicate **up to** three potential KAUST faculty members. Instructional faculty are not eligible to support (host) applicants. A KAUST PI must accept your application to proceed to the next stage. Applicants who have already agreed with a KAUST faculty member to support their application, or who are already affiliated with KAUST, must indicate only that one specific PI or current supervisor.

Mobility Requirements: Successful candidates must relocate to KAUST, Saudi Arabia and conduct research on-site. The Fellowship is open to all nationalities. Candidates must satisfy all KSA requirements to obtain a resident permit (iqama).

Referees: Candidates must identify two referees willing to provide a recommendation letter on their suitability and capability to undertake independent research. Two signed reference letters must be submitted together with the Concept Note at Stage 1 by the applicant.

Reference letters must be signed and must:

- State the relationship to the applicant.
- Describe research abilities, technical skills, and originality, with specific examples.
- Comment on soft skills.
- Assess potential as an independent researcher and leader in their field.
- Assess the feasibility of the proposed research in relation to the applicant's background.

1.2 KAUST-Affiliated (Internal) Applicants

The Fellowship is open to KAUST-affiliated (internal) postdoctoral researchers who meet the following additional requirements. Other KAUST-affiliated individuals and KAUST Alumni are not eligible.

1. Must meet all general eligibility criteria in Section 1.1.
2. Must have been affiliated with KAUST for no more than 12 months at the full proposal submission deadline (e.g., for January 2027, must have joined KAUST in January 2026 or later).
3. Each PI may support a maximum of one KAUST-affiliated candidate per call.
4. On-boarding postdocs who apply before joining KAUST are eligible and are not classified as internal or KAUST-affiliated postdocs.
5. If successful, internal nominees must begin working on their proposed research under the KGFP framework within 3 months from the date of the nomination.
6. The same selection criteria apply to internal and external applicants.
7. Research proposals must represent the applicant's own original idea and must not be directly connected to any running project under the PI.

1.3 Research Proposal Requirements

For a research proposal to be eligible, it must meet the following requirements:

Research Areas: Proposals must align with the academic programs of a KAUST academic division:

- Biological and Environmental Science and Engineering (BESE)
- Biomedical Sciences (BioMed)
- Computer, Electrical and Mathematical Science and Engineering (CEMSE)
- Physical Science and Engineering (PSE)

Research Pillars: Proposals must address at least one of KAUST's strategic research areas:

- Food
- Water
- Energy
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Red Sea
- Health

Duration: Research projects must have a 3-year duration and must follow the budget and financial guidelines of the call.

Submission: Applications must be written in English using the provided templates. Citations are excluded from the page limit. Figures and tables, if included, count toward the page limit.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION PROCESS

Stage 1 – Concept Note Submission (Open: 1 September – 1 October 2026)

Applicants are required to complete the application form and submit the below documents:

- CV with a list of relevant publications (maximum 4 pages)
- Concept Note (template) of the research proposal up to 3 pages (not a full proposal at this stage)
- Indication of up to three potential KAUST Host Pls
- Two signed reference letters

Stage 2 – Faculty Review & Expression of Interest

Eligible applications are shared with KAUST faculty for their review and expression of interest:

- Review shortlisted candidate profiles
- Conduct informal interviews if desired
- Indicate interest in hosting

Only candidates for whom at least one faculty member confirms hosting interest are invited to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Full Proposal Submission (Deadline: January 15)

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to submit a full proposal (using the provided template) by January 15th.

Application Timeline – Call 2027

Phase	Timeline
Call Opens – Applications & Concept Notes accepted	1 September – 1 October 2026
Eligibility & Screening	October 2026
Faculty Review & Expression of Interest	October – November, 2026
Invitation for Full Proposals	November, 2026
Full Proposal Submission Deadline	15 January, 2027

Important: Incomplete applications or applications submitted by email will not be considered eligible. Once a Stage 3 full proposal is submitted, no further changes can be made.

SECTION 3: SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

3.1 Scientific Excellence of the Applicant

- Quality, originality, and output of the candidate's research to date, based on scientific contributions and CV
- Ability to carry out independent research and future potential, based on reference letters
- Previous awards, scholarships, or achievements
- Other unique attributes or contributions to the research field

3.2 Research Project Merit

- Scientific quality, approach, novelty, and significance of the proposed research
- Relevance to KAUST's strategic research areas
- Communication and dissemination plan for results
- Project feasibility and work plan quality
- Budget practicality and reasonableness
- Potential for innovation, impact, and translational research outputs during or beyond the Fellowship

3.3 Host PI Suitability

- Suitability of the host PI and research lab for the proposed project and the applicant's background
- Added value of the applicant's expertise and proposed research for the PI's lab and KAUST's priorities

Fellowships are awarded to candidates. We particularly encourage applications from those with innovative, impact-oriented ideas that bring new knowledge and expertise aligned with KAUST and the Kingdom's priorities. Candidates are encouraged to go beyond the continuation of their PhD research.

3.4 Evaluation Process

Stage 1 – Eligibility Screening: All Concept Note submissions are screened for eligibility and completeness.

Stage 2 – Full Proposal Submission: Eligible applications from Stage 1 are shared with faculty. Faculty indicate hosting interest for up to 2 candidates. Selected applicants are invited to submit a full proposal. Candidates without confirmed faculty interest do not advance.

Stage 3 – Internal Review: Full proposals are assessed internally by divisional reviewers. The highest-scoring applications proceed to external review.

Stage 4 – External Review: Applications are evaluated by external, COI-free academic and/or industry experts. The highest-ranked applicants are invited to interview.

Stage 5 – Interview & Final Selection: Shortlisted candidates present their research proposal in a virtual interview. Senior KAUST academics conduct the interviews. Based on the interview committee's recommendations, the VPR makes the final nomination. All applicants are informed of the outcome by email within three weeks of their interview.

Please Note: Feedback will be provided only to candidates whose applications are externally reviewed. Detailed feedback will only be provided to nominated candidates. Due to the volume of applications, individualised comments cannot be provided to all applicants.

SECTION 4: FELLOWSHIP BENEFITS

Fellowship Duration

Fellowships are awarded for 3 years, with a formal evaluation at the end of Year 2. Nominated Fellows may start as soon as they obtain their resident visa and complete KAUST onboarding procedures.

Stipend and Research Budget

KAUST Global Fellowship provides an annual stipend of US\$75,000 (US\$6,250/month), plus:

- Medical insurance
- Relocation and travel allowance (see below)
- Schooling for up to 3 children aged 4+
- Daycare subsidy for younger children
- Housing depending on family status

Annual research budgets are field-dependent:

- Up to US\$20,000/year for computational sciences (CEMSE)
- Up to US\$30,000/year for experimental/physical sciences (PSE)
- Up to US\$40,000/year for biological/life sciences (BESE)
- Up to US\$40,000/year for biomedical sciences (BMS)

Research budget may be allocated to conferences, work-related travel, KAUST Core Labs facilities, consumables, and other approved categories. Big equipment and hiring of students or research staff are not eligible under this Fellowship.

Relocation and Travel Allowance

A flat-rate relocation allowance of US\$3,000 (or per standard University rates) covers costs related to the Fellow and their family's relocation (if applicable), including visa costs and shipping of personal belongings. Flight tickets are booked separately by the University. This allowance does not apply to KAUST-affiliated applicants.

Fellows and their eligible dependents (up to two children) are also entitled to an annual travel assistance per University policy.

Career and Professional Development

KAUST Global Fellowship provides access to mentoring, leadership, and teaching programmes, as well as all learning and development opportunities generally available to KAUST postdocs.

SECTION 5: FELLOWSHIP EXPECTATIONS

KAUST Global Fellows are expected to:

1. Maintain academic excellence and submit annual progress reports.
2. Conduct research at KAUST using the allocated resources.
3. Participate in professional learning and development activities.
4. Present research publicly and engage with the academic community.
5. Acknowledge KAUST Global Fellowship support in all publications, presentations, and outputs.
6. Join KAUST Alumni activities and serve as programme ambassadors.
7. Engage in academic and other community activities at KAUST.

SECTION 6: ABOUT KAUST

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) is an international university in Saudi Arabia renowned for scientific and engineering excellence. With researchers from over 100 nationalities, KAUST is recognised for its world-class laboratory facilities and its contributions to global challenges in Water, Food, Health, Energy, AI, and Red Sea Exploration.

The KAUST campus is designed to inspire and motivate students, employees, and their families in a multicultural, interdisciplinary, community-based environment.

For more information:

[KGFP Website](#) | [KAUST](#) | [Research and Programs](#)
[KAUST Faculty](#) | [KAUST Strategy](#) | [Saudi Vision 2030](#)