

WEBINAR Q&A

Questions Answered by the Fellowship Team

1. *Is it a requirement to hold the PhD degree at the time of application, or is it sufficient to have it conferred before the fellowship's official start date?*

It is not required to hold the PhD degree at the time of application. However, you must have the degree officially conferred before the Fellowship's start date. Without the PhD diploma, we cannot initiate your recruitment or relocation process to join KAUST and the Global Fellowship Program.

2. *Is the 50% stipend coverage by the Host PI always happening or there is compromise?*

The 50% stipend coverage by the Host PI is mandatory. The Host PI confirms this commitment by signing the support letter as part of your application package.

3. *How to get in contact with a PI?*

You can identify potential Host PIs by reviewing the KAUST faculty profiles on our website, which include research areas, publications, and contact details. We recommend reaching out directly via email, introducing yourself, sharing your research interests, and explaining how your work aligns with theirs.

4. *I have an industrial PhD, and hence no publication record. I'm I eligible?*

You will need to have at least one peer-reviewed publication to be eligible for the Fellowship. This demonstrates research dissemination capability aligned with an academic track.

5. *When is the expecting starting date of the Fellowship?*

Selected Global Fellows are expected to start anytime between July and December 2026.

6. *Is the 75k the net or gross stipend?*

The USD 75,000 annual stipend is net, and Fellows also receive comprehensive benefits offered by KAUST, including housing, healthcare, and relocation support.

7. *How can a Global Fellow plug into the KAUST ecosystem? For instance, if a fellow has a commercially promising research project, how would they go about accessing the mentorship or resources needed to turn it into one of those supported startups?*

Global Fellows are fully integrated into the KAUST research ecosystem. They can access KAUST's entrepreneurship and innovation resources through the Innovation & Impact (I&I) Office, including mentorship, IP support, and startup incubation through programs such as TAQADAM and KAUST Innovation Ventures. Fellows are encouraged to work with their Host PI and the I&I team to explore commercialization pathways.

8. *Is it necessary to provide a detailed budget breakdown in my proposal, or is a general description of resources?*

A detailed budget breakdown is expected. The figures can be approximate or rounded, but the proposal should show a realistic and cost-effective allocation of resources aligned with the research plan and deliverables.

9. *What is the approximate ratio of applicants to fellows selected each year?*

The selection process is highly competitive, with an approximate ratio of 1 Fellow selected per 25–30 eligible applicants.

10. *Does KAUST accept multidisciplinary proposal i.e., economics and data analytics under economies of future?*

Yes, multidisciplinary proposals are welcome if they align with KAUST's research priorities, can fall under one of the KAUST academic programs, and clearly demonstrate scientific rigor and impact potential in the chosen area.

11. *Do we need to provide an English certificate when applying?*

An English certificate is **not required**. However, strong English proficiency is expected, as all research and communication at KAUST are conducted in English.

12. *Is the program open on a regular basis?*

The Fellowship has **one annual call for applications**. We accept applications annually between July 1st – January 15th.

13. *Will it be acceptable to have the publication criteria met by joining time instead at the time of the application?*

No. You must meet the publication eligibility criteria at the time of application to be considered.

14. *Is it possible to get mentorship from two faculty members, one as PI and another as co-PI?*

Yes, co-supervision is possible if both faculty members agree and one primary Host PI is selected on the application form. You may state this arrangement in the research proposal.

15. *What is the mutual distinctive thing in all previous successful applicants (i.e., publication count, international cooperation, conference count)?*

Successful applicants typically have a strong publication record, a clear research vision, evidence of international collaboration, and demonstrated potential for research leadership and innovation.

16. *Is there any KPI needed to be achieved throughout the 3 years?*

Yes. Fellows are expected to meet annual performance and progress milestones, as indicated in the approved research proposal. Engagement in professional development activities and contributions to the KAUST research community is also expected.

17. *How many rounds each year for this Fellowship?*

There is one selection round per year, with a deadline on January 15.

18. *Is having previous postdoctoral experience a strong point?*

Yes, if it demonstrates research maturity, independence, and leadership potential. However, in some fields, having many years of postdoctoral experience may be viewed less favorably, as the Fellowship is designed to support researchers still early in their path toward independence.

19. How long does the application process take?

The full process - from submission to final selection - takes approximately 4-6 months.

20. Are there any criteria about the level of publications?

While there is no strict threshold, publications should be in reputable, peer-reviewed journals relevant to your field, demonstrating the quality and impact of your research.

21. How does the path ahead look after GFP Program? Does one become a permanent academic staff within KAUST?

The Fellowship does not automatically lead to a permanent academic position, but Fellows are well-positioned for competitive academic, research, or innovation careers globally, including potential future opportunities at KAUST.

22. If I am interested in specific research which under the vision of KAUST but not within the host PI research projects. Can I still reach out to the host PI or this will lower my chances?

Yes, you can. It's advisable to highlight how your research complements or extends the PI's work and contributes to the broader KAUST research ecosystem.

23. If I contacted a PI and do not get reply, can I connect with another host PI in the same division?

Yes, absolutely. You may contact another PI within the same division whose research aligns with your proposal.

24. Does research under PSE get categorized under Energy & Industrial Leadership?

Indeed, many projects in the Physical Science and Engineering (PSE) division fall within the Energy & Industrial Leadership priority. However, depending on the specific research focus, your project may address a different priority and still be falling under one of PSE academic programs. Your project might also contribute to more than one research priority.

Questions Answers by the Global Fellows

1. How did you get in contact with a PI?

Reviewed the KAUST faculty profiles to identify faculty whose work aligned closely with my interests. I reached out directly by email, introducing myself and highlighting how my proposed research complemented their ongoing projects. Some Global Fellows also mentioned that they used their professional or academic networks - or acquaintances already at KAUST - to help establish an initial connection with potential Host PIs. Once the conversation started, it was important to be clear about how our research goals could intersect in a meaningful way.

2. What life at KAUST is like day to day?

Life at KAUST is unique and inspiring. The environment is highly international, supportive, and focused on research excellence. A typical day balances intensive lab work with opportunities to attend seminars, collaborate across disciplines, or participate in professional development activities. Outside of research, the campus offers great amenities - sports facilities, beaches, cafes, and community events - which make it easy to maintain a healthy work-life balance. It truly feels like living in a small, vibrant research city where everything you need is within reach.

3. *What do you think made your application stand out? What tips do you wish you had known when preparing your application?*

What made my application stand out, I believe, was the clear alignment between my proposed project and the Host PI's expertise, as well as a strong emphasis on the scientific novelty and potential impact of my work. I also showed how the Fellowship would help me transition toward research independence.

If I could give one tip, it would be to spend time refining your research statement—it should not just describe what you plan to do, but also why it matters and how it fits within KAUST's broader research vision. Having open discussions with the potential Host PI early in the process was also invaluable in shaping a focused and compelling proposal.

4. *What do you think gave the biggest value to your application when you applied?*

The biggest value came from demonstrating a clear scientific vision that built upon my previous work but also proposed a new, forward-looking direction that could thrive within KAUST's ecosystem. I made sure to emphasize how my research could contribute to KAUST's priorities and how the collaboration with my Host PI would create mutual benefit. Having strong recommendation letters that spoke to both my technical expertise and leadership potential also helped strengthen my case.

5. *How is the collaboration within and outside the University for your research?*

Collaboration at KAUST is one of the program's greatest strengths. Within the University, it's easy to connect with researchers from other divisions or research centers thanks to shared facilities and interdisciplinary projects. In my experience, the support for collaboration extends beyond KAUST as well, there are structured opportunities to engage with international partners, industry collaborators, and innovation programs. This openness has allowed me to expand my research network and explore practical applications of my work that go beyond academia.