KAUST Global Fellowship Program

Application Guidelines

Accepting Applications on a rolling base:

Cut-off dates January 1ˢᵗ and July 1ˢᵗ

KAUST Global Fellowship Program (www.kgfp.kaust.edu.sa) is an initiative from the Office of the Vice President for Research aiming to attract and support postdoctoral researchers towards a fully independent research career. As an internationally recognized 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 will complement, support and advance current research activities at KAUST in line with the Vision 2030 and the RDI strategic priorities of the Kingdom and the 4 research pillars ar KAUST: Sustainable Environment and essential needs; Health and Wellness; Energy and industrial leadership; Economies of the future.

Location:
The Program is taking place at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Saudi Arabia.

Contact info: kgfp@kaust.edu.sa

PUBLICATION DATE: April 2024

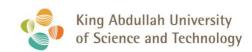**Annual cut-off dates for evaluation of applications:**

- **1st of July**
- **1st of January**

NOTE: The guidelines are updated periodically. Ensure you are reading the latest version.

King Abdullah University
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ELIGIBILITY

The Applicant

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

PhD degree

Applicants must have been awarded a PhD degree from a well-recognized university, within four* solar years (i.e., those applying in 2024, must have received their PhD in January 2020 onwards).

Applicants who have not yet been awarded their PhD degree, must be awarded by the time the Fellowship starts, but not necessarily at the time the application is submitted.

*Justified career breaks due to parental leave, mandatory military/ civil service, or similar might be exempted and not count in the four-year requirement. No exceptions will be made for any type of voluntary career breaks. Any supporting documents for justified career breaks should be included in the submitted application form.

Publications

Applicants must have and submit during their application up to two (one mandatory, one optional) first (or joint first) author primary research papers accepted for publication or published in an international peer-reviewed journal at the time the application is submitted.

Other publications might be accepted according to the applicant's field.

The following items should not be listed as publications:
- Papers submitted or in preparation and therefore not accessible to the community (not yet peer reviewed or accepted).
- Papers published not in English originally.
- Abstracts of presentations at conferences.

KAUST Host PI

A KAUST faculty member must agree to support and host the candidate and their project. The host PI will act as mentor of the Fellow, especially in relation to research activities, and assist and facilitate administrative aspects of the Fellowship related to procurement and spending. The KAUST Host PI will also be co-funding 50% of the Global Postdoctoral Fellow's stipend.

Candidates must indicate in their application the KAUST faculty member who confirmed and agreed to host them and their research project, if successful. A copy of the KAUST Host PI Letter should be uploaded by the candidate on the application form. The KAUST Host PI will be notified via email about the final submission of the application including the host PI support letter.

Mobility

Successful candidates are expected to relocate in Saudi Arabia* to live and work at KAUST and undertake work in one of the research laboratories and research centers of the University. Participating in the Fellowship Program under a different institution or in another country is not permitted.

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People of all nationalities are welcome to apply. We encourage female applications for a better gender balance in science.

Candidates need to satisfy all the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia requirements to obtain resident status.

Reference Letters

The candidate needs to provide two reference letters, at least one of which is not from their direct supervisor (present or past), confirming the candidate's suitability and capability to undertake an independent research project.

Reference letters must include the **candidate's name, proposal title, and referee details (title, name, position, and contact details).** Additionally, referees should mention details about their relationship to the applicant, the applicant's academic excellence, and the research proposal by answering the below questions:

- Briefly describe your academic/ professional relationship to the applicant including how long you have known them and any work you have done with them or other collaborations.
- Does the applicant possess the necessary skills and ability to perform research as an independent investigator and deliver project outcomes meeting milestones and deliverables?
- Please highlight how the research proposal would answer significant research questions and/or the research potential to address national and global issues related to any of the following areas: Sustainable Environment and Essential Needs, Health and Wellness, Energy and Industrial Leadership, Economies of the Future.
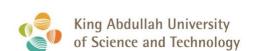
All referees of eligible applicants will be notified automatically to upload their reference letters or review and approve the already submitted reference letters on the application form. The reference letters must be uploaded on the system for an application to be considered for evaluation at the cut-off date. Only the referees of eligible candidates shall be notified to submit/upload their reference letters.

KAUST Affiliated Applicants

Please refer to the respective documents for KAUST Affiliated Applicants for more details and directions.

KAUST Affiliated applicants must meet the general eligibility criteria that apply for all applicants and shall be at KAUST no more than one year, taking into consideration the solar year at each cut-off date (i.e., for the July 2024 cut-off date they must have joined KAUST in January 2023 onwards, for the January 2025 cut-off date they must have joined KAUST in January 2024 onwards).

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The Research Proposal

For a research proposal to be eligible under this Fellowship, it should meet the below requirements:

Research Areas

KAUST Global Fellowship Program is supporting research in line with the programs of KAUST academic divisions; Biological and Environmental Science and Engineering (BESE), Computer, Electrical and Mathematical Science and Engineering (CEMSE), and Physical Science and Engineering (PSE).

More specific, funded research projects should fall within or across one or more of the KAUST research priorities: Sustainable Environment and Essential Needs, Health and Wellness, Energy and Industrial Leadership, Economies of the Future

Duration and budget

Research projects must have a **duration of 3 years** and must follow the budget and financial guidelines of the call.

Submission

Applications must be written in English and no special formatting is allowed. If you choose to use figures and tables in your proposal, you should make sure not to exceed the maximum page limit. Project proposal and supporting documentation must be drafted using the provided templates (when applicable).

Applications will be evaluated after each cut-off date (January 1st & July 1st each year). Shortlisted applications will remain on the system to be evaluated for a maximum of 2 consecutive cut-off dates.

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APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications must be submitted electronically, by completing the online application form and submiting all necessary documents according to the instructions provided.

The Fellowship Program is accepting applications on a rolling basis with two cut-off dates for evaluation per year on January 1st & July 1st.

Before submitting their application, applicants must ensure that they meet all the eligibility requirements as described in the previous section.

The applicant is responsible for ensuring all required application components have been submitted ahead of the respective cut-off date for their application to be considered for evaluation. **All required documents must be submitted and uploaded individually in a PDF format (each file not exceeding 10MB):**

- CV (max 4 pages*)
- Up to two publications, one mandatory and one optional (same as the ones mentioned in the application form section 4)
- KAUST Host PI letter (this should be uploaded by the applicant)
- Research proposal (use the provided template)
- Two reference letters to be uploaded directly by the referees or the applicant (only referees of eligible applicants will be notified to upload their reference letter or approve the one uploaded on the system by the applicant).

*CV must not exceed the 4 pages including contact details, innovation/commercialization activity, teaching/mentoring/lecturing experience, key achievements, important publications, participation in conferences or other scientific communication materials)

No application will be consider for evaluation without all the required information, including the KAUST Host PI support letter and the two reference letters.

Shortlisted applications will be staying on the system for a maximum of two cut-off dates and will have the opportunity to be evaluated against the shortlisted applications of the next cut-off date.

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SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

The primary selection criteria applied by the Global Fellowship Committee are scientific excellence of the candidate, the proposed project and the host PI suitability.

Notably, the following aspects are considered:

Scientific achievements of the applicant
- Quality, originality, and output of candidate's research to date based on scientific contributions and CV;
- Candidate's ability to carry out independent research and future potential based on reference letters;
- Previous awards or scholarships;
- Other unique attributes or contributions to the research environment of the candidate.

Proposed Research Projects
- Scientific quality, approach, novelty and significance of the proposed research proposal;
- Relevance in relation to KAUST and RDI strategic priorities, and the Vision 2030;
- Dissemination of research project results;
- Project feasibility and work plan quality;
- Budget practicality and reasonableness;
- Potential for innovation and development of translational research outputs (during or beyond the fellowship).

Host PI suitability
- Suitability of the host PI and research lab for the proposed research project and the applicant's scientific background;
- Added value of the applicant and proposed research project for the lab and KAUST strategic priorities.

Fellowships are awarded to candidates.

We encourage applications from candidates with innovative, impact-oriented ideas, that will bring new knowledge and expertise and contribute into re-focusing KAUST research to align with the Kingdom's RDI priorities.

Candidates are encouraged to go beyond the continuation of their PhD research and take their ideas many steps forward to apply their science and research into delivering real-world impact and finding solutions to national and global challenges.

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Evaluation timeline (times are approximate)

Evaluation and selection process is expected to last 3 –4 months after the cut-off date.

First stage: processing and pre-screening
All applications will be screened to ensure eligibility requirements are met and the application is completed in terms of required documentation and use of the provided templates.

During this time, referees will be notified to approve the application and upload/ submit their reference letters on the portal.

Second stage: Divisional review committees
Each eligible application will be assessed by an assigned Divisional Review Committee. Each Divisional Review Committee will consist of internal (KAUST) faculty and external reviewers (leading academics and researchers in their respective fields). The applications will be reviewed and ranked based on scores.
The applications with the higher scores and ranking will be invited for the interview phase.

Third stage of evaluation: Interview
Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview session. Interviews will take place through videoconference only. Candidates must give a presentation as part of the interview procedure. The interview will take place at the interviewer's and the interview committee's convenience.

Fourth stage of evaluation: Selection
The Global Postdoctoral Fellows will be selected and nominated on a merit-basis criteria taking into consideration the final evaluation of shortlisted candidates and the interview scores. The final decision for nominations sits with the Vice President for Research (VPR). All applicants will be officially informed about the outcome of their application by email within three weeks after their interview.

Selection is based on merit criteria only as described before.

Successful applicants are shortlisted and notified at the end of the evaluation and the selection process. Selected candidates are expected to start their fellowship within 3-6 months and will be publicly announced as they join the program.

PLEASE NOTE: *No feedback will be provided to applicants at any stage of the application process, including the input we receive from external reviewers. For feedback to be helpful it must be correct and detailed. Due to the large number of applications, the evaluation committee members cannot include any individualized comments in their assessments.*

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BENEFITS

Fellowship Duration

Fellowships are awarded for 3 years, with an evaluation at the end of the 2nd year. The nominated Global Fellows shall accept the Fellowship within 1 month from the announcement of the results.

Nominated Fellows are permitted to start their Fellowship as soon as they obtain their resident status visa and according to the onboarding and HR procedures of the Kingdom and KAUST. All candidates are expected to join the Fellowship program no later than 6 months after they accept the Fellowship given that they satisfy all the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia requirements to obtain resident status.

Stipend and Research Budget

KAUST Global Fellowship provides a 2-years plus 1-*year fixed-term contract* and an *annual stipend* of 75,000 USD (6,250 USD monthly) with additional benefits including medical insurance, relocation allowance, schooling, and accommodation according to individual or family situation.

Furthermore, Global Fellows will be assigned an *annual research budget* that can be split in different cost categories like conferences and work-related travel, use of KAUST Core Labs facilities, and consumables. The total research budget differs depending on the field as follows:
- 20,000 USD for computational sciences
- 30,000 USD for experimental/ physical sciences
- 40,000 USD for biological/ life sciences

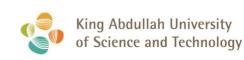### *Relocation and travel allowance*

The relocation allowance is a flat rate of 3,000 USD (or as per the usual University rates) to cover any costs related to the Fellow and their family relocation to KAUST like costs needed for the issue of the visa and/or shipping of personal belongings (note: travel costs i.e. tickets are booked and covered directly by the University). If the applicant is already in KAUST at the time of the Fellowship nomination, the relocation allowance will not be paid.

Global Fellows and their eligible dependents are also entitled to an annual travel allowance paid once per year as part of their stipend as per the University policy.

Career and professional development

KAUST Global Fellowship Program offers for free the opportunity to participate in a variety of programs and certified courses for its Global Fellows. Programs and courses include but are not limited to:
- KAUST Postdoc Mentoring Program
- Harvard Higher Education Teaching Certificate
- Leadership Programs/ Certificates

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FELLOWSHIP EXPECTATIONS

Alongside unique benefits, KAUST Global Fellows are expected to:

1. Maintain a high level of academic excellence at KAUST throughout the program. This will be evaluated and closely monitored through yearly progress reports.
2. Conduct and implement their research project at KAUST, Saudi Arabia, using available resources and provided facilities.
3. Participate in program-sponsored enrichment activities organized to create a welcoming environment for the ensemble of the cohort. Participation in programs to develop skills, promote leadership and encourage interdisciplinary research are available and expected from Fellows to undertake.
4. Give public lectures and presentations about their research inside and outside KAUST, using their allowance for travelling to conferences, reaching out to the international academic community using all communication means, including personal accounts and social media as well as tools already used by KAUST.
5. Acknowledge the KAUST Global Fellowship program's support to any publications resulting from research activities funded by the Program. Fellows may also be asked to submit abstracts of their work to the VPR's office for further promotion and use in promotional material and the Fellowship website.
6. Get involved in Alumni Activities as part of a growing global community of Fellows, and act as ambassadors for the KAUST Global Fellowship Program. Alumni often share their experiences with others, publicize the program to their colleagues and participate in information sessions for new candidates.
7. Engage in the academic and general community life of KAUST in voluntary, non-political/non-partisan nature activities.

KING ABDULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (KAUST)

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology is an international, graduate-only research university with researchers from over 100 nationalities, located on the shores of the Red Sea in Saudi Arabia. KAUST was established in 2009 and is largely recognized for its science and engineering excellence, unparalleled laboratory facilities and equipment, and for its contribution to global challenges in domains including Water, Energy, Environment, Food & Health, and Digital.

KAUST attracts top international faculty, scientists, engineers, and students to conduct curiosity-driven and goal-oriented research to address world's pressing scientific and technological challenges. KAUST offers outstanding research facilities and internationally competitive research funding and salaries. The KAUST campus is designed to inspire and motivate students, employees and their families in a multi-cultural and interdisciplinary community-based environment.

For more information about:
- KAUST: https://www.kaust.edu.sa/en
- KAUST Research and Programs: https://www.kaust.edu.sa/en/research
- KAUST Faculty: https://www.kaust.edu.sa/en/study/faculty
- The KAUST new strategy and priorities: https://www.kaust.edu.sa/en/about/our-strategy
- The Kingdom's Vision 2030 and Research Development Innovation (RDI) priorities: https://marifa.kaust.edu.sa/vision-2023

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