Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

Graduate School Scholarship Programme 2026

Guidelines for doctoral programmes for the nomination procedure

The GSSP scholarships are awarded in a two-stage selection procedure. In the first step, up to forty doctoral programmes are selected in a competitive procedure, which receive a funding commitment for up to four DAAD-funded scholarships (two scholarships in two consecutive years) with a funding period of up to four years. In the second step, the selected programmes nominate suitable candidates for the GSSP scholarships. The DAAD is responsible for awarding and administering the scholarships.

Candidates nominated for a scholarship by the doctoral programmes must submit an individual application at https://funding.meindaad.de/sites/personalfunding#PBFApplication-Start?fundingProgramInstance=57824099

Nomination and selection of international doctoral candidates

The announcement of the doctoral scholarships and the pre-selection of suitable candidates is carried out by the respective doctoral programmes. It has to be ensured that the doctoral positions are publicly advertised: e.g. via the website of the doctoral programme, EURAXESS, the DAAD platform https://www.phdgermany.de, etc.

Candidates who are to be nominated for a GSSP scholarship must meet the following criteria:

- excellent academic profile, at the starting date of the scholarship/preparatory German course, the nominees must have completed their studies with a master's degree[1] or equivalent,
- at the time of nomination, applicants must not have been resident in Germany for more than the last fifteen months prior to the nomination,
- as a rule, applicants should not have graduated any longer than six years before the time of nomination[2], (Important information for scholarship applicants)
- must not have completed a PhD previously,
- research phases outside Germany during the funding period can be supported if they do not exceed 25% of the total funding period, and do not take place directly at the beginning of the funding period.

Doctoral programmes nominate candidates for each GSSP scholarship. In addition, one or two reserve candidates should be nominated for each scholarship – these candidates must also apply via the DAAD portal; the nominated candidates must be ranked in the attached form *Letter of Nomination*. Subsequent nominations beyond the originally submitted list of candidates will only be accepted by the DAAD in very well justified, exceptional cases.

The following documents are submitted to the DAAD for the nomination procedure:

a) By the **doctoral programmes**:

The *Letter of Nomination* containing information regarding the following elements:

- meaningful information on the total number of applicants and the nature of the selection procedure used by the doctoral programme,

[1] In exceptional cases, it is possible to nominate candidates with a bachelor's degree if permitted by the respective *Promotionsordnung*.
[2] Possible exceptions are listed in the "Important information for scholarship applicants" in section A, point 2.

- scientific qualifications of the nominated applicants and their suitability for the doctoral programme (we recommend about half a page of text for each nominee),
- Names of the university professors intended as academic supervisors (if there is more than one supervisor, please clearly identify the first supervisor),
- English language skills of the nominated applicants,
- Necessity of a German language course – preliminary (if available) or during the scholarship[3],
- Information on any research phases /field research outside Germany in the context of the nominees' doctoral projects (When? Where? What?).

Alongside the Letter of Nomination, please submit the following documents:

- the scholarship announcement and proof of the different publication channels employed for the announcement (please attach as a screenshot)
- for each nominee, one letter of recommendation from university professors at the nominee's home university, submitted with the application to the doctoral program (the template[4] can be found at: https://www.daad.de/medien/deutschland/stipendien/formulare/recommendation.doc)

Parallel to sending the nomination letter to the DAAD, the nominated candidates are to be informed by the doctoral programmes that they should submit their application documents via the DAAD portal. Please send the following documents to the nominated candidates:

- *Guidelines and Information for Nominees*, and
- the completed *Confirmation of Nomination.*

b) By **the foreign applicants** (individual online application via the DAAD portal):

An application includes the DAAD application form with the following additional documents submitted in German or English:

- the research proposal with which the applicant has applied with at the participating graduate school;
- a curriculum vitae;
- a letter of motivation (optional);
- a schedule of the planned research work including information about possible field studies/stays outside Germany;
- Bachelor and Master degree certificates and certificates on annual examinations taken at the home university (transcript of records) including grades and explaining the home university's grading system (explanation of grading system);
- documents certifying knowledge of the foreign language required by the graduate school[5];
- any documents certifying completed practical work (internship etc. - optional);
- a list of publications (optional);
- confirmation of nomination.

[3] As a rule, the costs for German language courses are covered by the DAAD and booked through the DAAD. The preparatory German language courses end at the end of March and at the end of September, regardless of their duration (two, four or six months). Participation in a preparatory German language course is therefore only possible if the scholarship begins in April or October. The duration of the language courses depends on the scholarship holders' language skills. The courses will not necessarily take place at the university location. Scholarship holders can apply for a subsidy for language courses attended during the scholarship as well.

[4] The use of the DAAD template is not mandatory. Other templates or letters of recommendation in continuous text are permissible, if it is ensured that the points mentioned in the DAAD template are addressed in them.

[5] If the nominee cannot submit a language certificate (TOEFL; IELTS; etc.), a confirmation by the nominating doctoral programme that the nominee's language skills were sufficiently tested during the selection process (interview, lecture, or similar) is also sufficient.

The candidates selected by the doctoral programmes for their doctoral positions, or the reserve candidates who may move up in the ranking later, will receive a GSSP scholarship.
Only applicants who fulfil the formal requirements for a DAAD doctoral scholarship can be funded. The issuing of the Letter of Award and the support during the scholarship will be managed by the DAAD programme section in charge. The scholarships are awarded for up to four years.[6] The continuation of the scholarship after the first year of funding is based on an annual progress report and a statement by the supervisor of the scholarship holder. The report and statement must be submitted no later than three months before the end of the respective funding year; the statement must contain a clear recommendation for further funding or termination. In the case of a recommendation for discontinuation, the DAAD may terminate the scholarship before the original grant would have ended, as the purpose of the scholarship can no longer be achieved. The related formal decision will be made by the head of section of the DAAD programme section in charge.

Stays outside Germany within the framework of the DAAD scholarship can only be funded if they are integral parts of the research proposal. No more than 25% of the total funding period can be approved as stays abroad, and a foreign phase cannot take place directly at the beginning of the funding. If possible, the planned phases abroad should be discussed with the nominees during the selection process of the doctoral programs.

Dates:
GSSP scholarships may be started on the 1st of each month between February and December of each year. Fellowships must be started by December 1 of the respective year; otherwise, they will be forfeited.

The list of candidates for the two GSSP scholarships for each year may be submitted at any time. When planning, sufficient time should be allowed for visa application and preliminary language courses. Please note that the procedure carried out by the DAAD to implement the funding decision can usually take up to three months. Please also take into account that applicants from Latin America, Asia and Africa usually need at least three months for the issuance of a visa.
If the scholarship is planned to start in October, the nomination of the applicant should therefore be submitted to the DAAD in April at the latest, or earlier depending on the duration of a planned German language course, so that the necessary entry formalities of the applicant and the desired start date can be realized. Nominations after August 15 for scholarships to be started in the same year are strongly discouraged in view of the time necessary for the funding decision.

In order to ensure a timely processing of the candidate list, the doctoral programmes should set a maximum deadline of 4 weeks for the nominees to submit the application in the DAAD portal. This deadline should also be stated in the *Letter of Nomination*.

Notice:
Upon application of the supervisor, a material resource and supervision allowance of currently 1,000 euros per year can be approved, which will be paid to the doctoral program. The recipient account must be named in the application form. The account should be located at the institution of the doctoral programme, even if the supervisor is a full-time member of another institution. Applications will be submitted and approved annually and not for the entire duration of the fellowship.

[6] If the scholarships have been announced by the doctoral program for three years, the DAAD usually follows these terms. This does not affect the possibility - if required - to apply for a fourth funding year in the course of the third funding year. In addition, a one-time final grant of up to six months can be applied for, which follows the end of the regular funding period (of usually 48 months).