

OWSD Early Career Fellowship

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Below you can find a list of answers to the most commonly asked questions.

Should you have any doubts regarding the application process, the eligibility criteria, or need any further clarification, please refer to the FAQs before contacting the OWSD Secretariat. Due to the high volume of queries received, we cannot always guarantee a prompt response.

Please read all the information provided. If your questions have not been answered, please contact us at earlycareer@owsd.net. The Secretariat reserves the right to not provide feedback on information already available in the Call and the FAQs.

Q: What is the profile of an ideal candidate for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship?

A: The ideal candidate is a woman scientist living and working in an eligible country who has already received a PhD and is employed at a research institute. She wants to develop a research team and resources and has the long-term goal of creating a centre of innovation and specialist research that will be recognized at national, regional and international levels, and which can eventually attract high calibre researchers. She is committed to capacity building and is an inspiring leader and role model, as shown by her experience as a supervisor. She is keen to ensure the long-term sustainability of her research by collaborating and working with a range of partners, including industry, as well as private and civic sectors. In addition, she understands the necessity of good communication (using a variety of media) to enhance the visibility of her work and its impact, to ensure the maximum uptake and impact.

Q: Can the OWSD Early Career Fellowship be considered as a post-doctoral research fellowship?

A: The OWSD Early Career fellowship is not a post-doctoral research fellowship. It is a grant of up to USD 50,000 awarded to early career female scientists who have completed their PhDs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and are employed at an academic or scientific research institute in one of the eligible Science and Technology Lagging Countries (STLCs). The funds granted shall be used towards research project's expenses and activities outlined on the online form submitted when applying.

Q: What alternative opportunities can I consider if I am not eligible for an OWSD Early Career Fellowship, or I have missed the Call for Applications window?

A: If you are not eligible for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship or you have missed the Call for Applications window, you can have a look at the following fellowship opportunities:

<https://twas.org/opportunities>

<http://scholarship-positions.com/>

<http://www.facultyforthefuture.net/>

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/fellowships-grants/>

<http://awardfellowships.org/fellowships/>

<http://www.ifs.se/ifs-programme/>

Please remember that, as stated on our website and explained in a specific question below, an applicant, at the time of application to the OWSD Early Career Fellowship, must NOT have an active

research grant or fellowship with TWAS or have already submitted an application for a TWAS programme within the same given year. Only one application per year is possible across all TWAS and OWSD programmes.

Q: How are applications evaluated?

A: Applications are evaluated based on two main aspects: the quality of the research proposal and the applicant's profile.

The following criteria will be taken into consideration while evaluating the research proposal: how original, relevant and feasible the proposal is; the potential of the proposal to strengthen links and collaboration opportunities between researchers, industry and other sectors; the project's direct impact on local communities, with an emphasis on its inclusiveness; the likelihood that the proposed project can continue to secure funds and partners once the fellowship has ended.

The applicant's profile will be evaluated based on: scientific excellence; leadership skills; and outreach skills

A more comprehensive and detailed list of the evaluation criteria can be found [here](#).

Q: You state that in order to be eligible, an applicant must have a 'PhD awarded not more than 10 years prior to application.' I defended my PhD thesis and got the PhD certificate in 2014. Am I eligible for the 2024 Call for Applications?

A: If you defended your PhD thesis and obtained your PhD certificate in 2014, i.e. within the 10-year maximum limit for the application (independently of the month), you are still eligible to apply in 2024. Regrettably, no exceptions can be made to the 10-year requirement.

Q: There is a list of [66 eligible countries](#). Why is my country **not included?**

A: The OWSD Early Career Fellowship is open to applicants residing in one of [the Least Developed Countries \(LDCs\)](#) identified by the United Nations, plus countries selected because of their low income levels and specific needs for support in building research capacity.

The list has been agreed on by the TWAS-OWSD Coordinating Committee, in collaboration with our donors, and applies to all OWSD funded programmes. The list is non-negotiable.

Q: Do I have to be resident in one of the [eligible countries](#)?

A: Yes, in order to apply for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship, you must have been resident in one of the eligible countries for at least 5 years. This residency requirement does not have to be consecutive.

Q: I fulfil the 5-year residence requirement in one of the [eligible countries](#), but I am currently living in another *non-eligible* country. Can I still apply?

A: If you plan to undertake the proposed research project in an *eligible* country and have proof of employment there (i.e. commitment to stay and contribute to capacity building of the institution you will be based at), you can apply.

Q: I am a citizen of one of the [eligible countries](#), is this enough to apply?

A: No, you must fulfil the 5-year residency requirement in one of the eligible countries. This residency requirement does not have to be consecutive. Therefore, applicants can be citizens of any country, provided that the residence requirement is fulfilled.

Q: If I am a citizen of a *non-eligible* country but residing and working in an eligible country, can I apply?

A: Yes, you can apply (provided that all the additional requirements are fulfilled).

Q: I do not have an official certificate of residency proving that I have been resident in one of the eligible countries for at least 5 years. Can I still apply?

A: If you cannot submit an official certificate of residency, the following documents can be submitted as proof of residence as long as the address and your name appear clearly: statement from the local police office or municipality, population registry office, rental agreement, utilities bills, employment contract. This list is not exhaustive and alternative documents can be considered. Please note that certificates must be provided in English, or a translation into English attached.

Q: I have a PhD in one of the eligible STEM study fields, but the awarding institution is not from one of the eligible countries. Can I still apply?

A: Yes, you can still apply as the awarding institution does not have to be in one of the eligible countries. The [eligible countries](#) refer to residency and the institution where the research project will be carried out.

Q: Are there any age limits?

A: No, there is no **age** limit to apply for the fellowship but there is a **time** limit, i.e. the PhD was awarded not more than 10 years prior to application. Please refer to the question on the ideal profile of the applicant to understand the target for the Early Career fellowship programme.

Q: Can a university/research institute/entity apply for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship?

A: No, entities cannot apply for the OWSD Early Career fellowship programme. The programme has been created for early career women scientists (individuals) who have completed their PhDs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and are employed at an academic or scientific research institute in one of the eligible Science and Technology Lagging Countries (STLCs). Early Career fellows will be supported to continue their research at an international level while based at their home institutes and to build up research groups that will attract international visitors. However, the individual needs to demonstrate that she has the necessary support of her department and/or research institute (there is a [form](#) that must be signed by the institute to this effect).

Q: I am already the recipient of a grant/I have applied for a grant to fund my research project. Can I apply for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship as well?

A: If you are funding your research project from other sources or you have applied for additional funds, you can still apply for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship (*the only exception to this are funds received from a TWAS fellowship or grant*). In general, funding from other sources is seen as a positive demonstration of concept and feasibility as long as resources requested expand and supplement activities and resources rather than duplicate them. Therefore, in your research proposal, you would need to explain/demonstrate how the OWSD Early Career funds will expand and supplement your research activities.

Q: I have received an employment offer from the institution, but I have not signed the contract yet/the employment starts after the application deadline has passed. Am I still eligible?

A: Yes, if you can provide a letter confirming your appointment and position at the institution, as well as the start date, and specifying that you will receive a salary for at least two years starting from the year of application.

Q: I have submitted my PhD thesis and now I am waiting for my viva exam. Can I apply?

A: No, if you do not have a PhD certificate or an official document confirming that you have been awarded a PhD degree, you cannot apply.

Q: I have defended my PhD thesis and I have received an official document confirming that I have been awarded a PhD degree, but I am still waiting for my PhD certificate. Can I apply?

A: Yes, you can apply: in the online application form, you will be asked to upload “your PhD certificate or proof of PhD issued by the university/awarding institute”.

Q: I have been awarded a TWAS fellowship/grant. Can I apply for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship as well?

A: No, grants from TWAS/OWSD cannot be held simultaneously. You can apply for an OWSD Early Career Fellowship *only once your contract with TWAS has expired*. So, if you are receiving funds from TWAS at the time of the application, regrettably you will not be deemed eligible. As stated in the [Call for Applications](#): “Please note that an applicant, at the time of application, must NOT have an active research grant or fellowship with The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) or have already submitted an application for a TWAS programme within the same given year. Only one application per year is possible across all TWAS and OWSD programmes.”

Q: Can I apply for the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation awards and the OWSD Early Career Fellowship in the same year?

A: Yes, it is possible to apply for the Early Career Fellowship AND the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation awards simultaneously (provided that all the requirements for both are met). Please note also that past recipients of OWSD-Elsevier Foundation awards are eligible to apply for Early Career fellowships, but current and past recipients of the Early Career fellowship are not eligible for the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation awards.

Q: I am only looking for funds to cover costs for publishing/attending conferences/exchange visits, etc. Can I apply?

A: The OWSD Early Career Fellowship is conceived of as support to a research project. Therefore, only activities that are submitted as elements within the framework of the research project can be accepted.

Q: I see that the Call for the 2024 applications closes on 14 March 2024. At what time exactly does the call close? What about different time zones?

A: The 2024 Call for Applications will close on 14 March 2024 at 23:59 Rome time. The precision of the online application time counter depends on the computer and browser being used. To know the exact time in the reference time zone please visit [this link](#). It is the applicant’s responsibility to submit the application by the set deadline. Please do not leave submission to the last minute as technical errors may occur beyond anyone’s control.

Q: The supporting documents that I need to submit are not in English. Can I apply anyway?

A: The supporting documents should be in English given that the official application language is English and therefore all application content generated must be in English. If you are submitting any supporting documents (such as residency certificate, degree certificate, etc.) in your (local) language, you must attach at least an informal translation into English and upload it along with the scanned

original in the online application form. Documents without any English translation will not be considered.

Q: I have an MD (Doctor of Medicine) degree in Medical and Health Sciences field. Can I apply?

A: It depends. As per our [Call for Applications](#), the applicant must have a PhD or equivalent (Doctor of Science) in one of the eligible STEM fields in order to apply. This reasoning is based on the assumption that PhDs *advance* knowledge, whereas MDs primarily *apply existing* knowledge. However, if you have an MD and can demonstrate that your research project will advance scientific knowledge in a given field (address new and innovative research questions), you are invited to apply. It will be up to the Selection Committee to judge if your application is in line with the programme guidelines and therefore eligible for the fellowship funding.

Q: I have an employment offer at a university/research institute, but with no confirmed salary. Am I eligible?

A: You must provide evidence that you will receive a salary from your university/research institute for the duration of the fellowship, or provide proof and explanation of how you are planning to support yourself through other sources for the duration of the fellowship.

Please note that the salary requirement is based on the following:

- The fellow should not depend on the fellowship to cover basic living costs;
- The fellow should demonstrate that their university/research institute is committed to retaining them beyond the fellowship duration and is invested in the long-term 'capacity-building' of the institution and its staff.

According to the [Call for Applications](#), in order to be eligible, you must be already employed at the university or research institute where your research project will be carried out (if employment has not been undertaken yet, a proof of employment offer and confirmation of acceptance can be submitted).

Q: To whom should the reference letters be addressed?

A: The two letters should be addressed to "The Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD)" with the subject "OWSD Early Career Fellowship programme".

Q: I do not have the required reference letters yet. In order to submit my application on time, can my referees send these letters separately and directly to OWSD?

A: No, ALL required documents must be uploaded within the online application. You must collect the reference letters and upload them directly to the online platform before submitting the application. No documents should be emailed to OWSD and will not be considered. Please ensure you have checked the *list of all mandatory documents* to upload (these include your PhD certificate/proof of PhD, CV, list of publications, proof of employment, proof of residence, reference letters, and the supporting statement of head of applicant's institution).

Q: I am facing some difficulties in obtaining the dean's/vice-dean's/head of institution's signature on the supporting statement. Can the head of department sign it instead?

A: Yes, but the head of institution's signature is required if at all possible, since, if granted the award, the head of institution would need to sign the Award Agreement, not the head of department. Therefore, this would be a good opportunity for you to secure the head of institution's support already at the application stage. Also, the reviewers of applications will look favourably on applications which have the highest level of endorsement.

Q: The head of institution has some reservations about some of the content in the Supporting Statement. Can I change/delete it?

A: No, the head of institution's Supporting Statement cannot be amended – it must be used and signed as it is.

Q: My colleague and I are working on the same research project, which we would like to submit for the OWSD funding. We are both employed at the university/research institute and both have been involved in developing the project proposal. Can we both apply for the OWSD Early Career Fellowship?

A: Yes, two scientists from the same institution working on the same research project can apply for the grant. However, please note that should the research project be deemed eligible for an award, only one applicant will be selected based on her profile (please see the evaluation criteria published on our website - 'Evaluation' section).

Q: I am employed at a university/research institute in one of the OWSD eligible countries, but I am collaborating also with other institutions outside the country where my university/research institute is based. Can I still apply?

A: There are no specific restrictions with whom you can collaborate. An applicant can be employed at a university/research institute in one of the OWSD eligible countries and, at the same time, collaborate with other institutions based in other eligible as well as non-eligible countries. Please note that in such cases, it is important to demonstrate in the application that the majority of the research work will be carried out in the country where the primary applicant is based, and, therefore, the majority of resources will stay and benefit the institution in an OWSD eligible country.

Q: I have been resident in different eligible countries and if I add them together, I fulfil the 5-year residency requirement. Can I apply?

A: Yes, you can apply. Please be aware however, that proof of residence will have to be submitted from all the different eligible countries where you have resided. It is desirable that the applicant has an established network and professional ties in the country where the fellowship project will be carried out. Therefore, if the most recent years were spent outside of the applicant's home country, it is important to demonstrate that such connections exist.

Q: How should I calculate the H-index?

A: The H-index is an index that attempts to measure both the productivity and impact of the published work of a scientist. This index is based on the set of the scientist's most cited papers and the number of citations that they have received in other publications. There are several online resources that can be used to directly calculate the H-index. The most established are "ISI Web of Knowledge", "Scopus" and "Google Scholar", both of which require a subscription (please check with your institute), but there are free options too, one of which is "Publish or Perish". Note that different databases may provide slightly different H-index values.