

PhD Fellowships for Women Scientists from Science and Technology Lagging Countries

OWSD PhD 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 a high volume of queries received, we cannot always guarantee a prompt response.

If your questions are not answered below, please contact us at fellowships@owsd.net

Q: What does “host” institute mean?

A: “Host” institute refers to the university where the OWSD PhD fellow will travel to undertake their PhD studies. The host institute must be based in one of the developing countries in the Global South.

Q: What does “home” institute mean?

A: For the purposes of the OWSD PhD *Sandwich* scheme, “home” institute refers to the university where the OWSD PhD fellow is registered as a full-time PhD student. The sandwich scheme fellow will travel to the “host” institute to undertake one or multiple research visit(s). Full details of the sandwich scheme can be found here.

Q: Why is my country not among the eligible ones?

A: OWSD Fellowships are open to applicants from the **48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** identified by the United Nations, plus **18** 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 and is non-negotiable.

Q: I live in a developed country, am I eligible for the OWSD PhD Fellowship?

A: No, applicants with residence in a developed country or registered in a university located in a developed country, such as European countries, USA, Canada, etc. cannot be considered eligible for our fellowship programme.

Q: Is there any age limit to apply?

A: There is no explicit age limit for these fellowships. However, we draw your attention to the fact that the objective of the OWSD PhD programme is to build capacity of early career female scientists in the Global South who can then continue to pursue their careers in academia and beyond. It is, however, up to the Selection Committee to evaluate whether a candidate is eligible for the fellowship funding, and their decision is final and without appeal.

Q: My country used to be on your list of eligible countries but I can’t find it. Is there a mistake?

A: The OWSD list of eligible countries for the PhD fellowship was updated in 2016. Owing to scientific and economic changes in a number of developing nations, and in agreement with our donor, Sida, OWSD intensified the focus of our programmes to include only those countries where science and technology are significantly lagging. OWSD Fellowships are now open to applicants from 48 Least

Developed Countries (LDCs) identified by the United Nations, plus 18 countries selected because of their low income levels and specific needs for support in building research capacity. Formerly, the OWSD list included all LDCs and any additional countries in sub-Saharan Africa. With this new list, effective for any PhD fellowship from 2017 onward, some countries in Africa which were previously included (e.g. Botswana, Cape Verde, Gabon, Nigeria) are no longer considered low income and are therefore no longer eligible for fellowships support. Countries from other regions which have been removed are: Azerbaijan, Belize, Dominican Rep., Ecuador, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Samoa, Suriname, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

We will do our best to work with those countries that are no longer on the list to see if we can provide partnership funding for fellowships in the future.

Some new countries outside Africa have been added. These are: Tajikistan, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic and Palestine (West Bank & Gaza Strip).

Q: The host institute where I want to complete my PhD studies is not included on the OWSD list, can I still apply?

A: Please note that the OWSD list of host institutes is a recommended list and not exhaustive. Any host institute will be considered by OWSD as long as it is located in a developing country in the South and demonstrates appropriate resources and expertise.

Q: The host institute where I want to undertake my PhD studies is located in a developed country, can I still apply?

A: The OWSD PhD Fellowship is a South-South scheme, encouraging and supporting women scientists to travel from one of the eligible countries in the South to any other developing country in the South. Host institutions in the Europe, UK or USA cannot be considered. However, host institutes in developing countries such as Brazil, China, India, Malaysia and South Africa, for example, are popular destinations for our fellows and have excellent facilities. Host institutes can even be based in scientifically lagging countries (e.g. we have fellows at host institutes in Benin and Togo) if the hosts can demonstrate adequate facilities and supervisory resources for the PhD topic selected.

Q: I am not eligible for the OWSD PhD Fellowship, could you recommend other opportunities I could consider?

A: We encourage you to become an OWSD member (if not already) and explore if your country has an OWSD National Chapter, so you can continue learning about other opportunities as they come up.

You can also apply for other fellowship schemes.

Here is a brief list:

<http://www.owsd.net/resources/opportunities>

<https://twas.org/opportunities>

<http://scholarship-positions.com>

<http://www.facultyforthefuture.net>

<https://www.aauw.org/what-we-do>

<http://awardfellowships.org>

Q: I am already registered as a PhD student in my home country, is it too late to apply for the OWSD PhD Fellowship?

A: No, it is not too late. The sandwich PhD study scheme enables applicants, already registered as PhD students in their home countries, to undertake research visits abroad at times that suit their study schedule. Applicants can, if they wish, spend 6 months of each year of their PhD at the host institute for a maximum of 3 research visits (20 months total). The minimum length of the first research visit is 6 months and at least one visit must be undertaken.

Q: My MSc degree is still pending, can I apply for the OWSD PhD Fellowship?

A: The minimum degree requirement for the OWSD PhD fellowship is an MSc degree (or equivalent). If you have not yet completed your MSc degree (or equivalent), you do not meet this requirement at this stage. However, if all your coursework has been completed and your MSc thesis submitted, you can apply, in which case it will be up to the Selection Committee to decide whether you are eligible for the fellowship funding. The Selection Committee's decision is final and without appeal.

Q: I am already on-site at the host institute where I want to undertake my PhD studies, can I apply for the OWSD PhD fellowship?

A: The OWSD PhD Fellowship scheme aims to provide mobility opportunities to women scientists, so they can travel to pursue PhD studies abroad in a developing country in the Global South. Candidates who are already in the host country at the time of application will not usually be considered eligible, but may be taken into consideration in exceptional cases. It will be up to the Selection Committee to decide whether you are eligible for the fellowship funding. The Selection Committee's decision is final and without appeal.

Q: I am interested in applying for the OWSD PhD fellowship, but I do not have a host supervisor. How do I go about identifying and contacting one?

A: In general, applicants are expected to independently find a potential PhD supervisor, contact them to introduce their PhD project proposal, and request a preliminary acceptance letter and commitment letter which need to be submitted as part of the online application. You can start by researching which universities have departments that specialise in your discipline area and looking through their websites. If you have recently read a paper that was relevant to your research topic, consider checking the authors of the publication and their affiliated institutions as well their collaborators' institutions. You can contact them to ask for recommendations of experts who work in one of OWSD eligible countries and might be interested in taking on a PhD student. We also encourage you to become an OWSD member so you can ask for tips and advice from OWSD alumnae, current fellows and members. Some countries also have OWSD National Chapters where you can meet other OWSD members face to face and take place in events relevant to women scientists.

Q: I would like to pursue my PhD studies in social sciences/humanities/arts/other, can I apply for the OWSD PhD Fellowship?

A: We regret to inform you that the OWSD PhD Fellowships are granted for PhD studies in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects only and therefore other study fields are not eligible.

Q: My research proposal is interdisciplinary, can I apply for the OWSD PhD fellowship?

A: If the emphasis of your PhD research is on social sciences (e.g. economics or psychology), you are unlikely to be eligible. However, if the study design and research question are rooted in the natural sciences (fields that are eligible for the OWSD PhD fellowship), you can consider applying. The

Selection Committee will evaluate your project proposal and decide whether you are eligible for the fellowship funding. The Selection Committee's decision is final and without appeal.

Q: I am looking for funding for a trip to a conference (or another specific event/activity), does OWSD provide additional grants to women scientists?

A: Unfortunately, OWSD provides funding for conference visits only to PhD fellows already in receipt of our fellowship. If you are not an OWSD PhD fellow, we cannot support your conference travel.

Q: I see the deadline for the call for applications. At what time exactly does the call close? What about different time zones?

A: The call for applications will close on the given date at midnight (24:00) GMT+02:00.

Technical assistance for the online applications is provided only during the office hours (Monday - Friday from 8:30 - 17:00 GMT +02:00).

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

A: The official application language is English and therefore all application content generated must be in English. If you are submitting supporting documents (such as degree certificate, acceptance letter or no objection certificate, etc.) in a different language, you must attach at least an informal translation into English and upload it along with the scanned original at the appropriate point in the online application form. Documents without any English translation will not be considered.

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

A: No, grants from TWAS/OWSD cannot be held simultaneously. 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."*