FAQs for scholarship applicants

Bear in mind that professors at Swiss academic institutions receive numerous email requests to act as research supervisors for Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship holders. Your careful preparation and your targeted approach once you have completed your enquiries will raise your chances of attracting a professor's interest and possibly of receiving a positive answer. The following information may be useful before you decide how to approach a potential academic supervisor.

Who can help me to find an academic supervisor?

As an applicant you are responsible for finding a suitable research supervisor (professor). Neither the secretariat of the Federal Commission for Scholarships nor the international office at the universities can help you find an academic supervisor for your application for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship. We recommend you look for a suitable research supervisor by reading up on university websites and talking to any contacts you may have at your own academic institution.

What should I do before contacting a professor?

a) Make sure that the prospective academic supervisor actually works in your field.
b) Make sure that you possess all of the qualifications required for the intended scientific collaboration. Find out, for instance, what requirements must be met in order to obtain a master's degree at the university in question.
Finding a professor who is willing to supervise you can be a major challenge. It can take several weeks or even months.
See: **https://youtu.be/kp4NnqZ2T00**

How should I go about contacting a professor?

Be well prepared and focused. Make direct contact with a professor and declare your interest in collaborating in a specific research project. Tell the professor what you have studied so far and that you are applying for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship. All enquiries should be accompanied by the following documents, as a minimum: short CV, letter of motivation, 2-3 convincing letters of reference, research plan (2-3 A4 pages), all in correct English.

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FAQs for academic supervisors

You are a professor at a Swiss academic institution. Foreign students and postgraduate researchers contact you to ask if you will act as their academic mentor or supervisor and host professor. The following information may be useful to you in deciding how to deal with such a request.

Why do FCS scholarship applicant contact professors in Switzerland?

Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are intended as Switzerland's contribution to preparing the next generation of professors and researchers in the country of origin. This is particularly crucial and important for doctoral students from developing countries or in countries that lack a strong tradition of PhD studies. Personal relations are an essential element in providing access to Switzerland's academic institutions and networks. Each application for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship must therefore be backed by a professor who has agreed to supervise the research, integrate the scholarship holder into their team and provide good research conditions.

What does supporting an FCS scholarship applicant involve?
The decision to act as academic supervisor or not is entirely up to you, of course. If you decide to do so, please bear in mind that giving your support is a commitment. In other words, if you choose to support a candidate, it means that you are familiar with his/her research project, you have discussed it with the applicant, and the research project relates to the research that you conduct in your department or laboratory. It is also important to realise that your support is not just a personal commitment: indirectly, it reflects on the research carried out by your institution, which places a double burden of responsibility on your shoulders.

How do I provide support to an FCS scholarship applicant?
Please send a letter describing in sufficient detail the research proposal, your relation to the candidate and possible future collaboration, and enclose your short CV. This confirmation of support should be written on paper with an official letterhead showing your institution's official contact details.

Should I support more than one candidate?
Do not assume that you will increase the chances of success by supporting several applicants: the FCS has a clear preference for solid support to individual applicants as opposed to noncommittal support for multiple applicants.

What is the role of the academic supervisor?
If you agree to act as an academic supervisor, you agree to supervise the scholarship holder during their whole research stay (12 months for research fellows and post-docs or 36 months for PhD scholarship holders). You agree to integrate the scholarship holder into your team and provide good research conditions (lab space and access to infrastructure, library etc.). PhD thesis supervisors should do their utmost to ensure that adequate funding is available after the scholarship so that the thesis can be completed within a reasonable timeframe (1 or 2 additional years maximum).