



PhD Fellowships Funding Regulations

Call of 2019

Swiss Data Science Center

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Chapter 1: Overview

Data Science is one of the Strategic Focus Areas defined in the Strategic Planning 2017–2020 for the ETH Domain. The ETH Domain has launched the Initiative for Data Science in Switzerland to accelerate data science through education and research and the provision of infrastructure¹. The Initiative created the Swiss Data Science Center (SDSC), whose mission is to accelerate the use of data science and machine learning techniques broadly within academic disciplines of the ETH Domain, the Swiss academic community at large and the industry. At the meeting of May 20/21, 2015, the ETH Board allocated 30 m CHF to the initiative over the next four years.

Part of the budget is allocated to PhD Fellowships funded by the SDSC, which are reviewed on a competitive basis. SDSC PhD Fellowships are directed to students that are interested in the development and the implementation of a technology or method that has the potential to broadly foster the adoption of data science.

The main motivation of this first call for SDSC PhD Fellowships is to foster the development of new data science methods. The call seeks proposals for the development of new methods in data science, possibly motivated by a real use case, so as to accelerate the adoption of data science in academia and industry.

An SDSC PhD Fellowship applications are jointly submitted by a currently enrolled PhD student at ETH Zurich or EPFL, supervised by a Thesis Director (“PhD supervisor”) from the same institution. The PhD Fellow will be assigned a point of contact from the SDSC staff (“SDSC point of contact”). The Management Office of the SDSC will assist in the administration and coordination of the fellowships and will ensure accountability of the project according to the directives defined.

Chapter 2: Funding Principles

Article 1 - Principles

- PhD supervisor and PhD student enrolled in one of the institutions of the ETH domain
- SDSC point of contact by a research staff member of the SDSC
- The PhD student is funded following the standard rates of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), which are as follow:²
 - 1st year CHF 47,040;
 - 2nd year CHF 48,540;
 - 3rd year CHF 50,040;
 - 4th year CHF 50,040.
 - Social security contributions will add to that.
 - Total maximum duration 4 years.
- The SDSC PhD Fellowships are limited to currently active PhD students at EPFL or ETH Zurich (enrolled in a PhD program), and funding can run up to 4 years (partial funding also possible).

Article 2 - Type of projects

This call primarily targets research groups at EPFL and ETH Zurich that are working on data science and machine learning methods, broadly speaking. We invite proposals for research and development of data science methods, possibly motivated by a realworld use case, that have the potential of broadly enabling the adoption of data science in academia and industry.

¹ “The ETH Domain launches the Initiative for Data Science in Switzerland”, ETH Board Fact Sheet, May 2016 – http://www.ethrat.ch/sites/default/files/FactSheet_Data_Science_E.pdf

² “Standard SNSF rates” http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_doktorierende_e.pdf, version 1.4.2018

Chapter 3: Requirements

Article 3 - Requirements from Supervisor

The PhD supervisor has to be affiliated with the same ETH Domain institution and must have the capacity to be the main supervisor of the PhD student on a recognized PhD program within the ETH Domain institution.

Article 4 - Requirement from PhD candidate to fund

The PhD Fellow must be currently enrolled in a PhD program at ETH Zurich or EPFL.

Chapter 4: Evaluation Procedure

Article 5 - Application

Only professors employed by an institution of the ETH Domain and who are eligible to be main supervisors of the PhD Fellows can apply. PhD Fellows will be funded for a maximum of 4 years or until the completion of their PhD. The maximum budget for a Fellow is CHF 195'660, excluding social security contributions.

The Fellows will submit their full proposal in English via e-mail to admin@datascience.ch. This subject line needs to be used: "SDSC PhD Fellowships Call 2019 – Application"

The proposals have to be submitted by February 28th, 2019 and have to include the following attachments (in PDF):

- Four (4) pages describing the project³, including an abstract not exceeding half (½) a page;
- CV of the PhD applicant, max two (2) pages;
- CV of the PhD supervisor.

Article 6 - Selection criteria

A Scientific Review Committee, appointed by the Steering Committee of the SDSC and composed of members of the Steering Committee and SDSC personnel will be responsible for the evaluation and selection of the proposals.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Scientific merit,
- Novelty of approach, and
- Technical feasibility

The committee will also evaluate the potential of the developed method in accelerating the adoption of data science in academia and industry.

Chapter 5: Funding

Article 7 - Funding decision

The Fellowship applicants will be notified by email by April 30th, 2019.

³ References would not count for the page limit.

Article 8 - Start of PhD thesis, release of funds

The student has to be enrolled in a PhD Program at EPFL or ETH Zurich before applying. The funds for the first year will be released when the Fellowship applicant and PhD supervisor accept the fellowship, and every subsequent year until completion of the PhD with a maximum of 4 years.

Article 9 - Changes to topic

If the accepted project deviates significantly from the original plan, the PhD candidate can submit a change of their PhD Fellowship topic to admin@datascience.ch. This change has to be approved by the PhD supervisor and the SDSC point of contact.

The recipient of the PhD Fellowship cannot be changed.

Article 10 - PhD thesis withdrawal or completion

The funding will be terminated whenever the student unenrolls from the PhD program or completes his/her PhD.

Chapter 6: Collaboration with SDSC

Article 11 - Role of SDSC Point of Contact

The SDSC point of contact appointed by the SDSC guides the student in his work in collaboration with the PhD supervisor. Should the work or progress of the PhD student be unsatisfactory, the SDSC point of contact will discuss the situation with the PhD supervisor. In particular, the SDSC reserves the right not to renew funding in the absence of meaningful interaction with the SDSC and/or its data science platform (if relevant). The management office needs to be informed about the situation and the measures required to improve the situation.

Chapter 7: Closing provisions

Article 12 - Approval and entry into force

- These guidelines were approved by the Executive Committee on December 13th, 2018.
- The first call to which the guidelines will apply is the call starting in April 2019.