SDSC PhD Fellowships
Funding Regulations,
Terms & Conditions
for the Call of 2022

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Chapter 1: Overview

Data Science is one of the Strategic Focus Areas defined in the Strategic Planning 2017–2024 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 infrastructure[1]. 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.

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 motivations of this second call for SDSC PhD Fellowships are to foster the development of new data science methods. The SDSC is expected to facilitate a strong synergy between data providers, data and computer scientists, and subject-matter experts, fostering scientific breakthroughs with significant societal impact. The call seeks proposals for the development of new methods in data science, possibly motivated by a real use case.

An SDSC PhD Fellowship application is to be jointly submitted by a PhD student currently enrolled at ETH Zurich or EPFL, and by the Thesis Director from the same institution who supervises the student. A Senior Data Scientists will The PhD Fellow will be assigned as mentor among the SDSC. 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

- Professor and PhD student enrolled in one of the institutions of the ETH domain.

- The PhD student is funded following the standard rates of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), which are indicatively as follow:[2]

    - 1st year   CHF 47,040;
    - 2nd year   CHF 48,540;
    - 3rd year   CHF 50,040;
    - 4th year   CHF 50,040.
    - Additional social security contributions: 16% for the ETH domain.
    - Total maximum duration 4 years.

- The SDSC PhD Fellowships <u>are limited to currently active PhD students</u> at EPFL or ETH Zurich (enrolled in a PhD program), and funding can run up to 4 years (partial funding is 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 on data science methods, possibly motivated by a real-world use case.

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[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 24.9.2019

Chapter 3: Requirements

Article 3 - Requirements for the Supervisor

The PhD supervisor has to be affiliated with the same ETH Domain institution as the PhD student 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 for the PhD candidate to be funded

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 and senior scientists 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 226'965.60, including social security contributions of 16%.

The budget follows the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) salary ranges. It is indicative of the maximum budget that could be granted a Fellow at the time of issuance of the PhD Fellowship. This maximum budget may be subject to periodic adjustments following the SNSF salary review adjustment.

The Fellows will submit their PhD project proposal in English on the submission platform (Microsoft CMT) accessible from the submission button at https://datascience.ch/phd-fellows/.

The proposals have to be submitted by June 13th, 2022 end of day Swiss time and have to adhere to the format suggested in the Appendix of this document:

- 4 pages describing the project[3], including an abstract not exceeding half a page. The document should not exceed 3000 words in total.
- CV for the PhD applicant (max 2 pages).
- CV for the PhD advisor.

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,
- Technical feasibility, and
- Adherence to best practices in Open Science.

Chapter 5: Funding

Article 7 - Funding decision

The Fellowship applicants will be notified by email by July 31st, 2022.

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[3] References do not count in 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 transfered after the Fellowship applicant and PhD advisor accept the fellowship.

Funds for every subsequent year will be transferred at the contract anniversary date until completion of the PhD with a maximum of 4 years.

Article 9 - Changes to topic

If over time the PhD project deviates significantly from the original plan, the PhD candidate can submit a change of their PhD Fellowship project to admin@datascience.ch. This change has to be approved by the PhD advisor.

The PhD student recipient of the PhD Fellowship cannot be changed.

Article 10 - PhD thesis withdrawal or termination

The funding will be terminated whenever the student unenrolls from the PhD program, completes his/her PhD or receives a negative evaluation from advisors.

Chapter 6: Collaboration with SDSC

Article 11 – SDSC Mentor

For each PhD fellow, a Senior Data Scientist of the SDSC will be assigned as "SDSC mentor" with the responsibility of following regularly the progress of the work of the PhD student, and to provide mentoring if relevant. The PhD fellows will be invited yearly to present progress in their research work at the SDSC, and in colloquia organized by the SDSC.

Chapter 7: Reporting

Article 12 - Annual Report

The PhD Fellows will submit a report on September 30th every year to report on the progress. This report has to be signed by both the Fellow and his or her PhD advisor(s). The Advisors will have to assess the progress of the PhD work.

Chapter 8: Closing provisions

Article 13 - Approval and entry into force

- These guidelines were approved by the Executive Committee on May 5th, 2022.
- The call to which the guidelines will apply is the call starting in May 2022.