FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

May 2026

Applications to the Ph.D. scholarship program “Uncertainty”

Do I need to have the German nationality to be eligible?
No. The scholarship program “Uncertainty” is open for all nationalities.

Do I have to move to Germany?
No, you do not have to move to Germany or somewhere else. You can continue your Ph.D. studies at your location.

Am I only allowed to apply if I am enrolled at a German university?
An affiliation with a German university is not necessary. “Uncertainty” scholarships can be awarded for Ph.D. studies worldwide.

I do not have a Ph.D. position yet. Can you support me in my search?
The program “Uncertainty“ provides scholarships and invites fellows to join program conferences and workshops. Ph.D. supervision, admission to Ph.D. programs at universities or individual Ph.D. positions must be arranged by the applicants themselves.

Is admission to a doctoral program necessary at the time of application?
At the time of the application, the admission should be available. An exception is the application for a *Start Up Scholarship*.

What kind of certificate shall I upload?
Please submit a certificate that qualifies you for the Ph.D. studies. Usually, this is the master’s degree. We also accept transcripts. Please refrain from uploading all certificates of your studies.

My certificate is not available in English, German or French. May I still submit it?
Please submit a certified translation in addition to the original certificate.

Can I apply at the beginning/final stage of my dissertation?
You can apply at any stage of your Ph.D. research. Please give information on the accomplished research steps and your timeline in the research plan requested in our online application system.

I am currently still enrolled in my master’s degree. May I apply for a *Start Up Scholarship*?
You may apply for a *Start Up Scholarship* even before the completion of your master’s degree. Please note, however, that you must complete your master’s degree by the end of 2026 and before the beginning of your *Start Up Scholarship*. We do not provide funding for the writing of master’s theses.

When is it possible to begin a scholarship in the Ph.D. program?
For applications received in 2026, the requested funding period of the scholarship should begin in the first half of 2027.

Does my application have to be in English?
The working language throughout the program is English and for practical reasons only documents in this language can be reviewed by all members of the selection committee. We also accept research proposals and reference letters in German. Please note, however, that in such cases the rest of the application (abstract, working plan, CV) shall be still submitted in English.

What do I have to consider for my reference letters?
Both reference letters should be uploaded directly by the professor, lecturer or research associate you request these letters from. This is how it works: Once you have filled in the person's data and clicked on the button "Reference Request" (in the online application form under "Ph.D. project"), they will automatically receive an email including an upload link – you do not need to contact them separately with your request. You will be notified by the application system once the individual reference letters have been submitted by the persons you have designated. We have no formal requirements concerning the letters. Please ask two persons who know you and your project well. For *Start Up* applications you can, for example, ask professors from your previous studies.

My supervisor can only submit a reference letter in a language other than English and German. What should I do?
The working language throughout the program is English and for practical reasons only documents in this language can be reviewed by all members of the selection committee. Letter submissions in other languages than English and German (see above "Does my application have to be in English?") will be accepted, but unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that the letters can be fully taken into consideration in the reviewing processes. In order to facilitate communication, please ask your supervisor to attach at least a working translation into English in addition to their reference letter.