

International Postdoctoral Fellowship ISTA-Fellow

Guide for Applicants

The **closing date** for the Call for Proposals is **8th September, 2026 (14:00 CEST)**

Further information on the program can be found at: ista.ac.at/en/education/postdocs/

Applications can be submitted at: apply.app.ist.ac.at

Institute of
Science and
Technology
Austria

I. ISTA-Fellow program: Overview

Aims of the program

The ISTA-Fellow program aims to create the best environment for international scientific talent, supporting both the research and the researcher

The ISTA-Fellow program aims to support **excellent postdoctoral researchers across all scientific disciplines at ISTA** to perform brave science in a highly collaborative environment. ISTA provides the **resources and state-of-the-art support structures** to build strong foundations for new discoveries, to maximize chances for breakthroughs, and to acquire new skills to advance their future career path.

ISTA-Fellows are affiliated with a host research group at ISTA that offers the scientific environment, infrastructure, and mentorship for the fellow. The ISTA-Fellow program features a **bottom-up approach** throughout the whole program, with fellows free to propose their own research project within the [scientific fields represented on campus](#), including Biology, Neuroscience, Mathematics, Data and Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry, Earth Science & Astronomy.

Benefits of becoming an ISTA-Fellow

Funding

The ISTA-Fellow program 2026 will recruit up to 10 fellows. ISTA-Fellows receive 2-year, full-time employment contracts with an internationally competitive salary (min. 73'500 EUR gross) and full social security coverage. The fellowship includes a basic budget for project-specific costs such as consumables, travel, conference fees, membership fees, internal Scientific Service Units costs, and external services.

Research Environment

The core principles of the ISTA faculty selection process – *person before area, quality before speed* – have resulted in an exceptionally high concentration of innovative scientific leaders who are committed to mentoring the next generation. ISTA's scientific group size limit (≤ 15 persons) guarantees close support from the faculty supervisor(s) who will host the fellow.

Fellow projects will be carried out in a unique setting: a modern campus with shared [scientific facilities](#) that provide cutting-edge equipment and scientific expertise in computing, imaging and optics, (cryo) electron microscopy, nanofabrication, pre-clinical studies, and NMR.

Housing and Family Services

To give incoming fellows time to find permanent housing, on-campus accommodation is available for rent (subject to availability). ISTA provides on-site daycare for children from the age of 3 months (subject to availability). ISTA's International Office provides visa support.

Language

The official language of the institute is English. To help fellows integrate in Austria, German-language courses are offered on campus.

Eligibility Requirements

- All ISTA Fellows are affiliated with a host research group. All research groups at ISTA, except Astronomy groups, are eligible. Due to the Sirius Fellowship in Astrophysics (ista.ac.at/en/education/postdocs/sirius-fellowship), Astronomy groups are not eligible for the ISTA-Fellowship. More information about ISTA faculty members, their research groups and topics is available on the ISTA website: <https://ista.ac.at/en/research>).
- Applicants must hold a PhD degree (or equivalent) on the date of the call deadline or anticipate completing their PhD degree before the start of their fellowship (no later than 15/06/2027). A fellowship contract will not be issued until a copy of the diploma/proof of successful defense is provided.
- Researchers already employed at ISTA before 01/09/2026 are not eligible to apply.
- If successful, fellowships should commence between 15/12/2026 and 15/06/2027.
- The project should be aligned with the expertise of the host supervisor at ISTA. Applicants may identify a secondary supervisor at ISTA or nominate an external professor as a secondary supervisor when the specific scientific expertise required for a minor part of the project is unavailable at ISTA.
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NOTE: *It is your responsibility to ensure your proposed research matches the interests of your chosen supervisor/group. Projects that do not align with the group's research interests or where the host does not have the required expertise or infrastructure to host the project risk being excluded as 'out of scope/ineligible'.*

II. Application Process

Overview

1. Create an account at apply.app.ista.ac.at.
2. Verify your account by following the instructions contained within the email sent to you.
3. Complete the application by entering all required information and uploading all required documents (more information on this below).
4. Submit your application.

General notes on the application process

Your application must contain all required information and documents – **including the reference letters from your referees** – and have been submitted to our online system by 14:00 CEST on the date of the application deadline. Applications that are incomplete or ineligible will not be considered by the Selection Committee.

Online application form: Requirements

Personal Data: Standard personal information¹ (e.g. your name, address, etc.) as well as the (expected) date of PhD conferral/defense.

PhD Education: Details on your PhD program.

Additional Education: This section is optional.

Current affiliation: Current academic/professional affiliation. If currently on leave/unemployed, please enter details of your latest employment.

Host Supervisors: Please provide the name of the professor (supervisor) with whom you plan to work at ISTA. You must contact your potential host supervisor to reach an agreement on any potential submission. Faculty profiles, research interests and contact details can be found here: <https://ista.ac.at/en/research/>. If you have a secondary supervisor, please also include their name in the co-supervisor drop-down box. Any secondary supervisor must be contacted before submission.

Project Information: Enter a **project title** (max. 100 characters incl. spaces) and a **scientific abstract** (max. 300 words; no special characters). The abstract should be understandable and accessible for scientifically qualified assessors outside your immediate research field, and address the following questions:

- What is your research question?
- Why is this research question important?

Project Keywords: Please select up to five disciplines that are closely related to your proposal from the dropdown list.

Proposal documents: The documents below must be uploaded (pdf format) for your application to be considered complete and eligible. Please note that the following layout/formatting parameters must be respected for documents 1-4:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman, Arial	At least 11pt	At least single spacing	At least 2 cm (top, bottom, sides)

Documents that do not follow the page limits, formatting, and structure risk being excluded as 'ineligible'.

1. **Research Proposal** (max. 4 pages - not including references). Your proposal should contain the following **four sections**, using the **exact headings** provided:

¹ **Data Privacy Statement**: ISTA processes your personal data in accordance with the statutory data protection regulations. For more information including processing for the purpose of application and quality management and your rights as a data subject please refer to our data privacy statement: <https://ista.ac.at/en/dataprotection/>

A. Project Vision

Provide an introduction that sets the context of your study, describes the scope and purpose of the study and states the project objectives.

B. Methodology/Approach

Outline the overall strategy and a work plan for the two-year fellowship to achieve the proposed research aims with predicted outcomes and potential pitfalls.

C. Impact

Describe the importance, novelty, and potential impact of the proposed research project.

D. Scientific Match

Describe the rationale for the choice of host research group(s) and explain the fit with your research interests and expertise.

2. CV (max. 2 pages) and publication list.

The CV should include: education and training, previous and current employment, and, if applicable, research experience, awards and prizes, collaborations, and career breaks. The publication list should include your full list of publications and research outputs, in a format that includes the full author list, publication title, journal title, volume/issue/page (or equivalent identifier), and year. DOI numbers with hyperlinks are encouraged. For publications with >20 authors, please list the first and last author, yourself, and “et al”.

3. Summary of previous achievements (1 page). Summarize up to 3 of your most significant academic achievements with selected works across your career. Please provide concrete examples of contributions and explain their significance. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Generation of knowledge, innovation, and advancement of research
(e.g., research outputs, code, software, data sets, patents,...)
- Development and support of peers and the wider research community
(e.g., teaching, training, editorial work, expertise provided in collaborations, ...)
- Broader society
(e.g., outreach activities, open- and citizen science initiatives, ...)

Please note that your academic achievements do not have to be directly associated with your current application and the proposed research project.

ISTA has signed the CoARA agreement. Therefore, do not refer to citation metrics, journal rankings, institutional rankings, h-index, or other proxy indicators of scientific quality.

Ethics Self-Assessment Form: The ethics self-assessment form must be fully completed.

Other Information (optional): Upload diplomas and transcripts related to degrees listed in the fields PhD Education and Additional Education in the Online Application Form (see above). These documents can be added using the “other files” field.

Referees: **Submit the name and contact information for three referees.** These referees should be former professors or other senior scientists you have worked with. For applicants with an intersectoral background, one letter of recommendation may be submitted by a previous non-academic supervisor. Your potential host at ISTA may not be listed as one of the referees on your application.

Note: You do not have to wait until you have fully submitted your application in order to notify your referees. Once you have entered your referees' information and saved the application, a 'contact referees' button will appear at the bottom of the page. Clicking this button will notify your referees that you have requested a letter of reference and they will receive an email from our application system informing them how to upload their reference letter.

You may check on the status of these letters and, if needed, send reminders to your referees by logging into the system and viewing your submitted application. **At least two out of three reference letters must be received no later than the application deadline.** Applications missing two or more reference letters at the application deadline will be rejected as incomplete.

III. Evaluation and Selection

Complete applications passing the initial eligibility check by program management are evaluated by the Selection Committee and faculty reviewers based on the following criteria:

Scientific Excellence: *Proposal*

Assessment of the quality, innovative aspects, and feasibility of the proposed research, with a specific focus on sections A-C.

Scientific Excellence: *Applicant*

Assessment of the scientific expertise and credibility of the applicant to lead and execute the project based on the CV, Summary of scientific achievements, and the reference letters provided by external professors/senior scientists who know the candidate well. Applicant's past career trajectory and the expected gain in expertise and potential for future development will be considered.

Scientific Match

Assessment of the alignment between the applicant's expertise and the host group, including rationale for the choice of host group and mutual added value, as outlined in proposal section D.

The final fellowship awards will be made following discussion and ranking at a Selection Committee meeting.

Up to 10 fellowships will be awarded under the ISTA-Fellow. Unless otherwise stated in the award letter, fellowships should commence between 15/12/2026 and 15/06/2027.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications no later than 4 months after the application deadline (including reserve list status where relevant). Where an applicant considers they have a case for complaint regarding the evaluation or eligibility checks, they can submit a request for redress through the online submission platform.

Contact: Should you have questions on the ISTA-Fellow application process, please see the [program webpage](#) or contact: ista-fellow@ista.ac.at

About ISTA

The Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA) is a cross-disciplinary research institution that combines basic science with graduate education. Our scientists perform theoretical and experimental research in Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, and Information and System Sciences. They are organized in small to medium-size research groups that interact with each other across the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Each research group of ISTA is headed by a tenured or tenure-track professor. The Scientific Service Units (SSUs) at ISTA provide cutting-edge equipment and expert services, thereby acting as an interdisciplinary platform that maximizes the sharing of equipment among multiple research groups.

To learn more about ISTA and the research undertaken there, please visit our website.

