

# Final Year STEM PhD students: self-nominate for the 2026 Schmidt Science Fellowship

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## What is the Schmidt Science Fellowship?

<https://schmidtsciencefellows.org/>

Schmidt Science are seeking ambitious STEM PhD students who:

- display extraordinary academic achievement, a high degree of intellectual curiosity and creativity; and
- a commitment to innovation, collaboration and interdisciplinary working.

Schmidt Fellows are expected to show character, leadership, and be driven to make a positive difference in society and the world.

**Candidates are expected to show a [pivot](#):** a clear-cut and ambitious change of discipline from their PhD to the proposed postdoc research.

The Schmidt Science Fellowship offers

- **\$110,000 per year for up to two years** of postdoctoral research
- **tailored science leadership** training and development
- **lifelong access** to a stimulating, caring and collaborative community

This is a **highly competitive** selection process. We receive large numbers of self-nominations and can only shortlist a **maximum of eight candidates** to apply directly to Schmidt. Schmidt awards around 30 fellowships a year, which is 10% of the shortlisted candidates from all the international institutions who have been selected to put forward candidates.

## Eligibility

Candidates must be:

- a **PhD student** whose degree will be conferred by the **University of Cambridge** – students at partner institutes are eligible if they meet this criterion
- **studying for a PhD in natural sciences** (Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Physics), **Engineering, Mathematics, Computing** – or any of the sub-disciplines, at one of the Schmidt nominating partner institutions. Individuals on **clinical track MD-PhD** or **Veterinary-PhD** programs are **not eligible**
- expected to **complete all requirements for the conferral of their PhD** i.e. the unconditional approval of their thesis, **between 15 May 2025 and 30 June 2026**
- **able to start their Fellowship in July 2026 or October 2026**; available from April 2026 to July 2027 to attend virtual onboarding activities, and from October 2026 to attend in-person convenings
- **able to demonstrate clearly [the pivot](#)** to pursue research in an alternative discipline, to achieve a scientific goal not possible while following their current course

## The pivot

One of the key differentiating features of the Schmidt Fellowship is the pivot. Candidates must show

- **a genuine and ambitious change of direction** from their PhD: linear or incremental extensions of PhD studies are unlikely to be considered ambitious enough
- the pivot should enable the candidate to achieve **scientific goals** not possible under their current course of research
- through this, a **commitment to bold interdisciplinary research**
- a **clear rationale** for this change of direction
- a desire for genuine **development of new expertise**, learning new skill sets, and a widening of perspectives and networks
- The pivot must be to **another STEM discipline**. Pivots to social sciences are not eligible

There is a [video illustrating the requirements](#) for the pivot and how best to achieve it on the Schmidt website.

You can also see [examples of successful research pivots](#) in the Directory of Fellows.

## How to self-nominate

To apply for consideration by the panel, the Fellowships team at PdA must receive the following **four documents in PDF format**, no later than **23:59 on Wednesday, 2 April 2025**.

**All documents should be emailed to [fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk)** In the email, please include:

- the expected completion date for your PhD
- a commitment to be available to take up a Fellowship, if offered, based on the dates above

From **you**:

1. **a letter of interest** stating motivation and suitability, referring to the aims of the programme and person specification (500 words max)
2. **your current CV** (2 sides of A4 max; publications and presentations may be included as additional pages); must include your full legal name, email address and the scientific field of your PhD

From **your lead supervisor** or PI – this should be sent directly from the referrer:

3. **a reference letter** detailing your suitability for the Fellowship, including the proposed pivot

From **your department** – this should be sent directly from the department:

4. **a statement confirming your good standing with the University** signed by a senior administrator or academic within the candidate's department who has access to HR records. You can download the [template for this statement](#) via this link or from the PdA website.

All documents including the reference letter and letter of good standing must be received by the deadline. We cannot accept applications where any element is not in place when applications close. Candidates should ensure that their supervisor and those responsible for submitting the statement of good standing are aware of the deadline and the importance of submitting on time.

## The Cambridge Selection Process

1. **3 April 2025:** all **complete submissions** will be sent to a **senior academic panel** coordinated by the Postdoc Academy. This panel will include academics with suitable expertise and experience to assess submissions from eligible areas of research
2. **First week in May 2025:** the panel will inform the Postdoc Academy of the **outcome of the selection process**, naming up to eight shortlisted candidates
3. On receipt of the outcome, the **Postdoc Academy will inform Schmidt**, requesting access codes to the application portal
4. Each **shortlisted candidate** will receive the **link** to the Schmidt application portal, with a **unique access code** and instructions on when and how to apply
5. Details of the selection panel are available on request only. Please contact [fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk) for more information

From this point forward, the application process is managed by Schmidt. You can find more information about this process and key dates here on the [How to Apply](#) section of the Schmidt website.

## Contacts

- From **March to May 2025** please email [fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk) if you have any questions or need information. Before contacting this email address, please see the [FAQs on the PdA Website](#)
- From **May 2025 onwards**, **shortlisted** candidates only should contact the **Schmidt Foundation** directly – contacts will be made available at the point of shortlisting