

Final Year STEM PhD students: self-nominate for the 2027 Schmidt Science Fellowship

[What is the Schmidt Science Fellowship?](#) | [Eligibility](#) | [The pivot](#) | [How to self-nominate](#) | [The Shortlisting Process](#) | [FAQs and Contacts](#) | [Timeline](#)

What is the Schmidt Science Fellowship?

<https://schmidtsciencefellows.org/>

Schmidt Sciences are seeking ambitious STEM PhD students who are:

- **academically excellent, risk-positive, curious and creative scientists** with a commitment to ambitious, high-impact, interdisciplinary science
- interested in broadening their horizons by a clear cut and ambitious **pivot away from their PhD research area** to pursue a challenging alternative research discipline with world-leading scientists
- **future leaders** with the potential and character to lead teams and unlock transformative discoveries in the future and motivated to increase the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration

The Schmidt Science Fellowship offers:

- **\$110,000 per year for up to two years** of postdoctoral research **in a different area from the PhD**, at any approved location worldwide
- **Build a global network through Schmidt's Science Leadership Program**, a bespoke professional development programme
- **Benefit from personalised mentoring** delivered by experienced international interdisciplinary science leaders to develop as scientific and societal thought leaders
- **Join a lifelong community** of exemplary interdisciplinary scientists
- **Receive unique scientific freedom** to pursue ambitious research goals, take risks, and have bold ideas

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. This represents 10% of the shortlisted candidates from all the international institutions who have been selected to put forward candidates.

The self-nomination process is described below. It includes the submission of a letter of interest and CV and a reference from your lead PhD supervisor / PI.

Please ensure that **you and your referee read the Schmidt requirements** carefully before submitting. The Schmidt Fellowship is about more than just academic excellence. Submissions should reflect the personal qualities described above and a clear cut and ambitious research pivot.

Eligibility

Candidates must be:

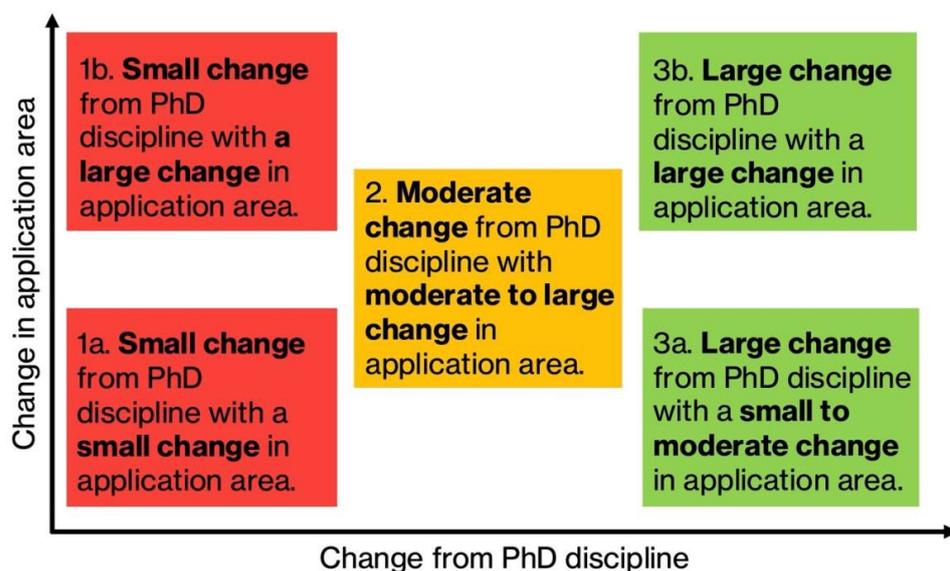
- a **PhD student** whose degree will be conferred by the **University of Cambridge** – students at partner institutions are eligible if they meet this criterion
- **studying for a PhD in natural sciences** (Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Physics), **Engineering, Mathematics, Computing** – or any of the sub-disciplines – 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 01 May 2026, and 30 June 2027**
- **able to start their Fellowship in July 2027 or October 2027**; available from April 2027 to July 2028 to attend virtual onboarding activities, and from October 2027 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

The figure below illustrates what Schmidt requires from the pivot. Changes 3a and 3b, involving a large change of discipline are most highly valued. The pivot should enable the candidate to achieve **scientific goals** not possible under their current course of research and should show a **commitment to bold interdisciplinary research**. The proposal should include a **clear rationale** for the pivot.

There is a [video illustrating the requirements](#) for the pivot on the Schmidt website.

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



The following are **not acceptable**:

- pivots to subdisciplines closely related to the PhD
- proposals which represent a logical or incremental progression from the PhD
- proposals which try to cover multiple disciplines superficially
- pivots to social sciences; the pivot must be to another STEMM discipline

How to self-nominate

Babraham, Sanger and MRC PhDs: If you work for the **Babraham or Sanger Institutes or the MRC**, the application process is a little different. Please see the [PdA website](#) on how to submit your self-nomination. For all other **University of Cambridge PhDs**, the process is as follows:

The deadline for self-nominations is **23:59 on Sunday 29 March 2026**. We must receive all elements of the self-nomination by this date. Incomplete submissions will not be sent to the selection panel. It is the self-nominee's responsibility to ensure that the three submissions below are made by the closing date. All submissions from Cambridge University PhDs must be completed online.

1. **Your self-nomination:** This form asks questions relevant to the self-nomination process and asks you to submit
 - a. **a letter of interest** stating motivation and suitability considering the Schmidt requirements (500 words max)
 - b. **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
2. **A reference from your lead supervisor or PI:** This must be completed by the person named as your supervisor in your self-nomination form
3. **Confirmation of your good standing with the University:** This must be completed by a senior administrator or academic in your department who has access to HR records

The Shortlisting Process

1. **w/c 30 March:** 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 2026:** 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. Candidates who are **not shortlisted** will be notified by the end of May. Unfortunately, due to the high number of applications, we cannot provide individual feedback into unsuccessful self-nominations.

Contacts

- From **February to May 2026** please email fellowships.pda@admin.cam.ac.uk if you have any questions, need information or have difficulties accessing the online applications. Before contacting this email address, please see the [FAQs on the Postdoc Academy website](#).
- From **May 2026 onwards**, **shortlisted** candidates only should contact the **Schmidt Foundation** directly – contacts will be made available at the point of shortlisting. The Postdoc Academy's involvement in the selection process ends with the submission of the shortlist to Schmidt.

Timeline

