

Background

The DIZH Fellowship is an internal funding programme of ZHAW digital aiming to address researchers from all departments at ZHAW. It is funded by the [Digitalization Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions \(DIZH\)](#). The programme focuses on supporting individual researchers to intensely engage with timely and topical questions of digital transformation. We explicitly encourage the submission of applications for projects grappling with social science and/or humanities perspectives on the topic. Successful applications must demonstrate the respective project's broader relevance. They ought to have an impact on society or possess economic significance and address practical questions. The Fellowship aims to support researchers in expanding their knowledge, skills, and qualifications to actively shape the process of digital transformation, creating sustainable value not only for their own academic careers but also for ZHAW and DIZH.

Objectives

The Fellowship Programme pursues five objectives:

1. Support for outstanding researchers

The programme aims to recognize and support ZHAW researchers through a competitive application process, thereby strengthening their profiles and those of their organizational units.

2. Implementation of applied research ideas

The programme seeks to finance innovative research ideas in the field of digital transformation, whose implementation would not be possible without this support.

3. Promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration

The programme promotes networking and collaboration within the ZHAW digital community ([Digital Futures Lab](#)). Regular events, such as the Fellowship Colloquium, aim to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation among the Fellows, their institutes, and the departments of ZHAW.

4. Enhancement of research visibility

By strengthening research profiles in digital transformation, research at ZHAW becomes more visible and recognized both within and outside the university (participation in conferences, publication of scientific papers, etc.).

5. Practical relevance to areas outside of academia

The funded projects should contribute to solving societal and/or economic challenges in the field of digital transformation.

Who is eligible to apply?

The Fellowship is aimed at highly committed ZHAW researchers from all departments and disciplines who are interested in practice-oriented research on relevant topics of digital transformation. We particularly encourage early-career researchers to apply for a Junior Fellowship. Applicants must be employed at ZHAW for the entire duration of the Fellowship.

Fellowship Formats

Depending on their academic age, applicants can apply for one of the following three formats:

1) Junior Fellowship

The Junior Fellowship is intended for researchers with an academic age of **up to 6 years**. This format aims to foster the career development of young ambitious researchers with or without a PhD.

Applicants can apply for a Fellowship lasting a **minimum of 3 and a maximum of 24 months** at a workload of 20 to 80% (0.2 to 0.8 FTE). The budget is based on the internal hourly rates of ZHAW and must not exceed the maximum funding amount of **CHF 200,000**. A 20% workload covers 34 working hours per month, and an 80% workload covers 136 working hours. In addition to the Fellowship workload, at least 20% (0.2 FTE) must be dedicated to tasks defined by the already existing work contract. Example: A person with an 80% employment can apply for a Fellowship of up to 60%. During the Fellowship, Fellows reduce their share of planned teaching and other research activities in their organizational unit to concentrate on their Fellowship project.

2) Senior Fellowship

The Senior Fellowship is intended for postdocs with an academic age of **4 years or more**. This format aims to provide experienced researchers the opportunity to focus deeply on a specific topic or project.

Like the Junior Fellowship, senior scholars can apply for a Fellowship lasting a **minimum of 3 and a maximum of 24 months** at a workload of 20 to 80% (0.2 to 0.8 FTE). The budget is based on the internal hourly rates of ZHAW and must not exceed the maximum funding amount of **CHF 200,000**. A 20% workload covers 34 working hours per month, and an 80% workload covers 136 working hours. In addition to the Fellowship workload, at least 20% (0.2 FTE) must be dedicated to tasks defined by the already existing work contract (see example above). During the Fellowship, Fellows reduce their share of planned teaching and other research activities in their organizational unit to concentrate on their Fellowship project.

3) Senior Fellowship with "Extended Scope"

The Senior Fellowship with "Extended Scope" is intended for experienced lecturers and professors who wish to employ a PhD student in addition to their own commitment to the project. This format thus not only aims to support the Senior Fellow in research and publication activities. It helps mid-career scholars to gain valuable experience in supervising PhD students. The application must plausibly demonstrate the added value of involving a PhD student in the project. Applicants must ensure that a PhD student is available, and their supervision is guaranteed at the beginning of the Fellowship.

The Senior Fellowship with "Extended Scope" finances 20% of the Fellow's working time (i.e., one day per week) for supervising PhD students. The applicant can apply for a Fellowship lasting a **maximum of 36 months** (with the option of a one-time justified extension of 12 months). The Fellowship covers the costs for PhD students according to SNF guidelines and must not exceed a maximum funding amount of **CHF 300,000**. Thus, PhD students must be budgeted as follows: CHF 50k in the 1st year, CHF 52k in the 2nd year, and CHF 54k in the 3rd year. If the PhD student is already employed at ZHAW as a scientific assistant before the start of the Fellowship, the annual salary may be higher than the SNF guidelines stipulate. In this case, the Fellow and their organizational unit must cover the difference.

Review Procedure

Throughout the review process, applicants are assessed within their academic age group to ensure fair evaluation. Early-career researchers are thus not compared with experienced postdocs, lecturers, and professors.

Selection Criteria

a. Scientific/technical quality of the proposed research project (1-7 points)

The project is based on the latest findings and meets the standards of the involved disciplines.

Key indicators:

Relation to the "state of the art," adequacy of the methodology, feasibility.

b. Scientific qualifications of the researchers (1-7 points)

The past scientific achievements of the applicants, such as publications, awards, and previous research successes, as well as expertise related to the research project, are evaluated considering the academic age.

Key indicators:

Necessary expertise and skills to successfully conduct the research project, collaborations, and interdisciplinary cooperation.

c. Added value of the Fellowship for ZHAW and society (1-7 points)

The positive impact of the Fellowship on ZHAW is assessed. Additionally, the potential contribution of the research project to society is evaluated.

Key indicators:

Strengthening of the research profile through the Fellowship, national and international networking, solving societal problems, promoting innovation, knowledge transfer.

Selection Process

1. Administrative Review

All applications are checked by the ZHAW digital office for formal requirements. Formal deficiencies (e.g., missing documents, budget excess, etc.) may lead to rejection.

2. First Round: Written Evaluation

Scientific assessment of the application by two independent reviewers selected based on their expertise. At least one reviewer is external. Each application is evaluated globally (ABC rating; A = fundable; B = conditionally fundable; C = not fundable) and in detail on a 7-point scale based on the evaluation criteria.

3. Review Evaluation

The Fellowship selection committee reviews all submitted applications in a workshop based on the written reviews and evaluations from the first round and decides which applicants to invite for an interview in the second round. The written reviews are important, but the committee's assessment may not necessarily align with them.

4. Second Round: Interview

The interview between the applicants and representatives of the Fellowship selection committee takes place online and lasts a maximum of 20 minutes. In the first 5 minutes, the applicant will introduce the project in a short presentation. The remaining 15 minutes are reserved for discussion. Before the interview, applications are assigned to two representatives of the selection committee based on their expertise. Their task is to ask questions mainly about the added value of

the Fellowship for the Fellow, ZHAW, and society at large during the discussion. After the interview, the two representatives of the selection committee evaluate the assigned applications globally (ABC rating; A = fundable; B = conditionally fundable; C = not fundable).

5. Funding Decisions

After the interview, the ZHAW digital office creates a ranking list based on the global evaluations of the interviews and the detailed written evaluations of the selection criteria from the first round. The global evaluations from the first round are thus replaced by the global evaluations of the interviews. The provisional funding decision is submitted to the university management for approval.

6. Notification of Results

After the final decision, the ZHAW digital office informs the applicants of the results as soon as possible.

Application process and Timeline

- Applications can be submitted **from 8 July 2024, until 23 September 2024**, at 23:59 on zhawdigital.grantplatform.com (Internet Explorer is not supported).
- Applications can be submitted in German or English.
- Accounts must be created with the ZHAW email address and full name.
- All entered information is automatically saved once the first tab of the application is completed.
- After submission, no further changes can be made.
- The results of the first round will be communicated in mid/late November 2024.
- Interviews will take place on **9, 10 and 11 December 2024** (please mark these dates in your calendar).
- The final funding decisions will be communicated at the **end of January 2025**.
- Project start date is **no earlier than 1 February 2025**, and **no later than 1 July 2025**.

Contact: All questions regarding the Fellowship Call and the submission platform can be directed to digital@zhaw.ch. Questions related to the content of the application can also be directed to digital@zhaw.ch.