

Application Manual

FRIAS Sustainable Governance Senior Fellowship for Researchers from Africa Programme

Application deadline: 12 September 2025, 13:00 H CET

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Eligibility Requirements and Application Procedure

To be eligible, candidates must **fulfil all of (1) the formal eligibility criteria and (2) the basic academic quality criteria. (3) Applicants must carefully follow all given form requirements and length limits listed in the Application material section.**

1. Formal eligibility criteria

- Applicants must hold a completed doctoral degree plus a minimum of eight years of post-doctoral experience
- Applicants must have at least six months' research or study experience at academic institution(s) in a country different from the country of their first academic degree by the time of application AND have received a Master/PhD in an African country.
- Applicants can be of any nationality but must be based in an African country.
- Only Applications from disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences with a thematic focus on sustainable governance will be considered.
- Applicants must obtain a letter of cooperation from an academic partner at the University of Freiburg who will support the project during the applicants' stay in Freiburg. The academic partner must be a professor at the University of Freiburg.
- The research project must not involve topics that are excluded from funding due to ethical issues.
- Applications exceeding the word count and page limits (see Application Materials) will not be considered.
- Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

2. Basic academic quality criteria

Minimum requirements for publication record: 5 peer-reviewed publications since 1 January 2016, including at least one with or as a co-author

The publications can appear in different media, such as books, journals, repositories or websites, and can have different formats. These include monographs (counted as three publications), journal articles, articles on preprint servers, and contributions to anthologies and collection of essays. If available, please also provide a persistent identifier (e.g. DOI/Digital Object Identifier). An exception is made for papers that have already been accepted for publication, in which case the editor's confirmation of acceptance must be enclosed.

Manuscripts not accepted for publication before the application deadline as well as textbooks, reprints, translations, book reviews and editorial publications do not count.

Details of quantitative metrics such as impact factors and h-indices are not required and are not considered as part of the review.

Time off for family, medical reasons or non-academic professional activities will not be counted as part of the relevant period (see FAQ).

Where two candidates are equally suitable for a post, priority will be given to enhance diversity and inclusion.

The project should not be of local interest only but should have sufficient potential for international transfer.

The proposed project must have a thematic focus on sustainable governance (see further explanation below).

Sustainable Governance at FRIAS

Governance is understood as a spectrum of formalised and informal rules that regulate public life, encompassing political, social, economic, and cultural practices. Thereby an academic understanding of governance inspects 'the rules of the game' and the interplay of actors. Research projects in sustainable governance include dimensions of political acceptance, reproduction, multi-scalar application, and global interconnectedness as well as temporality and historical experiences. They focus on sustainability-related matters like social and human rights, acceptance, cost-efficiency, the environment, local/global entanglements, climate change or other topics that touch

upon the relation to resources and future developments in a broader sense. This includes past performances as basis for actual and future governance.

The applicants must explain how their work connects to this general understanding of sustainable governance in the abstract (max. two sentences) and in the project proposal.

Application Materials

Candidates apply exclusively via the online application portal. We do not accept applications submitted by other ways of communication. After final submission, applicants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt.

Apply here: Sustainable Governance Senior fellowships

The following materials (in English) are required to be submitted with the application. Page and word limits may not be exceeded, formal structure requirements must be fulfilled. **All required documents must be in PDF format.**

Information on the candidate and project (abstract, layman's abstract to communicate the research project to a general public, ethical issue table) must be filled into the online application form.

Additionally, the following attachments are required to be uploaded to the application portal:

1. Project proposal (max. 3000 words, including footnotes, headers, footers, and bibliographical references, 4 graphs) **must** have the following structure:

- (1) Research field, title, and short abstract of the research project.
- (2) Aims, theoretical framework, and methodology of the project.
- (3) Work plan and feasibility (time schedule).
- (4) Innovative potential, originality, and relevance of the project.
- (5) Issues concerning research ethics.
- (6) Bibliographical references.

Please note that the word count includes ALL words in the file sent, e.g. headers and footers, footnotes and bibliographical references.

Candidates must clarify in their proposal how the research project connects to sustainability governance.

2. CV in tabular form (max. 2 pages). Mandatory template available [here](#)

3. Publication list: Applicants must provide a list of publications that may not exceed 8 publications in total. 5 of those publications must be published after 1 January 2016 and must be peer-reviewed, including at least one with or as a co-author (see [Basic academic quality criteria](#)).

4. **Copy of the PhD diploma:** if the writing system/script used in the diploma is not Latin (for instance, Cyrillic, Chinese), an official translation is requested.
5. **Letter of cooperation** by an academic partner at the University of Freiburg who will support the project during the stay in Freiburg. The academic partner must hold the title of a professor.

Selection Procedure

The selection process is highly competitive and strictly merit-based (expected success rate: ~10% of all eligible applications). It involves three steps:

1. Eligibility and basic quality check

To be eligible for application and proceed to the next step, candidates must fulfil **all** of (1) the formal eligibility criteria and (2) the basic academic quality criteria (see above).

The formal eligibility and the basic quality check are conducted by the FRIAS Board of Directors under the supervision of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). The SAB is comprised of renowned senior scientists from outside the University of Freiburg and is responsible for the selection of applications for fellowships.

Applicants are informed on whether they have passed the basic eligibility check.

2. International peer-review by external experts

In the second stage, eligible proposals are forwarded to external experts who review and provide a written assessment of the applicant's research project and CV. These experts are selected based on criteria defined by the German Research Foundation (DFG):

- no formal affiliation to the university
- familiarity with the area
- distance from the applicant (non-bias)
- broad overview of the research landscape
- experience as a referee
- international expertise

The evaluation considers the following standardised criteria:

1. Academic excellence of the applicant (weighting 40 %):
 - Excellence of the candidate in terms of career development
 - Excellence of their contribution to the research field
2. Excellence of the proposed project (weighting 40 %):
 - Quality of the proposed project and the proposal
 - Innovativeness of the proposal
3. Experience and capability of the applicant (weighting 20 %):
 - Is the candidate well qualified to conduct the research project?
 - Can the candidate be expected to benefit from a FRIAS fellowship?

Finally, all reviewers are asked to give a clear rating on the application:

- **Excellent** – relevant criteria are fully met and exceeded
- **Very good** – relevant criteria are fully met
- **Good** – relevant criteria are met, but with shortcomings
- **Fair** – while relevant criteria are met, weaknesses are clearly visible
- **Clearly below average** - relevant criteria are not sufficiently met

3. Final selection by FRIAS SAB

FRIAS Fellows are ultimately selected by the SAB. Both the FRIAS Board of Directors and the SAB are responsible for compliance with highest standards of academic quality in research programmes and selection processes.

Based on the original proposals and the expert reviews, a preliminary ranking is first made by a board of Africa Centre for Transregional Research (ACT) members, before the SAB makes its final decision. The top candidates are directly selected for funding and offered a fellowship at FRIAS. Additionally, there will be a waiting list to fill any positions not accepted by one of the initially selected applicants.

Calendar of implementation of the current selection process

Publication of the call for applications	July 2025
Submission deadline for applications	12 September 2025
Basic eligibility check	September 2025
Peer-review	October 2025 – January 2026
Final selection by SAB	February 2026
Notification of selected fellows	March 2026
Start of fellowships	1 September 2026

Financial Aspects

Successful applicants will become FRIAS Fellows with all the corresponding rights and obligations for the requested funding period.

Fellows with an employment contract at their home institution will receive a mobility allowance if applicable to compensate them for the extra costs of their stay in Freiburg. A reimbursement of teaching replacement costs throughout the fellowship up to the level of a W2 professorship is possible. Fellows without an employment contract at their home institution will obtain an attractive salary (W2, 100%). Each Fellow will additionally receive a research cost contribution and will be reimbursed for the travel costs of the inbound and the outbound journey (if applicable).

Redress

Complaints or a formal redress can be sent either to the FRIAS Managing Director or to the University of Freiburg's Representative for Academic Self-Regulation at any stage of the application/selection process within 14 days after the notification of the result has been sent. However, in general, the referee reports and decisions of independent experts are not overruled.

FRIAS Managing Director

Dr. Annette Doll

FRIAS, Albertstr. 19, 79104 Freiburg i.Br., Germany

annette.doll@frias.uni-freiburg.de

Representative for Academic Self-Regulation

The representative investigates the concreteness and significance of the allegations in accordance with plausibility criteria and informs the responsible governing bodies if he deems further action to be necessary. He is bound to strict confidentiality. This is an official and independent position working on the basis of an official university statute.

Prof. Dr. Uwe Blaurock

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Ethical Issues

The FRIAS Fellowship Programme considers both the need to ensure freedom of research and the need to protect the physical and moral integrity of individuals and the welfare of animals.

In order to identify ethical issues at an early point in the application process, all applicants are required to fill in the “ethical issues table”. Furthermore, applicants are requested to explain in detail in the project outline any ethical issues arising from their proposed research. Applicants must explain how these will be addressed.

A preliminary screening during the eligibility check also scrutinises potential ethical issues, even if they were not pointed out by the applicant. In addition, experts in the international peer-review procedure are asked to indicate relevant ethical issues raised by the proposal.

If the application successfully passes through the formal selection procedure, the project proposal is referred to the University’s Ethics Committee (EC) in case any potential ethical issues are identified. The same procedure applies if ethical issues arise during work on a given project. The EC issues a decision that may include requirements and restrictions. This decision is binding under the employment contract and different laws. As soon as the decision is issued and if it does not stand impede the project, the fellowship is offered to the applicant. If the requirements and restrictions are extraordinarily difficult to fulfil, the SAB has the authority to turn down an application on these grounds.

On the basis of the European Commission's Code of Ethics for Researchers the following fields of research cannot be funded:

- Research activities directed at human cloning for reproductive purposes.
- Research activities intended to modify the genetic make-up of human beings that could make such changes heritable (apart from research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be funded).
- Research activities intended to create human embryos solely for the purposes of research or stem cell procurement, including the technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer.
- Research that leads to the death of human embryos.

Ethical issues also include the avoidance of any breach of research integrity, which means, in particular, avoiding fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other kinds of research misconduct. In grave instances and after due process has established wrongdoings, fellowship offers can be retracted and current fellowships can be revoked.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I apply?

Applicants must complete and submit the online application form by 12 September 2025, 13:00 H CET. After registration you can edit the application form, upload the required annexes, and complete the ethical issues questionnaire. It is highly recommended to start the application early enough to become familiar with the technical processing.

Apply here: [Sustainable Governance Senior fellowships](#)

What if there are difficulties in accessing the online application site?

If you encounter difficulties in submitting your online application, please contact the Institute via e-mail: susgovafrica.fellowships@frias.uni-freiburg.de

Are there specific research priorities?

Projects of an open nature (e.g., preliminary projects intended to lead to larger third-party funding) as well as those of a concluding nature (for instance, leave of absence for the publication of research results gathered earlier) can be supported within this funding period.

Applications are welcome exclusively from disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences with a thematic focus on sustainable governance. A letter of cooperation by an academic partner at the University of Freiburg is required.

Will working space be provided?

FRIAS will provide fully furnished offices for double occupancy, and whenever possible, single occupancy.

Do I need to find an academic host at the University of Freiburg?

The applicant needs to identify an academic partner at the University of Freiburg (including letter of cooperation) prior to submission of the application. The academic partner must hold the title of a professor.

How is time off for family, medical reasons or non-academic activities calculated?

The time period of the basic academic criteria regarding publications can be extended, if the applicant has a documented time off due to family or medical reasons.

Maternity time off is calculated with 18 months per child, whereas in case of paternal or medical time-off, the documented timeframe is relevant. The time off must be accrued during the time period that is relevant for the eligibility criteria

Do fellowships need to start 1 September 2026?

Fellowships should be conducted within the period between 1 September 2026 and 31 August 2027.

Is there support for fellows with families?

Our FRIAS fellow service team assists families in finding suitable accommodation in the Freiburg area considering their needs regarding price, size, and location. Together with the University of Freiburg's Family Service, we provide information on the German system of childcare and schools. Fellows are supported in finding appropriate childcare facilities and in the process of enrolling their children at day-care centres, kindergarten, and schools.

Do you have further questions?

Please feel free to contact us at FRIAS via e-mail:

susgovafrica.fellowships@frias.uni-freiburg.de