

DIZH Fellowship 2026 - 7th Call for Applications, April 2025

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 current challenges and issues related to digital transformation. All submitted projects should have social and/or economic relevance and address practical issues. The Fellowship aims to support researchers in broadening and deepening their knowledge and skills in their respective fields. Fellows are also expected to create sustainable added value for the ZHAW through their projects. Submissions of projects that address social science or humanities issues in the context of digital transformation are particularly welcome. An overview of all funded fellows can be found here: [DIZH Fellows](#)

Objectives

The Fellowship Programme pursues four 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. Enhancement of research visibility

Funded fellows are expected to raise the profile of research at the ZHAW in the field of digital transformation, both within the university and externally – for example by participating in conferences, contributing to (internal) events or academic publications.

4. Practical relevance to areas outside of academia

The funded projects contribute to addressing social and/or economic challenges in the context of digital transformation.

Who is eligible to apply?

The Fellowship is aimed at highly committed ZHAW researchers from all departments and disciplines who are working on practical issues related to digital transformation. We particularly encourage early-career researchers to apply for a Junior Fellowship. To apply, you must be employed at ZHAW for the entire duration of the Fellowship.

Fellowship Formats

A Fellowship can be applied for from 3 to a maximum of 24 or 36 months at a workload of 20 to 80% (0.2 to 0.8 FTE). The budget is based on internal ZHAW hourly rates and may not exceed the maximum funding amount of CHF 200,000 or CHF 300,000 for extended scope. A 20% workload is 34 hours per month, and an 80% workload is 136 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 researcher with an 80% workload may apply for a maximum 60% Fellowship. During the Fellowship period, Fellows will reduce their planned teaching and other research activities in their organizational unit in order to fulfil their Fellowship.

Depending on their [net 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 4 years**. This format aims to foster the career development of young ambitious researchers with or without a PhD.

2) Senior Fellowship

The Senior Fellowship is intended for post-doctoral researchers with at least 4 years of academic experience. The aim of the Senior Fellowship is to give experienced researchers the opportunity to focus on a specific topic or 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 scientific findings and makes an innovative contribution to its field. It will be assessed how well the project represents the state of the art and which scientific gaps or open questions it addresses.

Key indicators:

Relation to the "state of the art," potential for innovation, 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 extent to which the Fellow's project contributes to the strengthening and visibility of research expertise in the field of digital transformation at the ZHAW is assessed. Furthermore, the potential for the research project to make a significant contribution to the resolution of pressing social challenges is also evaluated.

Key indicators:

Strengthening of the research profile through the Fellowship, national and international networking, contributing to solve social challenges, knowledge transfer.

Selection Process

Each application is reviewed and evaluated in a multi-stage process. The selection process involves experts in the field as well as a selection committee made up of members of ZHAW digital and internal ZHAW experts.

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 (2= eligible for funding; 1 = conditionally eligible for funding; 0 = not eligible for funding) 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 from the first round and decides which applicants will be invited for a second round interview. 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 funding decision is submitted to the university management for approval.

6. Notification of Results

Once the final decision has been made, the ZHAW digital office will inform the applicants of the results as soon as possible.

Coaching

ZHAW digital offers individual coaching sessions to support the application process. The aim of these optional coaching sessions, which last a maximum of one hour, is to clarify general questions and to ensure that the proposed research projects meet all the selection criteria for the DIZH Fellowship. Coaching sessions can be arranged by sending an e-mail to digital@zhaw.ch.

Application process and Timeline

- Applications can be submitted **from 14 April 2025 until 30 June 2025 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 2025.
- Interviews will take place on **8, 9 and 10 December 2025** (please mark these dates in your calendar).
- The final funding decisions will be communicated at the **end of January 2026** latest.
- Project start date is **no earlier than 1 February 2026**, and **no later than 1 July 2026**.

Application Template

Applicant

- Name
- Departement
- Institute
- Formal position at ZHAW
- Link to a website of choice for example, research profile, personal website (optional)
- Fellowship-format
- Submission language (German/English)
- Attachments
 - o Scientific CV as PDF, 4 pages max. (educational background, past and current employment, listing of a max. of 5 significant achievements, academic age)
 - o One artifact of choice to highlight the quality of your work, 10 pages max.

Research Endeavor

- Title
- Abstract (500 characters max.)
- Keywords (max. 5)
- Research proposal (6500 characters max.)
- References used in your research proposal (PDF, optional)
- How does your research endeavor relate to digital transformation? (2000 characters max.)
- Added value of your Fellowship for ZHAW and society in general (4500 characters max.)
- Blacklist of possible reviewers (optional)

Setup

- Duration (depending on the Fellowship format between 3 and 36 months)
- Project start
- Workload in percent
- Fellowship Budget
- Justification setup (600 characters max.)
- Recommendation letter of your supervisor as PDF
- Optional: reference letters as PDF
- Formal checks

Contact

Questions regarding the content and the administrative process of the Fellowship Call and the submission platform can be directed to digital@zhaw.ch.