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How we decide – PhD fellowships

How we decide on PhD fellowship applications

The Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds (BIF) is dedicated to funding outstanding basic research in biomedicine. A PhD fellowship application must therefore be outstanding in terms of (1) the candidate's achievements to date, (2) the scientific quality of the proposed research project, and (3) the scientific quality of the proposed host laboratory, please see Selection criteria.

Who will be awarded a BIF PhD fellowship is decided in a two-step, peer-review selection process by the BIF's Board of Trustees, which includes six internationally renowned scientists working in an honorary capacity. In the second phase of the selection process, each application is additionally evaluated by an external expert and the applicant is interviewed by a member of the BIF's staff.

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1. Pre-selection process

(completed approx. six weeks after deadline)

- Check of formal criteria (eligibility, topic, etc.) by the BIF's staff
- Peer-review of each application by two scientists of the BIF's Board of Trustees
- Discussion of applications and shortlisting by the Board
- Notification of candidates regarding outcome.

Selection criteria

What are the applicant's achievements?

Which personal qualities (top grades, talent, and inquisitiveness, versatility and creativity, determination and motivation, diligence and perseverance, etc.) has the applicant demonstrated during his/her training? Has the applicant shown mobility or has he/she been rather settled? In the latter case, did he/she have sound reasons for not having changed country, university, and/or supervisor? Is he/she capable of independent research?

What is the quality of the PhD project?

Is the project imaginative and promising? Is it likely to yield new and important insights or is it a descriptive and diligently executed yet uninspiring piece of work? Is the current state of knowledge correctly portrayed and adequately documented? Are the methods of investigation state-of-the-art and sophisticated? Is the work schedule reasonable and realistic for a PhD project of about 3 years? Is the project really a research project in its own right or rather a subunit of a collaborative effort?

What is the scientific quality of the laboratory?

Does the laboratory in which the applicant wishes to pursue his/her PhD project have first-class equipment and does it use state-of-the-art techniques? Has the laboratory made significant contributions to the respective scientific field and does it have an international reputation for excellent research? In other words, is the laboratory among the most suitable places in the world for the project in question?

2. Final selection process

(completed approx. five months after deadline)

- External experts in respective fields evaluate applications that passed pre-selection
- The BIF's staff interviews candidates, whenever possible face-to-face
- Two BIF Board members evaluate each application and the respective external expert review and interview report
- BIF Board meeting with final decision after panel discussion of candidates and their applications
- Notification of candidates regarding outcome.

Please note

- Only written notifications are legally binding.
- The decisions of the Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds are incontestable.
- Re-submission is possible only under certain circumstances, and only after consultation with the BIF.
- We ask for your kind understanding that due to the large number of applications, reasons for rejection cannot be given.

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