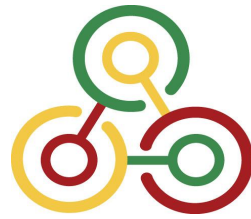




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UKUDLA
African German Centre
for Sustainable and Resilient Food
Systems and Applied Agricultural
and Food Data Science

Call for Doctoral Scholarship Applications

2026

Application closing date (African candidates): 06 February 2026

The African German Centre of Excellence UKUDLA invites applications for PhD scholarships in the area of sustainable, resilient food systems and data science. Scholarships will be awarded for a period of 36 months (extension possible for a maximum of 6 months up to a maximum duration of 42 months). During this period, a 6-month exchange period at the German partner University of Hohenheim is an integral part of the scholarship. The application form can be found [here](#). The scholarship is financed by the DAAD with funds from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (BMLEH), Germany.

With support from



Federal Ministry
of Agriculture, Food
and Regional Identity

by decision of the
German Bundestag



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



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UKUDLA objectives

UKUDLA's primary objective is to advance the expertise of Master's and PhD students, early-career researchers, and university lecturers in agri-food systems and applied data science. It also aims to enhance teaching methodologies and mentorship programmes within these interdisciplinary fields.

For this purpose, scholarships for food systems-related doctoral studies are awarded to individuals from the target group described below and are selected through a competitive process.

By training future academic and professional leaders, the programme contributes to the following long-term impacts:

- Qualified professionals' involvement in agri-food systems and applied data science-related research projects in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Graduates strengthening education and research in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Structural strengthening and regional networking of partner institutions and partner universities.
- Promoting knowledge exchange with and transfer to stakeholders of the agri-food systems.

Participating institutions

Successful candidates will enrol for full-time doctoral study at one of the network's institutions: the University of the Western Cape, the University of Mpumalanga, the University of Pretoria (South Africa), or the Lilongwe University of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (Malawi).

Place of tenure

For the duration of the degree, successful candidates must be based in the city or town where the university at which they are registered is located. A 6-month exchange program with the University of Hohenheim (Germany) is an integral part of the scholarship.

Scholarship benefits

- Stipend: A monthly stipend of EUR 900 (basic rate) + EUR 30 rent subsidy (in case a place on campus or in halls of residence is not provided or possible) will be provided to PhD candidates for a maximum of 42 months. Additionally, a contribution to medical aid can be included up to 20 EUR / month (medical aid contract and proof of payment must be provided). Payment schedules may vary according to the procedures of the home institutions.



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- UKUDLA Graduate Centre educational modules, short courses, summer schools and workshops are integral to the UKUDLA project. Scholarship holders will have an opportunity to apply to participate in these educational activities.
- A six-month research exchange at the University of Hohenheim (Germany), including travel costs, is also covered within the scholarship funding period.
- Additional research funds in reasonable amounts for material costs, equipment, consumables, labour, local travel, etc., are available and can be applied for.

Target group

- Candidates who have a master's degree in a discipline that is broadly linked to food systems or data sciences and are interested in how these fields intersect.
- Candidates who have not yet started with their doctoral degree.
- Candidates with an average of 68% or higher must have achieved the first degree awarded by an internationally recognised university.
- Candidates who are prepared to undertake the doctoral degree as full-time students.
- Candidates who can demonstrate their leadership potential/experience and/or commitment to community engagement and impact will be given preference in the application process.
- Candidates who have English language proficiency, with one of the following qualifications as a minimum requirement: TOEFL 79/80 points or IELTS Band 6. Candidates who can prove that English has been the language of instruction at least since secondary school will also be considered.

Application requirements

- Graduates with a first academic degree, who have successfully completed a master's degree with above average results (at least: 68% overall average / Second Class/Upper Division or equivalent, as applicable)
- Clearly show motivation and strong commitment through a written statement;
- Have a thorough knowledge of the language of instruction (English);
- Have completed their last university degree not more than 6 years ago at the time of application;
- Must already be in an African country either as a national or permanent resident;
- Candidates must be able to supply two academic references, where possible, one from the potential supervisor.
- Willingness to dedicate 10 hours per week to work at the host university as compensation for the waived tuition fees.



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Please note: The university from the network you choose might have additional requirements for admission to the university, in which case it is the applicant's responsibility to be aware of what these are and be compliant.

**The following restriction must be taken into account: In the case of breeding projects, the development of genetically modified (including genome-edited) organisms for commercial use as food or animal feed is not eligible for funding.*

Submission of Application

As a first step, all applicants must submit a completed application form, which can be completed [here](#). **The most important part will be the development of a research project proposal addressing one of the announced research topics at our website.**

The following attachments must be uploaded as part of the application:

- A copy of your National Identification Card or, if not applicable, a copy of your passport.
- A **completed research project proposal form addressing one of the announced research topics** at our homepage: <https://ukudla-coe.ac.za/opportunities/> (proposal form available to download [here](#)).
- A cover letter including your motivation
- Max. two academic recommendation letters (which provide information about your qualifications and your academic performance). *Your potential supervisor can provide one of your recommendation letters.*
- Letter of admission from the host university (this can be subsequently submitted before the scholarship begins if it is not available at the time of application, the Letter of Award only becomes effective if you are admitted to the selected university).
- Certified copies of university degree certificates, including transcripts.
- Short CV (2 pages maximum)
- Evidence of English proficiency (TOEFL 79/80 points or IELTS Band 6 or English as the language of instruction at least since secondary school).

The UKUDLA online application form via glasscubes offers you the option to upload documents (linked [here](#)).

Selection procedure

Applications will go through an administrative review to ensure all qualifying criteria are met. If an application meets the specified criteria and is related to one of the research topics published at our website <https://ukudla-coe.ac.za/>, it will be sent for review by the selection committee. Applications will be peer-reviewed by two selection committee



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members using a rating rubric. A shortlist will be produced, and selected candidates will be invited to **participate in an online interview** on the 19th and 20th of February.

The successful candidates will be informed before the end of February 2026, to commence their scholarship earliest in March 2026.

Payment of scholarship funds

The award of the scholarship is dependent on acceptance of the student's registration at the institution of choice.

The scholarship funds will be paid directly to the scholarship holder's student account. Further details will be communicated after admission to the scholarship programme in the Letter of Award and Scholarship Agreement.

Payments cannot be made in advance/prior to the scholarship start date and the commencement of studies at the host institution. Furthermore, no additional benefits other than those listed in this call for applications, such as benefits for family members, can be made.

Expectation

UKUDLA scholarship holders are expected to actively engage in their PhD studies, as demonstrated by the submission of a well-developed PhD proposal and regular progress reports detailing their research. They are also expected to contribute to the academic community by publishing their research findings in peer-reviewed journals. Furthermore, scholarship holders should actively participate in science communication, disseminating their research to broader audiences. Finally, they are required to dedicate 10 hours per week to work at the university, as agreed upon with their institution and supervisor.

Duration and continuation of scholarship

Scholarships are awarded for the duration of the standard period of study for the PhD programme, which is 36 months (extension by a maximum of 6 months up to a maximum duration of 42 months possible). After the first and second years of the project, your academic and research achievements will be assessed for further funding (details will be provided in the scholarship agreement).

Deadline

The deadline for applications is **06 February 2026**.

Email address for queries

Any questions or queries can be directed to ukudlagradcentre@uwc.ac.za