

Initiative Afrique Fellowships



The University of Bern has been strongly committed to promoting science in Switzerland and fostering global research networks, including with partners in Africa. Since the University of Bern's membership in the network [The Guild of European Research-intensive Universities](#) (The Guild), and the collaboration of The Guild with the [African Research Universities Alliance](#) (ARUA), the partnerships with African universities are not only expanding but also consolidating. These important partnerships are reflected in the [Initiative Afrique](#), a collaboration between the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Innovation and the Vice-Rectorate for International Affairs and Academic Careers. The Initiative Afrique is a vehicle for pooling all Africa-related activities and facilitating networking within and outside the University of Bern, based on partnerships with the African continent. By supporting and coordinating the co-creation of consortia for such collaborations, the Initiative Afrique promotes inter- and transdisciplinary approaches. In this context, the strategic priorities of the Initiative Afrique are the following:

- Consolidation of existing partnerships with African universities.
- Identification of potential partnerships with African research networks and collaboration on Africa-related projects, as well as academic exchanges.
- Engagement in efforts to promote equity and decolonisation in research collaboration between Africa and the Global North.
- Contribution to the implementation of the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#).

Initiative Afrique launches a funding scheme for scientific exchange, called the Initiative Afrique **Fellowships**, aiming to reinforce the relationship between the University of Bern and its partners from Africa.

Regulations and Guidelines for Application 2026

The Initiative Afrique **Fellowships** funding scheme is aimed at researchers planning to invite colleagues from African institutions for a research visit to the University of Bern, or visit their colleagues in African institutions. **This scientific exchange program is restricted only to researchers from the University of Bern and their African partners.**

Research visits by researchers from the University of Bern to African institutions, or by researchers from African institutions to the University of Bern, are funded for **30 to 90 days**.

- **Participation requirements**

Applicants for the Initiative Afrique **Fellowships** must be master's students, PhD candidates, postdoctoral or senior researchers employed at the University of Bern, and must meet the personal requirements set out in the Funding Regulations and the General Implementation Regulations of the university. Except for master students, their work-time percentage may be under 50 per cent but should not be lower than 20 per cent. Applicants from Africa may be master students, PhD candidates, postdoctoral or senior researchers.

- **Duration of the Academic Exchange**

Minimum of **30 days** to a maximum of **90 days**.

- **Available funding**

- Africa to Switzerland: max. 2000 CHF per month. The travel costs are covered (max. one outward and return).
- Switzerland to Africa: max. 1800 CHF per month. The travel costs are covered (max. one outward and return).

- **Eligibility Criteria for Applicants**

To be eligible for an Initiative Afrique **Fellowship**, the applicants must:

- Be pursuing a master's degree or doctoral program, be a postdoctoral researcher or senior researcher at a home institution from the University of Bern, or provide a longstanding partnership for at least 12 months with the University of Bern.
- Aim to initiate or consolidate collaboration between the home and the host institutions.
- Present a concise research plan of max. four pages in the field of expertise of the host institution at the University of Bern or the African partner institution.
- Have not received support through similar funding schemes within the last three years.

- **Application**

Calls for applications are launched each semester, with clear submission deadlines. You are requested to send your applications to the email address afrique.research@unibe.ch.

- **Evaluation procedure**

Important: no application will be evaluated or considered if it does not include all the 8 documents listed below in Step 2 of the application procedure.

Applications are assessed according to the following criteria:

- The quality, originality, and relevance of the academic exchange must clearly occur within the context of a research, publication, or teaching project involving both institutions, e.g., the University of Bern and an African partner institution.
- Scientific expertise of the person to be funded and her/his contribution to the partnership between the University of Bern and its African partner institution.
- Complementarity and additional benefits of the academic exchange.
- Long-term collaboration perspectives.
- Feasibility of the visit based on a realistic budget as well as the required scientific infrastructures (institutes, laboratories, etc.).

- **Submission deadlines**

Calls for submissions are launched every semester, according to specific deadlines that are clearly outlined in the call document.

Timeline of the call 2026:

- **17 November 2025: launch of the call**



- **31 January 2026: deadline for applications**
- **16 March 2026: notification/decision**
- **June 2026: earliest start of the fellowship**

Contact

Initiative Afrique, Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation, Hochschulstrasse 6,
3012 Bern, Switzerland

Email: afrique.research@unibe.ch

For any further questions related to the Initiative Afrique **Fellowships**, please
contact Dr. Djouroukoro Diallo, Head and Coordinator of the Initiative Afrique.

Email: djouroukoro.diallo2@unibe.ch

To apply, please follow these three steps.

Step 1: Fill out the online application form carefully and completely.

Step 2: Submit the following documents in a single PDF document:

- A letter of motivation by the applicant, addressed to the Executive Committee of Initiative Afrique, explaining how the planned research visit supports the applicant's career development and progression, and consolidates ties between the **home institution** and **host institution** (max. two pages).
- The full research plan based on the provided template (in English or French; max. 4 pages).
- The completed budget form, based on the one provided.
- The resume of the applicant (max. 1 page).
- A letter of confirmation from the **host institution**, on official letterhead.
- A letter of confirmation from the **home institution**, on official letterhead.
- A copy of the applicant's passport (first page only).
- Proof of medical insurance coverage abroad for the applicant, for the planned duration of the stay.

Step 3: Build a single PDF file of NOT MORE than 3MB (if necessary, you may compress and send a ZIP file) that includes all the documents listed in step 2, in the order above, and upload this single PDF file through the online application form.

- **IMPORTANT:** Applicants must secure the support of a host Principal Investigator (PI) from the University of Bern or an African partner institution before applying for this scheme. **Applications lacking a clear commitment from a host institution and a Principal Investigator to host the applicant shall not be considered.**

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