



International Postdoctoral Fellowship IST-BRIDGE

Guide for Applicants

The **closing date** for the Fall 2023 Call for Proposals is **5th November 2023 (14:00 CET)**

Further information on the program can be found at: <https://ista.ac.at/en/education/postdocs/>

Applications can be submitted at: <https://apply.app.ista.ac.at>



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**Institute of
Science and
Technology
Austria**

IST-BRIDGE program: Overview

The IST-BRIDGE program will recruit 60 fellows over 5 globally-advertised calls. BRIDGE fellows receive a 2 year contract, with up to 6 month extensions to encourage transferrable skills training through academic and non-academic¹ secondments, as well as placements in ISTA research support units.

Scientific Excellence

IST-BRIDGE supports **excellent postdoctoral researchers with a broad and diverse scientific portfolio** and provides them with the **tools and support structures** to maximize the chances for breakthroughs and build the strongest foundation on which discoveries can emerge. IST-BRIDGE features a **bottom-up approach** throughout the whole program: fellows are free to propose any research topic within or cutting across the scientific fields represented on campus (Biology, Neuroscience, Mathematics, Data and Computer Science, Physics and Chemistry). There is **no compromise on excellence** when it comes to the selection of fellows and their projects. Fellows have access to state-of-the-art facilities and are encouraged to interact closely with colleagues from different fields as part of their fellowship project.

Bridging the Experience Gap

IST-BRIDGE provides postdoctoral researchers a unique opportunity to bridge their training and/or experience gap. Fellows are enrolled in a **Career Development Program**, which is structured in **four profiled tracks** (see page 3), a combination of desired career goals and concrete professional options. Fellows have the option to consolidate the acquired skills through an optional **broad secondment scheme** consisting of 1) global academic secondments at BRIDGE network partners, 2) secondments at intersectoral (non-academic) partners that best match the fellow's career goals, and 3) short placements within ISTA research support units (intrasectoral). Fellows are provided with the framework, experienced support services and guidance to facilitate fellow driven (i.e. bottom-up), dynamic interaction with actors from other fields and sectors. This should ultimately enable them to develop sustainable partnerships and their own scientific and professional network.

Promoting Innovation Transfer

"Chance favors only the prepared mind" (Louis Pasteur): As there is no way to know for sure which basic science projects will lead to major scientific advances, ISTA has invested in support structures to facilitate this process. Researchers need to be prepared to recognize and capitalize on opportunities when they arise. With its partners IST CUBE, a tech-based incubator, and IST Park, the technology park adjacent to ISTA, the program provides **tailored support and coaching during the transition phase** between proven academic research results and the exploitation of innovations.

Global Outlook

IST-BRIDGE is hosted by ISTA and embedded into the **BRIDGE network**, where BRIDGE stands for Basic Research Institutions Delivering Graduate Education, bringing together four of the 2019 Nature Index 'normalized Top 10 research institutions' worldwide. This network provides short-term global academic secondments, extending fellows' training and research networks.

IST-BRIDGE aims to create the best environment for international talent, supporting both the research and the researcher.

¹ 'Intersectoral/Non-academic sector' means any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector. 'Academic sector' means public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations and International European Research Organisations (IEROs).



Host: IST Austria

PhD-granting institution dedicated to cutting-edge research

IST Core Missions:

- Perform world-class basic research
- Train the next generation of scientific leaders
- Implement best practices for management in science
- Support science education and technology transfer

IST Key facts:

- 60 research groups
- No departments, no disciplinary boundaries
- 47.5% ERC success rate (highest in Europe)
- #3 Nature Index 2019

BRIDGE Network

Platform of scientific institutions on three continents sharing two common missions: world-class research & training young scientists



Intersectoral Partners

Trusted partners bridging the fundamental research at IST Austria, and the businesses & industry of the entire region and beyond



The Program: IST-BRIDGE

New international postdoctoral program

- 60 fellowships across 5 calls
- Bottom-up curiosity-driven fellow projects in the life sciences, physical sciences, math and computer science
- 2 year contracts with extension option for secondments
- Co-supervision (academic & intersectoral)



BRIDGE Career-Tracks

Profiled competency training: 18 courses across **4 flexible 'career-tracks'**
 Academic Leadership
 Entrepreneurship & Industry
 Science for Society
 Research & Innovation Management

Outstanding scientific networking and training at research institutes of proven excellence on a global scale

Closing the training gap

Fellows provided with expert consultation on identifying, approaching and negotiating with intersectoral partners

BRIDGE Academic Secondments
 3 month scientific secondments at BRIDGE Network partners

BRIDGE Intrasectoral Placements
 3 month placements within IST Austria administrative departments

BRIDGE Intersectoral Secondments
 6 month 'fellow-driven' secondments at an intersectoral partner

Closing the experience gap

OPTIONAL

Benefits of an IST-BRIDGE Fellowship

Funding

BRIDGE fellows receive 2-year, full time employment contracts with an internationally competitive salary (min. EUR 61.000 gross) and full social security coverage. In addition to this salary, each fellow will receive a single paid relocation allowance of EUR 2.000. Furthermore, a single additional allowance of EUR 1.000 is paid to researchers whose partner/family relocates with them.

Research Environment

BRIDGE projects will be carried out in a unique setting: A newly built campus where shared scientific facilities concentrate cutting-edge equipment and scientific expertise in scientific computing, bio-imaging, electron microscopy, nanofabrication, life science and pre-clinical studies, and newly completed NMR facility. The core principles of the ISTA faculty selection process – *person before area, quality before speed* – have resulted in an unprecedentedly high concentration of scientifically innovative leaders: Over 2/3 of faculty have won at least one ERC frontier grant. Close support from the fellow's faculty supervisor(s) is guaranteed by ISTA's scientific group size limit (≤ 15 persons).

Beyond IST-BRIDGE

A targeted Career Development Program, structured in four profiled 'Career-Tracks', will provide fellows with the necessary information, tools, and opportunities to make informed career decisions post-fellowship. Optional contract extensions of up to six months are available for non-academic secondments, as well as up to three months for internal placements in IST research service units: see the [program webpage](#) for more details.

Housing and Family Services

Depending upon availability, the on-campus guesthouse/apartments can be rented, giving incoming fellows time to find more permanent housing. ISTA provides onsite daycare from age 3 months+ (places/reservations subject to availability). Visa support is provided by an International Officer.

Language

The official language of the institute is English. In order to help fellows integrate in the host country, German-language courses are offered on campus.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

As an MSCA COFUND program, IST-BRIDGE fellows are also Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows - an internationally recognized mark of research excellence.

Eligibility Requirements

- All research fields supported at ISTA are eligible (see <https://ista.ac.at/en/research>).
- At the date of the respective call deadline, applicants must hold a PhD (or equivalent) or have at least four years full-time equivalent research experience and anticipate the completion of their PhD degree before the start of their fellowship (should be no later than 01/06/2024). A fellowship contract will not be issued until a copy of the diploma/proof of successful defense is provided.
- Applicants cannot have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Austria for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the call deadline.
- Researchers already employed at ISTA at the call deadline are not eligible to apply.
- If successful, fellowships should commence between 01/03/2024 and 01/06/2024.

Application Process: Overview

1. Create an account at apply.app.ist.ac.at.
2. Verify your account by following the instructions contained within the email sent to you.
3. Complete the application by entering all required information and uploading all required documents (more information on this below).
4. Submit your application.

General notes on the application process

Your application must contain all required information and documents (**including the reference letters from your referees**) and have been submitted to our online system by 14:00 CET on the date of the application deadline.

Applications that are incomplete or ineligible will not be considered by the selection committee.

Application Form – Requirements

Personal Data: This section of the application requests standard personal information² (e.g. your name, address, date of birth, etc.) as well as the (expected) date of PhD conferral/defense.

Mobility Information: In this section, please indicate the countries (including time periods) in which you have legally resided and/or had your main activity (e.g. work, studies) during the last 5 years up until the call deadline. **NOTE**: Before issuing of a contract of employment by ISTA, successful applicants will be required to provide official evidence of their mobility eligibility (e.g. work contracts, utility bills, visa stamps, etc.)

PhD Education: In this section please complete all required fields about your PhD program.

Additional Education: This section is optional. However, if you wish to enter additional information about your academic background (e.g. undergraduate studies), the selection panel is happy to review the information as part of your application.

Current affiliation: Please enter details of your current academic/professional affiliation. If currently on leave/unemployed, please enter details of your latest employment.

Supervisors: In this section you must identify the professor (supervisor) with whom you plan to work with at ISTA. You are strongly advised to contact your potential host supervisor to reach agreement on any potential submission. Details on our faculty and their research interests can be found here: <https://ista.ac.at/en/research/>. **NOTE**: It is your responsibility to ensure your proposed research matches the interests of your chosen supervisor/group. Projects which do not align with the research interests of the group, or where the host does not possess the required expertise or infrastructure to host the project, risk being excluded as 'out of scope/ineligible' during the administrative checks.

You may also identify a secondary supervisor if desired. You may also nominate a professor external to ISTA as secondary supervisor where the specific scientific expertise required for a minor part of your project is not available at ISTA. However, the core/majority of your project should be aligned with the expertise of your primary supervisor.

² **Data Privacy Statement**: ISTA processes your personal data in accordance with the statutory data protection regulations. For more information including processing for the purpose of application and quality management and your rights as a data subject please refer to our data privacy statement: <https://ist.ac.at/dataprotection/>

Application Information: In this section, you should enter a **project title** (max. 100 characters incl. spaces) and **project summary** (max. 300 words; no special characters) which should be written so as to be understandable and accessible for a broad academic audience.

In addition to the research project, transferrable skills training will be provided through the **Career-Tracks program**, to develop targeted skills which complement BRIDGE fellows existing scientific skills. The four 'tracks' are: Academic Leadership; Entrepreneurship and Industry; Science for Society; Research and Innovation Management. For planning purposes, you are asked to name **your top two choices**. Your choices have no effect on the evaluation and fellows may mix/switch tracks during the fellowship. For more information on the Career-Tracks program, please see the [program webpage](#).

You must additionally upload the following documents (pdf format) for your application to be considered complete and eligible:

1. **Research Proposal** (max. 5 pages - not including references). This proposal should outline a work plan for the 2-year fellowship, and consider the formatting and evaluation criteria outlined below.

Formatting: The following parameters must be respected for the Research Proposal layout:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman, Arial or similar	At least 11pt	At least single spacing	At least 2cm (top, bottom, sides)

Research Proposals which do not follow the above page limits and formatting risk being excluded as 'ineligible' during the administrative checks.

Structure: In order for the Selection Committee to assess Research Proposals on a common basis, the proposal must be structured in the following three sections (**A-C**), using the exact headings provided:

A. Research Project

The Research Project should give a concise presentation of the scientific proposal, which will allow evaluation panels to assess the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach. Describe the proposed work in the context of the state of the art of the field.

B. Scientific Match & Interdisciplinarity

Justify how the proposed project (and your research interests/expertise) complements that of your chosen host research group(s). If relevant: Do you foresee any interactions/synergies with different research groups or different disciplines, either as part of this project or as part of further research stemming from this project?

C. Program Fit

Do you see any potential for 'non-academic' interactions, either as part of this project, or as part of your further training through the Career-Tracks program? Will your foreseen project results/objectives have any impact beyond academia³?

Research Proposals which do not follow the above structure risk being excluded as 'ineligible' during the administrative checks.

³ NOTE: The level and description of non-academic impact expected is relative to the proposed research field(s). Where you consider there is *no* intersectoral (i.e. non-academic) aspect or impact, this should be justified in this section.

2. **CV** (max. 2 pages) & **Publication List** (not included in page limit). Career-breaks (e.g. unemployment, parental/health leave, etc.) should also be included to ensure fair assessment of academic productivity based on effective ‘academic age’.
3. **IST-Bridge Motivation Statement** (max. 2 pages). This statement should provide an outline of the applicant’s career goals, as well as the benefit of the IST-BRIDGE program towards reaching these goals.
4. **Completed Ethical Issues Table** (available under ‘How to Apply (incl. downloads)’ at <https://ista.ac.at/en/education/postdocs/ist-bridge/>). The ethical issues table must be fully completed. If it is determined that you have uploaded an incomplete ethical issues table, you will be asked to re-submit a completed table, provided your application was otherwise complete and submitted by the deadline.

The remaining documents (PhD diploma, PhD transcript) are optional although you should upload any available diplomas related to degrees listed in the PhD Education and Additional Education sections. This can be done using the “other files” fields.

Referees: You must submit the name and contact information for three referees. These referees should be former professors or other senior scientists with whom you have worked. However, in order to accommodate applicants with an intersectoral background, one letter of recommendation may be submitted by a previous non-academic supervisor. Your potential host at ISTA may not be listed as one of the referees on your application.

You do not have to wait until you have fully submitted your application in order to notify your referees. Once you have entered your referees’ information and saved the application, a “contact referees” button will appear at the bottom of the page. Clicking this button will notify your referees that you have requested a letter of reference and they will receive an email from our application system informing them how to upload their reference letter.

You may check on the status of these letters and, if needed, send reminders to your referees by logging into the system and viewing your submitted application. **All reference letters must be received no later than the application deadline.** Applications missing reference letters at the application deadline will be rejected as incomplete. No exceptions will be made.

Evaluation and Selection

Complete applications passing the initial eligibility check by program management are evaluated by the international Selection Committee based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	
Scientific Excellence Weighting: 40%	Proposed project, as well as the expertise and professional career of the candidate (based on true ‘academic age’, taking into account academic career breaks).
Scientific Match & Interdisciplinarity Weighting: 20%	Justification of how the candidate’s interests/expertise complements existing expertise at ISTA: appropriate match with at least one target research group. Will the candidate be able to interact with different research groups or different disciplines? Does the candidate fit the Institute’s research culture, emphasizing cross-discipline interactions?

Program Fit (incl. career plan, non-academic aspects/impact) Weighting: 20%	Does the research and training project foresee or emphasize non-academic aspects? Is a willingness and interest in benefiting from non-academic training or cooperation visible? Does the project consider the potential impact of its results beyond academia? [NOTE: The level and description of non-academic impact expected is relative to the proposed research field(s). Where the applicant considers there is <u>no</u> intersectoral (i.e. non-academic) aspect or impact, this should be justified in the research proposal]
Career Potential Weighting: 20%	Capacity to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity in research: How will the fellowship impact on the career of the applicant? In what sense and to what extent will it add to existing experience and enhance his/her career perspectives?
Scoring (standard H2020 MSCA): 0 - The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing/incomplete information. 1 - Poor. The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses. 2 - Fair. While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses. 3 - Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present. 4 - Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present. 5 - Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Only minor shortcomings.	

Following discussion and ranking at a Selection Committee meeting, **top-ranked candidates will be invited for a remote interview** with selected Selection Committee members between 18/12/23 and 02/02/24. Following a positive confirmation by the Selection Committee interviewers, final fellowship offers will then be made.

Approximately 12 fellowships will be awarded per call. Fellowships should commence between 01/03/2024 and 01/06/2024.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications no later than 4 months after the application deadline (including reserve list status where relevant). Where an applicant considers they have a case for complaint regarding the evaluation or eligibility checks, they can submit a request for redress through the online submission platform.

Contact: Should you have questions on the IST-BRIDGE fellow application process, please see the FAQ section on the [program webpage](#) or contact: ist-bridge@ist.ac.at

About ISTA

The Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA) is a multidisciplinary research institution that combines basic science with graduate education. The scientists of ISTA perform theoretical and experimental research in biology, neuroscience, physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, and related fields. They are organized in small to medium-size research groups that interact with each other, also across the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Each research group at ISTA is headed by a tenured or tenure-track professor. Shared scientific facilities concentrate cutting-edge equipment and scientific expertise in bio-imaging, electron microscopy (including cryo), nanofabrication, life science and pre-clinical studies.

The core principles of the ISTA faculty selection process – person before area, quality before speed – have resulted in an unprecedentedly high concentration of scientifically innovative leaders: Over 2/3 of faculty have won at least one ERC Frontier grant. In addition: ISTA's ERC application success rate of almost 50% is by far the highest in Europe among all institutions hosting more than 30 ERC grantees. In addition to ISTA's success in recruiting world-leading faculty, its interdisciplinary design has also resulted in verifiably excellent scientific output: ISTA ranked eighth in Nature Index 2018's "rising stars" of the world (research institutes established within the last 30 years), the highest placed European institute and the only institution outside of Asia to appear in the Top 10. This was then surpassed in 2019, when the Nature Index ranked ISTA No. 3 among the world's best research institutes (normalized by size of research institute).

To learn more about ISTA and the research undertaken there, please visit our [website](#).



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