

2026 Scholarship Program of the Daimler and Benz Foundation for the Promotion of Postdocs and Junior Professors

With this program, the Foundation sets out to reinforce the autonomy of the next generation of academics and to support the careers of committed young academics after earning their doctorates. Its scholarship program therefore specifically focuses on the point in an academic career when a certain degree of autonomy in research has already been achieved, but postdocs do not yet hold a permanent position. The funding program is open to applicants from all disciplines (humanities, social and cultural sciences, natural and engineering sciences, medicine and life sciences) and is not restricted in terms of content. Applicants must be conducting a research project of their own and must be institutionally affiliated with a scientific institution in Germany or with a German scientific institution abroad.

1. Applicant profile

The scholarships are intended to support postdocs at German research institutions, especially junior professors or academics in comparable positions (e.g. autonomous heads of junior research groups). They must be at an early stage of their academic activity. The Foundation deliberately refrains from precisely defining this period, as it can be assessed very differently depending on the academic discipline involved. It should however be clear from the application that the applicant has made a conscious decision to resolutely pursue an academic career.

A scholarship may only be applied for to support one's own research project; this can either be the continuation of an existing research project or a new project.

Applicants must be in a position of temporary employment for the entire scholarship period or demonstrate that their living expenses are covered by other means. The scholarship cannot be used to cover an applicant's living expenses or to finance his or her own tenure. Scientists with a permanent tenure are not eligible to apply.

At regular intervals, the Foundation organizes gatherings, at which the scholarship-holders can exchange ideas and maintain their contact with the Foundation. Willingness to participate in these gatherings is mandatory.

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2. Scholarship benefits

A scholarship is granted for a period of two years; the funding amount is €40,000 in total. Scholarship-holders are required to furnish an interim report on the progress of their research work after one year, and a final report on their findings on conclusion of the scholarship period. The grant is issued via the third-party funding office of the applicant's research institution.

The grant may be used at the applicant's discretion – above all for the following purposes: research trips, participation in conferences and organization of their own conferences, temporary involvement of academic assistants, computers, laboratory equipment, and special chemicals. On the other hand, the scholarship cannot be used to finance typical outlay that is the responsibility of the respective research institution (e.g. overhead or publication costs, or consumables such as basic chemicals and office equipment). Any other funding received by the applicant is not offset against the scholarship.

3. Application procedure

The font size for submitted documentation must be at least 11 point throughout (corresponding to the typeface Arial normal). Applications with a smaller font size (especially in illustrations or charts) will not be taken into consideration.

Please submit the following documents for your application:

1. Proof of affiliation with an institute for the entire scholarship period (e.g. confirmation from the head of the institute or its administrative office);
2. Title and description of the research project for the specialist reviewers, including information on the intended methodology (maximum four A4 pages including references);
3. Title and brief description of the research project in generally comprehensible form for the non-specialist reviewers; this text should be formulated in such a way that readers without specialized knowledge can understand the scientific and, if applicable, societal relevance of the research project (maximum one A4 page);
4. A rough time schedule for the project, with indication of the planned use of the grant (maximum two A4 pages);
5. Curriculum vitae in tabular form, with academic career, in tabular form (including publications, scholarships, awards, third-party funding already received, achievements in the field of academic communication);
6. Copies of the applicant's Master's certificate and doctoral certificate (a provisional certificate will not be accepted; in the case of foreign certificates, please include a certified German or English translation);
7. Two confidential letters of recommendation, which include statements relating to both the applicant himself/herself and the project applied for. The Foundation makes no specifications concerning the choice of referees for these letters of recommendation, although it is advisable that they not

be from the same academic institution and that one such letter be from the institution where the applicant is currently working or intends to undertake research. The letters of recommendation must be printed on the official letterheads of the institutions at which the referees are active. Informal or unsigned letters of recommendation will not be considered and will lead to the applicant's disqualification.

Applications, in German or English, must be complete, i.e. including the confidential letters of recommendation, and must be received via the online application portal (www.daimler-benz-stiftung.de) by October 1, 2025 (11:59 p.m.).

The confidential letters of recommendation may only be submitted via the online application portal. They can only be uploaded once the applicant has entered the email addresses of the referees in the appropriate space. An email with access data will then be generated and automatically sent to the referees immediately. The Foundation would like to emphasize that the applicant should clarify the exact modalities and deadlines for submitting the letters of recommendation together with the referees in good time. Compliance with all data privacy regulations and the protection of personal data are an important concern for the Foundation throughout the process.

4. Selection process

After the application deadline, a comparative preselection process takes place. The selected candidates are invited to attend the Daimler and Benz Foundation's office in Ladenburg in order to present their projects in person in the presence of other applicants, representatives of the Foundation, and specialist and non-specialist reviewers. Depending on the current situation, the Foundation may also decide in favor of a presentation via video conference. Personal participation in this selection seminar is a prerequisite for the awarding of a scholarship.

The selection seminar usually takes place in January and announcement of the selected scholarship-holders in February of the year following the application deadline. The exact date of commencement of the scholarship period and transfer of funds is determined in consultation between the Foundation and the scholarship recipient. Repeated applications are not permissible.

5. Contact

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