

# REGULATIONS & FAQ

## FOR THE SWISS L'ORÉAL – UNESCO FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE PROGRAM

2026 EDITION



L'ORÉAL  
GROUPE



**satw** technology  
for society

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**For Women in Science** is the successful global cooperation of UNESCO and L'Oréal. Together, these two partners have **promoted women in science since 1998** – strengthening the excellence of research, fostering gender equality, and highlighting the visibility of women in research ("role models").

**The Swiss L'ORÉAL-UNESCO For Women in Science (FWIS) program** promotes four female early-career scientists working in universities or research institutes within Switzerland each year by providing an award worth CHF 25,000 each. In Switzerland, the partners are the **Swiss Commission for UNESCO, L'Oréal Suisse SA and the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences SATW**.

The award is designed to provide flexible support to the award winner. The prize money can be spent in innovative ways to enable women scientists to pursue and continue their research careers – such as paying for childcare or domestic assistance, funding travel costs to an overseas conference or a research assignment abroad, purchase of equipment, or activities that support personal and professional growth (i.e. leadership training).

**For Women in Science Switzerland** is guided by the regulations outlined below to realize the objectives of the cooperation in Switzerland.



## 2. GENERAL CONDITIONS OF ELIGIBILITY

Applications are open to **female early-career scientists working in STEM** disciplines. "Early-career" is understood as **post-doc candidates** in the three years following their doctorate.

- Candidates must identify as female postdoctoral level researchers who have already completed their PhD in the STEM fields of life and environmental science, physical sciences, mathematics, computer sciences, engineering, architecture or medicine.
- Candidates must have no more than 3 years' active full-time equivalent postdoctoral experience as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 (discounting career breaks but including teaching experience and/or time spent in industry).
- Candidates must not currently hold a permanent academic position or have ever held a permanent academic position in the past or have received a promise of a permanent academic position before the start date of the award.
- Candidates must conduct research in the fields of life and environmental sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, computer sciences, engineering, architecture or medicine.
- Psychology, education sciences, human and social sciences are not eligible for this award.
- Candidates may be citizens of any country but must be conducting their research at a university or research institute within Switzerland.
- Applications are welcome from candidates who wish to establish/re-establish themselves after a career break or other period of absence from active research in the STEM fields.

The application of female scientists **with children is strongly encouraged**.

Applicants must not have received funding from another For Women in Science program (e.g. international or from another country) in the past. Please refer to FAQ for details.

### 3. SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria are as follows:

- Excellence of the applicant's current and past research validated by:
  - Academic records
  - Strong recommendation
- Relevant, timely, and clearly articulated research proposal:
  - Relevance of the research and its potential impact
  - Originality of the research proposal
  - Clarity of methodology
- Feasibility of the proposed activities
- Potential to leverage the award to enhance the candidate's career and/or assist with a successful return to scientific research (candidate statement).
- Applicants' special commitment to the "third mission" of science (i.e. contribution to society) is also assessed as part of the understanding of research excellence. This can be, for example, open science engagement such as special efforts in citizen science or open data, transdisciplinary work, policy advice or science communication, especially with young people as target group.

A team of multi-disciplinary juries will review the applications and evaluate them in accordance with the criteria described above.

## 4. AWARD MONEY

Applicants are **free to decide how they use the award money** but must be used in relation with a research project conducted at a university or research institute within Switzerland. Several purposes are conceivable, such as: funding travel costs to an overseas conference or a research assignment abroad, purchase of equipment, financing of childcare or domestic assistance to allow the female researcher to spend more time in the lab, or activities that support personal and professional growth (i.e. leadership training), etc. **The award cannot be used to pay the salary of the applicant.**

The **application must be accompanied by a budget outlining how the grant will be used.** Subsequent changes to this concept by the award winners are possible if consulted with the organizers.

Award winners will usually receive the prize money of CHF **25,000 in one instalment**, unless two instalments are necessary. The total amount will be paid into a bank account in the award winner's name, which she will provide to L'Oréal Suisse SA.

If, for some reason, the award winner is unable to carry out her research project, she shall be obliged to reimburse the award money to L'Oréal Suisse SA in whole or in part, in proportion to the time spent on the project, as decided by L'Oréal Suisse SA after hearing the award winner and informing the other partners of Program, i.e. the Swiss Commission for UNESCO and the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences SATW.

## 5. HOW TO APPLY?

Candidates must submit their own applications via the online platform: [www.forwomeninscience.com](http://www.forwomeninscience.com). Candidates must create an account to be able to complete an application.

Applications by mail or email are not accepted. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be taken into consideration. The jury will treat all documents in full confidentiality.

The application and all its accompanying material must be written in English. Alongside the application form, it is required to submit the following documents:

- **A detailed CV** of no more than 2 pages including training, outreach activities, commitments, etc. + a complete list of publications (not included in the 2 pages).
- **Copies of candidate's undergraduate and postgraduate degree certificates.**
- **A letter of support from host institution.** This letter must confirm that the university/research institute is willing to provide the candidate with the appropriate space and facilities and employ the candidate for the entire duration of her project, should the award be granted.
- **A letter of recommendation** from academic supervisors acquainted with last periods of formal study or research. It cannot be the post-doc supervisor or direct manager.
- **A research proposal** (maximum 1'000 words, not including bibliography and list of publications) incl. methodological and content-related research approach.
- **A research summary** (maximum 200 words).
- **A candidate statement** explaining why the award is important for her and the added value it will bring to her career (maximum 500 words).
- **A budget outline** with justification for the proposed expenditure choices in a table form (see example in the FAQ). This is an estimate and does not need to include exact figures/quotes or be formally approved by the candidate's institution (see above section 4).
- if applicable, **any contribution to the "third mission" of science** (maximum 200 words).

The applicant does not have to complete her application in one sitting; she may log back into her application and add to or edit it as many times as needed until the point of submission. She can navigate through the different sections of the form and print her application at any stage.

The deadline for the applications is **March 15th, 2026**. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the application is complete and submitted before the deadline. For a complete application to be considered the candidate must select the 'submit' button on the online application form.

By submitting an application, applicants fully accept the present 'Regulations & FAQ' document and its obligations.

**Please note:** Incomplete applications or those received after the deadline, as well as applications not meeting the conditions stated in this document, will not be considered. The jury is bound by a duty of confidentiality regarding the documents entrusted to them.

## 6. SELECTION

The applications will be assessed by a jury involving scientific experts.

The jury will select the candidate based on the following criteria:

- Excellence of the applicant's current and past research
- Relevant, timely, and clearly articulated research proposal
- Feasibility of the proposed activities (coherence between aims and planned activities)
- Potential to leverage the grant to enhance the candidate's career and/or assist with a successful return to scientific research

The jury's decisions cannot be appealed. The jury does not need to explain or justify its decisions.

The organizers will inform the foreseen four award after the jury's deliberation by telephone and e-mail. They must keep the information of their selection confidential until the award ceremony. Applicants who have not been selected will be informed around the time of the award ceremony.

## 7. COMMUNICATION

The award winners are **obliged to have photos taken** of themselves for public communication and to take part in the award ceremony. If events are planned specifically for and with them in the 12 months following the award ceremony, they are also obliged to take part in them.

Award winners may be called upon to participate in one or more initiatives of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO to talk about their experience and their work.

They **may also be filmed and interviewed** for non-commercial purposes related to the communication of the Swiss L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science program.

These photos, videos and texts may be used by the partners for written and audiovisual publications, for distribution to the Swiss and international media, and on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, X and Instagram in connection with the For Women in Science program and the promotion of women in science. A **written authorization for image rights must be signed** by each of the award winners when the contract is signed.



## 8. DATES

- Launch of the call for applications: **February 2, 2026**
- Closing date for applications: **March 15, 2026**
- Selection process by the jury: **May to July 2026**
- Award ceremony: **October 2026**

## 9. REGULATIONS

Participation in the **Swiss L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Program** call for applications 2026 implies acceptance of these regulations (see also above section 5).

## 10. CONTACT US

For any questions about the present regulations, please consult the online FAQ or contact the **Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences** at:  
[mint@satw.ch](mailto:mint@satw.ch)

## 11. FAQ

### Applications

#### How do I apply for the program?

Candidates should follow the below steps to apply to the Swiss L'Oréal UNESCO For Women in Science Program.

- Create an account on the platform [www.forwomeninscience.com](http://www.forwomeninscience.com)
- Complete application
- Upload all the required documentation, and then press 'submit' to finalize the application

Candidates do not have to complete their application in one sitting; they may log back into their application and add to or edit it as many times as they like up until the point they submit it. They can navigate through the different sections of the application form and they can print their application at any stage.

By submitting an application, applicants fully accept the present 'Regulations & FAQ' document and its obligations.

#### How do I find out whether my application is successful?

The organizers will inform the foreseen four award winners after the jury's deliberation by telephone and e-mail. Award winners must treat the information of their selection confidentially until the award ceremony. Applicants who have not been selected will be informed around the time of the award ceremony.

**No feedback will be given on individual applications.**

### Eligibility

#### I am not a Swiss citizen but am currently undertaking research in Switzerland, am I eligible?

Yes, applications are open to all citizens. Applicants must already have a confirmed contract at a university or research institute within Switzerland.

## Which area of research do I need to cover in order to apply?

The research fields covered by the program are based on the taxonomy of the Federal Statistical Office:

- **Computer Science**
- **Engineering:** Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Microtechnology, Communication Systems, Production Sciences, Materials Science, Technical Sciences, Civil Engineering, Cultural Engineering and Surveying, Architecture and Planning
- **Chemistry & Life Sciences:** Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Food Sciences, Biology, Pharmacy, Medicine and Pharmaceutical Sciences
- **Other STEM:** Earth Sciences, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, Natural Sciences, Agronomy, Forestry

Psychology, art and social sciences are not eligible for this program.

## I am currently working towards my PhD. Am I eligible?

No. Candidates must have completed and been awarded a research doctorate by the time of application. Award money cannot be used as PhD funding.

## What counts as no more than 3 years active full-time equivalent postdoctoral experience?

Candidates must have no more than 3 years' active full-time equivalent postdoctoral experience as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026. This excludes career breaks, such as maternity leave, career leave, sick leave, military and civil service, but includes teaching experience and/or time spent in industry after PhD completion. Part-time work is counted on a pro-rata basis. For each child, 18 additional months can be added, detailed regulations regarding admissibility correspond to the rules of FNS.<sup>1</sup>

For medical researchers without MD-PhD: submission up to 8 years after the state examination and at least 3 years of clinical activity after the state examination.

## What is the definition of not holding a 'permanent academic position'?

Candidates must not currently hold a permanent academic position or have held a permanent academic position in the past, or have received, before the start date of the award, the promise of a permanent academic position. Career breaks can include periods such as maternity leave, career leave, sick leave, military or civil service and voluntary service. If a candidate is currently returning to scientific research following a career break, please ensure that this is clearly mentioned in their application.

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<sup>1</sup> [20-11 Ausführungsreglement Beitragsregl. – E](#)

## **Am I able to hold the award on a part-time basis?**

The Swiss FWIS Award is intended to provide flexible support for women scientists to pursue and continue their research careers in Switzerland. Recipients can take up the award to pursue their research project either full-time or on a part-time basis to allow them to meet care duties, etc.

## **I want to use the award to conduct research outside Switzerland. Am I able to do so?**

Awards must be held at a Swiss university or research institute, and research must be carried out under the auspices of an academic supervisor or mentor at the host institution. However, award holders may conduct field work abroad as part of the Switzerland-based research supported by the program.

## **Are joint applications accepted?**

The Swiss FWIS Awards are presented to individuals. Joint applications are not accepted.

## **I have previously applied for the For Women in Science Program in another country. Can I apply again?**

Candidates who have not been selected in previous years and in other countries may apply again if they have not received funding from another For Women in Science program international or in another country.

## **Required Documentation**

### **Is it possible to submit a paper application?**

Only applications made through the on-line platform are accepted. Candidates must visit [www.forwomeninscience.com](http://www.forwomeninscience.com) to create an account and complete an application. Applications by email will not be considered.

## **What are the guidelines regarding the length of my proposed research plan?**

The research proposal, including the methodological and content-related research approach, should not exceed 1000 words. A bibliography and list of publications may be appended but are not included in the 1000- word limit.

Candidates will also need to explain in simple terms in no more than 200 words their research project (research summary).

## **What should be included in the third mission contribution?**

If applicable, please shortly summarize any contribution to the "third mission" of science, i.e. contribution to society (e.g. science communication with young people, participatory engagement with local communities, citizen science, open science, policy advice, etc). The statement should not be any longer than 200 words.

## **What should be included in the candidate statement?**

The candidate's statement should explain how the award will enable the candidate to undertake her research and contribute to her career. Candidates must specify how this award will help to address any obstacles and barriers which may have impeded the candidate's career progress to date.

Candidates should bear in mind that the Swiss L'Oréal UNESCO FWIS Awards are designed to provide flexible support and make a convincing case for the difference that this award will make to the candidate's career.

## **What are the guidelines regarding the length of my statement?**

The candidate statement should not exceed 500 words.

## **What should the budget outline look like?**

It should be presented as a table and uploaded as pdf.

Example:

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Details (if applicable)</b>
Conference of the American Society of Clinical Oncology	CHF 3'500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Travel costs: CHF 2'500</li><li>- Childcare for one week conference: CHF 1'000</li></ul>
Leadership Training from the University of Geneva	CHF 5'000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Enrollment Fees</li><li>- Catering &amp; travel costs</li></ul>
Etc...		

## **What is required from the letter of support from my proposed host institution?**

The application must include one letter of support from the proposed host institution confirming that the university/research institute is willing to provide the candidate with the appropriate space and facilities for the duration of the project to undertake the research that the award would support, and that the candidate will be hired / will have a working contract with the institution during the whole project period. This support letter (as a pdf document) must be on headed paper and signed by a representative of the host institution to confirm eligibility.

## **How many letters of recommendation are required?**

A completed application requires only one letter of recommendation. This should be written by an individual who has personal knowledge of the candidate qualifications and suitability for the Swiss FWIS Award. The referee should be an academic supervisor acquainted with the most recent periods of formal academic study or research of the candidate, if possible. Please do not submit more than one letter of recommendation.

## **How should the letter of recommendation be submitted?**

The letter of recommendation must be uploaded directly onto the system as part of the application form. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the letter of recommendation is complete and received before the deadline. Letters sent directly from referees will not be accepted.

## **To whom should the candidate's referees address the letter of recommendation?**

The letter of recommendation should mention "To the 2026 Swiss L'Oréal - UNESCO For Women in Science Jury Panel".

## **What should I do if my research does not fit exactly within the disciplinary areas on the application form?**

If the research does not fit strictly in a specific disciplinary area, the closest disciplinary area in the dropdown list can and has to be selected.

## **Are research projects that involve animal experiments eligible?**

If animal experiments are carried out as part of the submitted research project, these experiments must be described in detail. The necessity of animal experiments or the lack of alternatives must be justified.

## **Award Payment and Use**

### **What can the award winner use the Swiss FWIS Award money for?**

The Swiss FWIS Award is intended to provide flexible support for women scientists to pursue and continue their research careers in Switzerland. The prize money can be spent in innovative ways to enable women scientists to pursue and continue their research careers - such as paying for childcare or domestic assistance, funding travel costs to an overseas conference or a research assignment abroad, purchase of equipment, or activities that support personal and professional growth (i.e. leadership training). **The award money cannot be used to pay the salary of the candidate. It is understood that the funding must under no circumstances substitute for the laboratory's responsibilities toward its researchers.** Applicants are required to provide a budget estimate for the proposed expenditures in their application.

### **What is the payment structure/timing for the award money?**

The award is intended to support a project for a duration of up to 12 months. The award money will be paid in full after the Awards Ceremony and upon receipt of the original documents required for the bank transfer. The award money of CHF 25,000 will be paid in one instalment, unless two instalments are necessary, into a bank account in the award winner's name, which she will provide to L'Oréal Suisse SA. This award is personal and the payment of all taxes, duties and fees in connection with the award money received is the sole responsibility of the award winner. Recipients are required to submit a final scientific report and a final financial expenditure statement upon completion of their project.

### **What happens if, for some reason, the award winner is not able to carry out my research project as planned?**

If, for some reason, the award winner is unable to carry out its research project, she shall be obliged to reimburse the award money to L'Oréal Suisse SA in whole or in part, in proportion to the time spent on the project, as decided by L'Oréal Suisse SA after hearing the award winner and informing the other partners of Program, i.e. the Swiss Commission for UNESCO and the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences (SATW).

### **Am I eligible to apply based on my current research or does it need to be a new research project?**

The research can either be a new or an existing research project.

## **Am I able to hold the Swiss FWIS Program alongside other awards?**

Yes. Recipients are allowed to hold the Swiss FWIS alongside other awards, grants, scholarships and fellowships, but these must be declared. Recipients are not allowed to be funded from another For Women in Science Program international or in another country. Candidates should advise the For Women In Science team if they receive another award, grant, scholarship or fellowship which covers the proposed research project.

## **Technical Problems**

### **I am experiencing technical problems completing the form online. Who do I contact for help?**

In case of technical problems with completing the form, please contact [FWISsupport@loreal.com](mailto:FWISsupport@loreal.com).

### **I have not received the email confirming my registration. What shall I do?**

Please check if the confirmation email arrived in the junk or spam inboxes. If not, please contact [FWISsupport@loreal.com](mailto:FWISsupport@loreal.com).