

SIRIUS FELLOWSHIP IN ASTROPHYSICS

Institute of Science and Technology Austria

Guide for Applicants

The **closing date** for applications is **October 15, 2026 (14:00 CEST)**

Further information on the program can be found at: ista.ac.at/en/education/postdocs/sirius-fellowship

Applications can be submitted at: apply.ista.ac.at



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1. Sirius Fellowship in Astrophysics: Overview

Aims of the Program

The Sirius Fellowship in Astrophysics aims to support excellent postdoctoral researchers across all fields of astronomy and astrophysics in a highly collaborative environment. The Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA) provides the resources and state-of-the-art support structures for scientists to build strong foundations for new discoveries, to maximize the potential for breakthroughs, and to acquire new skills to advance their future careers.

Sirius Fellows in Astrophysics are formally hosted by one of the faculty research groups at ISTA but are free to pursue their own research in any area of astronomy or astrophysics.

Benefits of Becoming a Sirius Fellow in Astrophysics

Funding

The 2026 call for the Sirius Fellowship in Astrophysics will recruit up to two fellows. Each fellow will receive an initial two-year, full-time employment contract with an internationally competitive salary (min. EUR 76,986 gross per year) and full social security benefits. The contract is expected to be renewed for a third year contingent on review. The fellowship includes an annual research budget of EUR 25,000, which can be used to cover research-related costs including travel, publication charges, computer equipment and supercomputing charges.

Research Environment

The core principles of ISTA's faculty selection process—*person before area, quality before speed*—have resulted in a high concentration of scientifically innovative leaders, who are dedicated to mentoring the next generation. Fellows will be directly supported by chosen faculty hosts, but will have access to ISTA's broader interdisciplinary and interactive faculty in adjacent areas, such as physics, mathematics, and computer science.

Eligibility Requirements

- All Sirius Fellows are formally hosted by a research group, with the faculty host acting as a mentor. All astrophysics research groups at ISTA are eligible. More information about ISTA's faculty members, their research groups and topics can be found under <https://ista.ac.at/en/research> and <https://astro.ista.ac.at>.
- Applicants must hold a PhD in astronomy, astrophysics, or a related field at the start of their fellowship. The PhD should have been awarded no more than 6 years before the commencement of the fellowship on September 1, 2027. Exceptions to this policy will be considered only if documented evidence of post-PhD career breaks (e.g., parental or sick leave) is provided. A fellowship contract will not be issued until one of the following is provided:
 - EITHER a copy of the PhD diploma
 - OR proof that the candidate's PhD dissertation has been successfully defended and submitted with no further corrections needed.
- Researchers already employed at ISTA are not eligible for the fellowship.
- Following the initial evaluation round, top-ranked candidates must be available for a remote interview during **November 16–18, 2026**.
- Successful fellows must begin their employment at ISTA on or around September 1, 2027.

2. Application Process

Overview

- 1) Create an account at <https://apply.ista.ac.at>
- 2) Verify your account by following the instructions contained in the email sent to you.
- 3) Create an application at https://apply.ista.ac.at/sirius_fellowship_2026
- 4) Complete the application by entering all required information and uploading all required documents (more information below).
- 5) Submit your application.

General notes on the application process

To be considered, an application must be complete and submitted to our online system (<https://apply.ista.ac.at>) by **14:00 CEST** on **October 15, 2026**. In addition to the material uploaded by the applicant, at least **two out of three reference letters** must have been uploaded by the referees by the deadline. Applications that are incomplete or ineligible will not be considered by the Selection Committee.

Online Application Form: Requirements

Personal Data: Personal information (e.g., name, address, ...)

PhD Education: Details on your PhD program (institution, dates of attendance, degree date or expected degree date).

Additional Education: This section is optional and may be used to add a master's degree and/or other qualifications.

Current Affiliation: Current academic/professional affiliation. If currently on leave or unemployed, please enter details of your most recent employment.

Scientific Host: In this section, you must identify a professor as your formal host for your research project at ISTA. There is no need to contact your proposed host in advance. Details on our faculty, their research interests, and contact details can be found here: <https://ista.ac.at/en/research> and <https://astro.ista.ac.at>.

Application Information: In this section, please provide:

- a) **Project Title** (max. 100 characters including spaces)
- b) **Scientific Abstract** (max. 300 words; no special characters).
- c) **Research Proposal** (max. 5 pages including figures and references). The proposal should describe your past accomplishments and plans for future research at ISTA. Please also explain your choice of scientific host at ISTA. ISTA has signed the CoARA agreement (<https://www.coara.org>). Therefore, do not refer to citation metrics, journal rankings, institutional rankings, h-index, or other proxy indicators of scientific quality.

- d) **Curriculum Vitae** (max. 2 pages), including education, previous and current employment, and if applicable, research experience, awards and prizes, collaborations (if part of consortia), and career breaks.
- e) **Publication List**, including: your full list of publications and research outputs, in a format that includes the full author list, publication title, journal title, volume/issue/page numbers (or equivalent identifier) and year. DOIs with hyperlinks are encouraged. For publications with more than five authors, list the first five authors followed by “et al.”

Uploads: The documents must be uploaded in PDF format for the application to be considered complete and eligible. Please note that the following layout/formatting parameters **must be respected** for documents (c), (d) and (e):

Page Format	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	At least 11 pt	At least single spacing	At least 2 cm

Applications containing documents that do not follow the page limits, formatting, and structural requirements risk being deemed as ‘ineligible’ during the administrative checks.

Other Information:

Please upload diplomas/certificates and transcripts for all completed degrees listed under ‘PhD Education’ and ‘Additional Education’. For your PhD, please submit the document that best reflects its current status:

- a **PhD certificate**, if the degree has already been awarded and the certificate has been issued;
- an **official transcript or letter from the PhD institution confirming that the degree has been awarded**, if the certificate has not yet been issued;
- an **official confirmation of the scheduled PhD defense date**, if the defense has already been arranged;
- an **official confirmation** that the dissertation was **successfully defended and formally submitted, with no further corrections required**, if the PhD defense has already taken place; or
- a **PhD enrollment certificate**, if none of the above documents is available.

The relevant document(s) can be uploaded using the ‘Other files’ fields.

Research Ethics:

Please provide information on any potential ethical dimensions of your planned research and the corresponding compliance measures.

Referees:

Submit the names and contact information for three referees. Your potential host at ISTA must not be listed as one of the referees on your application.

Note: *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 of your request. They will receive an email from our application system informing them how to upload their reference letters.*

You may check on the status of these letters and, if needed, send a reminder to your referees by logging into the system and viewing your submitted application.

You are strongly advised to contact your referees as early as possible to allow them ample time to submit reference letters by the application deadline. At least two out of three reference letters must be received by the application deadline. **Applications with fewer than two reference letters at the application deadline will be rejected as incomplete.**

3. Evaluation and Selection

Applications passing the initial administrative eligibility check will be evaluated by an Internal Selection Committee consisting of ISTA faculty members, based on the following criteria:

- **Scientific Excellence: Proposal**

The quality, innovative aspects, expected impact and feasibility of the research.

- **Scientific Excellence: Applicant**

The scientific expertise and credibility of the applicant to lead and execute the project based on the CV, previous achievements, and the reference letters.

Following evaluation by the Internal Selection Committee, shortlisted candidates will be invited to a remote interview, after which an External Selection Committee will make the final selection of fellowship awardees.

Up to two fellowships will be awarded in the inaugural year of the Sirius Fellowship in Astrophysics program. Unless otherwise stated in the award letter, successful fellows must begin their employment at ISTA on or around September 1, 2027.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications in early January 2027 (including waitlist status when relevant).

4. About ISTA and Living in Austria

The Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA) is a cross-disciplinary research institution that combines basic science with graduate education. Our scientists perform theoretical and experimental research in Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, and Information and System Sciences. They are organized in small to medium-sized research groups that interact with each other across the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Each research group of ISTA is headed by a tenured or tenure-track professor. To learn more about ISTA and the research undertaken there, please visit our website: <https://ista.ac.at>.

Below, we list some key benefits of employment at ISTA and of living in Austria. For more details, please visit: <https://ista.ac.at/en/jobs/employee-benefits>.

Social Security Benefits

Austria has an excellent social security system which includes several forms of compulsory insurance for employees. The public statutory social insurance coverage ("Sozialversicherung") for employees includes accident, health and unemployment insurance and statutory pension. The employer registers the employee with the insurance institute and deducts the social insurance contributions from the employee's wages or salary.

Insured persons and their family members will receive a social security card ("e-card") which entitles them to medical care from practicing physicians, specialists, dentists and public hospitals that have contracts with the Austrian Health Insurance Fund (Österreichische Gesundheitskasse). Services of private physicians and private hospitals are not covered by the public health insurance, but may be largely covered by supplementary private health insurance.

Housing and Family Services

On-campus accommodation is available for rent (subject to availability), giving incoming fellows from abroad time to find more permanent housing. ISTA offers on-site daycare for children from the age of three months (places subject to availability). In addition, the International Office provides visa support.

Language

The official language of the institute is English. To help fellows settle into life in Austria, free German-language courses are offered on campus.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

At ISTA, equity, diversity and inclusion are core values that we see as essential for creating and disseminating new knowledge and for taking science into new directions. ISTA strives for a diverse community with an open, inclusive culture where scientists and staff of all backgrounds, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, sexual orientation, or physical disabilities, can work and learn together. For more information, please visit: <https://ista.ac.at/en/institute/edi>.

Contact:

Should you have questions about the Sirius Fellowship in Astrophysics application process, please see the program webpage:

<https://ista.ac.at/en/education/postdocs/sirius-fellowship>

or contact: sirius-fellowship@ista.ac.at