

---

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### FÖRETAGSFORSKARSKOLOR 24

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2025**.
- Funding decisions will be announced in mid-May 2025.
- After signing of agreement, approved projects may start on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025, at the earliest, and on 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2026, at the latest.

---

Therése Nordström, Programme Manager  
therese.nordstrom@kks.se, 070-362 52 08

#### **About the Knowledge Foundation**

*The Knowledge Foundation is a funder with the mission to strengthen Sweden's competitiveness. The foundation funds research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and newer universities when it takes place in collaboration with the business sector. The Foundation's calls are open to all scientific and artistic subject areas.*

# Contents

<b>The programme Företagsforskarskolor.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Objectives of the programme .....	3
The programme's purpose and contribution to strong research and education environments.....	3
Project design.....	3
<b>Terms and conditions .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Applicants .....	4
Participation of the university .....	4
Participation of business sector and other partners .....	4
Project duration .....	5
Financial framework and budgeting .....	5
<b>Application .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Appendices to the application.....	6
<b>Preparation and assessment .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Formal requirements .....	9
Assessment criteria .....	9

## **The programme Företagsforskarskolor**

Many parts of the business sector is currently facing challenges of complex character that require advanced research and development. This creates an increased demand for research-trained competence as well as research that takes place in collaboration between academia and the business sector, something that promotes knowledge exchange and innovative thinking. Within the Företagsforskarskolor programme, universities and doctoral students contribute with in-depth scientific knowledge and research methodology that is necessary to solve problems and drive business development forward. Participating companies get access to the latest research and may simultaneously develop and retain highly qualified personnel.

Collaboration through an industrial research school contributes to creating long-term networks between different companies and to strengthening relations between academia and the business sector. This may have positive effects both on the research and educational activities at the universities as well as on the operations of participating companies.

### **Objectives of the programme**

The objective of the programme Företagsforskarskolor is to contribute to more individuals with a doctoral degree and to strengthen research capacity in subject areas strategic both for the academic research and education environment and for the participating business partners.

### **The programme's purpose and contribution to strong research and education environments**

The Knowledge Foundation seeks to support the development of strong research and education environments that create value for academia, the business sector, and the society. All the Knowledge Foundation's programmes contribute in different ways to establishing and maintaining environments with a strong national and international scientific or artistic position in the long term, which also constitutes a profile area for the university. For more information on the Knowledge Foundation's view on strong research and education environments, go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

The specific purpose of the Företagsforskarskolor programme is to strengthen and profile the research, as well as to strengthen the competitiveness of the business sector by enhancing the competence in companies.

### **Project design**

The industrial graduate school shall be conducted as a cohesive graduate school and be integrated into one or more academic environments at participating universities. A focused direction is important in order to enable close collaboration between academy and business partners. Participating companies and research institute<sup>1</sup> are to be actively involved and well-integrated in the graduate school's implementation.

Admission of doctoral students must take place as collectively as possible. Admission, registration, and examination of doctoral students should comply with participating university's existing rules. The doctoral students shall be employed by a company. Only in exceptional cases may the doctoral student be employed by the university, but in these cases the reasons behind this must clearly be accounted for, along with a description of how the company affiliation is to be assured.

In their research activities, the doctoral students must be active at both the companies and the university. Each doctoral student must have a supervisor at the university as well as a supervisor or mentor at the company. The study pace for the individual doctoral student shall be planned to a maximum of 80 percent working hours. The remaining working hours shall consist of work at the employer.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the following, research institutes are included in the concept of company.

A steering group of 5-7 persons should be appointed to the graduate school. The majority, including the chairman, must come from the business sector, and the rest from academia. One of the doctoral students shall be affiliated to the steering group.

The application shall comprise a minimum of 6 *doctoral students* (individuals) with the ambition to achieve a licentiate or doctoral degree, but a maximum of 15 *doctoral degrees* (a licentiate degree corresponds to half a doctoral degree). This means that if, for example, an application includes 12 doctoral students with the ambition to obtain a doctoral degree, and 6 doctoral students with the ambition to obtain a licentiate degree, this corresponds to 18 *doctoral students*, but a total of 15 *doctoral degrees*.

It is possible to develop an industrial graduate school in two steps, with two separate admission periods for doctoral students. After about two years, and provided that the activities of the graduate school can be deemed to be well established, the university may apply for funding in a second step, called Företagsforskarskolor+, comprising a further group of at least four doctoral students. Altogether, for the two steps, funding can be applied for for a maximum of 20 doctoral degrees.

## Terms and conditions

### Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities<sup>2</sup> (henceforth called *universities* in the call text) with degree-awarding powers at third cycle level within the subject area of the graduate school, may apply. The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all subject areas. When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is to be replaced by *artistic* in the call text.

Several universities within the Foundation's target group may collaborate in the project if this strengthens the application and the project, but only one university may be the main applicant and contracting party vis-à-vis the Knowledge Foundation.

### Participation of the university

A project manager holding a doctoral degree and employed at the university should be operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. At the university, there must also be an appointed project owner. The project owner, who must have staff and budget authority at a senior level at the university, is responsible for ensuring proper conditions for the implementation of the project, and for monitoring the implementation. The project manager and the project owner should not be the same person.

The university may strengthen the project by contributing with own funds in the form of co-financing. However, any co-financing, as well as its size, will not impact the assessment of the project application.

### Participation of business sector and other partners

The project must be conducted in co-production with the business sector. For more information on the Foundation's view on co-production, go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors<sup>3</sup> can be found on the Foundations' homepage ([www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).

---

<sup>2</sup> Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Halmstad University, Jönköping University, Karlstad University, Konstfack, Kristianstad University, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen University, Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm University of the Arts, Swedish Defence University, Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, Södertörn University, University of Borås, University of Gävle, University of Skövde, University West, Örebro University

<sup>3</sup> Criteria for co-financing business actors have been updated prior to the call 2024.

The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions and parts of the salary for the doctoral student, must correspond to at least the same amount as requested from the Knowledge Foundation.

All co-financing business actors must, in the application, clearly demonstrate that the organisation has adequate conditions to fulfil the obligations described in the project plan and budget. Therefore, they must attach signed letters of intent for at least 60 percent of the number of doctoral students covered by the application, and the contributions to the project should be described and motivated. Specified co-financing must also be certified in the letters of intent (see also instructions for *Appendices to the application* below).

Swedish universities outside the Foundation's target group or other relevant partners, that cannot be counted as co-financing business actors, may participate in the project if they strengthen the application and the project. These partners should also attach signed letters of intent where the contributions to the project are described and motivated, but they bear their own costs in the project and these costs cannot be counted as co-financing.

Any connections, such as financial or personal links, between for example participating partners, between any partner and university, or between any partner and individual project participant(s), must be stated and clarified in the application form and the project plan. Any dual roles must be clarified. Specify, for example, company connections, share ownership, board positions, employment, or consulting activities.

### **Project duration**

The project duration should be 6 years), whereas the study time for the individual doctoral student should be planned for a maximum of 5 years.

### **Financial framework and budgeting**

The Knowledge Foundation's funding of the industrial graduate school is based on the extent of the graduate school and amounts to a maximum of SEK 1.8 million per doctoral degree, and SEK 900,000 per licentiate degree, *i.e.* a maximum of SEK 27 million for 15 doctoral degrees. The funding from the Knowledge Foundation is thus preliminary and will be followed up in the final reporting of the project.

The Knowledge Foundation's funds should mainly be used for doctoral student salaries, supervision, and other direct costs<sup>4</sup> for the doctoral students. Funding from the Foundation can also be used to cover certain operational costs, as for example, costs for management and administration, course development and shared activities. The graduate school's total costs for management and operation shall be in the range of 25–30 percent of the total amount applied for from the Knowledge Foundation. However, this cost may be covered both by funds from the Knowledge Foundation and through co-financing from the university.

It is possible to transfer a certain part of the Foundation's funding to participating companies in order to cover parts of the doctoral student's salaries.

Within this programme where granted projects are expected to participate in programme-wide exchange of experiences, costs related to travels and organisation of the meetings may be included in the budget.

Budgeting of funds must follow the instructions presented in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation* (found on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). The application should not include overhead costs (OH). An OH surcharge of 20 percent will be added and included in the agreement proposal if the application is granted by the Foundation.

---

<sup>4</sup> See *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, found on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

## Application

The application should be submitted via the project manager's account in the Knowledge Foundation's application system *SBS Manager* ([www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). Supplementing the application after the closing date of the call is not possible.

### Appendices to the application

The following appendices (as PDF files) should be attached to the application in the same order as below. The structure of the appendices must follow the headings specified for each appendix. Under each heading, the main characteristics of the information that the Foundation expects are stated. However, applicants may provide supplementary information that is deemed appropriate based on the direction of the call.

The appendices of the application must be written in English to enable international peer review (letters of intent may, however, be written in Swedish).

Note that all body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, and single line spacing.

**Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment(s)** (may not exceed 2 pages, see instructions below if several environments apply jointly)

To be uploaded under *Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment(s)*.

This appendix should be written jointly by the head of the research and education environment and the project manager. If a project is applied for jointly by several environments, all environments must be described. However, the appendix may only be extended by a maximum of half a page per additional environment. Emanate from the group or environment where the project has its closest context. Frame the description based on the below headings.

#### **1.1. The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment(s)**

Describe how the project will contribute to the development of the research and education environment and its activities. The connection to the objectives and purpose of the call must be clearly stated. It must be made clear in what way the project adds value in relation to previous and ongoing projects within the environment, especially projects with the same project manager.

#### **1.2. The research and education environment(s) where the project will be conducted**

Describe the environment's current status and ambition.

**a) Current status** and results over the past five years (area of activity and direction for related research and education within the environment, staff composition, scientific production, development of educations, funding, collaborative- and business partners etc.)

**b) Ambition** and objectives for the further development of the environment.

**Appendix 2. Project plan** (may not exceed 25 pages)

To be uploaded under *Appendix 2. Project plan*. The project plan must be page numbered. Any references (in legible font size) must be included within the page limit.

- If the university has previously been rejected on a similar application within the Företagsforskarskolor programme, and now reapplies, this must be stated along with comments on how the assessment panel's previous remarks are being considered in the current application.

### The focus of the graduate school

- Describe the research field that the graduate school is addressing and the scientific position of the applicant research and education environment within the field.
- Describe and motivate the research questions and how they relate to the state-of-the-art.
- Specify objectives for the graduate school, in the short and long term (if possible, time-specific, and quantitative). The objectives should relate to the doctoral students, the university's development of the research and education environment, as well as to co-production.
- Account for whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project's scientific content and in the design of the project, and if so, how these perspectives will be included (more information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).

### Company participation

- Describe the relevance of the graduate school to the business sector and how it is expected to contribute to strengthening the research competence of the business sector.
- State which companies are expected to participate in the graduate school and their roles, needs and contributions.

### Implementation of the project

- Describe how the activities in the graduate school will be performed. Include, for example, plans for recruitment of doctoral students, joint activities, supervision, course offering and development of courses as well as an overall activity and time plan.
- Include an overview risk analysis to identify obstacles/pitfalls and describe how these will be handled.
- Describe and justify the project's organisation, management, and staffing, including the composition of the steering group. Account for the competence, role, and work contribution of key individuals, including individuals from participating partners and the doctoral student's supervisors. The description should relate to information provided in the budget, the appendix *Staff in the project*, and CVs.
- Account for how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group (more information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).
- Describe and justify the costs included in the budget so it is clear what the costs consist of, why they are relevant for the project, and which partner will cover the costs. Specify clearly the share of the budget allocated to management and operation of the graduate school and what is included in this share.
- Include information on planned doctoral projects in tabular format with the following column headings:

Doctoral student (name or NN)	Project	University	Company	Employer	Planned study pace	Environment/Institution, Third cycle subject area	Possible progression at start (%)	Planned degree (licentiate/ PhD)

### **Appendix 3. Staff in the project** (appendix template)

To be uploaded under *Appendix 3. Staff in the project*.

Attach a table of planned project participants. From co-producing partners, only key participants need to be entered. Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an

Excel file from [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se), but must be converted and attached as a PDF file (make sure that the entire Excel spreadsheet fits on one PDF page).

**Appendix 4. Qualifications** (may not exceed 1 page per person)

To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

Attach CVs for all individuals in the project group who are crucial for the implementation of the project.

The Foundation applies a broadened review of merits and advanced assessment of research and researchers (more information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). All academically active participants should therefore present a selection of the merits and experiences that are the most relevant to the project and the programme form. *For example*, emanate from the following categories:

- **Degrees**
- **Positions**
- **Research output:** select at most ten (10) research results/outputs. In addition to scientific publications, this could be for example: documented artistic merits, instrumental- or product development, data set, software, patent, process- or policy development, as well as implementation of research results.
- **Educational activities:** pedagogical qualification including, for example, teaching, training and supervision, education development including development of open teaching resources and learning objects (learning and teaching materials).
- **Cooperation:** with academia, the business sector, or other societal actors, as well as communication efforts.
- **Management:** project management, activity development, assessment assignments, centre management, department assignments, granted funding.

**Appendix 5. Letters of intent** (approximately 1 page per partner)

To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

Signed letter of intent from each of the participating partners must be attached. Each letter of intent must include:

- needs and motives for participation,
- contributions and participation in the implementation of the project,
- expected results and benefits of participation, and
- total contribution (primarily through in-kind contributions). In projects where co-financing is required, the total amount must be stated.

Letters of intent should either be signed manually or electronically by, for example, GetAccept, ebox, or similar systems.

**Appendix 6. Signatures from the university** (appendix template)

To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

The application must be signed by the project manager, the project owner, and the vice-chancellor. The project manager's signature implies responsibility for the described implementation. The project owner and the vice chancellor assure through their signatures that the university approves the project and will be involved according to the project description.

Appendix template for signatures is downloaded from the Foundation's website, [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se). The signature appendix should either be signed manually or electronically by, for example, eduSign, GetAccept, ebox, or similar systems.



## Preparation and assessment

The application will be reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the formal requirements are met. If these are met, an assessment of the project's scientific quality will be performed by international scientific experts (peer review). Thereafter, an external assessment panel will conduct an overall assessment based on the assessment criteria below. As a supplement to the written application, a hearing will be held with representatives from the project. Funding decisions are made by the Foundation's board after recommendation by the external assessment panel.

### Formal requirements

The application must meet the following requirements before the Knowledge Foundation will consider it for evaluation. Applications that do not meet the requirements, will be rejected for formal reasons.

- The applicant university must belong to the Knowledge Foundation's target group and have degree-awarding powers at third cycle level within the subject area of the graduate school.
- The project manager must have a doctoral degree and be employed at the applicant university at the starting date of the project.
- The application must include appendices according to the call instructions.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.<sup>5</sup>
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the same amount as requested from the Knowledge Foundation.
- Signed letters of intent from each of the co-producing companies must be attached covering at least 60 percent of the number of doctoral students covered by the application. Specified co-financing should be certified in the letters of intent from co-financing partners.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed SEK 27 million (excl. OH costs).
- The graduate school's total costs for management and operation shall be in the range of 25–30 percent of the total amount applied for from the Knowledge Foundation. However, this cost may be covered by both funds from the Knowledge Foundation and through co-financing from the university.
- The duration of the project should be 6 years, whereas the study time for the individual doctoral student should be planned for a maximum of 5 years.
- Projects may start on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025, at the earliest, and on 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2026, at the latest.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, project owner and the project manager.

### Assessment criteria

#### *Strong research and education environment*

- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the short- and long-term development of the research and education environment?
- To what extent is there a clear description of the research and education environment's current status?
- To what extent is there an adequate ambition for the development of the research and education environment?

#### *Scientific quality<sup>6</sup>*

- To what extent is the applicant research and education environment(s) at an adequate scientific level within the subject area of the graduate school?
- To what extent is the scientific research agenda for the proposed graduate school realistic, clear and relevant in relation to the state-of-the-art?

---

<sup>5</sup> More information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

<sup>6</sup> When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

- To what extent is the objectives of the graduate school adequate and realistic?
- To what extent does the proposed graduate school relate to the needs of the business sector, and how well justified is the participation of business partners?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project's scientific content and in the design of the project? If considered relevant, are these perspectives appropriately included?

#### Benefits to the business partners

- To what extent is the proposed graduate school expected to contribute to strengthening the business sector's research competence in the subject area?
- To what extent does the proposed graduate school relate to the needs of participating companies, and how well described is their participation?

#### *Implementation*

- How well are the graduate school's activities described and to what extent are described plans expected to lead to a relevant implementation?
- How appropriate and realistic is the risk analysis?
- How well is the budget described and justified in the project plan and is the project plan realistic in relation to available resources?
- How appropriate is the project's organisation, management, and staffing?
- How well on an aggregated level are the merits and experiences of the project group fulfilling the requirements for an adequate project implementation according to the project plan?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group?