CALL FOR PROPOSALS

INDUSTRIAL GRADUATE SCHOOLS 25

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 9 February 2026.**
- Funding decisions will be announced in May 2026.

Therése Nordström, Programme Manager
therese.nordstrom@kks.se, +46 (0)70–362 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

The programme Industrial graduate schools

Many parts of the business sector are currently facing complex challenges 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 programme *Industrial graduate schools*, university colleges and universities (hereafter referred to as *universities* in the call text) 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 graduate school contributes to create 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 education activities at the universities as well as on the operations of participating companies.

Objectives of the programme

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

The programme's purpose and contribution to development of strong research and education environments

The Knowledge Foundation seeks to support the building of strong research and education environments that create value for academia, business sector, and society. All the Knowledge Foundation's programmes contribute in various ways to enabling environments to establish and maintain 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 the Foundation's website[1].

The specific purpose of the *Industrial graduate schools* programme is to strengthen and develop the research and education environment's research, as well as to strengthen the competitiveness of the business sector through competence enhancement.

Project design

The industrial graduate school should 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[2] are to be actively involved and well-integrated in the graduate school's implementation.

Admission of doctoral students must take place as cohesive as possible. Admission, registration, and examination of doctoral students should comply with the rules in force at the participating university. The doctoral students should be employed by a company but may in exceptional cases be employed by the university. The reasons behind this must then be clearly accounted for, along with a description of how the company affiliation will be assured.

[1] https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/strong-research-and-educational-environments/

[2] In the following, research institutes are included in the concept of company.

In their research activities, the doctoral students must be active at both the company 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 should be planned to a maximum of 80 percent working time. The remaining working time should consist of work at the 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 should be affiliated to the steering group.

The application must include 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*.

An industrial graduate school may be developed 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 has the possibility to apply for funding in a second step, called *Industrial graduate schools+*, comprising an additional group of at least four doctoral students. For the two steps combined, funding can be applied for a maximum of the equivalent of 20 doctoral degrees.

Terms and conditions

Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities[3] 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

The project must have a project manager who is operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. The project manager should have a doctoral degree[4] and be employed by the main applicant university at the latest at the start of the project. At the applicant 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.

[3] 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.

[4] Doctoral degree on scientific or artistic grounds.

The university may strengthen the project by contributing its own funds in the form of co-financing. However, any co-financing, and its amount, does not in itself form part of the assessment of the project application.

Participation of the 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 the Foundation's website[5].

Participating companies (business actors) must co-finance the project. Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors can be found on the Foundation's website[6] 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 amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation.

All co-financing business actors must attach signed letters of intent describing expected results and benefits of the participation, as well as how the co-operation in the project will take place. The letters of intent from co-financing business actors must cover at least 60 percent of the number of doctoral students in the application and must clearly describe the organisation's financial and resource conditions for meeting the obligations described in the project plan and budget.

Swedish universities outside the Foundation's target group as well as other relevant partners, who 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 six years, but the duration of the study period of the individual doctoral student should be planned for a maximum of five years. Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2026, and no later than 1 March 2027.

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 2.2 million per doctoral degree, and SEK 1.1 million per licentiate degree, *i.e.* a maximum of SEK 33 million (for 15 doctoral degrees). The funding from the Knowledge Foundation will be followed up in the final reporting of the project and will be adjusted in relation to the outcome of the doctoral students' actual progression at the end of the project.

The Knowledge Foundation's funds should mainly be used for doctoral student salaries, supervision, and other direct costs for the doctoral students. A maximum of 30 percent of the funding from the Foundation can be used to cover operational costs of the graduate school, as for example, costs for management, administration, course development and joint activities. These costs can also be covered by the university. Operational costs, in the form of a flat rate of 30 percent, are excluded from any repayment.

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[5] https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/

[6] https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/

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 salary.

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.

Information on approved costs and instructions for budgeting of funds are available in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, which can be found on the Foundation's website[7]. The application should not include overhead costs (OH). An OH surcharge of 20 percent will be added by the Foundation if the application is granted.

Application

The application should be submitted via the project manager's account in the Knowledge Foundation's application system *SBS Manager* via the Foundation's website[8]. 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.

Application appendices must be written in English to allow for international peer review (however, letters of intent may 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 development of the research and education environment(s)

Maximum 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. Emanate from the group or environment where the project has its closest context. Frame the description based on the below headings.

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.

1.1. The research and education environment(s) where the project will be conducted

- Describe the environment's current status and results of the last five years, including, for example, scope and focus of research and education, staff composition, scientific output, development of educations, funding, collaborations. Degree-awarding powers at third-cycle level within the subject area of the graduate school should clearly be stated.
- Describe the ambition and objectives for the further development of the environment.

1.2. 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

[7] https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/general-terms-and-conditions-for-projects/
[8] https://www.kks.se/en/apply-and-report/

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.

Appendix 2. Project plan

Maximum 25 pages (including any references). Page numbered. To be uploaded under *Appendix 2. Project plan.*

If the university has previously been rejected on a similar application (within the *Industrial graduate schools* 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. This should be included within the page limit of the project plan and should not be longer than approximately half a page.

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 to be addressed in the project and how they relate to the relevant knowledge frontier.
- Specify objectives for the graduate school (if possible, time-specific, and quantitative), both in the short and long term. Objectives should be specified both for the doctoral students, the university's development of the research and education environment, and for the co-production with the companies.
- 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 are included (more information on the Foundation's website[9]).

Company participation

- Describe the relevance of the graduate school to the business sector and how it is expected to contribute to the business sectors' development and research competence.
- 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 students' 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 the Foundation's website[10]).
- Describe and justify the costs included in the budget table so that it is clear what the budget items consist of and how they relate to the project objectives and planned activities. Clearly specify the

[9] https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/
[10] https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/

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. Project participants

Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an Excel file from the Foundation's website[11], but must be converted and attached to the application as a PDF file (ensure that the entire Excel spreadsheet fits on one PDF page). To be uploaded under *Appendix 3. Staff in the project.*

Enter information on all planned project participants from the university (or universities) in the table. From other participating partners, only key participants need to be entered.

Appendix 4. Qualifications

Maximum 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 academic merits (more information on the Foundation's website[12]). Thus, all academically active participants should present a selection of the merits and experiences that are 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, business sector, or other societal actors, as well as communication efforts.
- **Management:** project management, organisational 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

- expected results and benefits of the participation
- contributions and participation in the implementation of the project
- ability to contribute in accordance with the project plan and budget

[11] https://www.kks.se/en/documents/
[12] https://www.kks.se/en/broadened-review-of-academic-merits-and-advanced-assessment/

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 for signatures is downloaded from the Foundation's website[13]. 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.

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 following requirements must be met for the application to be considered for evaluation by the Knowledge Foundation. 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 by the university at the latest at the start 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.[14]
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation.
- Signed letters of intent from each of the participating partners must be attached. Letters of intent from co-financing business actors must cover at least 60 percent of the number of doctoral students in the application.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed SEK 33 million (excl. OH costs).
- A maximum of 30 percent of the funding from the Knowledge Foundation can be used to cover operational costs (more information under the section *Financial framework and budgeting)* .
- The project duration should be 6 years. The study period of the individual doctoral student should be planned for a maximum of 5 years.
- Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2026, and no later than 1 March 2027.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager.

[13] https://www.kks.se/en/documents/

[14] More information on the Foundation's website: https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/.

Assessment criteria

Contribution to the development of the research and education environment

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

Scientific quality[15]

- 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 graduate school clear and relevant in relation to the current knowledge frontier?
- 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 so, are these perspectives adequately included?

Benefit to the business sector

- How relevant is the project to the needs of the participating business actors?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development and research competence of participating business actors?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the potential benefit of a wider business sector?

Implementation

- To what extent are the objectives of the industrial graduate school adequate and realistic?
- How well are the graduate school's activities described and to what extent are described plans expected to lead to a relevant implementation?
- How well described and relevant is the participation of the business actors?
- 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 operation of the project, such as management and joint activities to create a cohesive graduate school?
- How well do the combined merits and experiences of the project group fulfil the needs of the project implementation?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group?
- How adequate is the risk analysis and to what extent does it provide the capacity to manage unforeseen events?

[15] When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.