FAQs for ZUKOnnect fellowships

Q: “I am unsure if my country belongs to Africa, Asia or Latin America. Is there a list of countries you could provide me with?”
A: “No. For the fellowship we have only broadly defined the geographical areas without linking it to political borders. There is no official list of (in)eligible countries”.

Q: “I currently work/live in a country outside of Africa, Asia or Latin America, am I still eligible?”
A: “No. We do require the current residency/workplace to be in an African, Asian or Latin American country. Specifically, this means you must have lived in and worked in an African, Asian or Latin American country in the period just before starting the fellowship at the Zukunftskolleg.”

Q: “I was born in an African, Asian or Latin American country but now work in a different country in Africa, Asia or Latin America – am I still eligible?”
A: “Yes. We do require you to have been born and currently work in a country in Africa, Asia and Latin America, but this does not need to be the same country. You are also eligible if e.g. you have an Asian origin but now work in Latin America.”

Q: “I have dual citizenship (one is in an African, Asian or Latin American country). Am I still eligible?”
A: This depends on the second citizenship. If the dual citizenship includes only countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, you are eligible. If you hold dual citizenship in a European or Northern American country you are, unfortunately, not eligible.

Q: “Can I apply, if I have a permanent position at a university, but not a professorship?”
A: “Yes. If you have a permanent position, but you are not in control of your own research agenda, you are eligible. The purpose of ZUKOnnect fellowships is to create networks at the pre-professorial level.”

Q: “Your criteria are very specific but do not apply to the academic structures in my country. How can I apply?”
A: “We know that with different systems, different traditions and different names for positions it is impossible to describe our ZUKOnnect fellowship so that it matches every country. Please explain the academic structures in your country in your letter of motivation, and the committee will take that into account.”

Q: “I am still writing my doctoral thesis, perhaps it is even the last year before I finish, but having a ZUKOnnect fellowship would disrupt my final phase, what should I do?”
A: “We do not want to disrupt your current research, or to fund parts of your doctoral research. In your situation, therefore, it would be best to apply in the next call. In most cases, the best time to apply during your doctoral research is after submitting the thesis and before defending it.”
Q: “I have an academic degree (e.g. MA or PhD) from a university in a non-African, non-Asian or non-Latin American country. Am I eligible?”

A: “Candidates with an academic degree (MA and/or PhD) from a university in Europe or North America are not the target group of the ZUKOnnect programme. However, candidates who had one or several international research stays (lasting up to one year) do belong to the target group of the call. The international experience of the candidates will be taken into account when evaluating the candidates, and, in the final selection, preference will be given to those candidates with no or little international exposure.”

Q: “The call focuses on early career researchers. Is there an age limit for the application?”

A: “Candidates applying for a ZUKOnnect Fellowship may have up to two years of postdoctoral research experience at most. Unavoidable delays in career development will be taken into account when calculating the years of postdoctoral research experience (see below). Other than that, there is no formal age limit, although the candidates’ achievements should be in line with their "academic age".

The Zukunftskolleg values multidimensional career tracks. Career breaks and variations in the chronological order of CVs are therefore regarded as potentially valuable contributions to the professional development of researchers. As a certified family-friendly university, the University of Konstanz especially welcomes returnees from parental leave. The mobility experiences of applicants are also recognized as a valuable contribution to the interdisciplinary and international research community at the Zukunftskolleg. Applicants can submit evidence-based CVs that reflect their extra-curricular achievements and qualifications.”

Q: “What will be taken into account when calculating the time of postdoctoral experience?”

A: “Candidates applying for a ZUKOnnect Fellowship may have up to two years of postdoctoral research experience at most. As a university-based Institute for Advanced Study within the German academic system we follow the guidance of the German Research Foundation (DFG). In order to appropriately assess an individual’s research achievements, due consideration must be given to individual circumstances. In this context, equal opportunity means that appropriate allowance must be made for unavoidable delays in an individual’s career development. Unavoidable delays in a research career (for example extended qualification phases, publication gaps, reduced number of periods abroad) may be caused by circumstances such as:

- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Childcare
- Care for family members
- Disability or chronic illness
- A long period of serious illness
- National service (military or civilian)

Applicants who wish to explain unavoidable delays in their career development must therefore explicitly state the relevant circumstances in the proposal, motivation letter and curriculum vitae and, if necessary, (i.e. the circumstance is not self-explanatory) attach a short explanation. Unavoidable delays in career development will be taken
into account when calculating the years of postdoctoral research experience. In addition, applicants should indicate in the curriculum vitae the dates of birth of children and periods of childcare (e.g. periods during which an individual temporarily gave up work for parental leave).

Q: “Will I need to contact a researcher or Zukunftskolleg Fellow to support my application?”
A: “No. Please do not contact a researcher or fellow in advance! We only ask you to name researchers or Fellows in your application form. Please use our website, the university catalogue or a web search engine to search for suitable research contacts at the University of Konstanz. There is no need to contact researcher(s) at the University of Konstanz beforehand.

Q: “I have to name Zukunftskolleg fellows and/or other Konstanz-based researchers in my application. Where can I find more information about who to pick?”
A: “You can find out more about the Zukunftskolleg Fellows here. For more information on researchers at the University of Konstanz, please take a look at the university’s departments.

Q: “I could not identify a current Fellow that matches my research interest, but I could link up to other researchers at the university. Can I still apply?”
A: “Yes. We encourage collaboration with our Fellows as this will also facilitate integration into the Zukunftskolleg community – in particular keeping in mind the relatively short duration of the fellowships. However, as we only have a limited number of Fellows, you are also eligible to apply if your research interest fits with other researchers at the university. Specifically, the selection committee will examine your research project description in combination with your timeline and the objectives for your research stay.”

Q: “Do I need a reference from the University of Konstanz?”
A: “No. The letter of reference should come from your current or former (academic) workplace. For doctoral students, a letter from their supervisor is sufficient. You will need no letter of support or similar document from a researcher at the university of Konstanz. Applicants can either directly upload the reference letters themselves or ask the reviewers to send it to us via email to zukonnect@uni-konstanz.de. Importantly, these references should be up to date, written on official letterhead paper and be signed by the respective reviewer.”

Q: “I am a doctoral researcher. What does the letter from my supervisor have to include?”
A: “A short confirmation from your supervisor which clearly states that you are in your last year is enough.”

Q: “What is required in the letter of motivation?”
A: “The letter of motivation is typically a statement of purpose and should address your motivation to become a member of the Zukunftskolleg. The letter should discuss the fit between you, your project, the Zukunftskolleg, and the University of Konstanz. To what degree would your project benefit from the specific environment at the Zukunftskolleg as well as the department associated with your research (and vice versa)? Why do you think you are the right person for this programme? How does
your experience and proposed research project fit within the advertised framework of the fellowship? The motivation letter can also address relevant experience or research as well as other pertinent information not stated elsewhere in the application. The letter should be no longer than two pages.

Q: “I have just completed my doctorate. Shall I comment on my past doctoral project or the new PostDoc project when applying (title, abstract and summary)?”
A: “It depends on the progress of your PostDoc research. Would you like to use your time in Konstanz to start working on a new PostDoc project after completing your doctorate or even on a proposal for a new project? In this case, in the very early stages of your research, it makes sense to provide a summary, title and abstract of your current doctoral research project and to additionally discuss what you intend to work on in Konstanz in your letter of motivation. In any case, please provide a time plan for your stay.

If you feel that you are already sufficiently familiar with the new project which you would like to work on in Konstanz, you are welcome to write your maximum three-page summary, title and abstract on your future project and to touch on your past doctoral research in your letter of motivation.”

Q: “Do I need to have any knowledge of the German language for the fellowship or, in general, for my stay in Konstanz?”
A: “No. The Zukunftskolleg is committed to caring for the special needs of international researchers, striving to reduce obstacles to transnational mobility through a number of measures. The working language of the Zukunftskolleg is English and all documents are available in English, thus reducing language-barriers for non-German-speaking Fellows. All coaching and training activities are available in English and all administrative and support staff is trained in communicating effectively in English.”

Q: “Do I need to submit a documentation of English language skills in order to be eligible?”
A: “No, you do not need to certify your English language skills. Although you are required to upload all documents for your application in English, you do not have to conduct or publish your research during the fellowship in English.”