

Terms and conditions of participation – valid for funding through the Hessen Ideen Scholarship from 1 July 2026 (as of January 2026)

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This document is a translation of the German-language terms and conditions of participation. Only the German-language version of the terms and conditions of participation is legally valid.

1. Objectives and legal basis of the funding

The Hessen Ideen Scholarship is a six-month scholarship programme for university members or alumni of state universities in Hessen and state-recognised, non-profit private universities in Hessen who are in the early stages of developing an innovative, knowledge- or technology-based entrepreneurial business idea.

Founders (teams) should be supported in the transition from an initial entrepreneurial idea to a validated business idea. The aim is to create measurable added value for the recipients (scholarship holders) in terms of:

- Improving the quality and development planning of their start-up ideas (sharpening customer and market orientation, structuring the project in terms of time)
- Improving the presentation of the project to potential investors
- Increasing the probability of success in obtaining follow-up financing for the project, in particular when applying for downstream federal programmes to promote start-ups (especially the EXIST start-up scholarship) or when acquiring financing from investors
- Increasing the likelihood of a successful market entry and a successful start-up

The scholarship is awarded by the University of Kassel on the basis of funding from the State of Hesse.

Applicants have no legal right to receive a grant. The awarding of the grant is subject to the availability of the estimated budget funds.

2. Purpose of the funding

Funding is provided for innovative, knowledge- or technology-based start-up projects by individuals and start-up teams from state universities in Hesse and from state-recognised, non-profit private universities in Hesse.

Scholarship holders receive a monthly scholarship (full-time or part-time) and simultaneously participate in the 'Ideas Accelerator', a coaching and qualification programme designed to provide targeted support for their start-up idea. The funding period is six months.

The Hessen Ideas Scholarship is offered as both a full-time and part-time scholarship and is personalised.

- Graduates with at least one state-recognised university degree receive a full-time scholarship of €2,500 gross per month.
- Students with a first professionally qualifying degree (bachelor's degree) who are enrolled in a further degree programme (master's degree) receive a part-time scholarship of €1,000 gross per month.

Notes:

- If the master's degree is successfully completed during the funding period, the increased scholarship can be received from the month following graduation.
- Special case of second degree: Persons who are pursuing a second degree (bachelor's) are not eligible for funding. If the second bachelor's degree is completed during the funding period, the person can receive financial support from the following month.

A maximum of three people per start-up team will be funded. The scholarships will be paid directly to the scholarship holders. Material costs (including travel expenses) are not covered by the scholarship.

The 'Idea Accelerator' consists of two components:

- 1) Coaching – During the programme, scholarship recipients and start-up teams are supported by a start-up consultant from a Hessian university. This advisor acts as a sparring partner for the participating scholarship holders in the development of their ideas and is referred to below as the university coach. In addition to the university coach, the scholarship teams are supported by the Hessen Ideen Coach throughout the accelerator programme. Together with the Hessen Ideen Coach, they can regularly review their progress towards their goals and discuss any questions or concerns they may have about the programme.
- 2) Qualification programme – Hessen Ideen workshops are held monthly at various locations in Hesse, covering a range of topics (e.g. business model development, marketing, pitching). The aim is to promote networking (mutual learning) and teach the key aspects of business planning. The programme will be published in good time before the start of the funding period. Note: The Hessen Ideen project team reserves the right to hold the workshops in digital form instead of in person under certain conditions.

In addition, opportunities are regularly created to connect the scholarship teams with experienced founders and other partners from the business world who can help them build networks and teach them entrepreneurial skills.

3. Application requirements

Applications are open to individual founders and start-up teams who are in the early stages of developing an innovative, knowledge-based business idea. Up to three people per team are eligible for funding.

At least one of the eligible team members must be a member or alumnus (up to 5 years after graduation, with the start date of funding as the cut-off date) of a state university in Hesse or a state-recognised, non-profit private university in Hesse. Only persons who can already demonstrate a first professionally qualifying degree (bachelor's) are eligible for funding.

Participating universities:

State universities:

- Philipps-Universität Marburg
- Justus Liebig University Giessen
- Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen University of Applied Sciences
- Hochschule RheinMain - University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSRM)
- Hochschule Geisenheim University
- Hochschule Darmstadt - University of Applied Sciences
- Technical University of Darmstadt
- Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
- Goethe University Frankfurt/ Main
- University of Art and Design, Offenbach/Main
- Fulda University of Applied Sciences
- University of Kassel
- Städelschule
- Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts

State-recognised, non-profit private universities:

- YMCA University of Applied Sciences
- EBS University of Business and Law
- Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt, University of Applied Sciences
- accadis Hochschule - University of Applied Sciences with accadis Institute of Entrepreneurship
- Frankfurt School of Finance & Management
- Giessen School of Theology
- Tabor Protestant University
- Fresenius University of Applied Sciences (applicants must provide proof of their connection to the Wiesbaden location)
- Ewersbach Theological Seminary - Theologische Hochschule Ewersbach
- University of Labour
- Tomorrow University of Applied Sciences

Applicants must provide evidence of a first professionally qualifying and state-recognised university degree (bachelor's degree) at the start of funding. This degree may have been obtained at either a state or a state-recognised university. The applicant's most recent university degree must not be more than five years old (the cut-off date is the start date of funding).

Exceptions to the 5-year rule:

- One of the team members may have obtained their university degree more than five years ago, provided that the other team members meet the above requirements.
- For postdocs/doctoral students: The degree may have been obtained more than five years ago, but the last employment relationship at the university may not have been more than five years ago. The application must be accompanied by an unsolicited CURRENT certificate from the institute/department confirming that the applicant was employed there as a research assistant and the period of employment.
- For persons who have received exist Women funding, the degree may have been completed more than five years ago, but the last day of exist Women funding may not have been more than five years ago.

For degree programmes in which no bachelor's degree can be obtained (e.g. diploma/state examination), the following applies: Students who have completed at least half of their studies, which extend up to the 2nd state examination/diploma, at the time of application are eligible for funding. Appropriate proof (e.g. intermediate diploma, certificate from the examination office) must be enclosed with the application.

Applicants who do not hold a degree from a German university must provide proof of recognition of their degree in the form of a certificate evaluation from the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) when submitting their application. Alternatively, the ANABIN database of the Central Office for Foreign Education can also be used.

In exceptional cases:

- Team members who do not meet the application/grant requirements (e.g. because they do not have a first qualifying university degree) are excluded from financial support. However, they should still be included in the application so that they can access the accelerator programme.
- If all team members are doctoral students who are also employed by the university and are therefore not eligible for funding, the project can still apply. For a limited number of start-up ideas that meet these requirements, participation in the Idea Accelerator is possible without financial support.

The start-up project must be in the pre-start-up phase. This means that a corporation may not yet have been established in connection with the idea described in the application. Business operations may not yet have commenced. Commencing business operations means generating revenue and operating on the market with the intention of generating revenue.



Start-up ideas for which a detailed business plan already exists are excluded.

For each application round, individuals may only apply to the Hessen Ideen Scholarship with one idea. If the idea is not funded, the individual may reapply with this idea or another idea. Individuals who have already received funding from the Hessen Ideen Scholarship are not eligible for further financial support.

4. Eligibility requirements

The Idea Accelerator is an integral part of the funding programme, and participation in the events of the qualification programme is mandatory.

This means that personal physical attendance is mandatory for events that take place in person, and digital attendance is mandatory for digital events. The project organiser will decide on justified exceptions.

After six months, scholarship holders must achieve binding milestones:

- Interim report: Submission of a written report on the current status of the business idea halfway through the scholarship period
- Final report: Submission of a written report on the business idea at the end of the scholarship period
- Final presentation
- Submission of a completed final questionnaire

In addition, scholarship holders are required to send a monthly report to the Hessen Ideen Team.

Scholarship holders commit to working on their start-up idea on a full-time or part-time basis. For full-time scholarship holders, secondary employment during the funding period is only permitted to a limited extent (maximum 5 hours per week).

The scholarship cannot be combined with any other scholarship or funding programme intended to finance the living expenses of the founders.

Scholarship holders must be part of the start-up network of a state university in Hesse or a state-recognised, non-profit private university (see 3. for a list of universities) and must include a statement with their application confirming their eligibility from the start-up network/transfer office of the respective university and guaranteeing support from the university coach. Only persons designated by the university (usually the start-up advisors/transfer staff of the universities) can act as university coaches. A list of the relevant people can be found on the [Hessen Ideen website](#). Teams whose members come from different universities in Hesse must decide which university they will apply through.

5. Application process

Applications can be submitted at any time, but certain application deadlines apply for the individual funding phases. Only applications that have been submitted in full before the relevant deadline can be considered for the next funding phase.

There are (usually) two funding phases per year, in each of which approximately eight start-up ideas are funded:

1 January to 30 June

1 July to 31 December

The next funding round starts on 1 July 2026

The following application deadlines apply:

Scholarship start on 1 July 2026 → Application deadline 12 March 2026 (11:59 p.m.)

Scholarship start date: 1 January 2027 → Application deadline: 10 September 2026 (11:59 p.m.)

Application deadlines for the upcoming rounds will be announced shortly.

Applications must be submitted using the online form, including uploads, on the website (<https://hessen-ideen.de/stipendium/informationen>). For a successful application, applicants must submit the following documents by the deadline:

- Completed online application form
- Description of the start-up idea, including a letter of motivation (important: please use the template available for download on the website)
- CVs of all team members who are to receive financial support
- Certificate of completed studies or degree programmes (if this is not yet available, please submit a provisional confirmation from the examination office that you have already completed your studies)
- Letter of recommendation from the supervising university (template available for download on the website).

The selection of the start-up ideas to be funded takes place in a two-stage process. In the first stage, all submitted applications are evaluated in terms of content after a formal review. The evaluation is based on the written application using a defined set of criteria. The criteria are: innovative content, market, customer benefit, feasibility, suitability for the programme, and the academic relevance. An initial pre-selection is made.

In the second step, the ideas that have been selected are invited to a presentation. A commission from the worlds of business and science makes the final decision on eligibility for funding and selects the scholarship recipients.



Note: Applications from winners of the Hessen Ideas Competition will be admitted directly to the commission presentation in the year following the competition, provided they meet the eligibility requirements.

The founders or start-up teams selected for funding will sign a scholarship agreement with the University of Kassel as the coordinating university. Founders will receive the relevant information with their written acceptance.

6. Other eligibility requirements

Scholarship recipients agree that the following information (including audio/image/video material) may be published on the website www.hessen-ideen.de and used for public relations purposes: Start-up idea, name of the founders, university of origin, image material, description of the project, start and end of funding, link to the homepage (if available).

This also applies to recordings made during Hessen Ideen Scholarship events (workshops, network meetings, etc.) in which the scholarship holders can be seen/heard.

In the event of press enquiries, scholarship holders agree that their contact details may be passed on.

7. Evaluation

An accompanying evaluation is planned to assess the effectiveness of the funding programme. This requires that the institutions commissioned to carry out the evaluation receive the necessary information during and after the term of the funding programme. The persons receiving funding and their home universities are therefore obliged to cooperate with the bodies commissioned to evaluate the programme, to provide the necessary information, to collect the necessary data and to make it available in a timely manner. The information will be used exclusively for evaluation purposes and will be treated confidentially.

8. Responsibilities

The Hessen Ideen initiative is a joint initiative of the Hessian Ministry of Science and Research, Art and Culture, Hessian universities and Hessian companies. The Hessen Ideen Scholarship is funded by the Hessian Ministry of Science and Research, Art and Culture. The University of Kassel and the Technical University of Darmstadt play a special role in the implementation of the project.



The University of Kassel is the coordinating university for the initiative:

University of Kassel
UniKasselTransfer Inkubator
Universitätsplatz 12
34109 Kassel

The project coordination team will provide further information on request and assist with the application process.

E-Mail: info@hessen-ideen.de

Guidelines, templates, etc. can be found at
<https://hessen-ideen.de/stipendium/informationen>.