NCCR Catalysis Project Office

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NCCR Catalysis Young Talents Fellowship

An initiative to promote fair representation in catalysis research

1 Aim

Chemistry and catalysis impact our daily lives, yet only some have benefitted from equal opportunities to integrate into the catalysis and sustainable chemistry research communities. The Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research, NCCR Catalysis, strives to address this disparity through the Young Talents Fellowship.

This fellowship aims to recognize and support students with outstanding academic achievements or potential, especially those facing barriers in the current structures. Successful applicants have the opportunity to conduct their Master's thesis in research groups associated with NCCR Catalysis. The goal is to help these talented individuals forge connections and cultivate ideas within a multidisciplinary, cross-fertilizing environment of research excellence.

2 Eligibility criteria

You are eligible and encouraged to apply if you:

2.1 Are currently enrolled in a Master's program relevant to catalysis and sustainable chemistry research. You have to be ready to start your Master's thesis between 1 August of the same year and 31 July of the following year (e.g. applications sent on 30 April 2026 need to be ready to start the thesis between 1 August 2026 and 31 July 2027) . Candidates pursuing their first Master's degree will be prioritized.

2.2 Show exceptional motivation and potential to conduct your Master's thesis in one or more of the labs of NCCR Catalysis Principal Investigators (PIs) based in Switzerland.

2.3 Meet the enrollment requirements of the host institution(s) where you plan to conduct your thesis.

We are excited to bring students from a wide variety of personal, educational, and professional backgrounds together, according to the Young Talents Fellowship Wheel of Privilege, and to leverage the great potential that lies in their diversity.

3 Fellowship

With the Young Talents Fellowship, you will benefit from:

3.1 **Financial support.** Receive up to CHF 3000 per month for the duration of your Master's thesis in Switzerland.

3.2 **Guidance & environment.** Benefit from supervision and mentorship in the vibrant research environment of the host lab(s).

3.3 **Networking & engagement.** Participate in scientific and social activities alongside NCCR Catalysis members.

Important considerations:

3.4 Cost coverage. The fellowship is designed to cover your cost of living, accommodation, and personal expenses.

3.5 Scholarship declaration. Declare all scholarships received during your Master's studies in your application. The NCCR Catalysis Young Talents Fellowship cannot be combined with other excellence scholarships at the Master's level, such as the SCS Foundation Alfred Werner scholarship, the ETH Zurich Excellence Scholarship & Opportunity Programme, and the EPFL Master Excellence Fellowships. Holding other fellowships during your Master's thesis is not permitted.

3.6 Project-related expenses. Expenses related to your Master's thesis, such as travel to NCCR Catalysis meetings or relevant training, are covered by the NCCR Catalysis funds from your hosting PI(s).

3.7 Support for unique situations. We recognize that unique situations may impact your ability to undertake your Master's thesis in Switzerland. NCCR Catalysis provides advanced support for financial challenges, including travel costs, family and care support, and other non-standard situations, subject to host institution regulations.

3.8 Payment details. The fellowship is awarded as a one-time payment or as mutually agreed with the NCCR Catalysis Project Office. If you discontinue your thesis (e.g., after 2 out of 6 months), you must repay the remaining funds (e.g., 4 months).

3.9 Fellowship extension. The hosting PI(s) and the recipient may decide to extend the Master's thesis with approval from both the host and home institutions. The fellowship duration cannot be extended beyond the period communicated at the time of application submission, and requests to do so will not be considered.

4 How to apply

To apply for the NCCR Catalysis Young Talents Fellowship, prepare the following documents:

4.1 Curriculum vitae. A concise CV of a maximum of two pages.

4.2 Motivation letter. Craft a one-page letter in which you:

- Introduce yourself and your circumstances briefly, e.g., by referring to relevant aspects in the Young Talents Fellowship Wheel of Privilege.
- Articulate the connection between your Master's program and catalysis/sustainable chemistry, highlighting why you are an exceptional talent.
- Choose and justify one or several hosting PIs; we strongly encourage collaborative supervision by several hosting PIs. During your application preparation, you must contact the potential hosting PI(s) to obtain their support for (joint) supervision, discuss an approximate start date with them, and request a recommendation letter (see **4.5**).
- Explain how receiving this fellowship would benefit your career.
- Specify if you need additional financial support and in which form (section **3.7**).

4.3 Educational documents. Provide a copy of your university degree and transcripts, showcasing all grades. Please ensure that an explanation of the grading system is provided.

4.4 Scholarship declaration. Provide a list of all scholarships you benefit from during your Master's studies, if applicable.

Send an email to office@nccr-catalysis.ch, with the subject line "**NCCR Catalysis Young Talents Fellowship Application: [applicant's full name]**" and include your application contents (**4.1-4.4**) as **one** document in pdf format.

4.5 Recommendation letters. Arrange for at least two recommendation letters, with at least one mentioning your ranking among peers. One recommendation letter **has to** be provided by the potential hosting PI(s). Recommenders should send the letters directly to office@nccr-catalysis.ch, with the subject line: "**LOR for [applicant's full name]**".

5 Application procedure and selection criteria

Your application will be handled confidentially and undergo the following stages:

5.1 Application submission. Submit your application exclusively via email to office@nccr-catalysis.ch. The submission deadline is 30 April. Incomplete or late submissions and letters of recommendation received after 30 April will not be considered.
5.2 Review process. The NCCR Catalysis Project Office organizes and prepares the received applications undergo a thorough review by the Evaluation Committee and the NCCR Catalysis Management Team. Their recommendations are presented for discussion and final decision by the NCCR Catalysis Steering Committee.
5.3 Selection criteria. Applicants are assessed and ranked based on the following factors:

- Potential as young researchers within NCCR Catalysis, considering academic excellence, alignment of background and motivation with proposed hosting PI(s), and the availability of space within group(s).
- Alignment with the fellowship's objectives.
- Potential career advancement through the fellowship.

We encourage you to submit your application on time and ensure the recommendation letters reach us on time.

6 Timeline

Mark these important dates in your calendar:

6.1 Application deadline. Applications and letters of recommendation are accepted until 30 April (23:59, CEST).
6.2 Decision notification. All applicants will receive a decision about their application by late June.
If there are many applications, the NCCR Catalysis Project Office may communicate a delay in the decision notification. Successful applicants must confirm their participation in the NCCR Catalysis Young Talents Fellowship within two weeks of receiving the acceptance notification.
6.3 Fellowship start dates. Successful applicants are expected to commence their Master's thesis in the host lab(s) between 1 August and 31 July. The fellowship will be granted only to those who have completed enrollment at their host institution(s).

7 Contact

If you have questions about the NCCR Catalysis Young Talents Fellowship or are unsure whether you're eligible to apply, please contact the NCCR Catalysis Office (office@nccr-catalysis.ch).