2027 call for PhD students

Application portal and selection process: a guide for applicants

Institute of Science and Technology Austria

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1. Selection committee

The selection committee consist of the entire faculty of ISTA.

2. Overview of the evaluation and selection process

2.1 Online application tool

ISTA accepts applications only via its own online application platform available during the application period (Mid-October – January 8). Documents submitted via any other channels will not be considered.

The **deadline to submit the application** is **January 8, 2027 (3:00 PM CET**); **referees** have until **January 12, 2027 (11:59PM CET)** to submit their letters of recommendation.

The deadline to change the details of your referee is January 8, 2027 (3.00 PM CET). Requests received later will no longer be considered.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure all documents are received on time. Requests to submit documents late will not be considered, regardless of the circumstances. ISTA will only process **complete and submitted applications**; all others will not be reviewed.

All documents need to be submitted **in English**; transcripts and documents originally issued in any language other than English need also to be submitted in their original language. Applicants are asked to submit the following:

(a) contact information;
(b) the names of the professor(s) they wish to work with at the time of application (these choices are not binding, should you be successful, and you may be interviewed by PIs whom who have not indicated in the application)
(c) their research interests at the time of application;
(d) as PDF attachments: CV, statement of purpose, university transcripts and diplomas in their original language as well as in English if the original language of issue was *not* English;
(e) information on their educational background;
(f) information on the grading scheme of the country/institute where their degree was obtained;
(g) information on any internships completed and/or other relevant academic and scientific activities, experience and skills gained;
(h) answers to three questions designed to test preparedness and motivation;

(i) contact details of 3 referees willing to send letters of recommendation.

Referees are contacted automatically via the application platform and are sent a unique link to the platform, through which they are able to provide feedback about the applicant using either a standardized questionnaire or an uploaded PDF.

These references are confidential and under **no circumstances** will we share them with applicants. Likewise, under no circumstances will we accept references submitted by applicants themselves. It is therefore wise to obtain your referee's agreement to this method of submission *before* you provide us with their details.

2.2 Completeness checks

After the deadline, the program management reviews all submitted applications on formal grounds. Applications that are started but not submitted are not considered – this includes applications that have previously been submitted at some point during the Call, but which were then reopened for editing purposes, and not thereafter *re*submitted. Applications that are missing the required documents or are missing the necessary number of submitted reference letters (two) are marked as incomplete and are no longer considered in the selection process.

2.3 Mode of evaluation:

The first formal scientific evaluation is based on the application materials, with a meeting of the selection committee, deciding on who will be invited for interviews, in the second half of February. Results of the first evaluation will be available shortly thereafter (mid to late February).

The second scientific evaluation is conducted via interviews by a minimum of two professors (usually more). Interviews may be done remotely or – in rare circumstances and/or for logistical reasons – onsite. If you are offered an onsite interview, but would prefer to do it online, you can request this. You *cannot* request that an online interview be converted into an onsite interview. Results will be available after all interviews have formally concluded (mid to late March).

2.4 First level evaluation: review of applications

Complete applications are forwarded to at least three different professors at ISTA, for scientific review and evaluation.

The assignment is based on these criteria, in descending order:

(1) names of professors listed by the applicant in the application;
(2) the research interests indicated in the application (every professor at ISTA is matched with a predefined list of research fields. If their research interests match those listed by the applicant, then the application is assigned to that professor. This usually happens if the professors listed by the applicant do not match the research interests also listed by the applicant, or where one or more of the professors listed by the applicant are unable to take part in the review process)
(3) spread of workload among professors – if the applicant indicated only very general research interests, then the workload of each professor is also considered. All faculty can also add one or more other faculty reviewers to the application if they deem it necessary or relevant – e.g., where they think an application would be of interest to anther professor not originally listed by the applicant.

A bundle of indicators is used to evaluate the candidate with respect to the applicant's preparedness, motivation, and potential. The following will be considered (in no particular order):

a. course performance overall, with a special focus on relevant field specific courses;
b. reference letters provided by professors and scientists who have supervised the applicant in an academic setting. One letter from non-academic work environment is accepted, but letters from an academic background should be given priority; referees are asked to address analytical capabilities, technical proficiency, ability to work independently and motivation/commitment;
c. statement of purpose: past research experience and motivation for applying to this particular PhD program, is it a good academic fit, does the program contribute to the candidate's future career plans, etc.;
d. additional relevant skills (field specific) e.g., those demonstrated in internships and/or participation in research projects, participation in science Olympiads, programming languages, lab techniques, etc.
e. transferable skills e.g., communication skills, experience with working in teams, previous international experiences, leadership as demonstrated in student organizations etc.;
f. diversity e.g., a woman in computer science/math/physics, etc.

2.5 Second level of evaluation: interviews

The program office will contact shortlisted candidates for interviews and will provide them with details about the next step around mid to late February.

Shortlisted candidates will be assigned to a minimum of two professors for interviews, usually more. Assignment is based on the professors you listed in your application **as well as** the wishes of professors and overall time constraints.

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by ISTA professors in the second half of February or early March. Professors may contact the candidate **directly** to arrange the date and location. Professors will decide whether to interview a candidate online or onsite. Interviews will be overwhelmingly conducted online, however some professors may wish to interview a particular candidate onsite to test a particular skill in person and/or because the candidate is local to the institute.

If a candidate is invited to be interviewed onsite, ISTA will cover the travel costs, including accommodation for the visit (if applicable) up to a certain limit (details will be posted on a dedicated website for successful interview candidates).

Candidates can request early interviews (e.g., if under time pressure from another institution). In that case, an online interview is the default interview mode.

Candidates who are designated for onsite interviews may request to switch to online interviews. However, candidates who are designated for online interviews will **not** be able to request to be interviewed onsite.

The final selection committee takes place in the week after the interviews are concluded; admission offers will go our shortly thereafter (late-March). The deadline to accept or decline an offer is April 15.

There will be an opportunity for all candidates who have received an offer of admission to visit the institute on April 5.

3. Instructions – Overview and Timeline

The application portal will be available in the application period only (usually from the second half of October until January 8 of the respective intake year). To apply to the PhD program of ISTA, you have to create an online account in our application system, which will allow you to track your application through its various stages.

You do not need to complete the application process in one session. You can return to your account and save your application as often as you like, up until you are ready to submit.

You will need access to a desktop computer to complete the application: the application software is not compatible with mobile devices or tablets.

Please read the FAQs carefully!

Step 1: Create an account

Register online by entering your email and choosing a password. Note that the field is case-sensitive. You will then receive an email immediately, with a link to confirm and finalize the registration of your user account. If you do not receive the email in your inbox, please check your Spam or Junk folders. If you still have not received the email, please contact phd.admissions@ista.ac.at.

Step 2: Read the instructions

Read the instructions carefully to make sure you complete all steps and upload all necessary documents. Please consult the FAQs before sending an email for assistance.

Step 3: Enter application data

There are six parts to your application:

- Personal Data
- Education
- Application Data
- Relevant Achievements, Experience and Skills
- Additional Information
- Referees

Make sure that you click "Save" regularly before moving on to a different section.

Step 4: Submit your application

Ensure that your application is complete and correct before submitting. Any sections completed incorrectly will cause an error, and your application will not be submitted until the error is fixed. The red error message at the top of the application will show you what the error is and which question it relates to.

The **submission deadline for applicants** is **January 8, 2027** at **3:00 PM CET**. Referees need to submit their **recommendations** by **January 12, 2027** at **11:59 PM CET**.

The deadline **to change the details of your referee** is **January 8, 2027** at **3.00 PM CET**. These deadlines are firm and extensions are not granted. Beware of the time zone!

ISTA will only process complete and submitted applications; all others will not be reviewed.

If your application is incomplete (e.g., sections left blank or questions not answered fully, documents and/or references missing, misspelled email addresses of referees, etc.) we will **not** contact you to inform you that it is incomplete.

If you wish to update your application after it is submitted, you can use the "Undo Submit" button. This will move your application back from the status "submitted" to the status "created". You can then use the "Open Application" button to edit sections of your application. Once you have done so, you will need to once again submit your application, to move the status forward to "submitted". (NB. Once your referees have been contacted, which happens automatically upon first submission of the application, ***you will no longer be able to edit your referees' details***. You will need to contact phd.admissions@ista.ac.at to do this on your behalf.)

If there is an **urgent** matter regarding your application submission **that is not addressed in these instructions or in the FAQs**, please contact our administrator at phd.admissions@ista.ac.at

Applicants should note ISTA cannot answer telephoned queries. We receive a large number of applications and an extremely high volume of applicant inquiries as the deadline approaches. We aim at answering all written inquiries within 48 hours during standard office hours (Mon – Fri 9 AM – 5 PM CET), but may take longer during peak times. Requests submitted outside these times and on the weekend (Sat and Sun) will be answered on the next working day. Keep in mind that December 24-26, Dec 31, Jan 1 and Jan 6 are public holidays in Austria.

Results of the first selection round will be available in late February. The majority of offers will be sent in late March after interviews, but selected offers *may* be sent earlier. The deadline to accept or decline an offer is April 15 for all candidates. The start of the PhD program is uniformly on September 15. Only in very exceptional circumstances can you start the program later.

NB. some of the screenshots in the following sections of the instructions are taken from an older version of the application form. Some text and other terminology displayed in the screenshots may have since changed in the active application form.

3.1 Personal data

Please enter data into all required fields. Required fields marked with an asterisk (*).



Make sure that you follow the indicated format when entering your data.

Phone: +43123456; make sure to include the country code.

Date of birth (YYYY-MM-DD): 2000-10-26. Any other formats such as 2000-Oct-26 or 26.10.2000 are not supported and will result in an error when trying to submit.

3.2 Education

Please enter data into all required fields. Required fields marked with an asterisk (*).

Please enter your degree information in this section, starting with your bachelor's degree. The minimum formal entry requirement is a Bachelor degree. In case of admission, you will need to finish your first (e.g., Bachelor-level) degree before September 2027.

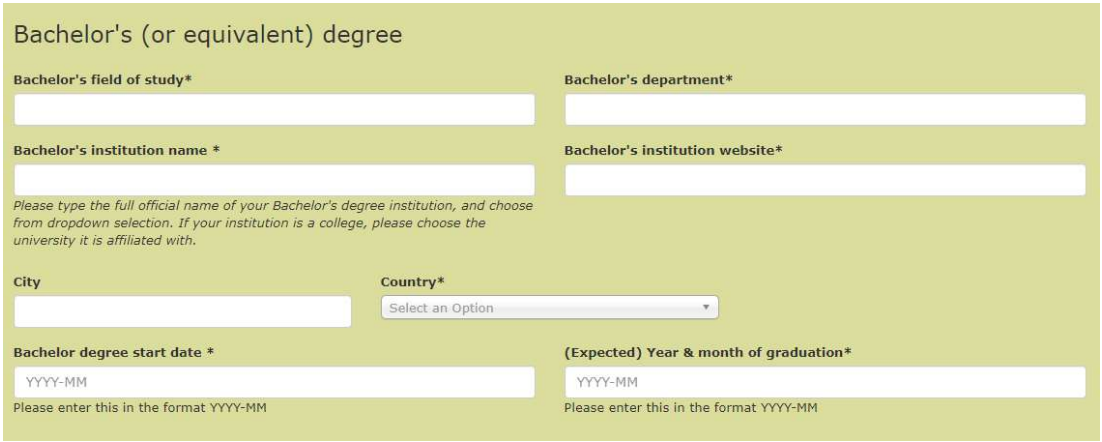
If the official title is different from Bachelor or Master, please choose the best equivalent.



If you are still enrolled in your degree program and have not been awarded your bachelor's or master's yet, please enter the expected graduation date in the corresponding fields, and indicate that the degree has not been awarded yet with the relevant checkbox.

The form field "institution name" adheres to naming used in the Research Organization Registry (ROR). When entering the name of your institution, type it in the "institute name" field, and choose from the dropdown selection. Please use https://ror.org/search to identify the exact name of your institution as listed in the database. If your institution is a college, choose the university it is affiliated with. *Note that we do not maintain the database and cannot add institutions to the list.*

In case your institution is not listed in the ROR database, choose the option Other, and add a note in the “additional information” section at the end of the application. Please only do this if you have exhausted all possible entries of your institution’s name in the database and still cannot find it.

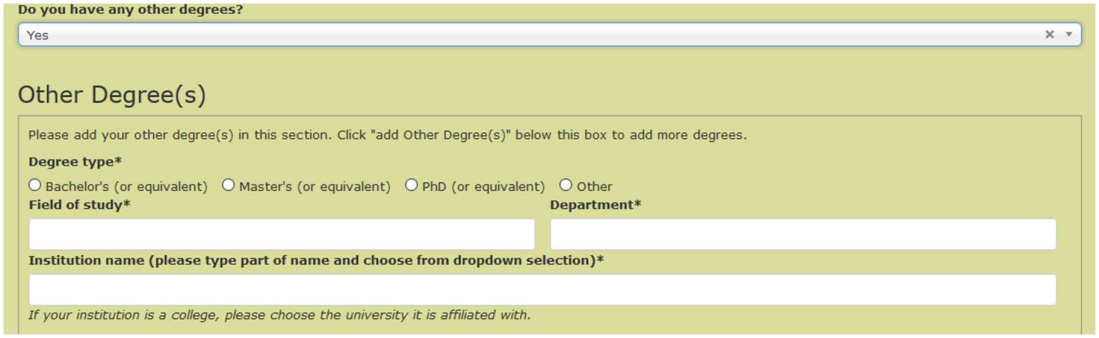


By September 2027, what is the highest degree level you will have obtained? *

Indicating that you will have earned a **Master** degree will open up a second field dedicated to the Master program. You can add additional degree programs by answering the question: “Do you have any other degrees?” with “Yes”.

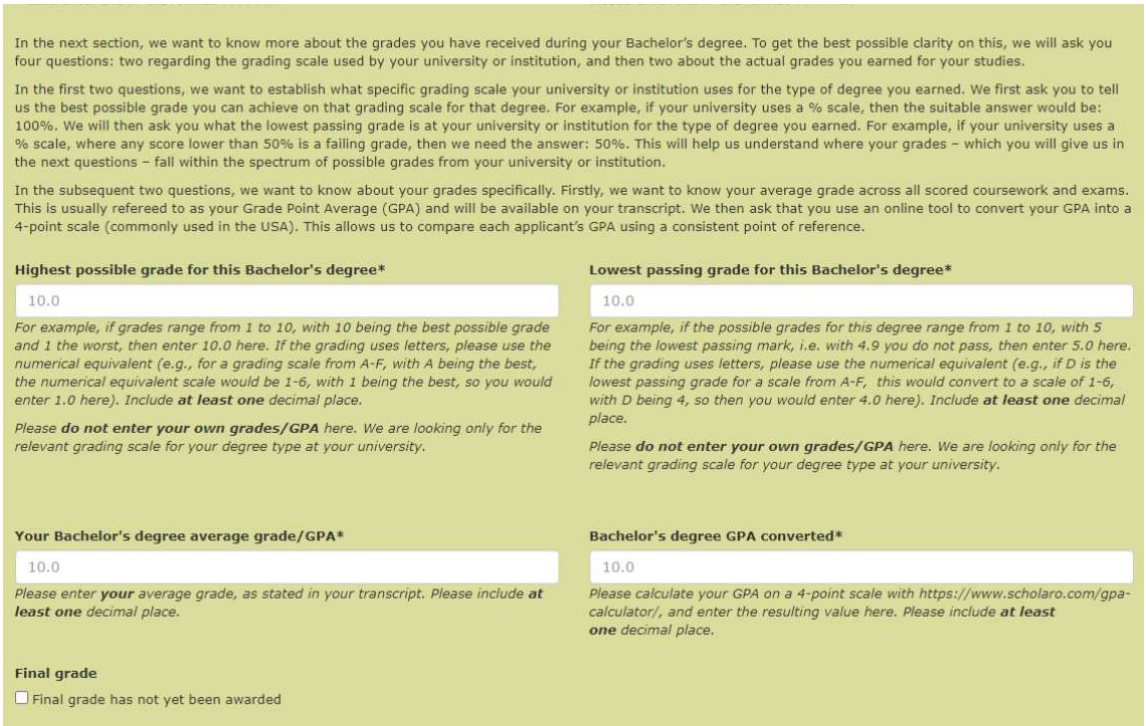
If you are enrolled in a **dual BS-MS program** or a 5-year program finishing with a Master (or equivalent) degree, please use the same start and end dates for both the Bachelor and the Master program.

You can add **additional degree** programs by answering the question: “Do you have any other degrees?” with “Yes”. This will open up a new section, addressing the same questions as for the Bachelor and Master degrees.



Make sure that you follow the indicated format when entering your data.

Degree start date requires the following format: YYYY-MM i.e., 2025-09. Any other formats such as 2025-Sep or Sept 2025 are not supported.



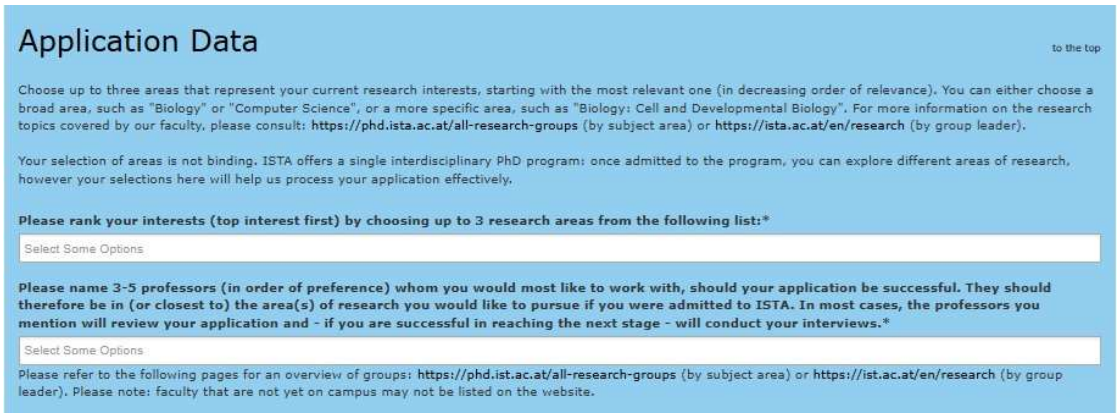
Highest/lowest possible passing grade requires the following format: 5.0. Enter **at least one** least one decimal place. Any other formats, letters or special characters such as 5-A, 5% etc. will not be supported. If your university uses the percentage system, indicate the percentage you obtained, and which percentage is required to pass. Enter them in a number format only. If the grading uses letters, please use the numerical equivalent, either that given in your diploma/transcripts supplement, or by direct transference e.g., for a grading scale from A-F, with A being the best, the numerical equivalent scale would be 1-6, with 1 being the best; thus you would enter 1.0 here.

Please **do <u>not</u> enter your own grades**/GPA as the highest/lowest passing grades. We are looking *only* for the relevant grading scale for your degree type at your university. You will enter your own GPA in the subsequent question.

Your GPA/average grade should be stated on your transcript. If you have entered the values for the highest possible and lowest passing grades correctly, then your average grade should fall somewhere between these two extremes. If you have just started a program and do not have any officially issued results, then please enter a grade based on past results or unofficial projections. Please <u>do not</u> enter 0.00. Please also then explain what you have done, and how you arrived at your average grade, in the "additional information" section at the end of the application.

Please use the grade converter at https://www.scholaro.com/gpa-calculator to convert your grade from the grading scale used by your institution to a 4-point scale. This gives us a figure we can compare across the application call.

3.3 Application Data



Choose **three research areas** you are interested in doing your PhD in and rank them. We recommend using subfields to ensure the best match between your application and the professors working in that field of interest. If your primary interests are not listed here, then ISTA is not a good academic fit!

The following fields are available in the application system and indicate **research areas** represented by professors currently at ISTA:

Biology: Biochemistry
Biology: Biophysics
Biology: Cell and Developmental Biology
Biology: Evolutionary Biology
Biology: Genetics and Genomics
Biology: Quantitative Biology
Biology: Structural Biology
Biology: Systems Biology
Biology: Technology Development, Bioimaging and Bioengineering
Chemistry: Biochemistry
Chemistry: Inorganic Chemistry
Chemistry: Materials Chemistry
Chemistry: Nanoscience
Chemistry: Organic Chemistry
Chemistry: Physical Chemistry
Computer Science: Algorithms and Complexity Theory
Computer Science: Computational Imaging and Imaging Processing
Computer Science: Cryptography and Security
Computer Science: Formal Methods and Programming Languages
Computer Science: Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence
Computer Science: Scientific Computing and Computer Graphics
Computer Science: Software, Distributed, and Embedded Systems
Data Science: Bioinformatics & Bioimaging Analysis
Data Science: Digital Fabrication
Data Science: Geometric Data Analysis
Data Science: Modeling
Data Science: Numerical Simulation
Data Science: Statistics
Data Science: Topological Data Analysis
Mathematics: Algebra / Representation Theory
Mathematics: Analysis and Differential Equations

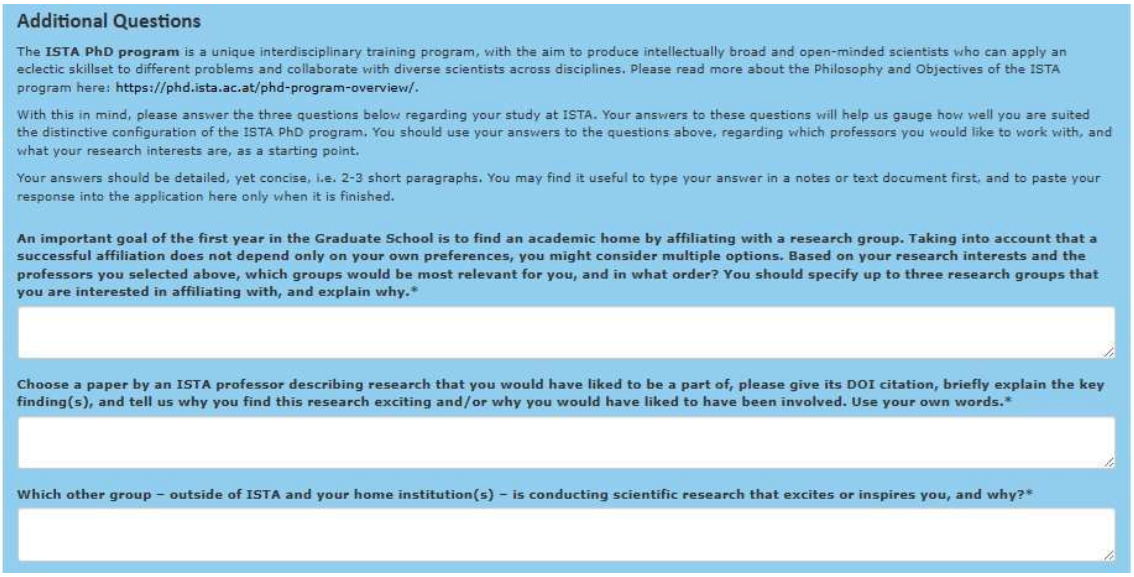
Mathematics: Discrete Mathematics
Mathematics: Geometry / Topology
Mathematics: Mathematical Biology
Mathematics: Mathematical Physics
Mathematics: Number Theory
Mathematics: Probability Theory
Neuroscience: Biochemistry
Neuroscience: Cellular Neuroscience & Connectomics
Neuroscience: Computational/Theoretical Neuroscience
Neuroscience: Developmental Neuroscience
Neuroscience: Molecular Neuroscience
Neuroscience: Structural Neuroscience
Neuroscience: Systems Neuroscience
Neuroscience: Translational Neuroscience
Physics: Astrophysics
Physics: Geophysics
Physics: Mathematical Physics
Physics: Experimental Atomic, Molecular and Optical Physics
Physics: Theoretical Atomic, Molecular and Optical Physics
Physics: Experimental Condensed Matter Physics
Physics: Theoretical Condensed Matter Physics
Physics: Experimental Quantum Devices and Information
Physics: Theoretical Quantum Information
Physics: Experimental Soft Matter, Biophysics & Bioimaging
Physics: Theoretical Soft Matter and Biophysics
Physics: Experimental Optics and Photonics
Physics: Theoretical Optics and Photonics

Review the group website of the research groups to understand which research field they are working in, and identify the relevant subfields.

Please **name 3-5 professors** (in order of preference) whom you would most like to work with, should your application be successful. They should therefore be in (or closest to) the area(s) of research you would like to pursue if you were admitted to ISTA. In *most* cases, the professors you mention will review your application and - if you are successful in reaching the next stage - conduct your interviews. Make sure you have reviewed their group website to understand if their research matches your interests. **Do not** choose random professors, or choose professors from random areas, just because this is an interdisciplinary program! In a well-crafted application, the research interests, chosen professors, affiliation and rotation examples, and statement of purpose, are consistent and well-argued.

Keep in mind that you will need to find an academic home. If your primary interests are not listed here, then ISTA is not a good academic fit!

For an overview of groups consult: https://ista.ac.at/en/research/ (or by group leader) or https://phd.ista.ac.at/all-research-groups/ (by subject area). Please note that some faculty that are not yet on campus may not be listed on the website.



Additional Questions

The **ISTA PhD program** is a unique interdisciplinary training program, with the aim to produce intellectually broad and open-minded scientists who can apply an eclectic skillset to different problems and collaborate with diverse scientists across disciplines. Please read more about the Philosophy and Objectives of the ISTA program here: **https://phd.ista.ac.at/phd-program-overview/.**

With this in mind, please answer the three questions below regarding your study at ISTA. Your answers to these questions will help us gauge how well you are suited the distinctive configuration of the ISTA PhD program. You should use your answers to the questions above, regarding which professors you would like to work with, and what your research interests are, as a starting point.

Your answers should be detailed, yet concise, i.e. 2-3 short paragraphs. You may find it useful to type your answer in a notes or text document first, and to paste your response into the application here only when it is finished.

An important goal of the first year in the Graduate School is to find an academic home by affiliating with a research group. Taking into account that a successful affiliation does not depend only on your own preferences, you might consider multiple options. Based on your research interests and the professors you selected above, which groups would be most relevant for you, and in what order? You should specify up to three research groups that you are interested in affiliating with, and explain why.*

Choose a paper by an ISTA professor describing research that you would have liked to be a part of, please give its DOI citation, briefly explain the key finding(s), and tell us why you find this research exciting and/or why you would have liked to have been involved. Use your own words.*

Which other group – outside of ISTA and your home institution(s) – is conducting scientific research that excites or inspires you, and why?*

Please answer **three additional questions** regarding your proposed study at ISTA. Your answers to these questions will help us gauge your suitability for the ISTA PhD program, particularly with respect to the unique structure and interdisciplinary philosophy of the ISTA PhD. For more information about the program structure, philosophy and components, please see https://phd.ista.ac.at/phd-program-overview/.

The second question also helps us to understand your preparedness for the research done at ISTA. Review the group website of the research groups, and choose a relevant paper. Please do not simply regurgitate the Abstract. We expect you to explain your interest in the findings, and opportunities for your own contribution, in your own words (not AI!)

Your answer to the third question helps us understand how you evaluate your own work. Again, we are looking for *your own words*.

Your answers should be detailed yet concise, i.e., 2-3 short paragraphs. You may find it useful to type your answer in a notes or text document first, then pasting your response into the application when it is finished.

3.4 Attachments

All documents must be submitted in English. All university diplomas and transcripts/scoresheets must be submitted in their original language of issue **and** in English, *if* the original language of issue is *not* English. An official translation is not required at this point, however: you can translate the document yourself. If the original language of your university is English, and/or your university issues official English versions of transcripts/certificates, then these alone are sufficient and a further translation is not required.

All fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required fields. You will not be able to submit your application if you fail to upload a CV, a statement of purpose, and at least your Bachelor or equivalent degree transcripts (as available at the time of application).



Please upload all relevant documents as **unencrypted, password-free PDF files.** Other file formats such as .doc, .jpg, .png etc. are not supported. The maximum size per file is **39MB**. If a document consists of more than one page (e.g., transcripts),

please combine these pages into a **single PDF document**. Make sure that the files **allow for document assembly**.

Please upload university **transcripts** for any degree program you have attended and/or are currently enrolled in. If you have completed a degree, please upload the **final transcript** and **diploma/certificate**. If you have not completed your program yet, please use the transcripts/scoresheets that are currently available to you. If you have just started a program and do not yet have any issued results, please upload an enrollment certificate and course schedule.

Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose (SoP) is an important part of your application. It is the one single document in the application which you have full control over. Therefore, craft it carefully and customize it to the program you are applying to. The SoP should be concise and preferably not exceed 2 pages.

The SoP is not a research proposal, but a document in which you share with us anything that prepares you for graduate-level research. For instance, you can describe your past research projects, your motivation to join the ISTA PhD program, as well as describing the skills you have and other background relevant to the research areas and groups you selected on the application form. Try to be as specific as possible about your experiences. You could also elaborate on your goals for the program and for your research in general. We want to hear your own voice, passions and successes: a generic SOP is not memorable, and so we prefer candidates not to use AI. If you do choose to do so, please use it sparingly: we can tell when a SoP has been mostly or wholly generated, and it will not do you any favours.

CV

The curriculum vitae, also known as a CV or resumé, is a comprehensive statement of your educational background and research experience, including relevant extracurricular activities and skills. Ideally it is a one-page document, but not longer than three.

Please note, with regard to the information provided in your CVs: We do not collect any special categories of personal data during the application process (in particular data revealing your racial or ethnic origin, political opinion, religious or philosophical beliefs or trade union membership, as well as health data or data on sex life or sexual orientation). If you nevertheless provide us with information that contains special categories of personal data, this constitutes your explicit consent pursuant to Art 9 (2) point (a) GDPR that we may process this data.

3.5 Relevant Achievements, Experiences and Skills

In this section you can give us additional information that may strengthen your application e.g., lab experience you might have or internships you have done.

Please note that this is mostly voluntary information. Your application will still be considered complete even if the optional fields are left blank, although it may look odd if you e.g., do not include details of an internship but then choose your internship supervisor as a referee.

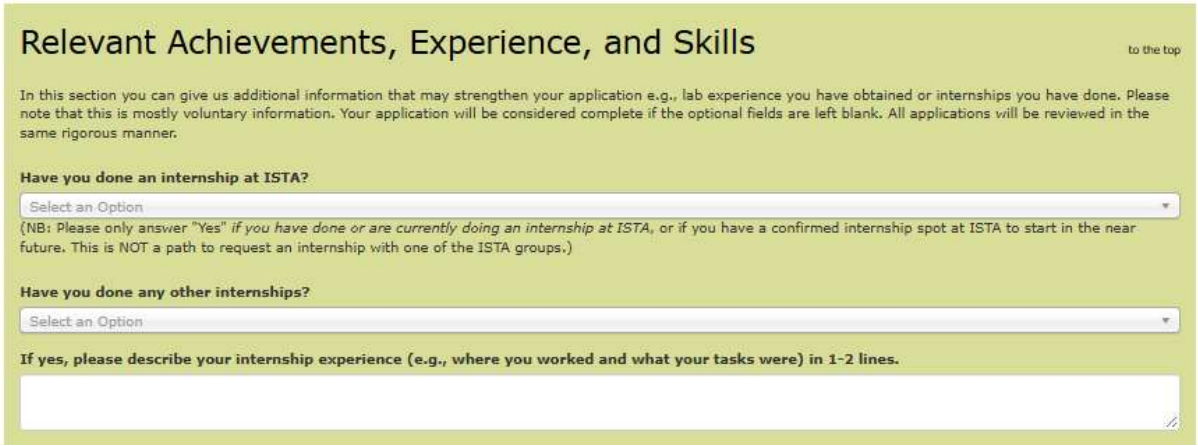
You can also specifically list the technical skills you have mastered during your research career so far. This can help your application stand out to a reviewer.

Have you done an internship at ISTA:

ONLY answer this question with "yes" **if you have in the past done a scientific internship or ISTernship** (or other academic research position) **at ISTA or are doing so at the time you submit the application**. Please answer "no" to this question:

a) if you have not done an internship or had another research position at ISTA
b) if you are merely *interested* in doing an internship at ISTA in the future, or
c) if you are currently in the process of applying for an internship or other position at ISTA.

Note that applying for an internship at ISTA is a separate process from applying to the PhD program.



3.6 Additional information

All fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required fields. We mainly use this information to improve our marketing and recruitment activities.

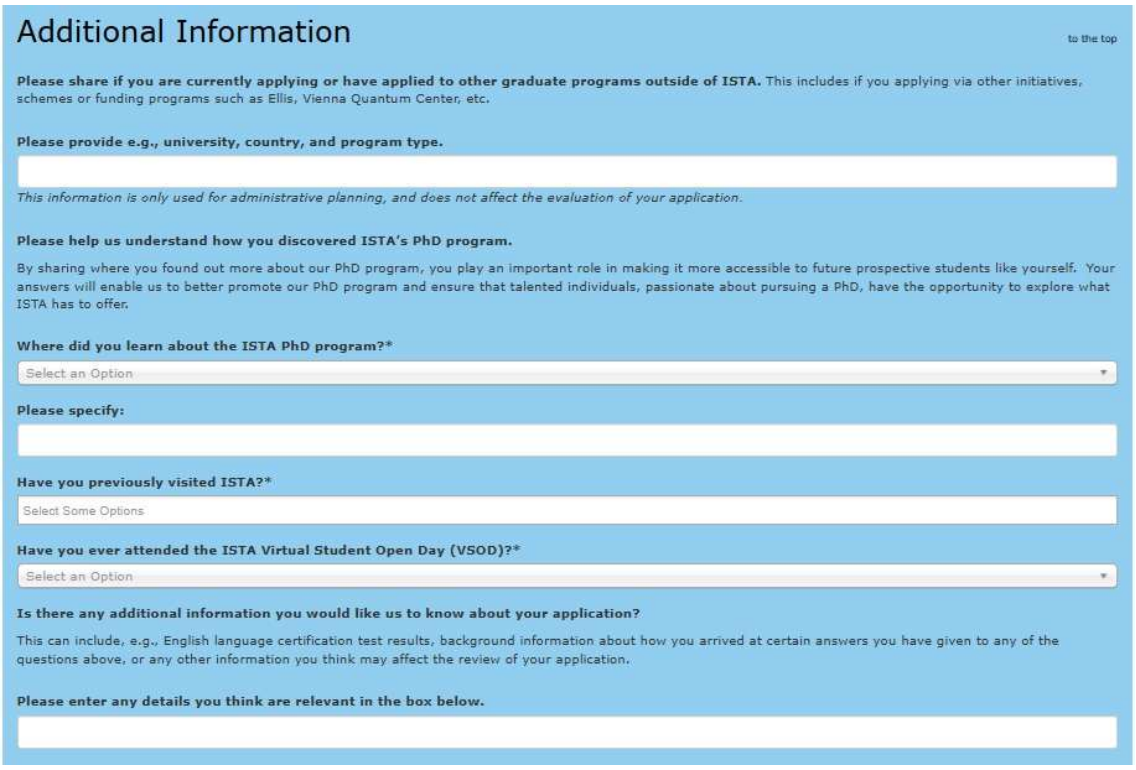
We also ask you to share if you have applied to other graduate programs outside of ISTA. This gives us a better understanding of your own particular timeline (i.e.,

possible offer acceptance deadlines) and thus helps us administratively handle your application.

As above: if you have chosen a different university from the ROR drop-down list because your own institution is not available, or if you have entered a GPA based on projections because your results have not yet been issued, then please enter the details here in the text field.

Language tests such as TOEFL, IELTS etc. are <u>not</u> mandatory. The program language is English throughout. Therefore, proficiency in written and oral English is expected and essential. If invited for interviews, we will evaluate your English skills in the interviews. However, if you have test results you would like to share with us, please enter your results in the text field.

Any other information that you think would be relevant to the processing of your application and which has not been covered in the previous questions, should also be entered here.



3.7 Referees

Enter the contact details of 3 referees. Make sure that the email addresses are still **valid,** the **spelling** is correct, and that you there are **3 distinct email addresses** (duplicate email addresses are not permitted). Institutional email addresses are preferred.

1. Enter the details of referee
2. Click “add referee” to add fields for the next referee
3. Save the application form
4. Use the “contact referees” button to send the request immediately

Your referees will receive an email directly from us with the subject "Request for Letter of Recommendation – ISTA" with a link to an online platform. The **deadline for the referees** to submit their recommendation is **January 12, 2027 (11:59PM CET)**. Be mindful of the time zone your referees are located in.

Emails can get lost in personal or institutional spam folders or may be blocked by institutional firewalls. Therefore, **make sure that your referees have approved** receiving emails from the email address phd.admissions@ista.ac.at **before sending the request.**

Enter all email addresses manually: **do not copy/paste** them from a website as it may be encoded to protect it from spambots trying to extract addresses from websites. Again, **double-check the spelling and the domain**! We will not contact you should we receive bounce backs from email addresses.

Save the application form, and make sure to click the “**contact referees**” button. Otherwise, the request will only be sent only after you have submitted your application.

You can send a **reminder** to your referee **once**. Do not send a reminder minutes or hours after the first request. Allow your referee time to respond.

Once you have requested the reference letter, you will no longer be able to make any changes to the referee.



Choose your referees carefully: they should be someone who has taught you or supervised your academic and/or research work and are therefore able to evaluate your academic and research performance. These can be professors, assistant professors, postdocs or equivalent positions. We recommend including the principal

investigator(s) who supervised your thesis work. If you have been employed since finishing your most recent degree, then we can accept one reference from industry.

Please ensure that you check the availability of your referees (e.g., that they are not on sabbatical or vacation during the application period) and willingness to submit a reference on your behalf, **before** adding their details to your application.

We require that letters of recommendation are sent by the referees directly. These letters are confidential and you will not have access to them. Uploading a letter of recommendation by yourself will lead to an automatic disqualification: your application will not be considered.

You can request reference letters before submitting your application form. Make sure to click the "**Contact referees" button** to send the request to the referees immediately while still working on your application. This allows your referees to have more time to work on the reference letters.

You can send a **reminder** to your referee **once!** Use this functionality carefully and allow your referee time to respond the request.

You can submit your application before any or all of your referees have submitted their reference letters.

If you need to **change the contact details of your referees** (typo in the email address, substituting a referee with a new one), you will need to contact phd.admissions@ista.ac.at and provide the following information:

- Your application ID (you can find this displayed in the frontend of the portal, or at the top of the page after clicking "see submitted application")
- full name of the referee you wish to update
- fields you wish to update (e.g., email address) including the correct info (e.g., the new email address)
- in case of substitution of a referee: all details of the new referee (title, first name, last name, email address, institution, country of institution)

The deadline to request changes is **January 8, 2027 (3.00 PM CET)**. **Requests received later than this will no longer be processed.**

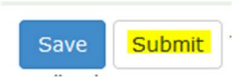
You can only amend the details of your referees **before** they have responded to the reference request.

Requests will be answered within standard office hours (Mon-Fri 9AM-5PM CET). Note also the following public holidays: December 24-26, 31, January 1 and 6. **Requests received over the weekend, on public holidays, or after business hours, will be answered on the next working day.**

Please note that during peak times, e.g., close to the submission deadline, we can receive several hundred emails per day. Emails are dealt with in order of receipt.

Sending repeated emails will not result in your request being processed any faster and can in some cases exacerbate delays.

3.8 Submit application



Submit your application. If your application remains at the status “created” (the status is visible from the frontend of the portal) then it is NOT submitted will NOT be reviewed.

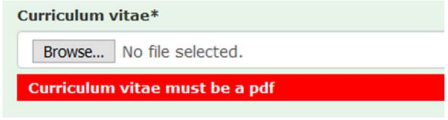
Once submitted, you will receive an automated email confirming submission. If you do not receive an automated email confirming that your application has been submitted, **then please assume it is not submitted and try again**.

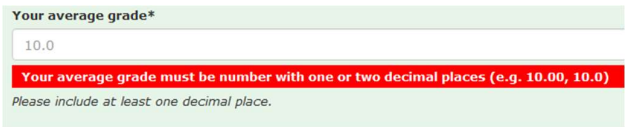
You can submit your application BEFORE any or all referees have submitted their letters of recommendation. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit your application, as the system may crash during periods of heavy traffic. Please also do not submit your application too early, to prevent too many changes from having to be made after submission.

The tool will not allow you to submit your application in case you have not completed the required fields. Fields that require input from you are marked with an asterisk: if you have not completed these, then they will be listed as errors and the relevant fields highlighted. Please pay attention to any special formatting required by the application field. If you believe that you have complied with all requests, and yet the application still will not submit, please “Save” your application and try to submit again using a different browser.









After submission, if you realize that there are mistakes in your application and/or receive an updated document e.g., a transcript, then you can edit the contents if your application up until the submission deadline i.e., **January 8, 2027 (3.00 PM CET)**.

If you wish to update your application after it is submitted, you can use the "Undo Submit Application" button. This will move your application back from the status "submitted" to the status "created". You can then use the "Open Application" button to edit sections of your application. Once you have done so, you will need to once again submit your application, to move the status forward to "submitted".



Once your referees have been contacted, which happens automatically upon first submission of the application, ***you will no longer be able to edit your referees' details***. You will need to contact phd.admissions@ista.ac.at to do this on your behalf.)

3.9 Status referees

You can log in to the application and check the Referee Status page to see the status of each reference letter, as follows:

Created
You have entered the referee and their email address but have not requested the reference yet, and so the referee has not yet received an email from us yet. If you do not explicitly request the letter, then the email will only be sent after you have submitted your application.

Requested
The email request to the referee has been sent, but the referee has not answered the request yet.

Reminded
The email request to the referee has been sent *and* a reminder email to the referee has been sent, but the referee has not answered the request yet.

Received
The letter of recommendation has been submitted and received. You will **not** receive a separate notification from us once letters have been submitted.

