



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



Federal Foreign Office



U N I K A S S E L
V E R S I T Ä T

***Pro-RUWA 2.0* offers PhD positions for francophone sub-Saharan African candidates**

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

4 PhD Scholarships within the West African-German [Pro-RUWA](#) Network

Application deadline: 30 Sep 2025 (24:00, GMT+1)

Scholarship start: 01 January 2026

Please note: Admission of grant subjected to fund approval (notification by around October 2025)!

The African Excellence network *Promoting Academic Capacities for Sustainable Agricultural Resources Use in West Africa – Pro-RUWA*, funded through the German Federal Foreign Office (AA) and monitored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the world's largest scholarship donor, offers 4 PhD scholarships.

Pro-RUWA 2.0 (The decision on further funding is expected to be made in October) continues aiming at training a new generation of excellent regionally and internationally educated young scientists, entrepreneurs, and administrators. Future decision makers in francophone West Africa shall be capacitated to jointly overcome bottlenecks in resource overuse, climate change, and food insecurity at the national and regional level. To this end *Pro-RUWA 2.0* will foster university education, international relations, regional development, and operational links between the academic, public and private sector. *Pro-RUWA 2.0* builds on built-up structures and processes of three universities in West Africa (University of Abomey-Calavi – Benin, University of Abdou Moumouni in cooperation with University of Agadez – Niger, Université Daniel-Ouezzin Coulibaly – Burkina Faso) and the University of Kassel in Germany obtained during the first phase. In the framework of its *Graduate School of Resources Management, Climate Change and Food Security*, the *Pro-RUWA* network invites students from francophone West African countries with proficiency in English to apply for a PhD scholarship at one of the *Pro-RUWA* partner universities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, and – new in 2026 – also Mali through the Institut Polytechnique Rural de Formation et Recherche Appliquée (IPR/IFRA) de Katibougou, Koulikoro.

Background

The Sudano-Sahelian countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali are heavily affected by indiscriminate resource exploitation and the effects of climate change. The latter is apparent in increasing temperatures, more erratic rainfall, recurrent droughts intermixed with torrential rainfall and floods, and negative effects on crop growth and pasture availability as well as on rural and urban economies. Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali in particular, exhibit high population growth rates, and a land-locked situation that hampers trade. To address these challenges, five universities together with associated partners have pooled expertise in a joint MSc and PhD supervision network for *Resources Management and Food Security*, which offers a modular, interdisciplinary training program in Agricultural Sciences. While training for professional English will be offered, the programme will be taught partly in French and in English, therefore documented proficiency in English is mandatory for applications.

Topics to be potentially filled

Each applicant is requested to develop a proposal according to one of the following topics

Ecosystem services

- Socioeconomic and environmental impacts of mining operations in AES countries (all four countries)
- Analyses and management (e.g. restoration and protection) of plant and animal biodiversity in savannah systems of West Africa (all four countries)
- Assessment of biomass and crop residues through remote sensing during the dry season (all four countries)

Local food systems and culture

- Traditional foods and their volatilisation in (cross-) national markets of West Africa (all four countries)
- Food preservation techniques using natural products (Benin and Mali)
- Promotion of value chains for underutilized local species (Benin and Mali)
- Factors driving the consumption of livestock products and their impact on nutritional status of households along rural to urban gradients in West/Central Africa (Benin)

Soil sciences and agroecology

- Promotion of agroecological practices in agricultural production systems (Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso)
- Promotion of integrated plant protection approaches like Integrated pest and diseases management (Burkina Faso)
- Comparative analysis of the ecological and socio-economic sustainability of agropastoral and agro-silvopastoral systems in the context of climate change in West African (Niger and Mali)
- Co-construction of innovative agricultural cropping systems for plant parasitic nematodes' management (Benin and Mali)
- Populations of free-living nematodes in different cropping systems (Benin)

Livestock and animal husbandry

- Institutional arrangements for community-based management of rangelands and indigenous livestock breeds in West Africa (Benin, Burkina, Mali, Niger) (all four countries)

- Evaluating and comparing the environmental footprints and socioeconomic benefits of indigenous and crossbred cattle in West Africa (Benin)
- Beyond meat, milk, and methane: integrating ecosystem functions and services into assessments of ruminant livestock systems in West Africa (Benin)

Note: The host university may change due to the availability of first supervisor.

What we offer - scholarships

The *Pro-RUWA 2.0* network offers a graduate programme in which PhD students are co-supervised by professors from any of the five partner universities (incl. Germany). Supervisors are chosen according to the PhD student's topic and thematic focus. PhD students will be based at their respective host university and enrolled in the *Pro-RUWA 2.0* PhD training programme; they may also spend at least six months at the partner university of the second supervisor. Moreover, they will be involved in the lively academic exchange within the *Pro-RUWA 2.0* network and the annual PhD conferences of the *Pro-RUWA 2.0* Graduate Academy.

The PhD scholarship will be awarded for 12 months each with the possibility of an extension to 48 months. It covers a country-specific monthly living allowance (Benin: 500 €, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali: 400 €), an annual research lump sum (460 €), enrolment and study fees (dependent on the host university) and the participation in *Pro-RUWA* Graduate Academy activities. Per student a research grant of a maximum of 5000 € is offered to complete empirical research. Final admission to the *Pro-RUWA* Graduate Academy is conditioned on the admission to the PhD programme of the chosen partner university and a positive progress evaluation by the PhD Committee each year.

Overview of benefits

	Surplace (resident)	Third country
Monthly scholarship	400 € / Benin: 500 €	500 € / Benin: 600 €
Annual study and research lumpsum	460 € (year 1- 3) 230 € (year 4)	
Enrolment fee	university - specific	
Study/tuition fee	university - specific	
Laboratory fee	university - specific	
Research grant	up to 5000 €	
Thesis printing / paper publication costs	on request and depending on the availability of budget	
Mobility (annual interim journey home, job interviews)	on request and depending on the availability of budget	

Application procedure

Applicants hold a MSc degree in Agricultural Sciences or a closely related field with an above average final grade. **Please note:** The date of obtaining your MSc degree must not be more than six years ago. The application process involves two elements. Your application is only complete if all of these elements are submitted:

1.) Application package

Please provide the following documents in a single PDF file in English. Only complete applications with all parts arranged in the exact order listed below, will be accepted:

1. A cover letter (including a motivation statement, **1 page maximum**);

2. A detailed curriculum vitae (including the academic background, the list of publications [if applicable], professional experience, language skills, voluntary work, **3 pages maximum**);
3. A preliminary PhD project proposal (written by the applicant!) addressing of the topics (s. above): **about 2000 words**, including topic, research question, short overview of the relevant literature, theoretical approach, research design and methodology, and a time schedule;
4. A short statement of the applicability of research results and its translation into sustainable products or services (max. 500 words);
5. A summary of the Master's thesis (**about 500-1000 words**);
6. The applicant must be proficient in English and supply a scanned copy of an **English proficiency proof** (TOEFL or IELTS certificate (grade min. 5.5 – with all skills better than 5.0) or 1+ year in an environment where the medium of instruction was/is English), B2 is considered the minimum level. Applicants who cannot obtain an international English certificate due to a justifiable constraint may be granted up to six months to provide one. When no English proficiency certificate is submitted with the application, but the candidate's level appears sufficient (verified through an interview), the candidate may be accepted on a six-month probationary basis, during which they must provide a valid certificate. The project will cover the costs for certificate obtainment once. If **no proof of English proficiency is submitted within six months, the scholarship will be withdrawn** and the position awarded to a candidate on the waiting list.
7. Above average study/professional proofs - scanned copies of the following documents in the original language with translations attached, if the language of these documents is not French, English or German:
 - a. the certificate and transcript of records of your recognised 2 years Master's (DEA) degree, listing all subjects and grades (if you have not yet completed your Master's / DEA degree, please provide only the transcript and substitute the certificate with a letter from the programme coordinator testifying the date and likelihood of the successful completion of the course);
 - b. certificate(s) and transcript(s) of records of your recognised Bachelor's degree, listing all subjects and grades;
 - c. certificate(s) for the completion of additional studies, listing all subjects and grades, [if applicable];
 - d. scanned copies of certificate(s) of previous professional/vocational experience, [if applicable].
8. Two Letters of Recommendation from former supervisors or external mentors
9. Signed statement confirming whether you are currently enrolled in a PhD program and whether you are already receiving a stipend.

These items of your application package must be submitted in the order listed above, with your cover letter as the first item, followed by your CV, etc. Kindly remember that all items of the application must be assembled in one single pdf document (use e.g. a pdf creator or your word processing programme), and should not exceed 50 MB in total file size. Submissions consisting of multiple files will be rejected.

Please name the file as follows: <2026 – Applicant's FAMILY NAME, given name>, (e.g. 2026 – SMITH, Arthur).

2.) Completion of the online application form and upload of your application package

To complete the online application form and upload your application package, you need to first register with your name and email address on the following website (online survey tool of the University of Kassel, Germany): [Pro-RUWA PhD 2026-2029](#) (please copy + paste the URL

<https://umfrage.uni-kassel.de/index.php?r=survey/index&sid=672313&lang=en>

in case the hyperlink does not work).

Once you have registered, a personalized link will be sent to you by email (as entered in the registration link!), with which you can then access the online application form. Completing the online application and uploading your application package is possible until the application deadline: **Tuesday 30 Sep 2025 (23:59 h, GMT+1).**

For further information or questions, please visit the *Pro-RUWA* webpage (www.uni-kassel.de/forschung/Pro-RUWA/home) or contact us at graduateschool.pro-ruwa@uni-kassel.de