

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



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

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

Application deadline: Friday 11th of September 2026 (23:59, GMT+1)

Proposed scholarship start: 01 January 2027

The African Excellence capacity building and research 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 again PhD scholarships.

Pro-RUWA 2.0 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* fosters 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 academic training processes of meanwhile four universities in West Africa namely **University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC)** – Benin, **University of Abdou Moumouni (UAM)** – Niger, **Université Daniel-Ouezzin Coulibaly (UDOC)** – Burkina Faso, **Institut Polytechnique Rural de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (IPR/IFRA)** – Mali and the University of Kassel in Germany. 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 documented proficiency in English to apply for a PhD scholarship at one of the *Pro-RUWA* partner universities.

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 and 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 supplementary 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 at the time of application.

Topics to be potentially filled

Each applicant is required to develop a PhD project proposal in one of the following disciplines in West Africa, to be academically supervised by one of the Pro-RUWA partner universities*.

Ecosystem services

- Socioeconomic and environmental impacts of mining operations (UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)
- Analyses and management (e.g., restoration and protection) of plant and animal biodiversity in savannah systems (UAC, UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)
- Assessment of biomass and crop residues through remote sensing during the dry season (UAC, UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)

Local food systems and culture

- Traditional foods and their valorisation in (cross-) national markets (UAC, UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)
- Food preservation techniques using natural products (UAC, IPR/IFRA)
- Promotion of value chains for underutilized local species (UAC, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)
- Factors driving the consumption of livestock products and their impact on nutritional status of households along rural to urban gradients (UAC)

Soil sciences and agroecology

- Promotion of agroecological practices in agricultural production systems (UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)
- Comparative analysis of the ecological and socio-economic sustainability of agropastoral and agro-silvopastoral systems in the context of climate change (UAM, IPR/IFRA)
- Promotion of integrated plant protection approaches, such as integrated pest and diseases management (UDOC)
- Populations of nematodes in different cropping systems (UAC)
- Co-construction of innovative agricultural cropping systems for plant parasitic nematodes' management (UAC, IPR/IFRA)

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Livestock and animal husbandry

- Institutional arrangements for community-based management of rangelands and indigenous livestock breeds (UAC, UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA)
- Evaluating and comparing the environmental footprints and socioeconomic benefits of indigenous and crossbred cattle (UAC)
- Beyond meat, milk, and methane: integrating ecosystem functions and services into assessments of ruminant livestock systems (UAC)

***Note: The themes listed above are not the final research titles. The institutions indicated in parentheses employ researchers with relevant expertise who may provide scientific supervision. Applicants are responsible for identifying the appropriate researcher, who will ultimately serve as the primary 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 €), a top up for health insurance according to country-specific health insurances (upon insurance prove), an annual research lump sum (460 €), enrolment, tuition and laboratory 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 conduct 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.

We are committed to fostering an inclusive and diverse research environment and welcome applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of gender, cultural background, disability, or other personal characteristics. Applicants with disabilities who meet the required qualifications are particularly encouraged to apply.

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	Up to 1025 € per publication (upon agreement)	
Mobility (annual interim journey home, job interviews, conference participation, international research stay)	On request and depending on the availability of budget	

Application procedure

Applicants must hold a MSc degree in Agricultural Sciences or a closely related field with an above average final grade. **Please note:** Applicants must have obtained their MSc degree within the past six years. The application process is as follows:

1.) Compile the application package

Please provide the following documents in English in a single PDF file. 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 one 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. English proficiency proof:
 - a. Applicants must be proficient in English and provide a scanned copy of proof of English language proficiency. The minimum required level is B1. Preferably, applicants should submit a valid TOEFL or IELTS certificate (minimum IELTS overall band score of 5.5, with no individual skill score below 5.0) or proof that they have studied for at least one year in an institution where English was or is the medium of instruction.
 - b. Applicants who do not provide an English language certificate may still be considered, provided they meet all other eligibility requirements. If shortlisted and invited for an interview, their English language proficiency will be assessed during the interview through a discussion of their submitted research proposal.
 - c. Applicants who successfully pass the interview and are selected for the scholarship may be granted up to six months to submit proof of English language proficiency before commencing their scholarship. The project will reimburse the cost of obtaining an English language proficiency certificate or other accepted proof of proficiency once.
 - d. If the required proof of English language proficiency is not submitted within six months, the scholarship offer may be withdrawn and 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, engineer) 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. One letter 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 (1. cover letter, 2. your CV, etc.) in one single pdf document (please use a pdf generator or your word processing programme), and **should not exceed 50 MB** in total file size. Submissions consisting of multiple files will be rejected without further notice.

Please name the file as follows: <2027 – Applicant's FAMILY NAME given name> (e.g. 2027 – 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 2026](https://umfrage.uni-kassel.de/index.php?r=survey/index&sid=848582&lang=en).

(please copy + paste the <https://umfrage.uni-kassel.de/index.php?r=survey/index&sid=848582&lang=en> in case the hyperlink does not work).

Completing the online application and uploading your application package is possible until the application deadline: **Friday, 11th of September 2026 (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