



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER

Federal Commission for Scholarships
for Foreign Students FCS

Academic Year
2020-2021

Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Students
at Swiss Higher Education Institutions

Application Guidelines for the Academic Year 2020-2021

To prepare a successful application:

Please read carefully and respect these guidelines exactly

Internet Link: www.sbfi.admin.ch/scholarships_eng

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In case of doubt the scholarship offer for your country of origin is decisive.

For further information see :

> www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_eng > select your country of origin

> [Video introduction to the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships \(5:04\)](#)

About the ...

Postgraduate scholarships

Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships

Through the Swiss Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS aka ESKAS, CFBE), the Swiss Government grants foreign researchers postgraduate scholarships at Swiss higher education institutions (Universities, Federal Institutes of Technology and Universities of Applied Sciences, Arts and Music Schools).

The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are intended for highly motivated, competitive young researchers who have graduated from university (postgraduates). These scholarships will enable applicants to undertake research work in the fields in which the Swiss universities are particularly active.

Read the FCS webpage

Specific scholarship types are offered for each country. Please go to the FCS webpage in order to see **which type of scholarship is offered to your country of origin.**

Click FCS website: www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_eng

Submit in your country of origin

Applications have to be submitted in the candidate's country of origin (citizenship). All candidates for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship have to submit their application at the specified contact (normally the Swiss Embassy) responsible for their country of origin. Double citizens are free to choose the country of origin where they prefer to submit their application.

The applications have to be submitted for a preliminary selection to the national institution in charge and/or to the Swiss diplomatic representation in the applicant's country of origin. The Swiss diplomatic representation will then forward the pre-selected applications to the FCS for final selection. In case your current country of residence is not your country of origin please submit your application to the Swiss diplomatic representation in your country of origin.

Application procedure

All year round

Entry Points

The Swiss diplomatic representation in the country of origin of the applicant are the entry point for the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships.

In August

Release

Detailed information about the scholarship types available for your country of origin, the eligibility criteria and the deadlines are online. Click FCS website: www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_eng

September, October,
November

Call for proposals

Get your application package from the Swiss diplomatic representation and prepare your dossier.

Check for your
country

Submission deadline

The date for submission of the application varies from country to country. Please check on the FCS website.

Before end of May

Selection

The results of the selection by the Federal Commission for Scholarships will be communicated at latest until the end of May.

In September

Start of scholarship

1st of September

Selection criteria

Important selection criteria

The 3 dimensions of selection criteria

The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are highly competitive. The following aspects of the application are considered mainly:

1) The candidate

Her/his academic profile, the research capacity and motivation.

2) The research proposal

Its originality and methodological soundness.

3) The academic context

The quality and context of supervision and the potential for future academic cooperation.

Strengthening cooperation

Longterm perspective

Candidates submitting their applications within the framework of a cooperation program between their academic home institution, where they are at the moment and/or where they accomplished their education, and a Swiss university/institute have a certain priority.

Academic host – a precondition

Academic supervisor aka host professor

Academic supervisor

To have an eligible application package, each applicant wishing to undertake a research, PhD or a Postdoctoral scholarship must find a host professor in Switzerland willing to support and entitled to supervise their scholarship research project or PhD project.

A letter of invitation must imperatively be part of the application package. This is also valid for doctoral schools.

Failure to have an academic supervisor will result in the rejection of the application by the relevant national institution in the host country or by the Swiss diplomatic representation. An application without a host professor is not complete and will therefore be rejected.

Before contacting a host professor

Prepare yourself well before contacting a prospective host professor

Make sure that the prospective academic supervisor actually works in your field at a Swiss university. Be specific and furthermore make sure that you possess all of the competences required for the intended scientific collaboration. Find out, for instance, what requirements must be met in order to obtain a Master's degree at the university in question before contacting professors.

Note: Many professors receive numerous requests. Finding a professor who is willing to supervise you can be a major challenge. It can take several weeks or even months.

Some hint

Watch this video for some hint before contacting a supervising professor:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp4NnqZ2T00>

Please note

The FCS application for a PhD scholarship including the support letter of a prospective host professor and the application for admission by a Swiss University for a PhD study are two separate procedures.

Finding your supervisor

Where to find

A prerequisite for the application

All Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are supervised and supported by a professor. The first step in the application process for the scholarship candidate is to find a professor at a Swiss academic institution **willing to act as her/his academic supervisor** for the scholarship research project.

What should you do before contacting a potential academic supervisor?

Watch this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp4NngZ2T00>

The FCS encourages candidates to find their academic supervisor on their own. There is no specific support offered in this bottom-up matching process. It is each applicants own task. A support letter from a host professor is required in any case. This is valid for doctoral school PhD applications as well. If the chosen doctoral school does not allow you to contact a supervisor before being admitted to the school, an application for the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship is not possible.

Good to know

Understanding the role of academic supervisors

Professors reported to the FCS that they are frequently contacted by scholarship applicants asking for support. Therefore the FCS secretariat issued a leaflet explaining the role of an academic supervisor for a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship holder.

The FCS recommends potential academic supervisors not to support more than 1 - 2 applicants per year. You find the leaflet «Will you be my supervisor?» enclosed in your application package. Feel free to use it when contacting your potential supervisor.

Types of scholarships available

All scholarships start in September

It is not possible to start the scholarship in the Spring semester or any other time in the year.

Not prolongable

Research Scholarship

12 months (September – August) – no prolongation possible.

Cannot be upgraded into a prolongable PhD scholarship.

Grant applications for stay lasting less than 9 months will not be treated as a priority.

Grant applications for stay lasting less than 6 months will be rejected.

Prolongable

PhD Scholarship

12 months (September – August) – prolongable up to 36 months **at most**

The PhD scholarships can be **prolonged** based on the achieved academic results. It is the concerned grant holder's and the supervisor's responsibility to find sufficient funding beyond the maximal duration of the PhD scholarship (36 months) if it turns out to be necessary to end the doctorate.

Not prolongable

Postdoctoral Scholarship

12 months (September – August) – no prolongation possible

Grant applications for stays lasting less than 9 months will not be treated as a priority.

Grant applications for stays lasting less than 6 months will be rejected.

Prolongable

Arts Scholarships

12 months (September – August) – prolongable up to 21 months **at most**

depending on the Master programme chosen and the necessary ECTS credits.

Research Fellowships

Research Fellowships (12 months)

Go to the FCS webpage in order to see which type of scholarship is offered to your country of origin

Intended for highly qualified postgraduate researchers from all academic fields.

- Master degree or equivalent achieved before 31 July 2020 (degree certificate)
- Date of birth after 31 December 1984
- A copy of the letter from an academic host professor (including her/his short CV) at the chosen Swiss university confirming why she/he is willing to supervise and support the research
- Research proposal including time frame

Postgraduate scholarships

The scholarship is valid only for full time PhD studies in Switzerland. It is not valid for mixed PhD programmes (part time in Switzerland and part time in another country). This scholarship is not compatible with fieldtrips outside Switzerland. Therefore no possibility and no funding for fieldwork. Furthermore, this scholarship type is not available for scholars holding a PhD degree.

Cotutelle de thèse

PhD students with an ongoing or planned doctoral project that is carried out within the framework of a formalised agreement between two universities («cotutelle de thèse» cooperation between a Swiss and a foreign university) and under the joint direction of two supervisors are eligible for a 12 month research fellowship only.

PhD Scholarships

PhD Scholarships (12 months up to 36 months)

Go to the [FCS webpage](#) in order to see which type of scholarship is offered to your country of origin

Postgraduate scholarships

Intended for highly qualified PhD students from all academic fields.

- Master degree or equivalent achieved before 31 July 2020 (degree certificate)
- Date of birth after 31 December 1984
- A copy of the letter from an academic host professor entitled to supervise a PhD (including her/his short CV) at the chosen Swiss university confirming why she/he is willing to supervise and support the PhD thesis. If an assistant professor supports a candidature, a full professor who is entitled to supervise the PhD during the entire scholarship has to co-sign the support letter.
- Research proposal including time frame

Full-time PhD only

The scholarship is valid only for full-time PhD studies in Switzerland at a Swiss university. It is not valid for mixed PhD programmes (part time in Switzerland and part time in another country). Furthermore, this scholarship type is not available for scholars holding a PhD degree.

Cotutelle de thèse

PhD students with an ongoing or planned doctoral project that is carried out within the framework of a formalised agreement between two universities («cotutelle de thèse» cooperation between a Swiss and a foreign university) and under the joint direction of two supervisors **are eligible for a 12 month research fellowship only.**

PhD Scholarships

Further important information for PhD applicants

**Two separate procedures:
Application and admission**

The FCS application for a PhD scholarship and the application for admission by a Swiss university for a PhD study are two separate procedures. The admission to a PhD study at your chosen Swiss university is *a conditio sine qua non* for a potential attribution of a FCS scholarship – but no guarantee though for a positive decision by the Federal Commission for Scholarships FCS. It is the applicant's responsibility to manage both procedures in parallel.

Two different ways to achieve a PhD

The first way to achieve a doctorate degree (aka PhD) consists in undertaking **doctoral studies under the supervision of an academic mentor** (supervisor). In this case, the **admission to the PhD takes place after the scholarship start**.

For doctoral school applicants additional document required

The second way consists in **being admitted to a doctoral school**, which provides the framework for the following doctoral studies. Please inquire your admission directly at the corresponding school.

- In addition to all other application documents (including the support letter from a supervisor), the **admission letter from the doctoral school is required with the application dossier**. As this takes time applicants must plan accordingly and submit their application for admission to the doctoral school sufficiently in advance of the scholarship programme deadline.
- If the chosen doctoral school does not allow you to contact a supervisor before being admitted to the doctoral school, the application for the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship is not possible.
- In case you do not get the admission to the doctoral school until the application deadline, and therefore cannot apply for the next academic year, you can always begin your studies without the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship and then apply for the following academic year. Please note: the exclusion criteria «Applicants who are in Switzerland since more than one year at the beginning of the scholarship» stays effective.

Postdoctoral Scholarships

Postdoctoral Scholarships (12 months)

Go to the [FCS webpage](#) in order to see which type of scholarship is offered to your country of origin

Postgraduate scholarships

Intended for highly qualified postdoctoral researchers at the beginning of their academic career from all academic fields.

- PhD degree achieved after 31 December 2016 and before 31 July 2020 (PhD degree certificate)
- Not more than 3 years after the award of the PhD. No funding for sabbaticals.
- A copy of the letter from an academic host professor (including her/his short CV) at the chosen Swiss university confirming why she/he is willing to supervise and support the postdoctoral research.
- Not accepted as academic supervisors for Postdoctoral scholarship applicants are their former PhD mentors and their co-directors for the cotutelle PhD if the academic supervisor is at a Swiss university.
- Research proposal including time frame
- This scholarship is valid only for full-time postdoctoral research in Switzerland. It is not compatible with fieldtrips outside Switzerland. Therefore no possibility and no funding for fieldwork.

Arts Scholarships

Arts Scholarships (12 months up to 21 months at most)

Go to the [FCS webpage](#) in order to see which type of scholarship is offered to your country of origin

Intended for highly qualified art students from all artistic fields wishing to pursue an initial master course.

- Bachelor degree or equivalent achieved before 31 July 2020 (degree certificate)
- Date of birth after 31 December 1984
- A proof for «admission is under consideration» at the intended Swiss arts or music school (conservatory). This may be in the form of a conditional acceptance pending an entry exam or other specific requirements. If applicable: a copy of the letter from a professor confirming the supervision of the studies.
- Valid only to pursue an initial master course. Applicants for arts and music cannot apply for a second master's degree.

Master scholarships

List of eligible countries

This type of scholarship is available for the following countries only:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, United States of America

Study location

Eligible host institutions

Swiss public academic institutions

The Swiss Government Scholarships are granted for research in one of the Swiss public universities, Federal Institutes of Technology, University of Applied Sciences or Schools of music and arts. The arts and music scholarships are granted for studies in the public music academies, as well as art and design schools.

Useful weblinks

Information on the universities, programmes, and professors can be obtained on the internet sites of the Swiss academic institutions, on the portal [swissuniversities](#) and [«study in Switzerland+»](#).

Full-time research only

The scholarship is valid only for full-time research in Switzerland. It is not valid for on-the-job studies, part-time studies, correspondence courses or mixed programmes (part time in Switzerland and part time in another country). During their scholarship grant holders are resident in Switzerland.

Field work for PhD grant holders only

The scholarship is meant for conducting research in the Swiss host institution. For Research as well as Postdoctoral scholarships, no fieldwork abroad of Switzerland is possible during the scholarship period. PhD students working in an academic field where fieldwork is indispensable, have to submit a request for acceptance of fieldwork indicating in advance the exact period, destination and purpose. A support letter by the academic supervisor has to be enclosed. There is no additional financial support for fieldwork by FCS.

Coming to Switzerland

At max 12 months in Switzerland before start

This scholarship primarily offers an opportunity to scholars who have not already been to Switzerland. Scholarship applicants may not be resident in Switzerland since more than one year when they start their grant next September. Otherwise they are not eligible. Applicants already in Switzerland during their application procedure add a copy of the residence permit for Switzerland.

Obligations

Living in Switzerland

Place of residence

Swiss Government Scholarship holders are expected to move to Switzerland during their grant period. The scholarship holders must be resident preferably in the city (in Switzerland) or in the Canton of their research/study institution. They must comply with the FCS instructions, regulations concerning the residence for foreigners in Switzerland and with the university/art institution regulations.

No family allowances

Family and children

The FCS does not have the authority to decide on the possibility of bringing the family of the scholarship holder to Switzerland. This is left to the Federal and Cantonal Migration Offices, which at present deal with requests very restrictively. The scholarship amount covers the living costs of one person only. There are no additional family allowances.

Notifying FCS about other grants and other forms of financial support

Other grants and additional income

If you are awarded another additional scholarship or you receive other forms of financial support (such as income from teaching and research assistance, etc.) you are asked to notify the Federal Commission for Scholarships.

Financial matters

Grants	Scholarship amount Research scholarship: 1'920.- Swiss Francs per month = 23'040.- CHF for 1 year PhD scholarship: 1'920.- Swiss Francs per month = 23'040.- CHF for 1 year Arts scholarship: 1'920.- Swiss Francs per month = 23'040.- CHF for 1 year Postdoctoral scholarship: 3'500.- Swiss Francs per month = 42'000.- CHF for 1 year
Housing allowance	All scholarship holders receive a one-time lump sum of CHF 300.- with the first grant payment to help them pay part of the housing deposit.
Semester fees	Tuition fees and Master fees for artists The FCS does not pay for tuition and/or semester fees. In some cases the universities and the Federal Institute of Technology do require scholarship holders to pay semester fees (generally around 600.- CHF per semester) or at least reduced tuition fees. In some cases the universities do not waive the PhD fees. In case the Universities and the Universities of Applied Sciences and Art Schools should not waive the fees, it is up to the grantee to pay for the fees.
Insurance	Health insurance According to the Swiss law, every resident in Switzerland must be covered by a Health Care Insurance (except for dental care). For non-EU and non-EFTA grantees only: the FCS pays mandatory Swiss health insurance. Please note, scholarship holders from EU and EFTA countries have to come with their European insurance card and pay themselves the relative expenses.

Financial matters

Europe	Travel expenses Grantees from EU and EFTA member states pay for their own travel expenses to Switzerland as well as back to their country of origin.
Worldwide	Grantees from outside the European Union and the EFTA pay for their own travel expenses to Switzerland, but the FCS pays a return allowance (lump sum depending upon the country of origin) for the ticket back to their country of origin at the end of the scholarship.
Allowance up to six month after the scholarship	Return allowance However, the return allowance will not be paid if the scholarship holders extend their stay in Switzerland beyond six months after completion of their research, if they take up employment pending the continuation of their research or if they move to a third country.
No allowances	Conferences Valid for all scholarship types: There are no allowances for international conferences.
Fieldwork only for PhD grant holders possible	Fieldwork Once the scholarship is awarded PhD scholarship holders may submit a special request regarding their PhD thesis and the potentially necessary fieldwork. The scholarship may continue during the fieldwork up to six months. No additional financial support is possible though for fieldwork by FCS. For other scholarship types, no fieldwork abroad of Switzerland is possible during the scholarship period.

Preparing your application

**English, French,
German, Italian**

**Two sets to be
submitted:**

1st set original,
attested, signed
documents

2nd set with copies

**Your CV must
include**

**Fill in completely
and sign your
documents**

**Thank you for
your patience**

Four admissible languages

The application documents have to be submitted in **English, French, Italian or German**. If your documents are not in one of these languages, then **an authenticated translation in English** must be included. Attestations can be done by a university or a government officer.

Exception for India: Self attested documents are accepted.

Submitting 2 sets of documents – each in the precise order

Please submit 2 sets (= 1 original + 1 copy) of application documents in exact order given (see pages 19-22). The 1st set contains the original, signed documents plus, if applicable the attested translations. The other set is a copy of the 1st set.

Include the following information in your CV: personal education and training, degrees and diplomas (with precise dates), if applicable: awards, academic positions (with precise dates), non-academic positions (with precise dates), publications with references, conferences, academic teaching experiences, extra academic experiences, links to your sciences blogs, your presentation online.

FCS advises **against the use of the Europass CV** template.

Complete and signed applications are valid only

Please fill in the forms carefully and completely. Sign the form and the research proposal. Only signed applications are valid and eligible.

Results follow until end of May next year

If the application is short listed by the national authority and/or the Swiss Diplomatic Representation it will be sent to Switzerland for the final selection by the FCS. The FCS will inform you by the end of May next year at latest whether your application has been successful or not.

Preparing your application

Research, PhD and Postdoctoral scholarship applications

Documents for Postgraduate Scholarships

Please submit 2 sets (= 1 original + 1 copy) of application documents in exact order given below: The 1st set contains the original, signed documents plus the confidential letters of recommendation and, if applicable the attested translations in English. The other set is the copy of the 1st set except for the confidential letters of recommendation (only 1st set). No copies for 2nd set.

Please do not put the documents into plastic folders or binders

- 1) Signed FCS application form (typed and printed) with photo.
- 2) A full CV with list of personal education and training, degrees and diplomas (with precise dates), awards, academic positions (with precise dates), non-academic positions (with precise dates), publications with references, conferences, academic teaching experiences, extra academic teaching experiences, links to your science blogs, your presentations online etc.
- 3) A motivation letter (max. 2 pages).
- 4) All applicants must have a clear research goal. Therefore research fellowship, postdoctoral scholarship as well as PhD scholarship candidates have to submit a complete research proposal (max. 5 pages, signed) including a layman abstract in English, using exclusively the FCS research proposal form provided with the application package. The research proposal is a central part of your application. Please devote the required attention to it and submit only a signed document.
- 5) A copy of the letter from an academic host professor (including her/his short CV) at the chosen Swiss university confirming why she/he is willing to support and supervise the research.

For research fellowships in addition:

A short CV of the academic mentor at the home institution.

For **PhD scholarships at doctoral schools only**, in addition: The confirmation for accepted admission is required. A support letter from a host professor is required in any case additionally.

Preparing your application

Research, PhD and
Postdoctoral
scholarship
applications

...continued

**Please
do not put
the documents
into plastic folders
or binders.**

- 6) Two confidential letters of recommendation from two different professors in the applicant's field (use exclusively the FCS form – originals in sealed envelopes only, for the first set).
No copies for 2nd set.
- 7) Photocopies of certificates and grade sheets from previously attended universities/ colleges and diplomas with grades, starting with the most recent. If not in English, French, Italian or German with attested certified translations in English. Exception for India: Self attested documents are accepted.
Do not submit the original certificates.
- 8) **Signed** medical certificate (use only the FCS health certificate form).
- 9) Two copies of the applicant's passport (main page with personal data). Dual nationals add copies of both passports. Applicants already in Switzerland during their application procedure add a copy of the residence permit for Switzerland.

Preparing your application

Arts scholarship applications

Documents for Arts Scholarships

Please submit 2 sets (= 1 original + 1 copy) of application documents in exact order given below: The 1st set contains the original, **signed** documents plus the confidential letters of recommendation and, if applicable the attested translations in English. The other set is the copy of the 1st set except for the confidential letters of recommendation (only 1st set). No copies for 2nd set.

Please do not put the documents into plastic folders or binders

- 1) **Signed FCS application form** (typed and printed) with photo.
- 2) A full CV with list of exhibitions, concerts, awards etc.
- 3) A motivation letter (max. 2 pages specifying the reasons to study in Switzerland, the importance of the choice for your future career as well as your professional projects at the end of the scholarship.
- 4) The applicants for arts scholarships do not have to submit a research proposal.
- 4a) For musicians: High-quality CD of 3 different styles of music if the music involves interpreters and directors. Composers have to submit their scores. (CD labelled with name, surname and country).
- 4b) For painters, graphic artists and sculptors: Copies or photos of 3 pieces of your work, along with rough drafts (incl. their dates of creation; work labelled with name, surname and country).
- 5) A proof for «admission is under consideration» at the intended Swiss arts or music school (conservatory). This may be in the form of a conditional acceptance pending an entry exam or other specific requirements. If applicable, a copy of the letter from a professor confirming the supervision of the studies.
(to be continued see next page)

Preparing your application

Arts scholarship
applications

...continued

**Please respect the
precise order of
documents
from 1) to 9)**

- 6) Two confidential letters of recommendation from two different professors in the applicant's field (use only the FCS form – originals in sealed envelopes only, for 1st set).
No copies for 2nd set.
- 7) Photocopies of certificates and grade sheets from previously attended universities/ colleges and diplomas with grades, starting with the most recent. If not in English, French, Italian or German, attested certified translations in English. Do not submit the original certificates.
- 8) **Signed** medical certificate (use only the FCS health certificate form).
- 9) Two copies of the applicant's passport (main page with personal data). Dual nationals add copies of both passports. Applicants already in Switzerland during their application procedure add a copy of the residence permit for Switzerland.

Exclusion criteria

Invalid applications

- Non eligible** - The applicant **does not fulfill the eligibility criteria** stated on the FCS website and in these application guidelines.
- No admission to doctoral school** - For PhD candidates at doctoral schools only: the document confirming your admission to the doctoral school is missing.
- Already in CH** - Applicants who are **in Switzerland since more than one year** at the beginning of the scholarship.
- Bad presentation** - The application is **incomplete**, does **not respect the guidelines**, does **not include the proper and completely filled FCS forms**, is **not submitted twofold** in the correct order or is **badly prepared**.
- Not accepted supervisors** - For PostDocs: Not accepted are the **PhD mentors** and **co-directors** for cotutelle PhD **at a Swiss university**.
- No supervisor** - An application **without a host professor** is not complete and will therefore be rejected.
- Non specific** - Applications **for more than one university** and/or **for more than one scholarship type**.
- Rerun** - Applicants who have **already benefited** from a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship are not eligible for a second scholarship.
- Careful preparation is worthwhile** - Incomplete (e.g. without invitation letter from an academic host Professor in Switzerland) or badly prepared applications will not be taken into consideration!

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Federal Commission for Scholarships for foreign students
International Scholarships SERI
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www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_eng

Eidgenössische Stipendienkommission für ausländische Studierende ESKAS
Commission fédérale des bourses pour étudiants étrangers CFBE
Commissione federale delle borse per studenti stranieri CFBS

www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_de
www.sbf.admin.ch/scholarships_fr
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Federal Commission for Scholarships for foreign students FCS

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