SSRS – Swedish Space Research School
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Call for PhD Project Proposals

First Call • December 2025

Introductory Note

The Swedish Space Research School (SSRS) invites universities and research institutes in Sweden to submit **PhD project proposals** for inclusion in the first cohort of SSRS-funded doctoral students starting **fall of 2026**.

SSRS is a new national doctoral school in space science and technology, jointly established by a large consortium of Swedish universities, research institutes, and industrial partners. The school is led by **KTH Royal Institute of Technology** and governed by a national **Steering Committee**, with participation from all SSRS consortium organizations.

This first call aims to identify high-quality, innovative, and strategically important PhD projects that will contribute to strengthening Sweden's long-term competence, excellence, and competitiveness in space research and technology. Note that the selection of PhD students with SSRS funding is a 2-step process. This call is the first step and concerns project ideas. These project ideas will be evaluated based on a peer-review process as outlined below. In a second step, for the projects selected for funding by SSRS, the host organisations will announce the PhD student positions and locally handle the application and employment process.

The total budget available for this call is up to 35 MSEK, to be distributed among the selected projects over their durations.

Deadline to submit application is 9 February at 23.59. Application is submitted as a PDF file and emailed to swedishspaceresearchschool@kth.se.

1. Eligible Applicants

The call is open to all organisations in Sweden entitled to award PhD degrees, as well as research institutes collaborating with such organisations. **Industrial PhD students are also welcome** through their host university or institute.

Already funded PhD students, i.e., those who *do not* apply for SSRS funding and are already fully financed through other sources, may participate in SSRS educational activities, workshops, and courses. **However, this call does not apply to this group**, and no project proposal needs to be submitted for them.

Applicants are allowed to participate in only one project proposal.

2. Research Areas

Project proposals must concern research related to space. Interdisciplinary and intersectoral proposals are encouraged.

Relevant areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Fundamental and applied space research**

  - Space physics, astrophysics, astronomy, planetology
  - Atmospheric science and Earth observation
  - Astrobiology
  - Life and material sciences using the space environment
  - Suborbital platforms and relevant ground analogues

- **Space technology (including dual use)**

  - Space systems engineering
  - Instrumentation, sensors, robotics
  - Manufacturing for space
  - Space innovation and commercialisation

- **Space safety and governance**

  - Space safety, sustainability, and debris
  - Space situational awareness
  - Space policy, law, diplomacy

- **Space education research**

  - Pedagogical and methodological research related to space sciences and engineering

3. Funding Model

SSRS will provide funding covering:

- PhD student salary (including social fees and overheads) for up to four years
- Mobility and travel funding for participation in courses, workshops and conferences organized by SSRS, as well as study visits.

Co-funding is welcome and can be included in the application.

Applications may also request partial funding in cases where a PhD student is supported through other schemes such as Marie Curie fellowships or Industry PhD arrangements.

4. Requirements

A valid proposal must:

1. **Describe a new PhD position:** Projects must concern a new PhD student; continuation funding for existing PhD students is not eligible.
2. **Ensure adequate supervision:** The host organization must guarantee qualified supervision according to local rules.
3. **Include participation in SSRS activities:** Travel budget must cover participation in mandatory SSRS courses and annual workshops/conferences.
4. **Allow for integration of SSRS core courses:** Host organizations must ensure the student can obtain the required course credits.

Joint supervision between two or more SSRS organizations is encouraged.

5. Application Contents

Applications must be submitted as a single PDF package containing:

Project Description (max 5 pages)
– Objectives, background, methodology
– Interdisciplinary aspects
– Expected results and scientific, industrial, or societal impact
– Fit with SSRS goals and Sweden's space capability
– Risks and/or security considerations (if applicable)
– Explicitly address the evaluation criteria in point 7 "Evaluation Criteria"

Budget Attachment
– Four-year PhD salary (incl. social fees/overheads)
– Travel and mobility budget
– Co-funding details (if applicable)

CV(s) of Proposed Supervisor(s)
– Including relevant publications, supervision experience, and ongoing projects

6. Evaluation Process

All valid proposals will be reviewed through a **peer-review process**:

- **At least two independent reviewers** per proposal
- Reviewers will not assess proposals from their own organization
- Evaluations will be summarized by the **Evaluation Committee** and forwarded to the Steering Committee
- The **Steering Committee** will make final selections, ensuring:
    o Scientific excellence
    o Interdisciplinarity
    o Industrial and societal relevance
    o Geographic and organisational diversity
    o Contribution to Sweden's long-term space capability

Submitting organizations may request anonymized evaluation summaries.

7. Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be assessed on the following criteria:

Scientific Excellence

- Novelty, clarity, and feasibility
- Methodological quality
- Expected contribution to the research field

Relevance

- Industrial and societal relevance
- Contribution to Swedish space competence
- Strategic fit within SSRS

Interdisciplinarity & Collaboration

- Cross-disciplinary integration
- Inter-organisational supervision
- International collaboration

Implementation Capacity

- Supervisor expertise and track record
- Local environment and infrastructure
- Feasibility of planned course participation

8. Inclusiveness and Diversity

SSRS promotes equality, diversity, and inclusive practices in the research environment, and proposals should demonstrate awareness of these principles in ways appropriate to their local context and team composition.

9. Important Dates

Round 1 (for PhD start in the fall of 2026)

- Call Opens: **15 December 2025**
- Deadline for Proposals: **9 February 2026**
- Evaluation and Selection: February–April 2026
- Announcement of Selected Projects: 10 April 2026
- Announcement of PhD Positions by Host Universities: May 2026
- Start of PhD Projects: October 2026

- Kick-off workshop at Esrange: planned for early November 2026.

Projects that have not started a PhD by 31 December 2026 will lose their funding