

Frequently Asked Questions

Early Academic Career Opportunities – Frequently Asked Questions

General

Does SMU have a recommended list of overseas universities and programmes supported for PhD studies and/or post-doctoral training?

There is no recommended list of overseas universities / schools / programmes. However, applicants/scholars are encouraged to consider universities or schools or programmes that are considered of high quality in the respective discipline area. Applicants ought to be able to articulate reasons for their preferred choice of programme at a particular school / university.

Applicants may refer to the [SMU Faculty Directory](#) to get an understanding of the core areas of expertise SMU recruits in and the universities that the current faculty have obtained their PhDs from.

Am I guaranteed a tenure track Assistant Professor job at SMU on successful completion of the PhD programme (for OPS) / post-doctoral assignment (for OPF) / lecturer contract (for ECA)?

Awardees will undergo a review about 3-6 months prior to completion of their OPS/OPF/ECA programme for the School to assess their suitability for a tenure track Assistant Professor appointment. The review will involve the submission of a report by awardees, a presentation of one of their scholarly papers to the faculty, an interview with the Dean and other SMU academic leaders and if deemed required, external reviewers letters.

What is the funding one receives as part of the Overseas PhD scholarship / Overseas Post-Doctoral fellowship?

The START schemes are co-sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the autonomous universities (AUs) in Singapore. The amount of funding that a scholar will receive is fixed and non-negotiable and similar to that offered by other Singaporean universities for the START schemes. The funding covers the cost of programme fees, monthly stipend, overseas maintenance allowance, return economy airfares, medical insurance and conference/field work grants.

The full package is competitive and comparable to those offered by other public agencies for overseas postgraduate programmes.

In addition to the funding, SMU scholars are assigned a faculty mentor who will be your contact person at SMU in the early years of your preparation to be an academic professional. There will be annual review exercise providing scholars with an opportunity to reflect on their progress, to identify and improve upon their areas of development and to seek guidance from their mentors.

How do I get my transcripts certified?

Ordinarily, the academic institution which granted the qualification will be able to provide you with a certified true or a certified original academic transcript which you could pass on to us and that would be sufficient. To obtain certified true copies of an academic transcript you would usually apply through the respective degree awarding institution's administration – either through the School or Student Administration / Registrar's Office or some such similar office at that institution. Regarding academic certificates, SMU would be more interested in validating your higher level qualifications such as Degree / PhD for the ECA award than necessarily a certificate or diploma level qualification unless

your highest earned academic qualification to date is a Postgraduate Diploma perhaps. We really would need to see that you either have completed and attained a relevant PhD or are expected to complete your PhD in the next year and are “ABD” status at the time of applying for the ECA.

However, if you do have original copies of your degree scrolls with you (or some might call this your degree testament or degree certificate) or an original academic transcript, you may come with these documents to our offices where we can sight them as being original and then take a copy for our records certifying that we have sighted the original.

Overseas Postgraduate Scheme (OPS)

What constitutes a 'good' Masters or Bachelor degree?

Besides the Grade Point Average (GPA), the quality standing of the Masters and Bachelor degree will be considered in the light of the overall application. In general, a research Masters would likely allow admission to a good quality PhD programme in a more direct fashion than a coursework Masters might. That said, there are several articulation pathways which people can successfully take to a good quality PhD programme. It may be helpful for you to research and find out the preferred pathways to a PhD programme which is well respected in the field you might be aiming for.

Should I have admission in a PhD programme before I apply for the Overseas PhD scholarship?

It is not a prerequisite that you should have admission in a PhD programme before applying for the Overseas PhD scholarship. It is preferable that applicants have clear idea of their preferred area of study, knowledge of the PhD programmes they might want to apply to. It will be an advantage if applicants have confirmed admission in a PhD programme at a top university at the time of applying for the scholarship.

Overseas Post-doctoral Scheme (OPS) and Early Career Award (ECA)

For application to ECA, what is the guideline for “recently completed” PhD and/ or post-doctoral training?

SMU has not set hard and fast eligibility limits as to how recent is “recent” for the PhD and/or the postdoctoral appointment for applicants applying to the ECA. In general, the ECA applicants thus far are generally either out on the rookie assistant professorship market in the current year of applying for the ECA, or might be one or two years out from their PhDs. SMU will consider applications based on its merits.

I am a PhD candidate at ABC University, and I expect to receive my degree in May 2018. Do I have to complete my degree before applying for the post-doctoral fellow/early career award?

It is not necessary for applicants to have graduated with their PhDs at the time of submitting their applications. However, if awarded, it would be a condition of commencing the award that the recipient satisfies SMU he/she has successfully completed all necessary requirements specified by the PhD awarding institution to be awarded the PhD. SMU would outline in the offer of the award a date by when SMU would expect this condition to be met by the recipient, beyond which the offer of the award would lapse.

Should I have identified a post-doctoral assignment for the Overseas Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the time of application or will SMU assist me with identifying an assignment?

Applicants for the Overseas Post-Doctoral Fellowship are highly encouraged to have identified a post-doctoral assignment at the time of applying for the Overseas Post-Doctoral Fellowship. At the very least, applicants must have a good idea of the post-doctoral assignment they would like to undertake during their fellowship and may work with the SMU school faculty to make the proposal more concrete.