

A short guide to applying at CeNS

Since 2009, the Center for NanoScience (CeNS) has been offering an online application tool for national and international candidates. Every year, we receive numerous applications from all over the world, though of very different quality. The average success rate (measured by finally accepted candidates) is about 5%. In many cases, applications do not pass the pre-selection process due to formal mistakes, sloppiness and/or missing effort. Please read the following guidance notes carefully before starting your online application.

1) Personal information: CV

Most importantly, your CV should be complete, i.e. it should comprise the complete time period from your high school degree until your present working and/or educational status. If there are longer “gaps” in your CV (more than 3 months), e.g. due to unemployment periods, it is better to be clear and honest. Otherwise the reviewer might ask herself/himself what you have done during that time and why you do not mention it.

If you are applying for a PhD position, a CV covering three or more pages is definitely too long! Keep it short, keep it chronological, and keep it clear. Think of the reviewer and his/her limited time and make it easy for her/him to go through the most important facts of your education and professional life.

2) Education: Bachelor’s and master’s grades and documents

This is the part of your application where formal requirements are checked. This means: You have to upload transcripts AND certificates. If they are not in English or German, we will need official, certified translations of the documents. Unofficial and/or self-certified transcripts will not be accepted, leaving your application incomplete. If you haven’t finished your master’s degree yet, please provide the most recent transcript of records. Make sure your documents are readable, i.e. that you scan them at a sensible resolution (300 dpi). Sometimes we receive files which are almost impossible to read due to low scanning resolution.

If you completed several master’s degrees, please state this in your CV and include grades and subjects of all master’s degrees.

Please provide, where possible, explanations of the grading schemes used and an indication of your class ranking/position in class.

We will transform your grades to the German grading system by using the following formula:

$$x = 1 + 3 \frac{N_{\max} - N_d}{N_{\max} - N_{\min}}$$

with N_{\max} being the best possible grade in the foreign grading system, N_{\min} being the lowest grade necessary for passing in the foreign grading system, and N_d being the grade which is to be transformed into the German grading system.

Example: Iranian grading system $N_{\max} = 20, N_{\min} = 10, N_d = 17. \quad X = 1.9$

Candidates with grades lower than 2.5 have only minor chances to be accepted. On the other hand, good grades alone do not guarantee acceptance!

You will have to present original versions of any uploaded document (including your high school certificate) with certified translations once you start your PhD here in Munich and want to enroll as a doctoral student at the university.

3) Additional Qualifications

Awards, international experience etc. can be very helpful to stand out from the crowd. Keep in mind that awards should be related to your field of study.

Experimental techniques: Please describe the techniques you have used e.g. in your Bachelor's or Master's thesis or during internships. Programming skills are also important to mention here.

You should convincingly prove that you are proficient in English, since this is an important prerequisite for a successful PhD. Numerous grammar mistakes and typos in your application will give the reviewer the impression that you either have a problem with expressing yourself correctly in English or that you submitted a rather sloppy application. Please make sure to proofread all your texts before submitting!

If you pass the pre-selection round, you will have an interview via Skype or phone with the PI of the respective project. Since this interview will be in English, your oral language skills are also very important.

4) Selection of the research project – motivation essay

Please write a short statement why you are applying for this position at CeNS. Many applicants tend to describe themselves and their previous academic achievements here extensively. This is not what is asked for. Many applications fail because there is no adequate link between the applicant's previous field of studies and the project she/he is applying for. A well-reasoned statement is of utmost importance! Explain why you are interested in this particular project; what is most fascinating for you, how this connects with your previous experiences and your education. Make clear that you invested some time in finding out more about the group and the topic. Avoid lengthy explanations of the state-of-the-art of your selected research project. The PI probably knows more about this than you do.

Always keep in mind that the reviewer will most likely stop reading if your statement gets too extensive. On the other hand, you should provide concrete reasons why you are applying to CeNS and to this specific position. Make a logical connection between what you have done so far and why you would like to continue at CeNS.

5) Reference letters

You will be asked to supply two academic references. Applications without reference letters will not be considered. Please make sure that your referee will send the reference letter by the deadline (February 10, 2022). Since most referees are quite busy, it is always advisable to ask for the reference letter as early as possible.

You will be asked to provide a professional e-mail address for your referees on your online application form (Your referees will be sent an automated reference request when you register their information in your application). Unfortunately, we have had some cases where the referees' e-mail addresses were obviously not trustworthy. Usually, professors and other supervisors have an institutional e-mail address. Please provide us with this e-mail address. We cannot accept references from personal/private e-mail accounts.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR APPLICATION!