

A Short Guide to Applying at the Center for NanoScience (CeNS)

For the current call, always check the application portal for exact dates and project lists.

CeNS PhD recruitment is highly competitive. A significant share of applications fail to pass pre-selection due to incomplete or non-compliant submissions. This guide summarizes what we look for and how to submit a strong application.

Who should apply

We encourage applications from motivated graduates in physics, chemistry, materials science, engineering, biology, and related fields. We value curiosity, evidence of research potential (e.g., thesis work, internships), and the ability to communicate clearly in English.

What we evaluate

- Project fit: how your background and interests connect to the selected project(s).
- Relevant methods and tools: experimental techniques, simulation, analysis, or programming you have actually used.
- Academic preparation: coursework and outcomes in relevant topics; we review transcripts holistically.
- Communication: clear, specific writing with minimal language errors (English).
- Professional conduct: completeness, accuracy, and adherence to instructions.

How to apply

Submit your application via the online portal before the deadline. You must select at least one research project from the project list. Only complete applications submitted before the deadline can be considered.

Prepare the following:

- Curriculum Vitae (≤ 2 pages, reverse chronological).
- Motivation statement (see guidance below).
- Transcripts and degree certificates (with official or certified translations where applicable).
- Contact details for two referees (preferably with institutional email addresses).
- Any additional materials requested by the portal (e.g., thesis abstract, publications).

Motivation statement (300–500 words)

Focus on specificity and evidence over generalities. Use this simple structure: Why CeNS → Why this project → Why me (methods/tools you have used that map to the project). Avoid writing a literature review; the PI already knows the field. Keep it concise and concrete.

CV guidance

- Keep to ≤ 2 pages; explain any gaps longer than ~3 months.
- Highlight methods, instruments, and software separately (e.g., AFM, cleanroom processing, Python, MATLAB).
- List outcomes briefly: project aims, your contribution, key results (1–2 lines each).

Referees and references

Provide names and email addresses for two referees who can comment on your academic or research work. If your application is pre-selected, the CeNS office or the PI of the project will contact them directly. Please inform your referees about this procedure in advance. Institutional email addresses are strongly preferred; where unavailable (e.g., industry supervisors), provide an official letter on institutional letterhead with verifiable contact details.

International grades and documents

We review international transcripts and convert grades using the standard approach applied by LMU/partner institutions. As a rough guideline, applications significantly below the competitive range may not be advanced; however, we evaluate the full profile (project fit, methods, references, and communication). Ensure scans are legible; use consistent file naming (e.g., Lastname_Transcript.pdf). Original documents will be verified at enrollment.

English and interviews

Clear written and spoken English is essential. Applications with frequent language errors are unlikely to pass pre-selection. If invited, you usually will have a video interview (Zoom) first. Be ready to discuss every part of your application.

Responsible use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)

We welcome tools that help you communicate clearly, but the ideas and wording must be your own.

Fine to use

- Grammar, spelling, and tone polishing of your own writing.
- Formatting suggestions, checklists, and organizing your ideas.
- Translating text that you yourself wrote.

Not acceptable

- Generating your statement or CV content from scratch.
- Adding generic or inaccurate claims (“hallucinations”).
- Misrepresenting skills, methods, or results.

Your responsibility: verify every technical statement; keep your voice specific and concrete; be prepared to discuss all content during the interview. Optional disclosure: “I used an AI tool for minor language editing; the content and wording are my own.”

Timeline

Deadlines and milestones (application deadline, pre-selection notifications, interview phase, and potential start dates) are announced on the portal each call. Always follow the dates published there; late or incomplete submissions cannot be considered.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

- **I haven't finished my Master's yet.**
You may still apply if degree completion is expected before enrollment; upload your current transcript and a brief note on expected completion.
- **Do I need certified translations?**
If your documents are not in English or German, provide certified translations per the portal instructions.
- **How many projects should I select?**
At least one, focusing on genuine fit; maximum two are possible.
- **Can I submit after the deadline?**
No. Only complete submissions received via the portal before the deadline are reviewed.

Submission checklist

Before you start

- ☐ I read the current call and eligibility notes on the portal.
- ☐ I meet the English communication requirement.
- ☐ I know which project(s) best fit my background.
- ☐ I have transcripts and (if needed) certified translations ready.

Before you submit

- ☐ CV \leq 2 pages; clear, specific, and updated.
- ☐ Motivation statement 300–500 words (Why CeNS → Why this project → Why me).
- ☐ Transcripts and degree certificates uploaded (readable PDFs).
- ☐ At least one research project selected in the portal.
- ☐ Two referees listed with emails; I informed them about the process.
- ☐ File names and formats follow the portal instructions.

Data protection & equal opportunities

Your data are processed in accordance with applicable regulations. CeNS is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications from all qualified candidates.

General questions: recruiting_cens@physik.uni-muenchen.de

For current deadlines, project list, and the application form, please consult the application portal.