



# ISO Research Grant 2025

## Call for research proposals

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## 1. About the ISO Research Grant

The ISO Research Grant is awarded annually to a postgraduate student or a team of postgraduate students (Masters, PhD or post-doc) to conduct a research study related to a theme proposed by ISO. The grant amount is 25,000 CHF. A different theme is proposed each year, but the broad focus is on evaluating the impacts of international standards.

Applicants submit a research proposal related to the year's theme. This proposal can be for a research project related to the researcher's academic work. However, it shall be for an original piece of work and must not have been previously published. ISO recognizes the right of the researcher to later produce a publication on the basis of the scientific results of the research submitted to ISO, provided that this does not interfere with the right of ISO to use the final output of the research for its own purposes, including for marketing and promotional activities (in any media).

## 2. Theme 2025

The ISO Research Grant, awarded annually, provides an opportunity for postgraduate students or teams of postgraduate students to conduct a research study related to a theme proposed by ISO. The 2025 theme for the ISO Research Grant is “Standards for supply chain resilience”. This theme reflects the vital role that international standards already play in the global trading system. In the age of digitalization and the increasing importance of sustainability in our interconnected world, this theme addresses the new challenges and opportunities faced by organizations worldwide.

ISO has a well-established presence in supply chains, transport, trade and logistics. For instance, [ISO 28001:2007](#) (Security management systems for the supply chain – Best practices for implementing supply chain security, assessment and plans) provides essential security best practice guidelines and requirements for organizations involved international supply chains. Additionally, ISO [22301:2019](#) (Security and resilience – Business continuity management systems – Requirements) provides a framework for organizations to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disruptive incidents, ensuring continuity and resilience in supply chain operations. ISO [31000:2018](#) (Risk management – Guidelines) supports organizations in identifying and mitigating risks, thereby strengthening the overall resilience of supply chains. These standards, among many others, demonstrate ISO's commitment to fostering resilient supply chains that can adapt to the evolving demands and challenges of global trade.

The ISO Research Grant 2025 aims to further investigate the role standards have played and can play in enhancing supply chain resilience and sustainability. The theme is intentionally broad, and proposals can focus on specific topics such as green transport systems, the resilience of global trade in the face of new threats and technologies, and the role of standards in promoting transparency and sustainability.

Overall, this year's theme underscores the critical role of standards in the global movement of goods and services. ISO invites eligible candidates to share innovative research proposals that evaluate the impacts of international standards in this domain. It is an exciting opportunity for researchers to contribute to this vital field, collect data and help shape the future of standardization.

Annex 1 offers a list of examples of topics relevant to the theme. Applicants may choose to develop one of them or to propose a different topic of their own. This list is by no means exhaustive and is simply provided for inspiration. What is critical, however, is that the topic of this year's Research Grant shows originality and adds to the existing body of available research. Annex 2 includes a series of relevant materials and webpages that can be of benefit to connect the theme with pre-existing work, as well as a non-exhaustive list of standards that we consider relevant to this theme. The list of standards might provide guidance to researchers looking to narrow the scope of their study and produce specific, measurable outcomes.

## 3. Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the Research Grant, the applicant(s)\* must be:

- Currently enrolled in postgraduate studies or a post-doc at an institution of higher education or a public research organization;
- Able to demonstrate the relevance of standardization to their field of study; and
- Proficient in English (the study must be written in English).

\*a joint proposal can be made by more than one person, provided that all applicants fit the above criteria. In the case of joint proposals, only one grant will be awarded.

## 4. Timeline

Milestone/steps	Date
Call for research proposals launched	Wednesday 23 April 2025
<b>Deadline to submit research proposals</b>	<b>Wednesday 9 July 2025 23:59 (CEST)</b>
Expected evaluation of proposals (including references)	July-September 2025
Selection of winning proposal	October 2025
Contract negotiations	November-December 2025
Research kick-off meeting	January 2026
Deadline for submission of the final research to ISO	November 2026

## 5. Proposal elements and structure

Proposals for the ISO Research Grant must contain four elements:

1. Letter of motivation – Include, for example, your reasons for applying, your inspiration for the proposed study, why you are qualified to carry out this study and how you expect to benefit from it;
2. Curriculum vitae with 2 referees (e.g. supervisors);
3. Research proposal – Following the structure outlined in the table below. Please note: the proposal must not exceed **2,500 words**, excluding references and annexes; and
4. Document confirming your affiliation with a university (i.e. signed letter of support and/or official proof of enrolment).

Section	Guidance on content
Title	Provide a short, concise title that conveys what your research is about.
Abstract	Describe the topic and aims of the study. Provide a summary of who will be involved in the research, the methods, the timeframe and a statement explaining the relevance of the research.
Introduction	Explain why you chose this topic, how your proposed research is relevant to the theme and how it contributes to

	the body of knowledge on impact of standards (significance to the research field).
Research question(s)	What is the question you are trying to answer? The purpose of this research; why it needs to be done.
Literature review /state of knowledge	Give a brief summary of relevant existing research related to the topic (including potential gaps or limitations) and an indication of potential sources. Demonstrate your understanding of the topic and its wider context.
Methodology	What is the systematic approach you will use to solve your research problem?
Research design and methods	Provide in depth description and justification of the methodology including sources of data, potential participants, methods of data collection, methods for data analysis and synthesis, limitations of the study.
Ethics	Are there any ethical concerns associated with your research proposal?
Data protection strategy	Are there any data protection risks associated with the research? Provide details of and elaborate on your data protection strategy in the context of the Research Grant project.
Communication of results	How will your research findings be shared? What is / are the foreseen research products?
Timeline	Estimate how long each task will take and show how you will complete your study in the given timeframe.
Detailed Budget	Indicate how the funds from the Research Grant will be allocated.
References	List of references used when writing the proposal.

## 6. How to apply

To apply for the ISO Research Grant, send your letter of motivation, curriculum vitae, research proposal and document confirming your affiliation with a university by email to [research@iso.org](mailto:research@iso.org) before the **deadline of 23:59 (CEST) on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025**.

## 7. Selection criteria

The following selection criteria will be taken into account in selecting the grant winner.

**Threshold criteria** – proposals not meeting these criteria will not be given further consideration:

Domain	Criteria
Topic and project planning	Project topic is clearly relevant to the theme – topic identifies a link between International Standards and supply chain resilience.
	Project budget is clear and calculations are correct.
Applicant background and support	Applicant's academic/professional background is relevant to the topic and proposed methodology.
	Applicant has the support of supervisors/appropriate referees.

**Evaluation criteria** – proposals meeting the threshold criteria will be assessed as follows:

Domain	Criteria	Weight
Quality of the project proposal	Soundness of the proposed methodology (including sufficient planning for access to data, outline of intended analytic approach, etc.).	30%
	Originality/novelty of the topic and importance of the results to the existing body of research.	15%
	Utility of intended project outputs (e.g. Full report, summaries, briefing points, etc.).	5%
	Written communication skills: clarity of message, structure and logical flow of proposal.	15%
	Budget outline: proposed budget represents effective planning and expenditure. Budget should be transparent, detailed and demonstrate value for money.	10%
	Data protection strategy: The proposal includes a sound data protection strategy, which is compliant with applicable data protection regulations and Section 10 of the Call for Proposals.	5%
Experience and expertise	Breadth and depth of experience and expertise in the proposed subject area: quality and relevance of previous publications and academic background.	12%
Motivation	Motivation expressed by the applicant: stated reasons for applying, inspiration for the proposed study, expected benefits for the student.	8%

ISO will not, except at its own discretion, provide information about the evaluation process, or feedback on individual submissions.

## **8. ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS) involvement**

The ISO/CS Strategy and Research unit is responsible for all aspects related to management and administration of the Research Grant. The successful applicant(s) will be expected to keep the ISO/CS Strategy and Research unit informed about the progress of the study (for example, by providing regular progress updates. A schedule of updates will be agreed on with the successful applicant(s) as appropriate for the project plan).

The ISO/CS Strategy and Research unit will provide guidance and support to the successful applicant(s) in the completion of the study as far as possible (for example, by commenting on outlines/drafts, and providing contacts within ISO members or ISO-related data).

## **9. Legal Disclaimer**

By responding to this ISO Research Grant call for research proposals, applicants agree that ISO reserves the right to withdraw the call for research proposals for any reason and shall not in any way be responsible for any costs incurred by applicants in the preparation and presentation of the application.

## **10. Data Protection**

Shall processing of any personal data be necessary in the context of the Research Grant and the performance of the Services/Deliverables under the future Research Grant Agreement (hereafter referred to as the “Personal Data”), it is expected that the Applicants will comply with the applicable laws on the protection of personal data, in particular but not limited to, the Swiss Federal Data Protection Act (FADP) or any local regulations applicable to the protection of personal data, where applicable (hereafter referred to as the “Applicable Laws”), as well as in accordance with the purposes for which the Personal Data would be transmitted and/or processed.

It is also expected that the Applicants will undertake to inform the data subjects of the processing of Personal Data and obtain their consent, when and where this is required by Applicable Laws.

In the event it is envisaged that the personal data processing would be made on behalf of ISO and according to ISO’s instruction in the context of the Research Grant, Applicants undertake to sign a data processing agreement in parallel with the Research Grant Agreement, the provisions of which shall in principle prevail over those of the Research Grant Agreement. Unless a data processing agreement is signed, the recipient of the Research Grant will be considered to be processing personal data as an independent data controller.

Applicants will have to take in any case all appropriate technical and organizational measures to ensure the security of the Personal Data in the context of the Research Grant, in particular to prevent the Personal Data from being accessible to unauthorized persons, to ensure the availability of the Personal Data, to prevent the modification of the Personal Data without right or inadvertently and to enable the traceability of the processing.

In the event of a breach or an incident related to the security of Personal Data in the context of the Research Grant, Applicants will be expected to immediately inform ISO and take immediate steps to identify and understand the reasons and circumstances of the breach or incident. It is also expected that they will take the necessary measures to put an end to the breach and mitigate its consequences for the persons concerned.

If the Applicants are located in a country that does not have an adequate level of protection under the Applicable Laws (i.e. outside the EEA, Switzerland, UK, Canada, New Zealand, Uruguay, Argentina or Israel), it is expected that Applicants will have the ability to take appropriate measures to ensure an adequate level of protection for transfers of Personal Data. The Applicants will have to agree in such event to enter into the standard contractual clauses approved by the European Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/914 of 4 June 2021<sup>1</sup> and any modifications required by the Applicable Laws (the “Standard Contractual Clauses” or “SCC”) and which will be implemented into the Research Grant Agreement.

Where applicable, and if necessary, it is expected that Applicants shall have the ability to provide all necessary assistance to ISO in the context of ISO’s performance of its obligations under the Applicable Laws, for example: establishing and updating the register of processing activities, carrying out data protection impact assessments and responding to requests from authorities or data subjects.

## 11. Intellectual property

Under certain conditions and depending on the intended use of the deliverables by ISO, ISO shall either own the full copyright and intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the deliverables (draft and final output), with these rights being transferred by the researchers to ISO as necessary, or be granted a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive right and license.

In the event of an assignment and transfer of copyright and IPRs to ISO, this shall encompass all rights, and with regard to copyrights in particular those pursuant to articles 9, 10, and 11 of the Swiss Copyright Act (SR 231.1); including but not limited to the exclusive right of reproduction, distribution, making available to the public, translation, adaptation, in any existing or future electronic or printed format, for the entire term of copyright protection.

In the case of a license granted to ISO, this license shall permit ISO to use, copy, publish, modify, create derivative works from, distribute, or make available the final output or its translations for any of its purposes, provided that appropriate credit is given to the author.

For instance, the final output of the research may be utilized by the ISO/CS Strategy and Research unit to develop materials for dissemination to ISO members or externally. The format of these materials will be determined by ISO based on the nature of the study.

Therefore, when submitting your proposal, it is imperative that you are fully cognizant of these options, and are prepared to accept to grant a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive right and license to ISO at the very least, or to ultimately transfer full copyright and intellectual property rights to ISO, as determined by ISO.

The researcher will also provide ISO with all data used in the project. Access provisions will be negotiated depending on data sources and applicable law, but ISO must have access to all data included in the final report, including data collected by the researcher directly.

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<sup>1</sup> As currently set out at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2021/914/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2021/914/oj)

The awarding of the grant does not create any employer-employee relationship with ISO. The researcher or their employing institution will be responsible for paying all the taxes applicable to the fees they will receive. Further details may be defined in a separate contractual arrangement, which will govern the relationship with the selected researcher.

## 12. Contact

Please contact [research@iso.org](mailto:research@iso.org) if you have any questions or require further information about the ISO Research Grant.

## 13. Annex 1: Research Examples

The following table contains possible generic topics for applicants to explore or take inspiration from.

**The list is by no means exhaustive and any original contributions that address the theme and respect the established criteria will be considered equally.**

CATEGORIES	FOCUS	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF TOPICS
<b>IMPACT STUDIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Specific standard/group of standards</li><li>- Theme: sector, geographic focus...</li></ul>	<p>Evaluate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the impacts of ISO XXXXX on Y</li><li>• the contribution of standard(s) XXXXX on Y</li><li>• how much/whether standards help promote sustainability, resilience or ethical sourcing in (X sector; X geographic region...)</li></ul> <p>Note: impact studies could be quantitative, qualitative, or both</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- ISO standards helping to keep track of CO2 emissions: calculating the impacts for the transportation sector in the UK</li><li>- Perceived benefits of ISO risk management standards by supply chain managers (survey-based study)</li><li>- How do international standards reduce barriers to trade for developing countries in agricultural/food supply chains</li></ul>



<b>USE OF STANDARDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific standard/group of standards</li> <li>- Theme: sector, geographic focus...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose one or more ISO standards and investigate who is using them, how and why (or why not)</li> <li>• Explore the standards landscape in a sector, or a geographic region to see where ISO standards fit in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what other standards/guidelines are being used and where the gaps are</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of ISO 28000 in high-risk regions: adoption rates and recommendations for supply chain professionals</li> <li>- Use of ISO 34101 in African vs. South American cocoa-growing regions (comparative study)</li> </ul>
<b>STANDARDS RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS</b>	Standards and regulations	<p>Explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the connection between ISO standards and regulations in a chosen sector or geographic region. Are ISO standards referenced? What other standards/ guidelines are being used and where are the gaps?</li> <li>• the role of ISO standards in helping drive supply chain sustainability resilience. What standards are being used and at which level (for example terminology, evaluation, reporting...)?</li> <li>• the relationship between regulatory compliance and international standards</li> <li>• role of international standards in trade instruments (e.g. bilateral trade agreements)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gaps and challenges of ethical mineral sourcing regulations: how can they be addressed with international standards?</li> <li>- Standards for corporate social responsibility reporting: regulatory vs. industry preferences</li> <li>- Use of ISO standards in regulating transportation of hazardous goods across borders: status quo and recommendations for increased safety</li> </ul>
	Involvement of civil society and vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the involvement of civil society and vulnerable people in the standardization process</li> <li>• Evaluate the contribution of standards to protect vulnerable populations from risks (e.g. technological or climate risks)</li> <li>• Investigate the awareness about/ access to/ use of standards in vulnerable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ISO 22301 for better resilience: protecting SMEs from climate-related risks</li> </ul>

		countries. Are relevant standards used by those who need them most (how and why, or how can it be improved)?	
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## 14. Annex 2: Resources

### Web pages

[ISO Online Browsing Platform](#) – The OBP lets users partially access standards, providing key information such as introductions, scope, normative references, and bibliographies. Applicants may find this useful if choosing to focus their proposal on a specific standard.

[ISO Research Library](#) – The library offers a collection of research publications on standards and standardization.

[ISO standards: transport](#) – Overview of related standards.

### Brochures and news articles

ISO – [Foresight: trade-related trends](#)

ISO – [CASCO: Delivering supply chain confidence](#)

ISO – [Keeping up with logistics](#)

ISO – [International Standards and Trade - What does the research say?](#)

### ISO standards that are relevant to the general theme (non-exhaustive list)

1. [ISO 28001:2007 - Security management systems for the supply chain — Best practices for implementing supply chain security, assessments and plans — Requirements and guidance](#)
2. [ISO/TS 22318:2021 - Security and resilience — Business continuity management systems — Guidelines for supply chain continuity management](#)
3. [ISO 14083:2023 - Quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions arising from transport chain operations](#)
4. [ISO 14067:2018 - Greenhouse gases — Carbon footprint of products](#)
5. [ISO 31000:2018 - Risk management — Guidelines](#)
6. [ISO/CASCO - Conformity assessment standards](#)
7. [IWA 45:2024 - Sustainable critical mineral supply chains](#)

Applicants are encouraged to research other standards that may be relevant to the general theme.

To explore the scope of the research, we advise to choose one standard, several standards (e.g. a multi-part series or a family of standards) or the work of one or several Technical Committees.