



Network for Water and Life: Collaboration Switzerland / West Africa

Call for students 2022

Background

The “[Network for Water and Life](#)” (NEWAL) is a *swissuniversities*’ supported partnership between Swiss and West African institutions that provides new opportunities for cooperation through data collection and sharing, joint activities, research exchanges, and partnership projects.

Water-related ecosystems are essential to life and provide valuable benefits such as transportation, natural purification, irrigation, flood protection, and habitats for biodiversity. Transitioning towards more sustainable and resilient societies requires an **integrated approach in addressing water-related challenges**. For instance, ensuring access to water and sanitation for all (SDG 6) is a prerequisite to achieving several of the SDGs, particularly those pertaining to poverty reduction (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), and energy (SDG 7). These challenges are further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change (SDG 13). Moreover, overuse is contributing to the rapid depletion of water resources, leading to insecurity and potential conflict (SDG 16). The critical importance of **water for life** therefore requires a **multi-disciplinary approach** that connects all these SDGs and develops a common understanding of how current and future challenges can be met.

2022 NEWAL Activities

Following up on the successful [2020 NEWAL Winter School](#), NEWAL aims to bring together 24 bachelor or master students from various disciplines and countries to focus on the overarching topic of “Water and Life” during a **7-day winter school** in Ghana which will be followed up by **research and partnership activities**. The students will work across disciplines and will develop research projects that can feed into practical contributions towards more sustainable ecosystems, with a special focus on water and livelihoods in West Africa.

Implementation

- **Selection phase (Oct-Nov 2021):** Winter school applications submitted by students interested in addressing development challenges related to water and life will be reviewed by the NEWAL organizing committee. A total of 24 students from Switzerland and West Africa will be selected to take part in the 2022 Winter School.
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- **Winter School in Kumasi, Ghana (Feb 5th-11th 2022):** The 7-day winter school will take place at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and will include field visits, meetings with stakeholders, inputs from Swiss and West African experts, as well as group work on case studies. Students will be exposed to the many water-related challenges faced by communities in West Africa, and they will be given the opportunity to collaborate with experts from various disciplines in order to launch research projects that address these challenges. In light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, participating students from different academic backgrounds will explore the nexuses between the SDGs and the overarching concern of water from their respective approaches. By the end of the winter school, students will have an idea of the key issues they would like to address in their research. The costs of the flight to Ghana as well as accommodation and meals will be paid for all students.
- **Virtual Learning (April-Sept 2022):** Following up on the winter school, students will spend 2-6 months doing research on a project of their choice. The scope of their research will be defined under the guidance of their supervisors and in accordance with the student's university requirements. As a complement to their research activities, students will take part in virtual workshops and webinars organized by NEWAL that address themes such as Climate Change Adaptation Strategies, Digital Innovation and Start-up Businesses, and Water and Peace, and they may do field work in West Africa.
- **Partnership Proposals (Nov 2022):** After having completed their research, students will be invited to respond to a call for project proposals that address water-related challenges through partnerships with local NGOs and/or businesses. A selection of the proposed projects will receive small grants for implementation.

Call for students

NEWAL is **now accepting applications** from students who are interested in taking part in this unique opportunity! The research thesis (or project) must be completed by September 2022. Students have to identify their research interests and a supervisor from their home institution before applying to the winter school.

The deadline for applications is **22 October 2021**. To apply, submit your CV, a 1-page motivation letter, and a statement from your supervisor confirming their support of your application to [Dr. Darcy Molnar](#). A panel will review all the applications and **the successful** candidates will be notified on **8 November 2021**.

For further information about the NEWAL project and winter schools, visit the [NEWAL website](#).