

Initiative for Sustainable Investment - Student Fellow Program FAQ

General

1. What is the Initiative for Sustainable Investment (ISI)?

The Initiative for Sustainable Investment (ISI) at Duke Kunshan University (DKU) is a university-wide research program dedicated to advancing societal knowledge about sustainable and responsible investing to address critical global environmental challenges through objective, evidence-based research.

The research at the ISI aims at green finance policymakers and capital market participants. Our research centers on the following three areas: 1) impacts of climate change and carbon emission regulations on corporate competitiveness, 2) environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and its financial implications, and 3) incentives for businesses and capital markets to engage in sustainable investment.

2. Why does the ISI have the Student Fellow Program (SFP)?

We want to involve students with strong interests in the relevant field to fully experience the research and work related to sustainable investment. We have seen exceptional growth of past students who work with Professor Junjie Zhang and the research team through this track. After careful planning and reflections with feedback from previous students, we design the SFP that aims to assist students in having valuable experience to achieve their career goals and academic pursuits.

3. What can students gain from the SFP? What are included in one term of the SFP?

There are the core and optional modules that students could take from the SFP. The core module includes research skills training and the research project. While students already have research experiences before joining the SFP, this training will strengthen their research skills before participating in research projects. The student will then join a research project to apply these skills.

At the same time, we understand there are constant development and innovations in the field of sustainable investment, so we add the optional modules that include the theme-based training and the seminar. The theme-based training will focus on training the core skillset under a theme of sustainable investment. We will choose a theme for each term that aligns with the current development. For example, in the 2022 Summer Term, students could participate in the Carbon Accounting Training. Students interested in the low-carbon economy, China's emissions trading scheme, etc., are encouraged to participate.

The seminars will include the most recent topics under discussion that are relevant to sustainable investment with experts' informative presentations. Since ISI will organize seminars with its partnering organizations, we will announce the topic and schedule once they are confirmed.

4. How many terms does the SFP have, and how long is each term?

There are three terms of the SFP: the summer term, the fall term, and the spring term. The length of each term aligns with the academic calendar.

5. Are there any requirements on the time commitment for the SFP?

The time commitment for the SFP would be no longer than 40 hours per month. After being accepted to the SFP, students could communicate with us about their midterm and final schedules and other tasks that will affect their time commitment for the SFP.

Applications and Admissions

1. When will the application start and end?

The application will start once the notification email of the SFP application is sent. For the 2022 Summer Term, it is May 13th. The application and admission processes will take two weeks. The admission is on a rolling basis, so please submit application materials once they are ready, and don't wait until the last minute! Please carefully review the application information.

2. What are the application materials?

The application materials include the resume, the statement of interest, and the writing sample (optional). The resume needs to be updated to reflect the current status of the student. The statement of interest is an important material for the application to let us know the motivation to join the SFP and the research interest. The ideal length of the statement of interest is 200 to 500 words. After students are accepted to the SFP, the statement of interest will help us identify the suitable research project for each student.

The writing sample is optional. We are willing to accept the final papers in courses. We also understand that students may not have the writing sample available.

3. How are admission decisions made? What are the criteria?

Application materials will be reviewed by Professor Zhang and the research team for the admission decisions. We will evaluate the application based on the applicant's interest, the research ability and the applicant's knowledge in this field.

4. When will students receive admission decisions?

The admission is on a rolling basis, and we will only notify shortlisted candidates.

5. Can students apply for the SFP for more than one term?

Yes! Since we will have new research projects with different theme-based training and seminars, students could apply for more than one term of the SFP. We would be interested to see students' growth since the last time.

6. How will students earn the Student Fellow title?

Admission to the SFP does not guarantee the Student Fellow title. Accepted students are required to have full participations in the core modules to earn the Student Fellow title.

7. What would be a class size for one term?

Currently, we offer 10 to 15 seats for a term of the SFP.

Additional Information

1. The research project

We want to share more information on the research project. Although we indicated that the student would be assigned to a research project, we will take consideration of the students' interests. Moreover, the availability of research projects is dependent on Professor Zhang and the research team's current work. We will do our best to accommodate students' interests, but there is also a possibility that students will not be placed in the project they are most interested in. Students will need to inform us whether they are comfortable switching projects before the start of the research project.

Moreover, students who participate in funded projects will also receive the adequate stipend.

2. What happens if students drop out of the SFP?

We understand there are special circumstances where students want to drop out of the SFP. However, before students formally notify us about the decision, we would suggest students get in touch with us to see what we can help. Students have responsibilities and deliverables to fulfill as they participate in research projects. We recommend students carefully consider the decision to join the SFP.

3. The annual event and the award

The annual event will be held at the end of an academic year for all terms of that year. We will send invitation emails to all SFP students. Students will have the opportunity to present their projects and share their experiences. We will also invite professors and experts as judges for the research project.

Moreover, exceptional students will be awarded honors each year. The list of honors will be announced each year at the end of the annual event. Students' performance at the SFP, the quality of the deliverables, peer reviews, and experts' evaluation at the annual event will be weighted in the honors.