

Swiss Finance Institute Knowledge Catalyst



SFI Knowledge Catalyst
Connect with Finance Students



About Knowledge Catalyst

The goal of the Knowledge Catalyst is to offer academic expertise to corporate partners while allowing Master's and PhD students to gain important insights from, and apply their learning to, real industrial situations through a fruitful exchange of knowledge.

Do you need a solid analysis of a finance problem? Are you seeking a qualified intern to support your organization? Then call on the SFI Knowledge Catalyst program.

Swiss Finance Institute connects corporate partners with Finance students from its six academic partner institutions across Switzerland. This is a three-way knowledge-exchange project between a Master's or

PhD student, a corporate partner, and an SFI professor. The corporate partner defines the project scope and acts as mentor for the student. Study and analysis are conducted as part of a research paper such as a Master's thesis, as part of a dissertation, as a field project, or during an internship within the company supported by a dedicated SFI professor who promotes academic talent and provides guidance.



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How You Benefit & The Collaboration Scheme

What Can the Knowledge Catalyst Offer You?

The Knowledge Catalyst benefits all three parties: corporate partners, students, and SFI professors.

Master's and PhD Students:

- Gain important exposure to, and experience of, the industry to complement their studies and prepare them for entering the world of work.
- Have the opportunity to manage a challenging and business-oriented project, which allows them to apply their learning and expertise.
- Can build networks with potential future employers.

Corporate Partners:

- Obtain privileged access to potential future employees.
- Access the most up-to-date knowledge and techniques from academia, which contribute to the process of innovation and to the creation of new products and services.
- Receive consultancy services at a favorable price from qualified and passionate students who provide a fresh external perspective on the partner's projects.

SFI Professors:

- Gain insight into the industry's current problems whilst acting as filters to ensure that the best students are chosen for such an excellent opportunity.
- Connect with corporate partners and establish networks.
- Share their expertise and promote academic talent.

How Does the Program Work and Which Companies Can Participate?

Knowledge Catalyst solutions are suitable for companies that provide financial services and for the finance departments of all types of organizations, ranging from small companies to large multinational corporations. The students are typically enrolled in Economics and Business Administration programs with a strong affiliation to finance. Thus, research projects that are carried out within the scope of a Master's thesis or PhD research project should be closely related to the student's study program whereas no such restrictions exist for internships.

The corporate partner submits a short research project proposal or internship description to the SFI Knowledge Catalyst Coordinator. Corporate partners are then provided with the curricula vitae of a few select students from whom they choose one student to engage. Since Swiss Finance Institute is not involved in the company's selection process, the terms and conditions of the collaboration are worked out jointly by the corporate partner and the student.

Research projects can relate to any topic within the larger area of banking and finance. Competence areas include:

- Asset management
- Private banking
- Investment banking
- Hedge funds
- Risk management
- Controlling
- Valuation
- Corporate finance

Examples of previous research projects can be found at www.sfi.ch/catalyst.

«The findings of the theses enabled us to have new software built that is expected to save us over 50% of our team's IT operating expenses.»

Lucio Fernandez-Arjona, Senior ALM Actuary, Zurich Insurance Company Ltd.

What Form Does the Collaboration Take?

Corporate partners can choose the approach that suits them best and discuss project details directly with the student(s) in question.

Research Projects

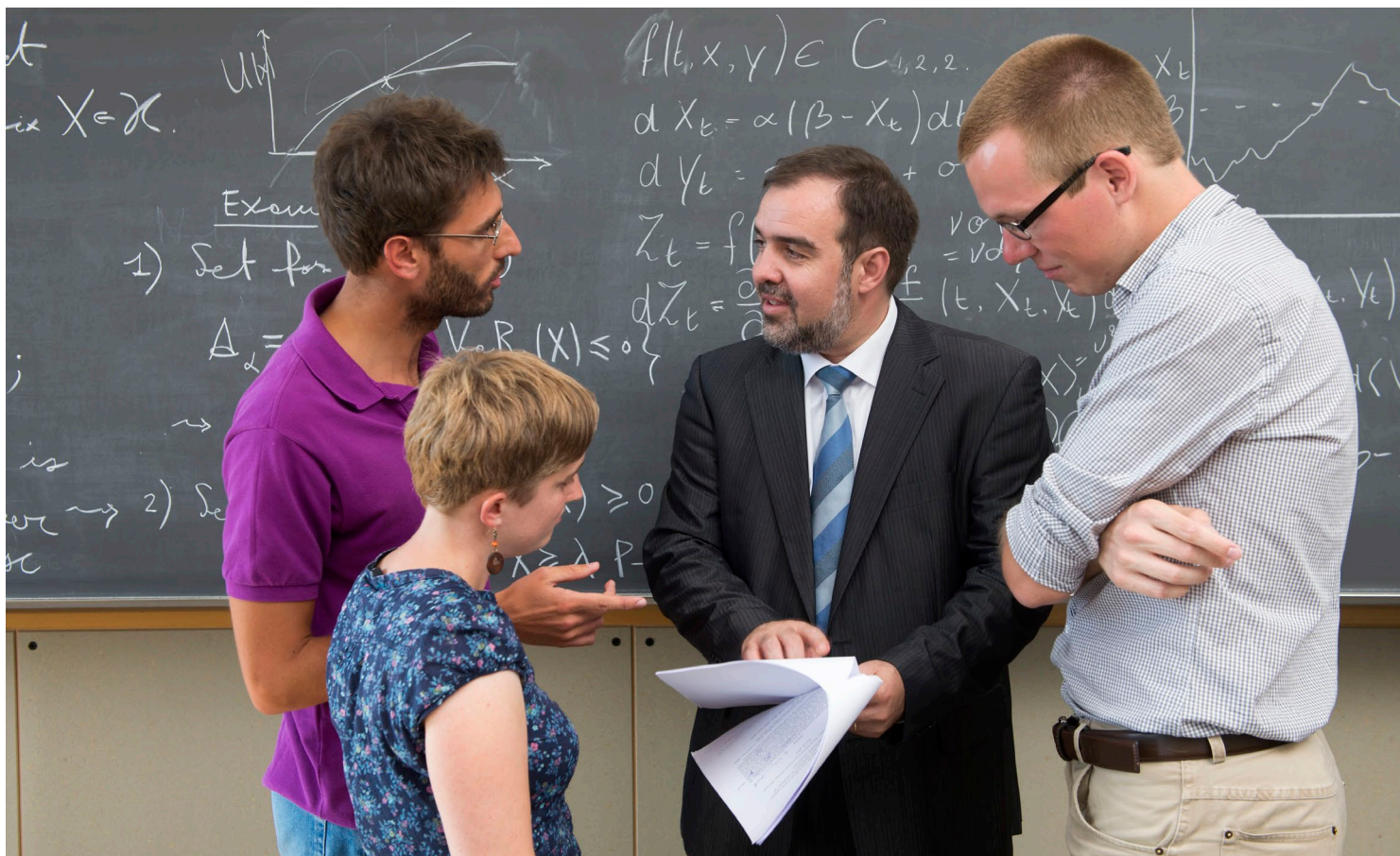
The corporate partner defines the research question and the scope of the project and assigns the project to a student. Study and analysis are conducted as part of a research paper such as a Master's thesis and the results and recommendations are handed over to the company. Students may work part time for the company during the period of study or manage the project by themselves while being coached by the corporate partner and the supervising professor.

Field Projects

A team of up to six Master's students conducts a consultancy project for a period of four months. The corporate partner defines the project scope and attends the kickoff meeting, a mid-term meeting, and the final meeting at which the partner receives the results, recommendations, and data.

Internships

Students are employed as interns and work for the corporate partner. Workload, schedule, and conditions are negotiated directly with the student.



Customer Success Story: UBS AG

Realizing Double Profit

Bekim Hotnjani was looking for a practical approach to his Master's thesis. Never in his wildest dreams would he have imagined that the biggest Swiss bank would put his thesis into practice.

Challenge

"We had a notion of the influence of tax aspects on client asset allocations. However, we needed scientific proof to base future decisions for clients in Switzerland and Germany on hard facts," say Antonio Manzini and Marco Prioni, UBS Investment Management. Their team had no spare capacity to focus on the required analysis, the data concerned was too sensitive to let external consultants produce it, and the team wanted to access the most up-to-date knowledge and techniques from academia. For Bekim Hotnjani this was the perfect opportunity to write a Master's thesis with a practical approach to business.

Solution

Through the SFI Knowledge Catalyst, a unique collaboration was established to meet the needs of all parties involved — the Master's student, corporate partner, and the supervising professor. After six months of working on the analysis, Hotnjani

remembers the weekly meetings with project leaders as his biggest highlight. "Wealth Management had not been on my radar before. But I learnt so much and have now found a business area that captures my full interest."

«Cooperation with the SFI Knowledge Catalyst is head hunting on a completely new level.»

Dr. Antonio Manzini, UBS Wealth Management & Swiss Bank

Results

It proved possible to translate the results of Hotnjani's Master's thesis directly into practice and they will be used for the next annual Swiss investors' benchmark review. In addition, both the team at UBS and Bekim Hotnjani made a double profit from the project: after working with Hotnjani for six months, UBS decided to hire the graduate student as a full-time employee. "This," Manzini states, "is head hunting on a completely new level."

Marco Prioni, Bekim Hotnjani, and Antonio Manzini (from left)



Submit Your Proposal

Who Are the Academic Partner Institutions?

In order to facilitate knowledge exchange, students can be selected from among six leading universities across Switzerland. Field projects are only possible in collaboration with the Università della Svizzera italiana in Lugano.

- École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne
- ETH Zurich
- Università della Svizzera italiana
- University of Geneva
- University of Lausanne
- University of Zurich

What Are the Costs for Companies?

Typically, students conduct the project in parallel with their regular course of study. The time companies must devote to the collaboration depends on the approach they have chosen for their projects. Studies that are conducted for research papers or field projects require little time commitment from corporate partners whereas internships involve more interaction. However, while students are always supported by an SFI professor to ensure that the research project and its results fully meet the expectations of the corporate partner, they should also be coached by a company representative.

The terms and conditions of each project are negotiated between the student and the company. Corporate partners are charged a fee by Swiss Finance Institute for each student successfully placed in the company, except for those students involved in field projects. For further details, please contact the SFI Knowledge Catalyst Coordinator.

Practitioners and Students – Get Involved.

We look forward to collaborating with you in the SFI Knowledge Catalyst. For further information, please contact SFI's Knowledge Catalyst Coordinator.



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Swiss Finance Institute

Swiss Finance Institute (SFI) strives for excellence in research and doctoral training, knowledge transfer, and continuing education in the fields of banking and finance, as befits Switzerland's international reputation as a leading financial center. Created in 2006 as a public-private partnership, SFI is a common initiative of the Swiss finance industry, leading Swiss universities, and the Swiss Confederation.

SFI Knowledge

SFI Knowledge promotes and supports dialogue, information flow, and collaboration between academia and the financial services industry. It performs an active intermediary role in gathering and disseminating financial knowledge, helping find solutions to current problems, and identifying new trends in banking and finance.