

Regulations concerning the mid term evaluation of cohort studies selected in 2005

Reports for the mid term evaluation of cohort studies (CS) are submitted using the official form provided by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) and subject to the following evaluation procedure:

- 1) The Scientific Secretariat of the SNF shall examine whether the CS reports fulfil all formal criteria. If necessary, applicants may be asked to provide additional information at short notice.
- 2) The International Panel (CS Panel) elected by the SNF National Research Council (NRC) for the evaluation of new proposals in answer to the call for cohort studies 2008 will also be in charge of the mid-term evaluation of running cohort studies. It is expected that CS Panel members shall openly declare any conflict of interest, i.e. direct scientific links with the authors or any form of benefit from the funding of the proposals. In such a case, the CS Panel members shall abstain from taking part in any discussion or voting that may take place on or about the conflicting report.
- 3) Prior to the evaluation meeting, each CS report shall be assessed by all members of the CS Panel and the PaKliF-Committee, who shall write a short appraisal on each. In their written appraisals, the members of the CS Panel and the members of the PaKliF-Committee shall give their opinion on:
 - a. whether the studies meet with criteria defined in the call in 2005, as well as whether any specific recommendation and/or condition formally communicated together with the funding decision have been fulfilled
 - b. the suitability of the infrastructure developed in relation to the cohort study
 - c. problems met by the applicants during the setup and management of the cohort study and achievements realised by the applicant.
 - d. network and co-operation established by the CS at the national and the international levels
 - e. Interdisciplinary co-operation of the researchers involved in the CS

The members of the PaKliF-Committee shall specifically concentrate on points b) and c). Written appraisals will be distributed to the CS Panel and PaKliF members in preparation to the evaluation meeting in April 2008.

- 4) In the first half of April 2008, a one-day meeting between the PaKliF-Committee, the CS Panel and the investigators shall take place as described hereafter. All meetings will be chaired by the President of Section B of the SNF NRC Division III. The Scientific Secretariat of the SNF shall be present throughout the meetings to provide regulatory, administrative and executive advice, and establish the minutes of the meetings.
- 5) First, each Principal Investigator of each cohort study shall present his or her CS report to the members of the CS Panel and the PaKliF-Committee. The presentation will be followed by an interview to clarify open issues. For the presentation and the interview, a total of 50 minutes is foreseen.

- 6) Shortly after the end of the presentations, all CS reports shall be discussed jointly by the CS Panel and the PaKliF-Committee. During this meeting, the members of the PaKliF-Committee will provide the CS Panel with all relevant information pertaining to specific prerequisites and regulations to be observed when running cohort studies in Switzerland and which might be of importance for the evaluation of each CS reports.
- 7) Should the International Panel members judge that for a given cohort, there are issues that remain unclear in the mid term report, in the presentation or after the interview, a site visit shall be performed. The visit shall be done by PaKliF or Section B of Division III members, accompanied by a representative of the Secretariat of the Division of Biology and Medicine of the SNF. The site visit must be done no later than end of August 2008. A study site visit report shall be written by the Secretariat.
- 8) After the evaluation meeting in April 2008, the Principal Investigators of the selected cohort studies will be asked to submit to the SNF a formal request for support, consisting of a comprehensive financial and scientific plan for years 4 and 5 of the cohort study. These will be evaluated by the CS Panel members, who will write a short assessment on each during the second half of October 2008. The Panel may involve the PaKliF Committee members whenever specific, local information is needed.
- 9) Based on the evaluation made in April 2008, on the written assessments of the formal request for support made in October 2008 and, where applicable, on the result of the site visits, the CS Panel, without the participation of the PaKliF members, shall identify studies that qualify for a grant extension, with recommendations on time and amount to be granted for each study. The Steering Committee – i.e. the President of Section B of Division III of the NRC, the President of the PaKliF-Committee and the Scientific Secretary of Division III - shall present a funding proposal to Division III of the NRC.
- 10) Division III of the NRC may accept or reject the selection proposal. In case of acceptance, it shall be forwarded to the Presidial Board of the NRC for final decision. In case of rejection, the Steering Committee may establish a new proposal, taking into account the arguments given by Division III of the NRC.
- 11) The applicants of the CS proposals shall be informed of the final decision of the Presidial Board of the NRC. In case of a positive decision, the notice of acceptance shall contain or refer to the terms and conditions to be observed in the continued execution of the CS.