

April 2018
(replaces the October 2017 version)

Careers division
Mobility fellowships
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Guidelines: Postdoc.Mobility return grants

Please read this document attentively. It contains important information about the submission of a Postdoc.Mobility application for a return grant

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1. Important remarks

1.1 Submission and deadline

Please submit your application via the platform mySNF: mySNF > What would you like to do? > Create a new application > Careers > Return CH Postdoc.Mobility.

A funding proposal is regarded as submitted in due time if received by the SNSF by **17:00 Swiss local time** on the submission date (1 February resp. 1 August). If the submission date falls on a Saturday, a Sunday or a holiday recognised under Swiss federal law, the submission date will be moved forward to 17:00 Swiss local time on the next working day.

Applications for **return grants** may **only be submitted** in compliance with the **official submission deadlines while a (n Advanced) Postdoc.Mobility fellowship is still ongoing**.

1.2 Language of the application

In mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, biology, medicine, psychology, economics and political sciences, applications have to be submitted **in English**. In all other research areas, applications can be submitted in one of the official Swiss languages. Special rules apply for political sciences (art. 1.16 of the [Implementation Regulations](#)).

1.3 Resubmission

According to art. 10 of the [Postdoc.Mobility Regulations](#), applicants whose application was rejected may apply once more for a Postdoc.Mobility return phase fellowship regardless of the subject matter of the project, provided the personal and formal requirements are met.

1.4 Decision

Please note that the decisions are communicated in a letter approx. 5 months after the submission deadlines of 1 February and 1 August.

1.5 Decision of non-consideration

Please note: Applications must meet the requirements with regard to, for example, the length of the research plan and the other mandatory data. The SNSF may decide not to consider applications that do not meet all of the requirements.

2. Personal and application data

2.1 References

Please indicate **two reference persons** (more than two will not be accepted). The indicated persons write a reference letter. The letters are confidential and have to be written in English (in Social Sciences and Humanities letters in French and German will also be accepted). They must bear the official letter head and an original signature of the reference person. You need to request the reference letters via mySNF by using the following link: [Reference letters](#). Once you have received the reference letters, you must upload them to the "Reference letters" container before 1 February

or 1 August (**17:00 Swiss local time**). Please specify if any of your reference persons has advised you on how to draft the research plan.

Please request the reference letters at an early stage so that you are able to submit your full application in good time. In no circumstances will the SNSF accept a delay in submission because the references are not yet available.

Additional reference letters attached as a PDF in the container "Other annexes" will not be taken into account and will be deleted.

2.2 Basic data I

2.2.1 Requested starting date

The research period financed by a return grant generally represents a seamless continuation of the completed Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, **starting immediately upon the fellowship holder's return from abroad**, but no later than 12 months after completion of the fellowship. If the return period does not start immediately upon the end of the fellowship, an updated project plan must be submitted on request.

2.2.2 Requested duration (months)

The duration of the grant is defined in months. A return grant is awarded for a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 12 months. Its duration is generally maximally one third of the entire duration of funding through Early Postdoc.Mobility, Advanced Postdoc.Mobility and Postdoc.Mobility. It is **not possible to request an extension of the return phase**.

2.3 Available or requested funds

The SNSF does not grant any award for research projects that are already being funded by the SNSF or third parties (art. 8.3e of the [Funding Regulations](#)). If you already have corresponding funds at your disposal to cover the living costs during the project (salary), it is in general not possible to supplement these funds by a SNSF return grant. In case of questions, please clarify the situation with the SNSF Administrative Offices. If you have requested or obtained additional funds (salary, fellowship, funds to cover congress costs, research costs, tuition fees etc.), please give detailed information and if possible upload under "Other annexes" a copy of the decisions. Note that even after you have submitted your application, you must inform the SNSF in case you obtain or request additional funds from other funding bodies while your proposal is being evaluated.

2.4 Requested funding

2.5 Salary of the applicant

Holders of a Postdoc.Mobility return grant must in principle devote their entire work-time corresponding to a work-time percentage of 100% to the research funded by the SNSF. The supported researchers generally spend 100% of their working time on the approved research project. Regarding the salary, the SNSF grants CHF 110,000. — (incl. social security contributions) resp. CHF 95,000.- (without social security contributions) for 12 months for a full-time equivalent. The SNSF and the grant administration office of the higher education institution where the grant holder is employed will define the exact salary.

The SNSF normally recognizes the local salary norms as the upper limit, but reserves the right to reduce salaries, which lie above the national average. Do not indicate predictable but not yet effective costs of living allowances. If the approved research funding is exceeded due to cost of living allowances, this will be compensated later by the SNSF.

2.5.1 Social security charges

This concerns the local percentage of employer's contributions without possible social security contributions such as child- or family allowance. Check this percentage against the current guidelines for the utilisation of funds (Appendix 12) (Allgemeines Ausführungsreglement zum Beitragsreglement). Note: the system does not accept commas, therefore please use a full stop (e.g. 12.5).

University of Basel	14 %
University of Bern	15 %
EPFL	16 %
ETHZ	16 %
EAWAG, EMPA, PSI, WSL	16 %
University of Fribourg	19 %
University of Geneva (incl. IHEID)	23 %
University of Lausanne (incl. CHUV)	16 %
University of Lugano	14 %
University of Luzern	16 %
University of Neuchâtel	22 %
University of St. Gallen	14 %
University of Zürich	15 %
Other Institutions, normally	16 %

2.5.2 Research funds

A maximum of 5'000.- annually can be allowed for the project funds (research costs and conference cost) that are directly linked to the completion of the project. Please list your financial requirements for the entire time-span of your return phase as detailed and concrete as possible. Supplementary grants during the ongoing fellowship can only be requested in exceptional cases if the additional costs were not foreseeable when the application was submitted. In any case, financial contributions to congresses must be requested at the SNSF 2 months before the planned event. You will find more information about refundable research costs in chapter 11.2 of the information set for SNSF mobility fellowships at www.snsf.ch > Funding > Careers > Postdoc.Mobility > Documents.

3. Annexed documents (PDF format required, max. 10 MB per container)

3.1 Research plan

A. General remarks

The research plan provides the basis for scientific evaluation, particularly of the quality of the proposed research project, i.e. its scientific relevance, topicality, originality, feasibility, and the suitability of its methods. Together with the CV and the applicant's track record, the research plan also serves as a basis for assessing the researcher's scientific qualifications, particularly his/her expertise with regard to the project.

The SNSF's requirements with regard to the form and content of the research plan help to ensure the comparability of applications. This is an important prerequisite for a comparative evaluation based on the principle of competition and for the equal treatment of all applicants.

The research plan must consist of original text that has been written by the applicant himself/herself. A limited amount of text (or other material, graphs, etc.) by third parties or text published by the applicant himself/herself is permissible in the sections concerning the state of research (2.1) and the state of his/her personal research (2.2) as well as when describing standard methods. The quoted texts must be clearly designated as such (quotation marks or appropriate wording) and a verifiable source must be mentioned nearby and in the bibliography. The SNSF uses a special software to compare texts and analyse suspected cases of plagiarism. A number of universities have made such programs available to their students and employees. We recommend that you contact your institution for further information. For more details see the SNSF dossier on scientific integrity: www.snsf.ch > The SNSF > Research policies > Scientific integrity.

The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet the requirements for the research plan, the formal requirements for applications (art. 14 of the [Funding Regulations](#)) **and the requirements for research integrity and good scientific practice** (art. 15 of the [Funding Regulations](#)).

B. Structure of the research plan

In **mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, biology, medicine, psychology, economics and political sciences**, applications have to be submitted in **English**. In all other research areas, applications can be submitted in one of the official Swiss languages. Special rules apply for political sciences (art. 1.16 of the [Implementation Regulations](#)).

The research plan must **not exceed 10 pages and 40,000 characters (with spaces)**; this includes the title, the summary, footnotes, illustrations, formulae, tables (as well as a possible table of contents), but not the bibliography. **A minimum of point 10 font size** (e.g. Times New Roman, condensed fonts not allowed) and **1.5 line spacing** must be used. The research plan must not contain any annexed documents.

Please note: Applications must meet all formal requirements (number of pages, characters, etc.). The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet all of the requirements and/or are manifestly inadequate.

The research plan needs to be structured as follows:

1. Summary of the research plan

In your summary, please present the **background and rationale** of the project, list its **overall objectives** and **specific aims**, mention the **methods to be used**, and briefly discuss the **expected results** and their **impact** for the field. The summary (**max. 1 page**) must be written in the **language of the research plan**. You may use the same summary text as in the administrative parts (basic data II) of your application, but it can absolutely not exceed 1 page in length.

2. Research plan

2.1. Current state of research in the field

Describe your project in the context of the current state of knowledge in your field. Make reference to the most important publications, particularly by other authors. Please describe:

- Which previous insights provided the starting point and basis for the planned studies;
- In which areas research is needed, and why;
- Which important, relevant research projects are currently underway in Switzerland and abroad.

2.2. Current state of your own research

The aim of a return phase fellowship is to enable the applicant to complete the project conducted abroad in Switzerland or to launch a new project here. For a **follow-up proposal** (follow-up of a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship or a follow-up of an Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship), please report on the work conducted within the scope of the previous project and the results obtained. If your planned return phase project is a completely **new project**, please present the research work you have already undertaken in the relevant field or in related fields, describe the results obtained so far as well as the relevance of these preliminary undertakings for your project.

2.3. Detailed research plan

Based on the information provided under 2.1 and 2.2, please specify the approach you are taking and the concrete objectives that you aim to achieve in the period of funding. The following points should be addressed:

- Describe the studies or experiments needed and/or envisaged to reach the set goals. Assess the risks involved and propose alternatives if necessary;
- Characterize existing sources and datasets and describe the data collection strategy and possible alternative strategies;
- Describe the methods by which the research goals are to be reached and methods that first have to be developed.

Your description should be as detailed as necessary to enable an expert to assess whether your methodology is appropriate and your project feasible.

2.4. Schedule and milestones

Please compile a schedule that includes the main tasks (milestones) (e.g. table, Gantt chart, etc.).

2.5. Reason for the choice of research institution(s)

Please describe your choice of the research institution(s).

2.6. Relevance and impact of the research

Please describe the scientific relevance and expected impacts of your project for the discipline and for science as a whole (research and education/teaching). Please mention the form in which you wish to publish your research results (articles in scientific journals, monographs, conference proceedings, etc.). If applicable, please indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project will have a broader impact and what this impact will be.

2.7. Relevance for personal career development

Please describe the relevance of your project for your personal career development.

3. Bibliography

List the sources of all concluded and/or ongoing work referred to in the research plan. Give the full reference, especially the title, source and full author list. Do not use "et al." to shorten the author list (exception: the author list can be shortened if a publication involves large international consortia with over 50 authors. In this case, a link to the complete reference has to be included. The use of "et al" is authorized if the names of the authors are mentioned in the body text of the research plan.) The bibliography is not included in the maximum number of pages (10) and characters (40'000) count.

C. Revised application (resubmission)

If this application is a revised version of a rejected application, please upload in the container "Research plan" **a separate document** providing a **point-for-point** response to the critique raised in the rejection letter and a comment on significant changes or additions in the research plan, if applicable. This **statement** must be written in the same language as the research plan and must **not be longer than 2 pages**.

3.2 CV and major scientific achievements

A. General remarks

The SNSF has signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), which recommends funders to be explicit about the criteria used in evaluating the scientific productivity of applicants.

The scientific quality, value and impact of the **entire research output** is taken into consideration (including datasets, software, prototypes) in addition to research publications. In this context, the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the name of the journal in which it was published. Within the scope of this evaluation, the scientific discipline, academic age and personal situation (e.g. career breaks, care duties) of the applicants will be considered.

In order to comply with the DORA, the SNSF requests a standardised set of information from all applicants, i.e. the "**CV and major scientific achievements**" and the "**Research output list**".

The document "**CV and major scientific achievements**" must be written in the same language as the research plan, and must be structured as specified below. This document can be sent out for peer-reviewing. **Proposals that lack the relevant information will not be considered for evaluation.**

B. CV and majors scientific achievements

The **CV (max. 3 pages, min. of point 10 font size)** and a **short statement of major scientific achievements (max. 1 page, min. of point 10 font size)** should be **assembled in one document** and be written in the **same language as the research plan**. The document is used to assess the following criteria:

- Scientific qualification of the applicant, based on past achievements;
- Ability of the applicant to conduct original research of high scientific quality and impact under his/her own responsibility.

The CV must be structured as follows (if you have nothing to be listed in a category please indicate this by "N/A"). Additional points can be added, if relevant to the proposal. It is important that all dates (from/until) include month and year.

1. Personal information, including the researcher ID (if applicable) (e.g. OrcID, ResearcherID, Google Scholar ID)
2. Education: **Please mention the day of your PhD viva voce/defence and the name of the PhD advisor/s. For applicants who have completed their medical exam, the date of the medical exam (examen d'Etat or Staatsexamen or equivalent) and the date of the MD thesis must be mentioned as well as the name of the advisor/s**
3. Employment history including current position/s **with the name/s of the advisor/s**
4. Institutional responsibilities
5. Approved research projects
6. Supervision of junior researchers (summary information, the names of the junior researchers should be indicated)
7. Teaching activities (summary information)
8. Memberships in panels, boards, etc., and individual scientific reviewing activities
9. Active memberships in scientific societies, fellowships in renowned academies
10. Organisation of conferences
11. Prizes, awards, fellowships
12. Personal skills (e.g. language skills, digital competences)
13. Career breaks (provide justification for events that might have influenced or delayed research and publication activities such as long absences due to illness, family commitments, etc.)

In the section "**Major scientific achievements**" (**max. 1 page to be attached to the CV**) the applicant describes his/her most important scientific achievements.

All these items are intended for evaluators to specifically assess the scientific quality and relevance of the research output. If possible, the documents/sources of the various achievements should be made available to the evaluators via a direct open access web-link.

3.3 Research output list

A. General remarks

The SNSF has signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), which recommends funders to be explicit about the criteria used in evaluating the scientific productivity of applicants.

The scientific quality, value and impact of the **entire research output** is taken into consideration (including datasets, software, prototypes) in addition to research publications. In this context, the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the name of the journal in which it was published. Within the scope of this evaluation, the scientific discipline, academic age and personal situation (e.g. career breaks, care duties) of the applicants will be considered.

In order to comply with the DORA, the SNSF requests a standardised set of information from all applicants, i.e. the "**CV and major scientific achievements**" and the "**Research output list**".

The document "**Research output list**" must be written in the same language as the research plan, and must be structured as specified below. This document can be sent out for peer-reviewing. **Proposals that lack the relevant information will not be considered for evaluation.**

B. Research output list

The research output list is used in the evaluation process to assess the scientific productivity and qualification of an applicant with regard to the proposed project and his/her ability to successfully conduct and document a research project. Both aspects are also taken into account in the evaluation of the feasibility of the proposed research project.

Depending on the research field, the applicant's position in the list of authors may give an indication on his/her contribution to the scientific work (see also: Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences: [Integrity in scientific research, Principles and procedures](#)). The research output of an applicant is used, among others, as a measure of his/her scientific independence. The total number of publications or the number of publications per year is not considered to be the only indicator of performance.

Please separate your publications **resulting from your PhD/medical exam (or prior) and from your postdoctoral time** and **highlight the 5 most important contributions**. For all publications listed from your postdoctoral time, please give a very short comment on your contribution; in particular for publications with several authors, where the applicant is not first or last author, or for disciplines where the authors are in alphabetical order.

The applicant's name in the list of authors and the publication year must be clearly visible (e.g. boldfaced or underlined). Give the full reference, especially the title, source and full author list. **Do not use "et al." to shorten the list of authors**, unless the research project was conducted by a large international collaboration with more than 50 authors and a direct link to the full publication is given.

All these items are intended for evaluators to specifically assess the scientific quality and relevance of the research output. In order to support the principle of open electronic access to scientific knowledge nationally and internationally, please **provide a direct internet link for each publication**, if applicable. **All publications attached as a PDF in the container "Other annexes" will not be taken into account and will be deleted.**

The research output list should be structured as follows (if you have nothing to be listed in a category please indicate this by "N/A"). Under points 1 - 4 only "published", "in press" or

"accepted" publications can be listed. Submitted but not yet accepted/published publications can be listed under point 10, unpublished work under point 11:

1. Publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals
2. Peer-reviewed books/monograph
3. Peer-reviewed conference proceedings
4. Contributions to books
5. Patents and licenses
6. Contributions to conferences (oral presentation or poster)
7. Outreach activities (e.g. public engagement in science, technology and knowledge transfer activities, scientific art performances, etc.)
8. General contributions to science (e.g. spokesperson for experiments, leader of expeditions, founder of networks and training programmes, etc.)
9. Other artefacts with documented use (e.g. maps, methods, prototype demos, software, databases, design, arXiv-articles, contributions to big data collaborations, etc.)
10. Submitted but not yet accepted/published publications.
11. Unpublished work (publications in preparation or thesis work (MSc, PhD)...; must be made available to the SNSF on request).

Please note that the research output list cannot be updated after the submission deadline of your application.

3.4 Career plan

No form or template is provided by the SNSF. The career plan must not exceed **one page** (a minimum of point 10 font size). The past career achievements should be described briefly, while more emphasis should be put on the medium and long-term career goals. The career plan must be written in the same language as the research plan.

3.5 Confirmation host institution

Please enclose a confirmation of your host institution in Switzerland. No form or template is provided by the SNSF. The confirmation letters must bear the official letter head of the host institution and an original signature of the head of the institution or host professor (no e-mail). The confirmation has to state clearly that the necessary infrastructure is available for the duration of the fellowship. The start and end dates of the fellowship must be mentioned.

3.6 Other annexes

You have the possibility to attach other documents relevant to the application in PDF format. This concerns, in particular, any **requests for exceptions** to be granted in accordance with the Postdoc.Mobility Regulations. The requests for exceptions must be written in the same language as the research plan. **Please note that all publications attached as a PDF in the container "Other annexes" will not be taken into account and will be deleted.**