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Regulations on SNSF professorships

16 January 2008

Based on Article 4¹ and 48² of the Funding Regulations³, the National Research Council issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Principle

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") awards SNSF professorships at Swiss universities to researchers pursuing an academic career.

² SNSF professorships are awarded in all disciplines.

³ The positions are full-time (100%). Exceptions may be granted in specific cases for valid reasons, such as family care duties.

⁴ Special conditions may be set to promote candidatures in specific research fields.⁴

Article 2 Funding period and beginning of employment

¹ SNSF professorships are awarded ad personam. The funding period is four years and may be extended by a maximum of two years.

² Employment can begin ten months after the submission deadline at the earliest.

2. Formal requirements

Article 3 Personal requirements

¹ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

² Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

³ www.snsf.ch > About us > Statutes & legal framework

⁴ Added based on the decision of 20 May 2008

Junior researchers who apply for an SNSF professorship must fulfil the following criteria:

¹ They must:

- a. have a doctoral degree and a proven record of two or more years of research activity, including high-level publications;
- b. have acquired at least two and at the most nine years of research experience after the doctorate by the submission deadline. The date of the examination or viva voce and the submission deadline will be regarded as the relevant dates. No exceptions are possible with regard to the minimum period of two years. However, the maximum period of nine years after the doctorate represents a benchmark. The SNSF may accept applicants who exceed this benchmark, e.g. due to family care duties. The applicants must present their reasons for exceeding the benchmark in writing.⁵
- c. have a degree from a Swiss higher education institution or a proven record of at least two years' activity at a Swiss higher education institution by the submission deadline;
- d. have completed, by the submission deadline, a research stay of at least two years at one or more research institutions other than the institution that conferred the doctoral degree, including one year abroad. If the doctorate was obtained abroad, a postdoctoral research stay in Switzerland will be regarded as an equivalent qualification. The SNSF may consider extensive research stays abroad as a doctoral student as proof of mobility, in particular if the postdoctoral research stay abroad was not carried out due to, e.g., family care duties.⁶
- e. have not held and do not hold a position comparable to an SNSF professorship; candidates who, in the course of the evaluation procedure, accept an assistant professorship with or without tenure track in Switzerland will be excluded from the evaluation procedure. They must inform the SNSF as soon as possible if they accept such a position.⁷

² An SNSF professorship may not be used to extend a local employment contract of two or more years duration that is coming to an end.

Article 4 Objective requirements

¹ Applications for SNSF professorships must be submitted in accordance with the relevant directives using the official forms of the SNSF and must contain all data and documents designated as mandatory.

² Proposals may be submitted either in an official language of Switzerland or in English.

³ Mandatory documents for the first evaluation level include written confirmation from the candidate's superior at the host institute stating

- a. that the candidate is welcome at his/her chosen place of work due to his/her scientific achievements and competencies;
- b. the infrastructure that can be made available for the project;
- c. to what extent the candidate is capable of being integrated scientifically and academically during the period of funding.

⁴ Applications for the second evaluation level must include a letter from the governing body at the intended host institution (institution of higher education) confirming

⁵ Changed based on the decision of 15 August 2012, in force since 1 February 2013

⁶ Changed based on the decision of 15 August 2012, in force since 1 February 2013

⁷ Added based on the decision of 14 December 2011, in force since 1 February 2012

- a. that the intended research and teaching activity on the part of the candidate is in line with the long-term, scientific development of the institution of higher education and undertaking to
- b. place the necessary infrastructure at the successful candidate's disposal and to actively integrate him/her into the research, teaching and clinical activities of the institution;
- c. recognise the title "SNSF professor" the Swiss National Science Foundation has bestowed on the successful candidate;
- d. accord a legal status comparable to an assistant professor (or similar position) to the successful candidate;
- e. enable the successful candidate to devote at least 80% of his/her work-time to research and further scientific education and the remainder principally to teaching;

⁵ The governing body of the above mentioned institutions may send the SNSF further comments for the second evaluation level either with this letter or no later than eight weeks after the submission deadline.

Article 5 Submission of applications

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation issues a call for the SNSF professorship programme each year. It specifies the final deadline for the submission of applications.

² The applications must be complete and submitted to the Administrative Offices of the SNSF by the submission deadline for the current call. The provisions governing timely submission are contained in Article 14 of the Funding Regulations and Clause 1.15 of the General Implementation Regulations⁸.

³ Only candidates expressly invited to submit an application based on the results of the pre-selection procedure are eligible for consideration at the second evaluation level.

3. Evaluation procedure

Article 6 Responsibility

The Research Council of the SNSF is responsible for scientific evaluations and decisions with regard to applications for SNSF professorships under these Regulations. The Research Council may delegate this task to specialised evaluation bodies.

Article 7 Assessment criteria

¹ Applications that meet the formal requirements are scientifically evaluated.

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. Candidate's scientific track record (research and teaching experience at home and abroad, publications in high-level science journals);
- b. Candidate's personal aptitude for a successful academic career;⁹
- c. Candidate's readiness to be mobile before submitting the application (retrospective) and in view of the intended place of work during the SNSF professorship (prospective); a change of

⁸ Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015 and General Implementation Regulations of 9.12.2015, both in force since 1 January 2016.

⁹ Changed based on the decision of 15 August 2012, in force since 1 February 2013

workplace at the start of the SNSF professorship is encouraged, but is not a condition if sufficient retrospective mobility is in evidence.

- d. Scientific quality of the planned research project;
- e. Possibility of integration into the Swiss system of institutions of higher education.

³ In the interest of an equal representation of both sexes, the underrepresented sex will be given preference in the event of candidates being equally qualified.

Article 8 Evaluation procedure

¹ An SNSF professorship is awarded after a two-level selection procedure.

a. Level 1: Pre-selection:

² The evaluation bodies assess the applications (written documents) according to the criteria outlined in Article 7 paragraph 2 letters a to e. The opinions of external experts may be obtained, if necessary.¹⁰ The evaluation bodies select the best applications for the second assessment phase. The other candidates will receive written notification that they have been rejected, including the reasons for the decision.

b. Level 2 : Final selection:

³ The candidates who passed the pre-selection level are invited to submit a detailed proposal within seven weeks.

⁴ The responsible evaluation panels assess the candidates on the basis of the submitted documents and the external reviews of these documents as well as an oral presentation in which the candidates explain their research project and career plans and answer questions.

⁵ The number of professorships to be awarded is indicated in the call.

⁶ The SNSF informs the candidates of the decision of the National Research Council to either award or not award an SNSF professorship by means of a written ruling giving reasons.

Article 9 Follow-up applications

¹ By no later than the submission deadlines for applications to the first or second evaluation level, a follow-up application for an extension of a maximum of two years may be submitted in the course of the final year of funding, provided that an extension was not ruled out in the grant awarded by the Research Council.

² The follow-up applications must be submitted using the official forms provided by the SNSF for this purpose and must contain all data and documents designated as mandatory.

³ Follow-up applications are assessed according to the criteria defined in Article 7 paragraph 2 letters a to e, with special consideration being given to the scientific, project-related results achieved during the grant period and their publication.

⁴ Follow-up applications are assessed in a single evaluation phase.

⁵ The host institute must send the SNSF an assessment of the candidate during the first grant period, which must address the following points:

- a. Scientific achievements (publications, patents, lectures etc.);
- b. Teaching activities and their results;

¹⁰ Added based on the decision of 14 December 2011, in force since 1 February 2012

- c. Leadership and supervision of research group;
- d. Possibilities of a permanent academic position at the host institution.

Article 10 Legal consequences of the award

Applicants who are awarded an SNSF professorship become grantees of the SNSF. They undertake

- a. to devote at least 80% of their work-time to research and further scientific education and the remainder primarily to teaching and
- b. to apply for permanent academic positions.

4. Eligible costs

Article 11 Amount and composition of the grant

The grant for an SNSF professorship amounts to a maximum of CHF 1,600,000 for 48 months and comprises the grantee's own salary, a research grant for realisation of the project (material of enduring value, expendable items, salaries of doctoral students, academic and technical personnel, travel costs, miscellaneous) and a grant towards infrastructure costs.

Article 12 Salary

The amount of the salary depends on the usual local rates for an assistant professorship (or a comparable position).

²The SNSF reserves the right to set an upper limit for the salary.¹¹

Article 13 Infrastructure

Up to 20% of the research grant may be used to cover infrastructure costs incurred at the host institution in connection with the SNSF professorship (specific equipment at the workplace, rental of external rooms).

5. Rights and obligations of the grantees

Article 14 Release and expiry of the grant

The release and expiry of grants is regulated in the provisions of the Funding Regulations.

Article 15 Administration of grants

¹ Grants for SNSF professors are paid to the host institutions in annual instalments; they are to be administered by the local grant administration offices in accordance with the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

² Once the SNSF professorship is awarded, the research work described in the application, or the host institution, may only be changed if a corresponding request has been explicitly approved by the SNSF.

¹¹ Added based on the decision of 14 December 2011, in force since 1 February 2012

Article 16 Stays abroad

The SNSF may approve requests for a stay of a maximum of 12 months abroad or at an institution outside academia.

Article 17 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ Grantees who choose not to accept the awarded SNSF professorship or choose to terminate their research activities prematurely, must inform the SNSF of their decision immediately, giving the reasons. The funds no longer needed (i.e. funds for personal salaries freed up in the event of the grantee gaining a permanent professorship) are to be redeemed to the SNSF.

² Article 43¹² of the Funding Regulations is applicable in the event of any misuse or violations in connection with the grants.

Article 18 Reporting

SNSF professors are obliged to report to the SNSF pursuant to Article 41¹³ of the Funding Regulations. The report will provide information on research and teaching activities during the report period and on the job applications submitted.

6. Transitional and final provisions

Article 19 Further provisions

Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

² Issues regulated neither in the present Regulations nor in the above mentioned regulations and directives are decided by the National Research Council.

Article 20 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 February 2008. They replace the Regulations of 1 May 1999.

¹² Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

¹³ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.