
Description of the evaluation procedure

Career funding

January 2013

Preamble

The Swiss National Science Foundation

The SNSF is the principal Swiss agency promoting scientific research. Established as a foundation under private law, it has funded research work in all scientific fields on behalf of the Swiss Confederation since 1952. The focus is on basic research, part of which may also be use-inspired.

In fulfilling its mandate to promote scientific research, the SNSF has devised a variety of funding schemes under which researchers can submit applications and request financial support. The funding schemes are organised as follows:

- Projects
- Careers
- Programmes
- Infrastructures
- Science communication

Career funding

Career funding is one of the main concerns of the SNSF. The SNSF offers various funding schemes for promoting young scientists at different stages in their careers. All funding schemes are open to researchers with links to Switzerland. Ambizione is the only funding scheme to which foreign researchers can apply from abroad for a position in Switzerland, provided that they have the support of a Swiss host institution. There are one or more submission deadlines for each funding scheme per year (www.snsf.ch). The main career funding schemes are the following:

Mobility abroad

- Fellowships
(Doc.Mobility, Early Postdoc.Mobility and Advanced Postdoc.Mobility)

Independent development in Switzerland

- Doc.CH
- Ambizione
- SNSF professorships

Careers of women scientists in Switzerland

- Marie Heim-Vögtlin (MHV)

The applications for career funding are assessed by the National Research Council of the SNSF and the SNSF Research Commissions. The Specialised Committee Careers is responsible for their evaluation. It appoints specialised Evaluation Commissions (panels) to evaluate the applications. The Evaluation Commissions consist of members of the National Research Council and external members. Depending on the funding scheme, applications may be forwarded to external reviewers for a written review. Grants are awarded based on a competitive procedure. One of the core tasks of the SNSF is to ensure a systematic evaluation procedure, from the submission of

applications via the individual assessment stages through to the decision and its communication.

These guidelines provide a general description of the procedures in place for schemes evaluated by the National Research Council. A similar procedure is applicable to schemes evaluated by the SNSF Research Commissions (incl. Fellowship Commission) in accordance with the standards issued by the SNSF.

Career funding documentation

The career funding documentation consists of:

- a [Description of the evaluation procedure](#) (assessment and decision-making)
- the [Guidelines for applicants](#) and the different guidelines for the submission of applications in various funding schemes, which provide assistance in preparing and submitting applications
- guidelines for reviewers (external reviewers and referees), describing the underlying principles and criteria of the evaluation procedure
- the [Funding Regulations of the SNSF](#), providing the legal basis for decision-making at the SNSF
- the regulations specific to individual career funding schemes

These documents are available on the SNSF's website (www.snsf.ch). They may also be downloaded in *mySNF*, the electronic platform used by the applicants and evaluators (www.mysnf.ch). The guidelines are based on the [Funding Regulations](#) and the [Organisational Regulations of the National Research Council](#). Their sole purpose is explanatory and they do not in any circumstances substitute the mentioned formal legal documents. Depending on the funding scheme, the evaluation procedure may deviate slightly from this description.

Further information on schemes evaluated by the SNSF Research Commissions is given in the [Framework Regulations for the Research Commissions](#) and in the regulations of the individual Research Commissions.

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1. Career funding

1.1 Main features

Career funding is one of the SNSF's main concerns. More than 2000 applications are evaluated per year across all career funding schemes.

With the exception of Doc.CH, the career funding schemes are open to all research disciplines and topics; the projects may concern both basic and use-inspired research. Whereas the applicant must have a salaried position at an institution in order to apply for project funding, coverage of living costs (by means of a fellowship or a salary) is a key element of the career funding schemes. In addition, career funding schemes may cover the applicant's research costs or even provide funding for the applicant's research project. Applications must be submitted in electronic form via the *mySNF* portal.

The National Research Council of the SNSF evaluates the applications according to published criteria and, depending on the scheme, takes into account assessments provided by external reviewers. Decisions are based on the principle of competition. An application generally takes four to ten months to process depending on the scheme (www.snsf.ch).

1.2 Principles

Applications are evaluated in line with the criteria set out in the [Funding Regulations of the SNSF](#):

- applicants' scientific track record and expertise
- applicants' potential for pursuing a scientific or academic career
- scientific relevance, originality and topicality of the proposed project
- cogency and feasibility of the proposed project

The rules and practices of evaluation and decision-making are based on the following principles:

- **Excellence through competition:** candidates are accepted if the relevant application is of high quality and the curriculum vitae and track record show that the candidate has the potential to pursue a scientific or academic career. Such candidatures stand out against the applications that are its direct competitors.
- **Fairness and equal opportunities:** the defined criteria are attainable and applicants receive equal treatment from the SNSF regardless of any personal features.
- **Transparency:** decisions are based on clearly defined procedures and rules. Researchers receive clear and useful information concerning the evaluation of their applications and the respective decisions of the SNSF.
- **Integrity:** the SNSF respects national and international ethical standards in its decision-making and expects applicants to do the same.
- **Confidentiality:** all data, information and documents transmitted by applicants to the SNSF are treated as confidential.

1.3 Evaluation procedure and communication

The evaluation procedure for career funding is divided into three successive stages:

- 1. Submission of applications and administrative measures:** the Administrative Offices of the SNSF receive applications from researchers via the *mySNF* platform. They then check whether the formal and personal requirements for submitting an application have been met and inform the applicants accordingly.
- 2. Evaluation:** depending on the scheme, a one-stage or a two-stage evaluation procedure is applicable. In a two-stage evaluation procedure, a shortlist of candidates is initially compiled on the basis of written application documents. The candidates selected for the second stage are then invited for an interview, during which they present their project before an Evaluation Commission and answer questions. In some schemes, external reviews are solicited for the second stage, whereas this is optional in other schemes (fellowships, MHV). The Evaluation Commission's overall assessment of the application is then forwarded to the Specialised Committee Careers together with a recommendation to either approve or reject the application.
- 3. Decision:** the Specialised Committee Careers discusses the applications and makes a provisional decision on each application (in the two-stage procedure: a final decision on the first stage). Subsequently, the Presiding Board of the National Research Council examines whether the procedures have been correctly applied and the budget and other conditions complied with. If this is the case, it endorses the provisional decision.

The SNSF informs applicants of the final decision, giving reasons in the case of rejections.

2. Submission of applications and administrative measures

2.1 Submission of applications by researchers

Applications must be submitted by the submission deadlines set for the funding scheme in question. Applications may be submitted twice a year for fellowship schemes and once a year for MHV, Ambizione and SNSF professorships. Submission is possible via the electronic platform *mySNF* approximately three months before the relevant deadline at the earliest.

Applications must be submitted in electronic form via the *mySNF* platform. For this purpose, applicants must ask the SNSF to open a user account for them in advance. In *mySNF*, administrative and financial data is submitted directly via the relevant entry masks. CVs, publication lists as well as career and research plans are uploaded as PDF documents. The required data and documents as well as their form and precise content are specified in the [Guidelines for applicants](#) and in the guidelines

for each scheme (www.snsf.ch). In addition, help texts for individual entry masks are available on the *mySNF* platform.

When submitting proposals, the applicants make the following choices that have an impact on the evaluation procedure:

- **Language:** apart from most disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, career funding applications must be submitted in English. In the disciplines where English is not mandatory, applicants can choose between German, French, Italian and English. The choice of language should be made dependent on the language of the majority of publications on the research topic in question. This simplifies the search for external reviewers.
- **Correspondence language:** the correspondence language determines the language of the SNSF's rulings (approval, offer to withdraw an application, rejection) issued by the SNSF. The choice here is limited to German or French.
- **Discipline/subdiscipline and keywords:** the selection entered for these items determines the assignment of an application to an SNSF evaluation body. However, applicants are not entitled to have their proposal discussed by a specific panel.
- **External reviewers, positive list:** for funding schemes with mandatory external review, applicants may be asked to name potentially suitable reviewers. The SNSF may ask these persons to review the application.
- **External reviewers, negative list:** for funding schemes with mandatory external review, applicants may name researchers by whom they would not like to have their application reviewed. The SNSF considers such requests if they are justified.

2.2 Processing of applications at the Administrative Offices of the SNSF

2.2.1 Verification of formal requirements

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF check whether the submitted applications meet the formal requirements pursuant to Article 9 of the [Funding Regulations](#) and the regulations of the relevant funding scheme. If the formal requirements are met, the SNSF decides to consider the relevant application and forwards it to the National Research Council for evaluation. If the formal requirements are not met, the application is not considered.

2.2.2 Verification of personal requirements

The verification of personal requirements examines formal conditions as set out in Article 8 of the [Funding Regulations](#) and in the regulations of the relevant funding scheme. If the requirements are met, the SNSF decides to consider the relevant application and forwards it to the National Research Council for evaluation. If the applicant does not meet the personal requirements, the application is not considered.

2.2.3 Verification of scientific integrity

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF check whether the application breaches any rules of scientific integrity. Should there be any indications of scientific misconduct, all processing of the application is suspended until such time as the application is cleared of suspicion through an investigation. If the suspicion is confirmed, the SNSF may impose sanctions (see [Regulations of the National Research Council on the treatment of scientific misconduct by applicants and grantees](#)).

2.3 Contacts between the applicants and the Administrative Offices of the SNSF

Prior to and during the submission of applications, the applicants can address their queries and requests for information to the Administrative Offices of the SNSF by phone or e-mail. When checking submitted applications, the Administrative Offices may contact applicants in order to clarify issues related to their application. Before, during and after the evaluation, the applicants are obliged to:

- provide any information requested by the SNSF
- cooperate in clarifying facts
- inform the SNSF about any new facts that may be relevant to the funding decision

The SNSF does not give the applicants any information concerning their applications while the evaluation procedure is in progress and until the decision is communicated in written form.

3. Evaluation of applications

3.1 Roles in the evaluation procedure

3.1.1 Referees

The Specialised Committee Careers is responsible for evaluating career funding applications. It appoints specialised Evaluation Commissions to evaluate the applications. The Evaluation Commissions generally consist of members of the National Research Council and external members. All members of an Evaluation Commission are equal and are compensated for their work for the SNSF. The Evaluation Commissions are generally presided over by a member of the Specialised Committee Careers.

For each application, a member of the Evaluation Commission assumes the role of referee and another member that of co-referee (four-eye principle). Referees and co-referees are assigned to applications by the Administrative Offices based on the discipline chosen by the applicant, the keywords entered and the short summary. The referees and co-referees are elected on the basis of their general experience and knowledge of research, particularly in Switzerland, as well as due to their expertise in their research field. As far as possible, the assignment takes into account the

workloads of the commission's members and can be modified later by the referees themselves.

The assessments of the referees and co-referees are based on their own expertise and on any external reviews. Their initial task is to assess the applications assigned to them and to check, evaluate and complete the **criteria-based assessments** of the external reviewers. They then assess each application in relation to the other applications of the relevant Evaluation Commission (**comparative assessment**) and may make a funding proposal. When the referees present the applications and the external reviews to the relevant decision-making body, they recommend that the body adopt this mark. The co-referees give their opinion of the recommendations made by the referees.

3.1.2 External reviewers

Depending on the career funding scheme, it is possible or mandatory to obtain external reviews. Pursuant to the relevant regulations, at least two external reviews must be available in funding schemes with mandatory external review (Ambizione and SNSF professorships) before a decision can be taken. Valid exceptions to this rule are stated in Article 18 of the [Funding Regulations](#). As the response/acceptance rate with regard to requests for review currently lies at approx. 40%, the SNSF is obliged to approach six to seven experts before it can meet this requirement. External reviewers should, if possible, conduct their research outside Switzerland, and for this reason they are generally sought abroad by the SNSF. These persons are designated as follows:

- by the referees, aided by the Administrative Offices of the SNSF
- based on a proposal from the applicant (no obligation on the SNSF)

The SNSF does not avail itself of a database of names of potential reviewers, it identifies and contacts external experts anew after each submission deadline. All requests for review sent to external experts are processed by the Administrative Offices via *mySNF*, similarly the administration of incoming reviews and reminders. External reviewers are generally not remunerated by the SNSF.

External reviewers are selected based on their specific expertise. As far as possible, external reviewers must be independent vis-à-vis the SNSF and the applicants and must take the internationally accepted state of the art in the relevant discipline as their frame of reference. Their task is to assess each application (applicant and proposed project) on the sole basis of the criteria defined by the SNSF (see chapter 3.3.2 as well as Article 17 of the [Funding Regulations](#) and the regulations for the relevant funding scheme). They assess the application according to the individual criteria and provide a **criteria-based opinion** of the application as well as the CV and track record of the candidate. The SNSF expects reviewers to deliver a detailed and well-founded analysis of the applications. At this stage, applications submitted by the same submission deadline are not compared with one another; instead they are judged individually based on the criteria.

3.1.3 Evaluation bodies

Evaluation Commissions

Evaluation Commissions are specialised panels appointed by the Specialised Committee Careers to evaluate the applications submitted for a specific funding scheme. They are composed of members of the National Research Council. Pursuant to the [Funding Regulations](#), the Specialised Committee Careers may appoint other experts to assist the members of the National Research Council in the Evaluation Commissions. These experts are equal to the members of the National Research Council as regards their work in the Evaluation Commission and may participate in decision-making. The Evaluation Commissions are generally presided over by a member of the Specialised Committee Careers in order to maintain a link to the Specialised Committee.

The applications are assigned to members with the relevant expertise who act as referees or co-referees of the applications. The recommendations of the referees are discussed in the Evaluation Commission and either approved by a vote or modified. As a rule, the applicant's choice of discipline for his/her application determines its assignment to one of the Evaluation Commissions. However, applicants are not entitled to have their application put before an Evaluation Commission of their choice.

SNSF Research Commissions and Fellowship Commissions

Research Commissions (RCs) are SNSF-mandated bodies at the Swiss universities and ETHs. They are responsible for evaluating applications in the mobility funding schemes (fellowships) at doctoral or early postdoctoral level. The cooperation between the SNSF and the SNSF Research Commissions is regulated in the joint regulations for the Research Commissions of the Swiss National Science Foundation ([Framework Regulations](#)). Within the scope of the budget assigned to them, the SNSF Research Commissions are the final decision-making body for the funding schemes Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility (fellowships). In addition, they compile a shortlist of promising candidates for the doctoral programme Doc.CH. When evaluating these applications, the SNSF Research Commissions act in accordance with the evaluation standards of the SNSF.

The SNSF also appoints a Fellowship Commission, which is responsible for all applicants who cannot submit their applications to one of the Research Commissions.

Specialised Committee Careers

The Specialised Committee Careers is responsible for career funding and its specific funding schemes. Pursuant to the regulations, it is composed of at least two representatives of each of the four divisions of the National Research Council and of no more than two external members. The Specialised Committee is presided over by a member of the National Research Council who is also a member of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council. The members of the Specialised Committee generally preside over the Evaluation Commissions appointed by the Specialised Committee. At present, the Specialised Committee Careers consists of ten members.

The Specialised Committee is responsible for the strategic orientation of the career funding schemes, for the budget and for evaluation. This concerns the following main funding schemes:

- Doc.CH (final selection)
- Advanced Postdoc.Mobility (APM)
- Marie Heim-Vögtlin (MHV)
- Ambizione
- SNSF professorships

For the evaluation of applications, it appoints specialised Evaluation Commissions, generally one for each major discipline (usually three per funding scheme). The Specialised Committee endorses the recommendations of the Evaluation Commissions. As the body responsible for the budget, it makes decisions with regard to any proposed grants held in reserve for the funding scheme as a whole. The Specialised Committee thus reaches **provisional decisions**, which it puts before the Presiding Board of the National Research Council for endorsement.

In addition, the Specialised Committee Careers is responsible for the content of the mobility programmes Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility. The final evaluation of the applications submitted for these funding schemes is performed by the SNSF Research Commissions (or the SNSF Fellowship Commission). The Specialised Committee monitors the procedures and is responsible for allocating the budget. In addition, it collaborates closely with the SNSF Research Commissions on the evaluation of the Doc.CH applications that are shortlisted by the local SNSF Research Commissions.

The Swiss Foundation for Grants in Biology and Medicine (SFGBM) evaluates fellowship applications for Advanced Postdoc.Mobility (APM) in experimental and clinical medicine as well as in biology as a basic medical science in collaboration with the SNSF and based on its fellowship regulations. The SNSF finances a large portion of the SFGBM's budget. As for the other APM fellowships, the proposed decisions are approved by the Specialised Committee Careers and the Presiding Board of the National Research Council.

Members of the National Research Council (NRC)

The National Research Council consists of no more than 100 members. New members are elected by the Presiding Board of the NRC and the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council subject to a public tender and subsequent recommendation from the relevant division of the NRC. The aim is to appoint an evaluation body composed of some of the best experts in Swiss science. Members of the NRC are directly elected to one of the divisions of the NRC for a period of four years; the mandate may be renewed once. Besides their main role within a division, they may be members of a specialised committee. There are three specialised committees, for careers, interdisciplinary research and international cooperation respectively.

Members of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council

The Presiding Board of the National Research Council consists of a president and the presidents of the divisions and specialised committees. The presidents of the divisions and specialised committees are proposed by the relevant body as well as the

Presiding Board of the NRC and elected by the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council. The President of the NRC does not belong to a division or specialised committee. He/She is elected by the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council in response to an application from a nomination commission.

The directors and the heads of the funding divisions within the Administrative Offices attend board meetings in an advisory function. Prior to Presiding Board meetings, the provisional decisions of the divisions and specialised committees are examined in order to verify the **formal correctness of the evaluation procedure as well as compliance with the budget and other conditions**. If any procedural or other errors are revealed by the examination, the Presiding Board returns the provisional decisions unendorsed to the respective divisions and specialised committees. In all other cases, it endorses the provisional decisions, **which thereby become final**.

3.1.4 Conflicts of interests – bias and withdrawal

While acting as reviewers or referees, external experts as well as members of the NRC may encounter potential conflicts of interests. Such conflicts exist in situations where the approval/rejection of an application may result in an advantage or disadvantage for the reviewer or the referee. Reviewers/Referees must refuse a reviewing request or the assignment of an application if they:

- are mentioned as collaboration partners for the proposed project
- have jointly published with the applicants in the last five years
- professionally depend on or compete with the applicants, or have done so until recently, or will do so in the foreseeable future;
- work at the same institute as the applicants (or in the same or in a closely linked organisational unit);
- have close personal ties with the applicants (partnership, family ties, friendship);
- fulfil other criteria that put their impartiality in doubt^{*)}

^{*)} A member of the National Research Council (or of an Evaluation Commission) must withdraw if he/she has a potential conflict of interests (see above) with respect to an application under evaluation by the evaluation body. Members of evaluation bodies must mention their reasons for withdrawal without being prompted.

Before launching a request for **external** review, the Administrative Offices of the SNSF check whether there are any potential conflicts of interests for the prospective reviewers and, if necessary, look for other reviewers together with the referee.

3.2 Internal evaluation and ranking

3.2.1 Procedure, criteria and assessment

Career funding at the SNSF involves either a **one-stage or a two-stage evaluation procedure** (see overview in the annex). In one-stage procedures, the applications are evaluated on the sole basis of the submitted documents. In this context, the obtainment of external reviews is optional, i.e. the referee (or the co-referee) decides whether any external reviews are required in addition to his/her own assessment.

The referees make their own criteria-based assessment, which may be based on the external reviews they deem to be useful. In so doing, they comment on and assess the applicants and the proposed project in relation to the criteria mentioned in chapter 3.3.2. The written assessments (recommendations) of all referees are discussed, compared and rated at a meeting. The Evaluation Commission proposes candidates for approval or rejection to the Specialised Committee Careers.

In two-stage procedures (MHV, Ambizione and SNSF professorships), the procedure described above is used to make a shortlist of candidates. The Evaluation Commission proposes promising candidates to the Specialised Committee Careers and recommends inviting them for an interview in the second stage. They may need to resubmit their documentation or provide further documents for the second stage, depending on the funding scheme.

With the exception of MHV applications, all applications admitted to the second stage must be sent to external reviewers who assess them based on the predefined criteria. The external reviews are initially checked by the relevant referee with regard to their usefulness and weighted accordingly in the subsequent evaluation. The comprehensibility of the assessment, the clarity and concreteness of the text and the expertise of the reviewer with regard to the proposed project are the criteria used to judge the usefulness of a review.

As in the first stage, the referees compile a written recommendation containing their personal rating based on the external reviews. The referees' recommendations serve as the basis for evaluating the candidates. The presentation and discussion with the candidate are also included in the comparative assessment. Based on these elements, the Evaluation Commission proposes candidates for approval or rejection to the Specialised Committee Careers. In some cases, it also proposes additional candidates in reserve in case the Specialised Committee Careers is in a position to approve further applications after taking into account all disciplines. The definitive funding proposal is submitted to the Presiding Board of the National Research Council for final endorsement.

3.2.2 Deviating procedures

Final evaluation for the funding schemes Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility is performed by the SNSF Research Commissions or the SNSF Fellowship Commission. While the evaluation is performed in accordance with the evaluation standards issued by the SNSF, certain deviations are possible. The SNSF distributes the budget across the SNSF Research Commissions or the SNSF Fellowship Commission in proportion to the number of applications.

In the Doc.CH funding scheme, the SNSF Research Commissions compile a shortlist of candidates. The Evaluation Commissions of the SNSF make the final selection with the help of representatives from the SNSF Research Commissions.

3.2.3 Documents

The referees enter their comments, judgements and marks in the recommendation form via the *mySNF* platform. The guidelines and the form make them aware that a summary of their reasons for giving the application a specific overall mark may be forwarded to the applicants, whereby the referee's identity remains concealed. The overall mark and, if applicable, the funding proposal constitute the referee's recommendation to the decision-making body.

3.3 External review

3.3.1 Procedure

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF ask the selected external experts to compile a review. If the response from the latter is positive, they are given access to the application documentation via the *mySNF* platform. Subsequently, they transmit their reviews via the same platform within the timeframe defined by the SNSF. Reviews are made available to the referees as soon as they are received. If reviews do not arrive in good time, the referees and the Administrative Offices of the SNSF are obliged to approach further external experts for a review. If only one external review is received or none at all, a written review is compiled by the co-referee.

3.3.2 Criteria and assessment

The external reviewers assess the applications on the sole basis of the internationally recognised criteria specified by the SNSF (see Article 17 of the [Funding Regulations](#)):

Assessment criteria with regard to the applicant:

- scientific track record and expertise in view of the proposed project
- depending on the career funding scheme, questions regarding the applicant's education, teaching activities and aptitude for an academic career need to be answered

Assessment criteria with regard to the proposed project:

- scientific relevance and broader impact, originality and topicality (the criterion "broader impact" is solely applicable to projects involving use-inspired research)
- Suitability of methods and feasibility

Considering each set of criteria individually, the reviewers make assessments ranging from "outstanding" to "poor". They explain their assessment of the application in relation to the relevant criterion. Finally, the reviewers deliver an overall appraisal of the proposal in which they summarise the grounds for their assessment.

3.3.3 Documents

The external reviewers enter their comments and assessments as text in the review form. They are made aware that their text will be forwarded to the applicants in full

along with the final decision of the SNSF, whereby the reviewer's identity will remain concealed.

3.3.4 Which funding schemes are reviewed externally?

External reviews are requested for all applications for Ambizione and SNSF professorships that reach the second stage. For all other career funding schemes, an external review is possible but not mandatory. It is up to the referee and co-referee of the relevant application to decide whether any external reviews are to be requested. With this procedure the SNSF aims to put less of a burden on the peer review system.

4. Decisions and communication

4.1 Discussions in the evaluation body and provisional decision

Three Evaluation Commissions are generally appointed per funding scheme to evaluate all applications submitted for a specific scheme by a specific deadline. Each of the Evaluation Commissions evaluates applications from one of the main research areas:

- Funding area I: humanities and social sciences
- Funding area II: mathematics, natural and engineering sciences
- Funding area III: biology and medicine^{*)}

^{*)} In some funding schemes, a further, specialised Evaluation Commission is appointed for medical or clinical applications.

The forms completed by the referee and the external reviews are made available to members of the relevant Evaluation Commission approx. one week before the meeting. At the meetings, the referees present the proposals assigned to them. They may refer to external reviews and reiterate the grounds for their recommendation. The co-referees also deliver an assessment. There follows a discussion of the application in relation to the other applications received on the submission deadline. The definitive rating of the application is then decided by vote. The final mark awarded to the application from a six-point scale ranging from "outstanding" to "poor" is decided in this vote (a simple majority is sufficient) along with the question of approval or rejection and, in the event of approval, the funding proposals. In two-stage procedures, the vote decides which candidates are to be invited for an interview and which are not to be considered for the next stage. For each proposal, the outcome of the vote is recorded in the minutes. Based on this, each Evaluation Commission makes a proposal specifying the applications to be funded and the applications to be rejected.

The Evaluation Commissions are informed about the available budget and the number of grants to be approved. They have the opportunity of nominating further promising candidates in reserve, provided that there are still some funds remaining. The budget and the number of grants to be funded are split in proportion to the number of applications that need to be evaluated by the Evaluation Commission.

The definitive proposal of each Evaluation Commission is presented to the Specialised Committee Careers, which has the final say on all decisions of the first stage across all Evaluation Commissions, which are compared with one another, as well as on the candidatures held in reserve. In the case of one-stage procedures or decisions of the second stage, the decisions are forwarded to the Presiding Board of the National Research Council for approval.

4.2 Final decision

The Presiding Board of the NRC endorses the provisional decisions of the divisions and specialised committees. It convenes on approximately ten occasions through the year. All members of the Presiding Board receive a list of provisional decisions before the relevant meeting and have access to the application documentation via *mySNF*. The Presiding Board does not discuss the applications individually, instead it votes on whether to endorse the provisional decisions en bloc for each division or specialised committee (a simple majority is sufficient). Upon their endorsement, provisional decisions become final. Provisional decisions that are not endorsed are rejected and returned to the relevant evaluation body.

The Presiding Board's endorsement of decisions is an additional quality assurance measure which serves to ensure the formal correctness of the evaluation procedure. Accordingly, the Presiding Board only discusses applications where procedural errors are suspected or which constitute a precedent. Prior to the meeting, each member of the Presiding Board can inform the other members of applications that need to be discussed. Minutes are taken during meetings.

4.3 Announcement of final decision to applicants

For one-stage procedures, the evaluation generally takes three to four months to complete. However, it may take up to ten months for two-stage procedures (www.snsf.ch). The final decisions on applications submitted by a specific submission deadline are generally made four to ten months after the submission deadline, depending on the funding scheme. In funding schemes with a two-stage procedure, the candidates may receive either an invitation to appear for an interview or to submit a full application, or a definitive rejection, after three to six months at the latest.

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF forward the final decisions to the applicants as soon as possible in the form of a ruling (in accordance with the Federal Act on Administrative Procedure). The ruling must be written in one of the official Swiss languages, generally German or French. When submitting the application on the *mySNF* platform, the applicants had indicated in which official language they prefer to communicate with the SNSF.

Positive rulings contain information on

- the application's relative mark
- the approved duration of the project

- the approved total amount of funding and its subdivision into annual instalments
- the further procedure for the release of funds

Positive rulings may also specify conditions with regard to the execution of the project, which must be met before any grants are released.

Negative rulings contain information on

- the application's relative mark
- the main grounds for the rejection

The main grounds for the rejection are taken from the referee's recommendation and the minutes of the meeting.

Any anonymised external reviews requested and received for the relevant application are enclosed with both the positive and the negative rulings. However, the SNSF does not forward any defamatory comments. This applies, in particular, to comments on the applicants.

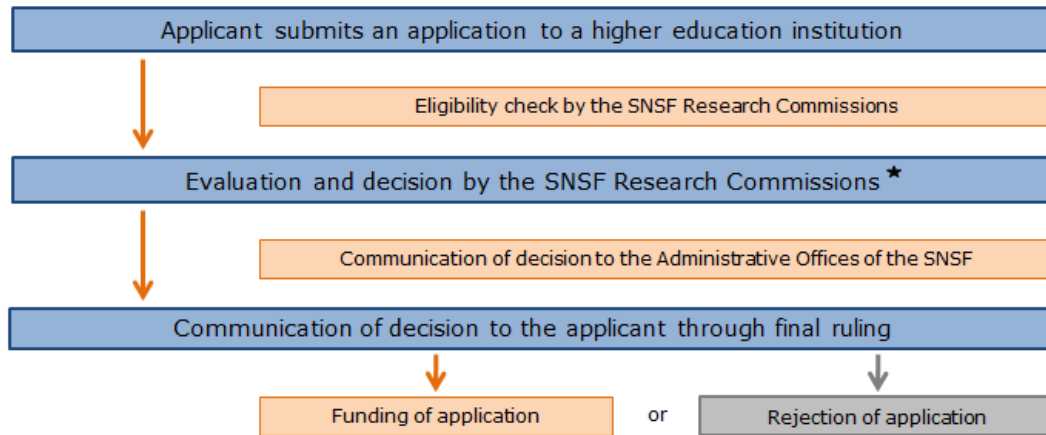
4.4 Applicants' right of appeal

Applicants may appeal against decisions of the SNSF before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court. The SNSF advises applicants to contact the Administrative Offices of the SNSF in advance in order to obtain information about the appeal procedure and its impact on the submission and evaluation of applications.

The SNSF may at its own discretion or in response to a request at any time reconsider decisions up to an appeal's circulation for review. Requests for reconsideration submitted to the SNSF by applicants are examined by the Administrative Offices of the SNSF, provided that reasons are given. If the examination reveals no indication of procedural errors, the SNSF rejects the request. In cases where the opposite is true, the request for reconsideration is discussed by the National Research Council, which either rejects the request or takes a new decision.

5. Annex: evaluation procedures in career funding – an overview

5.1 One-stage evaluation procedure



* The evaluation procedure varies depending on the SNSF Research Commission and the higher education institution

5.2 Two-stage evaluation procedure

