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Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships with a return option to advanced postdocs "Advanced Postdoc.Mobility"

16. Juli 2013

The National Research Council

based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations¹²

issues the following regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Principle

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") awards fellowships to researchers for further scientific education (hereinafter "mobility fellowships"). Mobility fellowships enable young scientists who wish to pursue an academic career in Switzerland to make a stay abroad in order to acquire more in-depth knowledge and enhance their scientific profile.

² In order to encourage the funded researchers to return to Switzerland and engage in research and to promote knowledge transfer between other countries and Switzerland, the SNSF may, within the scope of mobility fellowships for advanced postdocs, award additional grants as a means of financing a period of research immediately upon the grantee's return from abroad (hereinafter "return grants").

³ The supported researchers generally work at least 80% for the approved research project. A smaller work-time percentage may be permitted in response to a request giving reasons, particularly in the event of teaching commitments, clinical activities or family care duties.

¹ www.snsf.ch > Profile > Statutes & legal framework

² Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016

Article 2 Duration and start of the fellowship

¹ A mobility fellowship is awarded for a minimum of twelve months and a maximum of thirty-six months. If the approved duration of the fellowship is less than the maximum duration, an extension up to the maximum duration may be granted on request. In general, the funding period of thirty-six months abroad comprising mobility fellowships for "Early Postdoc" and "Advanced Postdoc" may not be exceeded.

² The earliest possible start of the fellowship is announced in the calls for proposals. The mobility fellowships may start approximately six months after the submission deadline at the earliest.

³ The mobility fellowship must be started no later than twelve months after the date of the ruling. Where there is good cause, a delay of up to twelve months in starting the fellowship may be approved upon request.

⁴ The first day of the month in which the research stay funded by the mobility fellowship starts is regarded as the first day of the mobility fellowship.

⁵ Mobility fellowships may not be awarded retroactively.

⁶ The return grant is awarded for at least three and at the most twelve months. Its duration is generally at the most one third of the entire duration of funding through the mobility fellowships Advanced Postdoc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility. The period of research after the return from abroad generally starts immediately after the mobility fellowship for advanced postdocs, but no later than twelve months after the end of the fellowship abroad.³

Article 3 Research location abroad; return to Switzerland

¹ The mobility fellowship finances the researcher's stay at a host institution abroad. The place of research must be different from the place of education. Furthermore, the host institution should not lie in the home country of the applicant; an exception may be granted upon request, generally for scientific reasons. Applicants having obtained their doctorate at a university abroad must conduct the mobility fellowship at a different place.

² In principle, the fellowship is awarded for a continuous stay. For scientific or family reasons, the stay may be split into two or more stays of at least four months each at the same or at different host institutions. Furthermore, it is possible to conduct part of the fellowship in Switzerland, whereby the stay in Switzerland must not exceed one-third of the entire duration and should not be used to complete the fellowship. If the stay is not intended to be continuous and to take place abroad in its entirety, a detailed justification must be submitted.

³ In principle, any researcher may apply for a return grant within the scope of a mobility fellowship for advanced postdocs, particularly those with family care duties. The return grant must already be applied for in the application for a mobility fellowship for advanced postdocs. Its aim is to enable the postdoc to complete the project conducted abroad in Switzerland or to launch a new project here.

⁴ The period of research immediately after the return from abroad must be spent at a Swiss higher education research center.⁴

³ Amended based on the decision of 17 June 2014, in force since 16 September 2014.

⁴ Editorial amendment of 17 November 2015, in force with immediate effect.

Article 4 Swiss delivery address

A Swiss delivery address must be mentioned in the application to which official messages may validly be sent in the course of the evaluation procedure and the mobility fellowship.

2. Formal requirements

Article 5 Personal requirements

Applications for mobility fellowships may be submitted by researchers from all disciplines who meet the following requirements:

- a. They hold a doctorate (PhD) or have completed their education in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine with a doctorate (MD).
- b. They can show that they had gained at least one year's experience in research at postdoctoral level by the submission deadline. The date of the examination or viva voce is the decisive date. Applicants already staying abroad under a mobility fellowship for prospective researchers or "Early Postdoc", may submit applications at an earlier point in time in order to avoid any financing gaps.
- c. Applicants with a doctorate (PhD) must generally have obtained the same a maximum of five years prior to the submission deadline. The date of the examination or viva voce is the decisive date. The period of five years after the doctorate serves as a benchmark. However, applicants who exceed this benchmark due to family care duties, for example, may be accepted. The applicants must present their reasons for exceeding the benchmark.
- d. Applicants who finished their medical training with a doctorate (MD) must have passed the state examination (or a similar examination) generally no more than nine years before the submission deadline. Furthermore, at the time of the submission deadline they must show that they have been engaged in clinical activities for at least three years since passing the state examination. The period of nine years after the state examination serves as a benchmark. However, applicants who exceed this benchmark due to family care duties, for example, may be accepted. The applicants must present their reasons for exceeding the benchmark.
- e. They are Swiss nationals, hold a valid Swiss permanent residence, residence or cross-border commuter permit, are married to a Swiss national or co-habit with a Swiss national in a registered partnership. Swiss nationals domiciled abroad and foreign nationals must declare in writing that they intend to pursue an academic career in Switzerland after the mobility fellowship. Candidates who are not Swiss nationals must at the time of the submission deadline additionally provide evidence of at least three years of activity at a research institution in Switzerland.

Article 6 Objective requirements

¹ Applications for mobility fellowships must be submitted in accordance with the relevant directives, in electronic form and in the prescribed file formats and must contain all data and documents designated as mandatory. The mandatory documents include, in particular, a confirmation from the host institution and the necessary letters of recommendation. If a return grant is applied for, an additional confirmation from the Swiss host institution must be submitted. This confirmation must contain information on the envisaged integration of the applicant at the institution.

² Applications may be submitted either in an official Swiss language or in English. The National Research Council may issue additional directives regarding application submission for individual disciplines.

³ Researchers who have submitted an application for a mobility fellowship for postdocs at the beginning of their career (Early Postdoc) may not submit an application for a mobility fellowship for advanced postdocs (Advanced Postdoc) pursuant to these Regulations before a formal decision on their current application is made.

Article 7 Submission procedure

¹ The SNSF announces submission periods by means of a call for proposals. The call may contain additional provisions that complement these regulations.

² The applications must be completed and submitted by the deadline specified in the call via the electronic application platform mySNF. The punctuality of applications is regulated in Article 14 paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations and Clause 1.15 of the General Implementation Regulations⁵.

³ ...⁶

3. Application procedure

Article 8 Responsibility

¹ The National Research Council of the SNSF is responsible for the scientific evaluation of applications and for decisions with regard to mobility fellowships. The Research Council may delegate this task to review panels formed for this purpose.

² ...⁷

³ The SNSF Research Commission of the university from which the applicant has obtained the doctorate compiles a statement. For applicants who have obtained their doctorate abroad, the SNSF Research Commission of the university where they are currently employed compiles a statement.

Article 9 Evaluation criteria

¹ Applications that meet the formal requirements are evaluated scientifically.

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. the quality, originality and topicality of the research project to be carried out during the research stay;
- b. the scientific track record of the applicants, particularly research work carried out independently or high-level publications;
- c. the likelihood of the applicants successfully completing the planned further education;
- d. the personal aptitude of the applicants for an academic career;

⁵ Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015 and General Implementation Regulations of 9.12.2015, both in force since 1 January 2016.

⁶ Repealed based on the decision of 17 June 2014, in force since 16 September 2014.

⁷ Repealed based on the decision of 17 June 2014, in force since 16 September 2014.

- e. the quality of the intended research location, i.e. working conditions, possibilities for further professional education, and expected extent of mobility.
- f. the coherence of mobility measures in the case of fellowship stays split into two parts or more;
- g. for the awarding of a return grant: the relevance of the research period immediately following the return for the grantee's academic career in Switzerland and the added value for knowledge transfer between other countries and Switzerland.

Article 10 Assessment procedure

The National Research Council selects and approves the best applications. It communicates its decisions to the applicants in the form of a ruling.

Article 11 Applications for extending the fellowship (follow-up applications) resp. delaying the return grant

¹ Follow-up applications must be submitted by the regular submission deadlines. Exceptions may be granted in specific cases for valid reasons. Only one follow-up application may be approved.

² Applicants must justify the need for an extension. They must disclose which research activities were conducted, which results were achieved during the grant period and which research activities are envisaged during the extension period. Furthermore, a letter of support from the scientific supervisor at the host institution must be provided.

³ A return grant may also exceptionally be applied for within the scope of an application for an extension of the Advanced Postdoc.Mobility⁸ fellowship (follow-up application).

⁴ If the period of research in Switzerland is not started immediately after the stay abroad, the SNSF must be informed of this in writing three months before the end of the stay abroad financed by the SNSF. The information must include reasons for the postponement, the length of the postponement and the date on which the period of research in Switzerland is to start. In the event of long interruptions, the SNSF may request a new project plan for this period of research.

Article 12 Legal effects of the award

¹ Applicants who are awarded a mobility fellowship become grantees of the SNSF.

² The grantees use the fellowship for their scientific education.

4. Eligible costs

Article 13 Grant for subsistence costs

¹ With the mobility fellowship for a research stay abroad, the SNSF awards grantees a grant for subsistence costs at the research location. The grants are defined according to the SNSF rates applicable in the year the award is made.

² Higher rates are allocated for grantees accompanied abroad for at least six months by spouses or partners who do not pursue any paid employment. For childless, unmarried couples, the higher rate applies only if they have a stable partnership at the time of the submission deadline.⁹

⁸ Editorial amendment of 17 April 2014, in force since 16 September 2014.

⁹ Amended based on the decision of 17 June 2014, in force since 16 September 2014.

³ Grantees with children receive a child allowance, defined by the SNSF, in addition to the subsistence costs. Child allowances contributed by third parties are deducted.

Article 14 Travel allowance

¹ In addition to the grant for subsistence costs, grantees and family members (spouse or partner pursuant to Article 13 paragraph 2 and children) who accompany them for at least six months are granted a travel allowance by the SNSF for the essential outward and return journey between the research location abroad and the current place of residence (e.g. Switzerland).

² The SNSF defines the amount of the travel allowances and reviews them periodically.

³ The SNSF may approve allowances for trips to Switzerland during the mobility fellowship, provided that the trips are made in the interest of maintaining academic contacts.

Article 15 Further costs

¹ Researchers may request the following additional grants, provided that the relevant requirements are met:

- a. A grant towards their matriculation fees at the host institution abroad, provided they can prove that the said institution has rejected a request from the researchers for such fees to be waived.
- b. A grant for attending scientific conferences that are relevant to their own research.
- c. A grant to cover the essential costs of conducting the research project, provided they can show that the host institution is not making any corresponding contributions.

² The SNSF may set binding maximum rates for the grants pursuant to paragraph 1.

Article 16 Late fulfilment of requirements

¹ If the requirements for a grant pursuant to Articles 14 and 15 are only met in the course of the mobility fellowship, grantees may apply for payment of the said grant as a supplementary grant in the course of the fellowship. Grant applications for attending scientific conferences must be submitted at least two months before the conference is held.

² Furthermore, grantees may apply for a supplementary grant if the parameters for calculating grants for subsistence costs pursuant to Article 13 should change.

Article 17 Additional funds

¹ Grantees must inform the SNSF without delay in writing should they receive any funds from other organisations or institutions in connection with the research stay covered by the mobility fellowship from the SNSF.

² Additional funds may be deducted from the grants pursuant to Articles 13 to 15 if they exceed a specific amount to be defined periodically by the SNSF.

5. Return grant

Article 18 Salary

The return grant consists of a salary with social security contributions paid to the grantee. The amount of the SNSF salaries is based on the usual SNSF salaries for postdocs at the relevant host institution in Switzerland.

Article 19 Other costs

The return grant may contain a contribution towards research costs directly linked to the implementation of the project.

6. Rights and obligations of grantees

Article 20 Grant release and expiry

¹ The approved grants are released at the grantees' request pursuant to Article 33¹⁰ of the Funding Regulations.

² The funds for the stay abroad are transferred in Swiss francs to a bank or postal account in Switzerland one month before the fellowship starts at the earliest.

³ If grantees do not commence their mobility fellowship on time, the grant expires pursuant to Article 2 paragraphs 3 and 4.

⁴ The expiry of the return grant is based on Article 34¹¹ of the Funding Regulations.

Article 21 Taxes and insurances

¹ A distinction must be drawn between the mobility fellowship (fellowship, stay abroad) and the return grant (salary with social security contributions, employment at a host institution in Switzerland).

² While income from the mobility fellowship is generally tax-exempt in Switzerland, this does not apply to the return grant.

³ The SNSF arranges accident insurance cover for grantees for the duration of the mobility fellowship. Family members are not insured. All other forms of insurance are the responsibility of the grantees.

⁴ Detailed information on the tax and insurance situation is given in the information sheet "SNSF Fellowships".

Article 22 Maternity or paternity, illness and accident, military or civilian service, civil defence

¹ Grantees who become mothers in the course of the mobility fellowship are entitled to paid maternity leave of four months.

¹⁰ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016

¹¹ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016

² Grantees who become fathers may be granted paid paternity leave of up to four months in the course of the mobility fellowship if an application giving reasons is submitted.

³ In the event of an illness or accident occurring in the course of the research fellowship, the SNSF may increase the grant pursuant to Article 13 and extend the duration of the fellowship on request if the scientific objectives pursued with the research stay could not otherwise be achieved.

⁴ In the event that a grantee is required to perform military, civilian or civil defence service during the fellowship, the duration of the fellowship may be extended on request.

⁵ In the cases described in paragraphs 1 to 4, fellowships exceeding the maximum duration stipulated in Article 2 may be awarded.

⁶ Return grants are paid based on the employment conditions applicable in Switzerland.

Article 23 Changes to research plan or change of research location

The research work (research plan and schedule) or the research location specified in the fellowship application may be changed after the approval, provided that a request giving reasons is expressly approved by the SNSF.

Article 24 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ In the event of grantees deciding not to pursue mobility fellowships or return grants or having to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the SNSF immediately of the fact in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

² They must redeem to the SNSF any grant already paid towards subsistence costs pursuant to Article 13 or the salary pro rata temporis. The other grants, if already paid, must be refunded insofar as the grantees have not incurred any verifiable expenses.

Article 25 Administration of the return grants

Pursuant to the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, the beneficiaries of return grants must have the latter administered by a grant administration office recognised by the SNSF.

Article 26 Reporting

Grantees report to the SNSF pursuant to Article 41¹² of the Funding Regulations.

7. Final provisions

Article 27 Further provisions

¹ In the absence of any relevant provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General Implementation Regulations¹³ apply.

² 14

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

¹³ Amendment; in force since 1 January 2016.

¹⁴ Repealed; amendment; in force since 1 January 2016.

³ Article 43¹⁵ of the Funding Regulations applies in the event of any misuse or violations in connection with the grants.

⁴ In the event of any scientific misconduct, the Regulations of the National Research Council on the treatment of scientific misconduct by applicants and grantees apply.

Article 28 Entry into force and replacement of existing regulations

¹ These Regulations enter into force on 1 November 2013.

² They replace the Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to advanced postdocs of 20 March 2012.

¹⁵ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016