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## Regulations on the awarding of grants to doctoral students in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) in Switzerland "Doc.CH (HSS)"

20 March 2012

The National Research Council

based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations<sup>12</sup>

issues the following regulations:

### 1. General

#### Article 1 Principle

<sup>1</sup> The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards grants to promising researchers who wish to write a dissertation on a topic of their own choice in the humanities and social sciences (hereinafter "Doc.CH (HSS) grants").

<sup>2</sup> The grantees are matriculated at a Swiss university as doctoral students and paid a salary by the university via the Doc.CH (HSS) grant.

<sup>3</sup> Their work-time percentage is generally 100% and they must devote all their work time to the dissertation. A lower work-time percentage may be approved in response to a written request giving reasons.

#### Article 2 Duration and start of funding

<sup>1</sup> Doc.CH (HSS) grants are awarded for a period of two to a maximum of four years.

<sup>2</sup> The first part of the grant is awarded for a period of two years, the second for one to two years.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest possible start of funding is announced in the respective calls. The grants may start approximately seven months after the submission deadline.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.snsf.ch](http://www.snsf.ch) > About us > Statutes & legal framework

<sup>2</sup> Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Doc.CH (HSS) grants may not be awarded retroactively.

### **Article 3 Place**

<sup>1</sup> Beneficiaries of Doc.CH (HSS) grants carry out their dissertation work in Switzerland. They must be matriculated as doctoral students at a Swiss university and duly employed for the duration of the grant.

<sup>2</sup> Part of the dissertation may be produced at a host institution abroad if a corresponding request giving reasons is made in writing.

## **2. Formal requirements**

### **Article 4 Personal requirements**

<sup>1</sup> Applications for Doc.CH (HSS) grants may be submitted by researchers who meet the following requirements:

- a. At the time of the submission deadline, they have a degree (master or similar degree) from a Swiss higher education institution which entitles them to start doctoral studies in the humanities and social sciences at a Swiss university. Researchers with a foreign degree are also entitled to submit an application if they have Swiss nationality.
- b. They have acquired the degree no more than two years prior to the submission deadline. An exception may be granted if the applicant's scientific career has been delayed, e.g. due to family care duties. Requests for exemption from this requirement must be well-founded and submitted in writing.
- c. They must provide a positive assessment of their degree thesis and have excellent marks in their degree.
- d. They have generally changed their higher education institution at least once between obtaining their bachelor degree and their matriculation as doctoral students. In the event of family care duties or if a research stay abroad of at least one semester is planned during the doctoral studies, an exception may be granted in response to a written request giving reasons.

<sup>2</sup> When the Doc.CH (HSS) grant starts, the applicants must be certifiably matriculated as doctoral students and employed at the envisaged university in Switzerland.

### **Article 5 Objective requirements**

<sup>1</sup> Doc.CH (HSS) applications must be submitted electronically and compiled in accordance with the relevant directives. They must contain all data and documents designated as mandatory.

<sup>2</sup> The mandatory documents include, in particular:

- a. Written confirmation from the responsible office at the host institute in Switzerland that it will integrate the grantee into the research institution and assure him or her of a workplace and access to the infrastructure required to successfully complete research work during the approved funding period. If applicable, the letter must also confirm the grantee's integration in a doctoral school or programme.
- b. Two letters of recommendation from different persons written in response to a request from the applicant. The first person must work at the Swiss university at which the applicant is

matriculated for a doctorate (supervisor); as a person authorised to supervise dissertations, he or she must undertake to supervise the grantee's dissertation. The second person must work either at another Swiss university or abroad; he or she must support the dissertation. In their respective letters, the two persons particularly comment on the scientific qualifications of the grantee, on his or her own contribution to the dissertation topic and on the feasibility of the proposed research project.

- c. A letter of invitation from the host institute abroad if a research stay abroad is planned pursuant to Article 3 paragraph 2. In this letter, the host institute confirms, in particular, that it can guarantee acceptance and supervision. If the stay abroad is organised after the Doc.CH (HSS) grant has been awarded, the applicant must submit this letter to the SNSF for prior approval along with an application giving reasons.

<sup>3</sup> Applications may be submitted in English or in an official Swiss language. The National Research Council of the SNSF (hereinafter "Research Council") may issue additional directives regarding the submission of applications for selected disciplines.

## **Article 6      Submission procedure**

<sup>1</sup>The SNSF announces submission periods by means of a call for applications. The call may contain additional provisions that complement these regulations.

<sup>2</sup> The applications must be addressed to the Research Commission of the SNSF (hereinafter "SNSF Research Commission") of the university at which the applicant intends to be matriculated and employed as a doctoral student.

<sup>3</sup>The completed applications must be submitted via the electronic platform mySNF by the relevant date specified in the call. The punctuality of applications is regulated in Article 14 paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations and Clause 1.15 of the General Implementation Regulations<sup>3</sup>.

## **3.      Application procedure**

### **Article 7      Evaluation procedure**

<sup>1</sup>The evaluation procedure comprises two phases.

<sup>2</sup> In an initial phase, the SNSF Research Commission selects the best applications and recommends them to the Research Council for the second phase.

<sup>3</sup> In the second phase, those persons whose applications were selected in the first assessment phase are invited by the Research Council to a personal interview at the main offices of the SNSF. In special cases (e.g. long travelling distance), the interview may be held as a video conference.

<sup>4</sup> In the second phase, applicants must present their research project and career plans orally and answer the questions of the panel members.

### **Article 8      Responsibility**

<sup>1</sup> In the first phase of the evaluation procedure, the SNSF Research Commissions are responsible for the scientific assessment and selection of the applications to be recommended to the Research Council for the second phase. Applicants whose application is not recommended for the second

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<sup>3</sup> Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015 and General Implementation Regulations of 9.12.2015, both in force since 1 January 2016.

phase are informed by the SNSF Research Commissions in writing of the rejection. The reasons for the rejection are given in the letter.

<sup>2</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions conduct their activities in accordance with the procedural rules specified in the Framework Regulations for the Research Commissions of the Swiss National Science Foundation as well as any further directives issued by the SNSF.

<sup>3</sup> In the second phase, the SNSF Research Council is responsible for the scientific assessment of the recommended applications and for decisions with regard to the awarding of Doc.CH (HSS) grants. The Research Council may delegate the scientific assessment to specialised evaluation bodies.

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Research Council is responsible for decisions with regard to the applications for the second part of the Doc.CH (HSS) grant.

## **Article 9 Evaluation criteria**

<sup>1</sup> Applications that meet the formal requirements are evaluated scientifically.

<sup>2</sup> The following evaluation criteria are applied:

- a. the quality, originality, topicality and feasibility of the dissertation project;
- b. the applicant's contribution towards the topic and concept of the dissertation project;
- c. the applicant's scientific track record;
- d. the likelihood of the dissertation being successfully completed;
- e. the applicant's aptitude for a scientific career and the prospects for such a career in Switzerland;
- f. the applicant's mobility as regards the envisaged place of work;
- g. the quality of the research location envisaged for the dissertation, in particular the working conditions as well as the possibilities for professional supervision and further education;
- h. the qualifications of the two persons mentioned in Article 5 paragraph 2 letter b, in particular of the dissertation supervisor.

## **Article 10 Applications for the second part of the grant**

<sup>1</sup> For the second part of the Doc.CH (HSS) grant pursuant to Article 2 paragraph 2, the grantee must submit a new application to the SNSF after the first eighteen months.

<sup>2</sup> The application must contain, in particular, a report on the completed first part, justification for the requested funding period for the second part and a statement by the dissertation supervisor and the other person mentioned in Article 5 paragraph 2 letter b. The signatories of the statement must comment, in particular, on the progress made in the dissertation and its expected completion.

<sup>3</sup> The second part of the grant is awarded on approval of this application by the Research Council. Within the scope of evaluating this application, the Research Council may invite the grantee for a personal interview.

<sup>4</sup> In principle, no further application for a supplementary grant to extend the second part may be submitted. However, in justified cases an extension may be approved, provided that the entire duration of the grant is shorter than the maximum duration of four years.

#### **Article 11      Legal effect of the award**

Applicants who are awarded a Doc.CH (HSS) grant become grantees of the SNSF.

### **4.      Eligible costs**

#### **Article 12      Salary**

The Doc.CH (HSS) grant comprises the grantee's own salary. The SNSF defines the amount of the salary pursuant to Clause 7.6<sup>4</sup> of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

#### **Article 13      Further costs**

The Doc.CH (HSS) grant covers costs directly related to project implementation (material of enduring value, consumables, travel and conference expenses, sundry expenses).

### **5.      Rights and obligations of grantees**

#### **Article 14      Grant release and expiry**

Release and expiry of Doc.CH (HSS) grants are governed by Articles 33 and 34 of the Funding Regulations.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Article 15      Administration of grants**

Beneficiaries of Doc.CH (HSS) grants must arrange for the grant to be administered by a grant administration office recognised by the SNSF pursuant to Clause 5.1<sup>6</sup> of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations.

#### **Article 16      Changes**

Following the award of the Doc.CH (HSS) grant, the research work and research conditions, in particular the host institute, the supervisor and the other person mentioned in Article 5 paragraph 2 letter b, may only be changed if a corresponding request giving reasons is explicitly approved by the SNSF.

#### **Article 17      Non-acceptance or premature termination**

In the event of grantees deciding not to accept the Doc.CH (HSS) grant or having to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the SNSF immediately of the fact in writing, stating their reasons for doing so. The remaining amount of the grant must be returned to the SNSF.

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<sup>4</sup> Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015 and General Implementation Regulations of 9.12.2015, both in force since 1 January 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015 and General Implementation Regulations of 9.12.2015, both in force since 1 January 2016.

## **Article 18     Reporting**

<sup>1</sup> After eighteen months, the grantees must submit an interim scientific report along with the application for the second part of the grant. If no second part is awarded, a final report must be submitted to the SNSF within six weeks of the grant's expiry.

<sup>2</sup> If no second part is envisaged, the grantee need only submit a final report within six weeks of the grant's expiry.

<sup>3</sup> Within six weeks of the second part expiring, the grantees shall submit a final scientific report containing specific information about the examination or viva voce and the completion of the dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, financial reports must be compiled in accordance with the relevant directives issued by the SNSF.

<sup>5</sup> In the absence of any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of Article 41<sup>7</sup> of the Funding Regulations apply.

## **6.     Final provisions**

### **Article 19     Further provisions**

<sup>1</sup> Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

<sup>2</sup> Article 43<sup>8</sup> of the Funding Regulations applies in the event of any misuse or violations in connection with the grants.

<sup>3</sup> 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 20     Entry into force**

These Regulations enter into force on 1 January 2013.

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<sup>7</sup> Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.