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## Framework Regulations for the Research Commissions of the Swiss National Science Foundation

of 20 March 2012

approved by the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council on 9 May 2012

The National Research Council

based on Article 21 paragraph 2 letter j of the Statutes of the Swiss National Science Foundation of 30 March 2007

issues the following Regulations:

### Chapter 1 General Provisions

#### Article 1 Scope

In these Framework Regulations, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) regulates the tasks and competencies of the Research Commissions of the SNSF (hereinafter "SNSF Research Commissions") as well as the requirements that a body at a Swiss higher education institution must meet in order to be recognised as an SNSF Research Commission. In addition, the role of the Specialised Committee Careers (hereinafter "Specialised Committee Careers") is defined in these Regulations.

#### Article 2 Requirements for recognition

<sup>1</sup> In order for bodies of Swiss universities (hereinafter "Universities") to be recognised as an SNSF Research Commission, the following requirements must be met:

- a. Regulations (hereinafter "RC Regulations") on the organisation and activities of the SNSF Research Commission under these Framework Regulations must be approved by the governing bodies of the Universities or by the body responsible under the applicable University legislation and submitted to the SNSF along with the request for recognition.

b. The governing bodies of the Universities must confirm that the necessary infrastructure, in particular a sufficiently endowed secretariat, is available by the date scheduled for the commencement of activities and that the regular and timely fulfilment of tasks is ensured.

<sup>2</sup> Bodies that at the same time carry out duties for the University may also be recognised as SNSF Research Commissions if the two remits are clearly separated and the representation of the interests of two separate bodies in identical matters is ruled out. In such cases, the provisions of these Framework Regulations apply insofar as the body functions as an SNSF Research Commission.

### **Article 3            Recognition**

<sup>1</sup> The request for recognition as an SNSF Research Commission must be submitted to the SNSF by the governing body of the relevant University.

<sup>2</sup> The SNSF generally makes a decision with regard to recognition and to the RC Regulations within six months of receiving the request.

<sup>3</sup> Any amendments of the RC Regulations are only valid once they have been approved by the SNSF.

<sup>4</sup> The SNSF may revoke recognition as an SNSF Research Commission if the requirements stipulated in these Framework Regulations are no longer met. It shall listen to the relevant SNSF Research Commission and the governing body of the University before taking such a step.

### **Article 4            Compensation**

The SNSF shall compensate the SNSF Research Commissions for the work they do under these Framework Regulations. The level of compensation is governed by the "Compensation Regulations" (Reglement über die Entschädigung der Organe Stiftungsrat, Stiftungsratsausschuss, Nationaler Forschungsrat und Forschungskommissionen des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds) of 25 January 2008.

## **Chapter 2        Organisation of the Research Commissions**

### **Article 5            Composition**

<sup>1</sup> The number and requirement profile of the members of an SNSF Research Commission must be defined in the RC Regulations such that the full range of teaching and research activities at the University is represented in adequate quantity and high quality.

<sup>2</sup> If, pursuant to the applicable University legislation, membership of the SNSF Research Commission is open to persons who are not members of the professorial teaching staff, then pursuant to Articles 10 and 11 the scientific evaluation and decision-making with regard to grant applications must be carried out exclusively by members of the professorial teaching staff.

<sup>3</sup> An SNSF Research Commission must be composed of at least seven members. The precise number of members must be specified in the RC Regulations.

## **Article 6            Incompatibility**

<sup>1</sup> The members of an SNSF research Commission must not be members of the National Research Council or of the Foundation Council of the SNSF.

<sup>2</sup> If a member of the National Research Council or of the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council is an ex officio member of the SNSF Research Commission based on the applicable University legislation, he/she must withdraw permanently from all matters concerning the SNSF. If the president of the SNSF Research Commission is affected by this provision, a permanent deputy must be appointed to deal with the SNSF.

## **Article 7            Election and period of office**

<sup>1</sup> The members of the SNSF Research Commission are elected by the governing body of the University or by the body responsible in accordance with the applicable University legislation. The co-opting of new members is not permissible.

<sup>2</sup> The election of the president of the SNSF Research Commission must be approved by the National Research Council, unless the presidency is bound ex officio to a specific function based on the applicable University legislation. If a permanent deputy must be appointed to deal with the SNSF based on Article 6 paragraph 2, the deputy must also be approved.

<sup>3</sup> The details are set out in the RC Regulations, in particular the period of office and re-elections. The entire period of office of a member of an SNSF Research Commission in principle must not exceed eight years. The period of office of the president is likewise in principle limited to eight years; the years spent as a member before gaining the presidency are not included. In exceptional cases, the National Research Council may extend the period office by no more than one year in response to a request giving reasons.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall inform the SNSF of their composition without being prompted and of any personnel changes without delay.

<sup>5</sup> When electing the members of the SNSF Research Commission and when appointing the president, the SNSF's aim of achieving an equal representation of men and women must be taken into account.

## **Article 8            Sections and sub-commissions**

<sup>1</sup> If the RC Regulations stipulate that the SNSF Research Commission must be split into sections and sub-commissions in order to fulfil its tasks in accordance with these Regulations and if the said sections and sub-commissions are to have the final say, their decision shall be binding on the SNSF Research Commission as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> If the evaluation of applications in the funding schemes Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility is delegated to a section or sub-commission, the latter must have the minimum number of members pursuant to Article 5 paragraph 3.

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<sup>1</sup> Added based on the decision by the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council of 11 December 2013, in force with immediate effect.

## **Article 9      Involvement of external persons**

<sup>1</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions may involve external persons in the evaluation of applications.

<sup>2</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall inform the SNSF about the involvement of external persons without being prompted.

## **Chapter 3      Duties**

### **Article 10      Awarding of Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowships**

<sup>1</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions are responsible for awarding mobility fellowships to doctoral students (Doc.Mobility fellowships) and to postdocs starting their careers (Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowships).

<sup>2</sup> When awarding the said fellowships, they shall apply the provisions of the Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to doctoral students (Doc.Mobility) and on the awarding of mobility fellowships to postdocs starting their careers (Early Postdoc.Mobility) as well as the procedural rules set out in these Framework Regulations.

<sup>3</sup> Unless they are explicitly authorised to do so by these Framework Regulations, the SNSF Research Commissions are not entitled to issue any provisions that deviate from the Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships mentioned in paragraph 2.

### **Article 11      Selection of candidates for Doc.CH (HSS) grants**

<sup>1</sup> In the context of grants awarded to doctoral students in the humanities and social sciences (Doc.CH (HSS) grants), the SNSF Research Commissions are responsible for evaluating the applications of the first phase. They select the best candidates and recommend them for the second phase. The maximum number of candidates to be recommended is set by the Specialised Committee Careers.

<sup>2</sup> The Specialised Committee Careers selects the best candidates from among the recommended candidates. It may set up one or more central evaluation commissions for the second phase. The SNSF Research Commissions may propose competent persons as members of the evaluation commissions. The evaluation commissions consist of members of the National Research Council and the SNSF Research Commissions and, if applicable, of external persons.

### **Article 12      Statement concerning applications for Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowships**

<sup>1</sup> Within six weeks of the application deadline expiring, the SNSF Research Commissions shall provide the National Research Council with a statement concerning the applications for Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowships submitted to the SNSF from their University. The statement shall contain an opinion on the candidates' academic suitability.

<sup>2</sup> The National Research Council may issue further instructions with regard to the form, scope and content of the statements.

<sup>3</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall take account of the fact that the applicants may be permitted to inspect the statements within the scope of access to records.

### **Article 13 Information and advice**

<sup>1</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall give interested researchers at their University appropriate information and advice on the funding opportunities offered by the SNSF.

<sup>2</sup> For this purpose, they shall collaborate closely with the relevant offices of the SNSF and participate in corresponding information campaigns run at their Universities.

<sup>3</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions generally organise one information event per year for researchers interested in the funding schemes Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility.

<sup>4</sup> They may propose measures aimed at optimising information or funding schemes to the SNSF at any time.

### **Article 14 Reporting**

<sup>1</sup> At the end of each calendar year, the SNSF Research Commissions shall inform the National Research Council by means of a written report about all the activities they have carried out under the Framework Regulations.

<sup>2</sup> The National Research Council may issue further rules with regard to the form, content and scope of the reporting.

## **Chapter 4 Specialised Committee Careers**

### **Article 15 Responsibilities of the Specialised Committee Careers**

The Specialised Committee Careers is responsible for:

- a. ensuring the coherence of the measures, schemes and practices of the different commissions in the area of career funding;
- b. setting up guidelines for the evaluation of applications and the co-ordination of funding activities of the SNSF Research Commissions within the scope of the funding schemes Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility;
- c. the budget available for the funding schemes Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility.

### **Article 16 Meetings with the SNSF Research Commissions**

<sup>1</sup> At least once a year the SNSF calls a meeting with the presidents of the SNSF Research Commissions.

<sup>2</sup> During the meeting, the Specialised Committee Careers and the presidents of the SNSF Research Commissions discuss issues of common interest. Both sides are responsible for reconciling and co-ordinating the funding activities of the SNSF Research Commissions in the area of Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility.

<sup>3</sup> The meeting will be presided over by the president of the National Research Council (overarching questions concerning the SNSF) and/or the president of the Specialised Committee Careers (career funding schemes).

<sup>4</sup> If a president of an SNSF Research Commission is not able to attend a meeting, he or she may be represented by another member of the SNSF Research Commission, which representation is legally binding.

## **Chapter 5      Procedural Rules**

### **Section 1      General rules**

#### **Article 17      Quorum**

<sup>1</sup> Decisions on applications for Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility grants may be made if at least half of the members of the SNSF Research Commission are present.

<sup>2</sup> Decisions are made by a simple majority vote of those present. The President also votes and in the event of a stalemate he/she has a casting vote.

<sup>3</sup> The RC Regulations may stipulate more stringent quorum requirements.

#### **Article 18      Decisions by circular letter**

<sup>1</sup> The RC Regulations may allow for decisions to be made by circular letter in matters of urgency.

<sup>2</sup> A decision is regarded as made if the majority of members vote in its favour.

#### **Article 19      Withdrawals**

<sup>1</sup> The members of the SNSF Research Commissions shall withdraw when matters relating to the SNSF are discussed and shall not participate in the preparations nor in decision-making if they

- a. have a personal interest in the matter;
- b. are related to a person directly affected by the decision, whether in direct line or collaterally (up to third degree), by marriage, by registered partnership or cohabitation;
- c. collaborate closely with persons directly affected by the decision;
- d. have any other conflicts of interests.

<sup>2</sup> The person concerned shall declare his or her interests without being prompted to do so.

<sup>3</sup> If the withdrawal is contested, the Research Commission or the responsible body pursuant to the University legislation shall decide.

#### **Article 20      Official/Professional secrecy**

Within the scope of their remit, the members of the SNSF Research Commissions and the external persons involved in the evaluations shall be bound by official/professional secrecy pursuant to Articles 10, 11 and 12.

## **Section 2: Rules for evaluating applications for Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility grants**

### **Article 21 Calls for applications**

<sup>1</sup>The SNSF Research Commissions shall set two deadlines per year for the submission of applications for Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowships. In so doing, they shall comply with the rules of the Specialised Committee Careers. The submission deadlines are published on the Internet.

<sup>2</sup>The dates of the calls for proposals for the Doc.CH (HSS) funding scheme are set by the Specialised Committee Careers.

### **Article 22 Procedure**

<sup>1</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall consider the rules issued by the Specialised Committee Careers for the evaluation of applications.

<sup>2</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall regulate the procedure for the evaluation of applications for Doc.CH (HSS), Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility grants in their RC Regulations.

<sup>3</sup> The following conditions must be observed when defining the procedure:

- a. Researchers who meet the formal application requirements must be admitted to the application procedure; there is no formal or informal pre-selection;
- b. Prior to any scientific evaluation, the SNSF Research Commissions shall not consider applications that do not meet the formal criteria by issuing a ruling after consulting the scientific secretariat of the Administrative Offices of the SNSF (hereinafter "the scientific secretariat");
- c. For each application admitted to scientific evaluation, at least one short written evaluation by a member of the SNSF Research Commission responsible for the field in question or by an independent expert must be available;
- d. Each application admitted to scientific evaluation is assigned to a referee and to a co-referee within the SNSF Research Commission. The referee and the co-referee give their opinion on the application at the evaluation meeting;
- e. Each candidature is discussed in the SNSF Research Commission and assessed in relation to the other candidatures. The best candidatures are financed (Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility) or recommended (Doc.CH (HSS)). The main reasons for a positive decision or a rejection are recorded in the minutes;
- f. The RC Regulations may stipulate that the persons entrusted with the evaluation may contact the applicants personally to clarify open questions. In this case, the place, time and content of the contacts must be noted in the application dossier;
- g. If the RC Regulations stipulate that the applicants are invited for an interview (evaluation interview), the latter must take place in front of a delegation comprising at least three members of the SNSF Research Commission and must be summarised in writing in the application dossier. The delegation may include external persons; at least one person must be a member of the SNSF Research Commission. The composition of the delegations must be defined in the RC Regulations;

- h. The entire application dossier is made available to the members of the SNSF Research Commission as a decision-making aid during the evaluation procedure. All procedural steps that are of significance for decision-making must be documented in the application dossier;
- i. The Research Commissions shall grant the applicants the procedural rights prescribed by the Constitution and by law. In particular, they shall grant them the right to access records and they shall communicate their decisions in the form of rulings that meet the requirements stipulated in the Federal Act on Administrative Procedure (Articles 34 and 35 APA). Applicants are not offered the option of withdrawing applications that have been given a negative rating prior to the communication of the decision;
- j. If an application for a Doc.Mobility or an Early postdoc.Mobility fellowship is rated positively, the SNSF Research Commission shall determine the amount of the fellowship based on the binding rates defined by the National Research Council and the information provided in advance by the scientific secretariat. It shall communicate the decision in the form of a ruling which complies with the guidelines issued by the scientific secretariat for this purpose and the provisions of letter i;
- k. If an application is given a negative rating, the SNSF Research Commission may submit the ruling to the scientific secretariat prior to its communication;
- l. The rulings are signed by the president of the SNSF Research Commission or, in the president's absence, by his or her deputy;
- m. If an appeal is filed against a decision by the SNSF Research Commission, the appeal procedure is initiated by the Administrative Offices of the SNSF. For this purpose, the SNSF Research Commission must provide the Administrative Offices with the entire application dossier (original documents) without delay as well as any information requested. If it becomes clear in the course of the appeal procedure that errors were made in the decision taken by the SNSF Research Commission, the SNSF Research Commission shall reconsider the said decision at the behest of the Administrative Offices;
- n. In the context of the funding schemes Doc.Mobility and Early Postdoc.Mobility, the SNSF Research Commissions shall require fellowship holders to send them a scientific report within six weeks of completing their fellowship. The content of the report shall be examined by at least one member of the SNSF Research Commission within a reasonable period of time. The result of the examination is communicated to the fellowship holder.

**Article 23            Collaboration with the scientific secretariat of the Administrative Offices of the SNSF**

<sup>1</sup> The scientific secretariat shall be invited to attend in an observing role meetings of the SNSF Research Commission at which applications are discussed.

<sup>2</sup> It may advise the SNSF Research Commission regarding procedural matters in the interest of ensuring uniform procedures throughout Switzerland and may instruct them with regard to administrative issues.

<sup>3</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions are entitled to receive support from the scientific secretariat, in particular with regard to procedural matters and the editing of negative rulings.

## **Chapter 6      Final provisions**

### **Article 24      Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations**

<sup>1</sup> These Framework Regulations were approved by the Executive Committee of the Foundation Council of the SNSF on 9 May 2012 and enter into force on 1 January 2013. They replace the Framework Regulations of 13 May 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The SNSF Research Commissions shall formally bring their RC regulations into line with the provisions of these Framework Regulations by 30 June 2013 and shall have them approved by the SNSF.

<sup>3</sup> If the SNSF Research Commissions do not fulfil their duty pursuant to paragraph 2, they shall forfeit their status as bodies of the SNSF. This forfeiture of status shall be confirmed by the Foundation Council through a declaratory decision.