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Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to post-docs; "Postdoc.Mobility fellowships"

1 November 2016

The National Research Council,
based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations¹
issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards fellowships to researchers for further scientific education abroad (hereinafter "Postdoc.Mobility fellowships"). The Postdoc.Mobility fellowships are intended for researchers after the doctorate who wish to pursue an academic career in Switzerland. A research stay abroad enables such researchers to acquire more in-depth knowledge, increases their scientific independence and enhances their research profile.

² The Postdoc.Mobility fellowships include funding to cover subsistence and travel costs as well as return grants. The return grants enable fellowship holders to finance their first period of research immediately after their return to Switzerland.

³ Holders of Postdoc.Mobility fellowships must in principle devote their entire work-time corresponding to a work-time percentage of 100% to the research funded by the SNSF.

Article 2 Legal framework

Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations² (hereinafter "General Implementation Regulations") apply to Postdoc.Mobility fellowships.

¹ www.snsf.ch > Funding > Documents & downloads

² www.snsf.ch > Profile > Statutes & legal framework

Article 3 Duration and start of the fellowship

¹ Postdoc.Mobility fellowships are awarded in principle for two years. The minimum duration is twelve months.

² The earliest possible start of the fellowship is announced in the relevant call for proposals. The fellowships generally start approximately six months after the submission deadline at the earliest.

³ The Postdoc.Mobility fellowship must be started no later than twelve months after the date of the ruling. If it is started at a later date, Article 33 paragraph 3 of the Funding Regulations will apply.

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

⁵ Once a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship has been started, it may be extended upon request by a maximum of one year exclusively for the following reasons:

- a. Interruption of research activity due to maternity, paternity or adoption;
- b. Inability to work for at least one month without interruption due to illness or accident;
- c. Services that benefit the general public, particularly military or civilian service.

Article 4 Return grants

¹ The return grant may be used to finance a period of research in Switzerland conducted immediately after the stay abroad in the frame of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

² Applications for return grants may only be submitted in compliance with the official submission deadlines while a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship is still ongoing.

³ The research period immediately after the return from abroad must be spent at a Swiss higher education institution. It enables the fellowship holder to complete the project conducted abroad or to launch a new project in Switzerland.

⁴ A return grant is awarded for a minimum of three and a maximum of twelve months.

⁵ The research period financed by a return grant starts immediately upon the fellowship holder's return from abroad and generally represents a seamless continuation of the completed Postdoc.Mobility fellowship,³ but no later than twelve months after completion of the fellowship. If the return period does not start immediately upon the end of the fellowship, an updated project plan must be submitted on request.

⁶ The return phase cannot be extended. However, a continuation of funding remains reserved pursuant to the reasons stated in Article 3 paragraph 5.

Article 5 Host institution, intersectoral mobility

¹ The research stay funded under the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship must be conducted at a non-commercial research institution (host institution) abroad, intersectoral mobility pursuant to paragraph 3 shall remain reserved. The place of research must not be the same as the place of education or dissertation and must not be located in the applicant's home country; in exceptional cases a research stay in the applicant's home country may be approved for scientific reasons upon request.

² In principle, the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship is awarded for a continuous stay abroad. For scientific or family reasons, the stay may be split into two or more stays of at least four months each at

³ Amendment of 1 September 2018.

the same or at different host institutions. It is also possible to conduct part of the fellowship in Switzerland if the stay in Switzerland does not exceed one third of the total duration and does not take place at the end of the fellowship. If the stay is not intended to be continuous and/or does not take place abroad in its entirety, a corresponding explanation must be provided.

³ It is permissible to spend parts of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship at institutions operating in the practical field (industry, administration, etc; intersectoral mobility) abroad or in Switzerland. The total duration of such stays may not exceed one quarter of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 6 Personal requirements

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

- a. At the time of the submission deadline, they hold a doctorate (PhD, MD-PhD) or have completed their studies in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine.
- b. Applicants with a doctorate (PhD, MD-PhD) must have obtained the same a maximum of three years prior to the submission deadline. The relevant date is that of the examination or viva voce. This time window may be extended pursuant to the provisions stipulated in Clause 1.11 of the General Implementation Regulations.⁴
- c. Applicants who have finished their medical training but do not have an MD-PhD must have passed the state examination (or an equivalent examination) no more than eight⁵ years before the submission deadline. This time window may be extended pursuant to the provisions stipulated in Clause 1.11 of the General Implementation Regulations.⁶ Furthermore, at the time of the submission deadline medical researchers without an MD-PhD must show that they have been engaged in clinical activities for at least three years since passing the state examination.
- d. 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. Candidates who are not Swiss nationals must at the time of the submission deadline additionally provide evidence of at least two⁷ years of activity at a research institution in Switzerland.
- e. Applicants who are able to show that they meet the following requirements may request a work-time percentage below 100%, but at least 80%:
 1. Family care duties or
 2. Fulfilment of activities that qualify them for an academic career (e.g. lecturing assignment, training and continuing education in their field).
- f. Clinical researchers must devote at least 80% of their work-time pursuant to letter e to the project.

⁴ Amendment of 14 August 2018.

⁵ Amended based on the decision of 15 August 2017, takes effect immediately.

⁶ Amendment of 14 August 2018.

⁷ Amended based on the decision of 15 August 2017, takes effect immediately.

Article 7 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for Postdoc.Mobility fellowships and return grants must be submitted electronically to the SNSF. They must include all information and documents designated as mandatory, particularly the confirmation from the host institution(s) and the required reference letters.

² The applicants must state in their career plan that they intend to pursue an academic career in Switzerland after completing the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

³ The language of the application must be chosen pursuant to Clause 1.16 of the General Implementation Regulations.

3. Submission of applications and restrictions

Article 8 Submission procedure

¹ The SNSF periodically announces calls for proposals for Postdoc.Mobility fellowships. The call may include additional provisions that supplement these Regulations.

² Applicants or grantees must register a Swiss delivery address with the SNSF, even if the place of research and/or of residency is located abroad. If it is not possible to provide a Swiss delivery address, the SNSF will be entitled to send its messages via e-mail, which communication shall be binding. In the context of an appeal procedure, however, it is compulsory to provide a Swiss delivery address.

Article 9 Postdoc.Mobility in relation to other funding options offered by the SNSF

¹ Postdoc.Mobility applications may only be submitted for a duration of support for which

- a. no other financing has been obtained for the planned project from the SNSF or third parties;
- b. no other career grants of the SNSF have been applied for.

The restrictions apply during the entire evaluation process.⁸

² Parallel submissions for Ambizione or PRIMA grants or Eccellenza⁹ are permissible while the evaluation procedure for a return grant is still in progress.

³ In the event of an impermissible parallel submission of a proposal, the SNSF will not consider the Postdoc.Mobility proposal.

⁴ As of the date of approval through to the end of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, incl. return grant, it is not permissible to submit any other applications for project or career funding or within the scope of programmes of the SNSF, nor is it permissible to hold or apply for an SNSF-funded position as an employee in another research project. It is permissible to apply for funding beyond the expiry date of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship or the return grant.

Article 10 Repeated submissions: limitation

Applicants whose application was rejected may apply at the most once more for a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship regardless of the subject matter of the project, provided the personal and formal requirements are met.

⁸ Editorial amendment of 1 September 2018, in force with immediate effect.

⁹ Amendment of 14 August 2018.

4. Eligible costs - fellowship

Article 11 Grant for subsistence costs

¹ With the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, the SNSF awards grantees a grant to cover subsistence costs at the research location. The grant is defined according to the SNSF rates applicable in the year the award is issued.

² Higher rates are allocated for grantees accompanied abroad for at least six months by spouses or partners who are not gainfully employed.

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

⁴ If the requirements for a grant pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 are only met in the course of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, grantees may apply for payment of the said grant as a supplementary grant while the fellowship is still ongoing.

Article 12 Extension of the grant: costs

¹ If grants pursuant to Article 3 paragraph 5 are extended, the grant pursuant to Article 11 will continue to be paid for the approved duration of the extension. The duration depends on the actual period during which research activities within the scope of the fellowship were interrupted.

² In the following cases, the maximum funded extension is:

- a. Four months in the event of maternity;
- b. Four months in the event of paternity, if the grantee can provide proof that he is the primary carer;
- c. Two months should the grantee assume responsibility for fostering and bringing up small children with a view to adoption at a later stage.

Article 12^{bis} Supplementary funding due to maternity¹⁰

¹ Grantees who give birth in the first nine months after the end of their fellowship may apply for supplementary funding due to maternity.

² The SNSF grants them supplementary funding corresponding to the monthly fellowship amount pursuant to Article 11 for a maximum of four months.

³ Supplementary funding is conditional on the fellowship holders providing proof that they are interrupting their research work due to maternity and are not entitled to any remuneration or any insurance benefits during the four months following birth. In the event that the total amount of such entitlements is lower than the supplementary funding pursuant to paragraph 2, the SNSF shall pay the difference between the two. Any entitlement to such supplementary funding is forfeited with the resumption of work.

Article 13 Travel allowance

¹ In addition to the grant for subsistence costs, grantees and their spouses or partners pursuant to Article 11 paragraph 2 and children pursuant to Article 11 paragraph 3 are granted a travel

¹⁰ Amended based on the decision of 14 August 2018, takes effect immediately.

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 If the requirements for a grant pursuant to paragraph 1 are only met in the course of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, grantees may apply for payment of the said grant as a supplementary grant while the fellowship is still ongoing.

³ The SNSF defines the amounts awarded as travel allowances and adjusts them periodically.

Article 14 Scientific exchange with Switzerland (CH-Link)

¹ The SNSF may approve grants to cover travel costs for short visits to Switzerland during the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, provided that the visits are made in the interest of maintaining academic contacts.

² The short visits must include conducting a seminar or a comparable event at an institute or laboratory of a Swiss university or higher education institution.

³ The visit to Switzerland may take place nine months after the start of the fellowship at the earliest and must not last for more than two weeks.

⁴ A corresponding request must be submitted six weeks prior to departure at the latest. The location, objective and work plan of the short visit must be outlined in the request.

⁵ The SNSF contribution towards travel costs comprises a blanket amount that is graduated according to the visited location.

Article 15 Further costs

¹ The SNSF awards grants to cover the following costs:

- a. Mandatory matriculation fees at the host institution abroad, provided it can be proven that a request for such fees to be waived has been rejected;
- b. Costs for participating in scientific conferences that are relevant to the grantee's research;
- c. Costs essential to the completion of the research project which verifiably cannot be covered via the host institution.

² Grants pursuant to paragraph 1 must generally be requested in the application for a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship. In exceptional cases, they may also be requested as a supplementary grant while the fellowship is still ongoing, particularly if it can be shown that the costs were not foreseeable when the application was submitted.

³ The SNSF may define maximum rates for the grants pursuant to paragraph 1.

Article 16 Funding by third parties

¹ If the grantees have received any additional funds from other organisations or institutions in connection with the research stay supported by the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship of the SNSF, such funds will be deducted when the grants are calculated pursuant to Articles 11-13 and Article 15 insofar as they exceed the grant defined by the SNSF.

² Grantees must inform the SNSF about the additional funding pursuant to paragraph 1 without delay in writing.

5. Eligible costs - return grants

Article 17 Salary and research costs

¹The following costs are covered in the frame of return grants:

- a. The grantee's salary, incl. social security contributions. The amount is calculated on the basis of the usual SNSF salaries for postdocs at the relevant host institution in Switzerland;
- b. Grants towards research costs - in accordance with the maximum rates defined by the SNSF - that are directly linked to the completion of the project and verifiably not covered by the host institution.

²Duration and costs of an extension of the return grant are defined in accordance with the provisions set out in Article 12 and in Clause 7¹¹ of the General Implementation Regulations.

6. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 18 Assessment criteria

¹ Applications that meet the personal and formal requirements are subjected for scientific evaluation.

²The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. the applicant's scientific track record;
- b. the applicant's aptitude for an academic career;
- c. the applicant's career progression and mobility;
- d. prospects of achieving the educational goals outlined in the career plan;
- e. scientific relevance, quality, originality and topicality of the research project to be carried out during the research stay;
- f. approach and methodology of the research project as well as its feasibility and chances of success;
- g. the quality of the intended research location, i.e. the working conditions and continuing education options as well as the degree of independence and mobility to be gained;
- h. the coherence of mobility measures in the case of fellowship stays split into two parts or more;
- i. if applicable, value that the requested stays at institutions operating in the practical field add to the applicant's career and to the research project;
- j. for the approval of a return grant: value that the research period immediately after the applicant's return from abroad adds to an academic career in Switzerland.

Article 19 Evaluation and decision

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

² It communicates its decisions to the applicants in the form of a ruling.

¹¹ Wording based on the Research Council decision of 24 September 2019, in force since 2 October 2019.

Article 20 Legal consequences of the award

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

² They are obliged to use the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship in accordance with the provisions governing the award and, in particular, to pursue the goal of further education, which is the purpose of the fellowship.

7. Grants and grant administration

Article 21 Grant release and expiry

¹ The approved grants are released at the grantees' request pursuant to Article 33 of the Funding Regulations.

² The grant is paid 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 start their Postdoc.Mobility fellowship on time pursuant to the provisions stipulated in Article 3, the grant is forfeited.

⁴ The forfeiture of return grants is regulated in Article 34 of the Funding Regulations.

Article 22 Tax and insurance matters during the stay abroad

¹ The Postdoc.Mobility fellowships of the SNSF are intended to be used for the continuing higher education of young researchers based in Switzerland. They promote scientific mobility for young researchers by making a contribution towards the costs of a stay abroad. The SNSF does not pay any salaries, however. Grantees are not required to give the SNSF anything in return. Federal law requires only application and reporting documents, which do not constitute services. The research results shall not be the property of the SNSF under any circumstances.¹²

² The SNSF arranges accident insurance cover for grantees for the duration of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship. Family members are not insured. All other forms of insurance are the responsibility of the grantees.

³ Information on tax and insurance matters is made available by the SNSF.

Article 23 Changes to the 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 once the mobility fellowship is awarded, provided that a request giving reasons is expressly approved by the SNSF.

Article 24 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ In the event that grantees decide not to pursue the Postdoc.Mobility fellowships or the return grant or have to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the SNSF immediately about the fact in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

² They must reimburse the SNSF pro rata temporis for any grant already paid towards subsistence costs pursuant to Article 11 or for the salary paid under the return grant pursuant to Article 17.

¹² Amendment of 23 April 2018.

The other grants, if already paid, must be refunded insofar as the grantees have not incurred any provable expenses.

Article 25 Administration of return grants

Return grants are administered by the responsible grant administration office recognised by the SNSF.

Article 26 Reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to send the SNSF periodic reports in accordance with the requirements defined by the SNSF.

² In particular, scientific and financial reports as well as output data are to be submitted annually after the start of the project.

³ The duty to provide output data will remain in place after submission of the final report and end three years after the expiry of the grant.

8. Entry into force

Article 27 Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

¹ These Regulations enter into force on 1 November 2017

² They replace the Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to advanced postdocs (Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowships) of 16 July 2013.