
Guidelines for requesting a Flexibility Grant

Grants for doctoral students and postdocs with family care commitments.

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1. Purpose of the Flexibility Grant

The aim of Flexibility Grants is to offer young researchers at doctoral and postdoctoral level more flexibility in reconciling a scientific career with child care duties.

In the framework of the Flexibility Grant, researchers can apply for a financial contribution towards external child care costs, a contribution towards the salary of a support person that allows the researchers to reduce their work quota, or a combination of both options.

For detailed information on the Flexibility Grant, please refer to the following documents:

[Funding Regulations of the SNSF](#), [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#) and [Annex 4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations: Flexibility Grant](#).

The documents can be downloaded via the SNSF website (www.snsf.ch) on the electronic platform *mySNF* (www.mysnf.ch).

These "Guidelines for requesting a Flexibility Grant" are intended as an additional help in submitting an application; they are not legally binding, however.

2. Points to be clarified before submission

2.1 Eligible schemes

Postdocs and doctoral students may apply for a Flexibility Grant under the following funding schemes:

- Project funding (Divisions I to III, interdisciplinary projects)
- Spark (grant recipients whose salary is covered by the Spark grant, as well as postdocs financed through the grant)
- Practice-to-Science (postdocs and doctoral students financed with the grant)
- Eccellenza (postdocs and doctoral students financed with the grant)
- SNSF professorships (postdocs and doctoral students financed with the grant)
- Ambizione (grant recipients whose salary is covered by the Ambizione grant, as well as postdocs and doctoral students financed through the grant)
- PRIMA (grantees whose salary is covered by the PRIMA grant, and postdocs and doctoral students financed through the grant)
- Postdoc.Mobility (only return phase; grantees whose salary is covered by the Postdoc.Mobility return grant)
- Doc.CH (grantees whose salary is covered by the Doc.CH grant)
- Sinergia
- National Research Programmes
- International cooperation programmes

Flexibility Grants may also be applied for in the context of National Centres of Competence for Research (NCCRs). Special submission and application arrangements in the case of NCCRs are set out in the NCCR Guidelines "Grants for postdocs and doctoral students with family care duties". The grants need to be obtained by the NCCR management on behalf of the beneficiaries.

In the case of Lead Agency applications in project funding, a Flexibility Grant may only be requested for the Swiss part of the project. In the scope of international cooperation programmes, Flexibility Grants are only awarded to researchers who are employed in Switzerland. Holders of Eccellenza project grants may not apply for a Flexibility Grant for themselves, but they may do so on behalf of the postdocs and doctoral students funded under the grant.

2.2 Personal requirements and submission of applications

The personal requirements for applicants who wish to apply for a Flexibility Grant are set out in [Annex 4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations: Flexibility Grant](#) under Clauses 4.4 and 4.5.

The submission procedure is regulated in Clause 4.6 of Annex 4; in addition, applicants must bear in mind that:

- applications may not be submitted before the SNSF has approved the research project or before the relevant employee has been registered with the SNSF via a personnel change message.
- a Flexibility Grant starts only after the maternity leave;
- all contributions towards child care costs will be added to your taxable income. As these payments are taxable, they may have a negative impact on child care subsidies granted by the public authorities.

The application for a Flexibility Grant must be submitted in electronic form (in *mySNF* under the "Supplementary grants" section) and in the prescribed file formats and must contain all mandatory data and enclosures. The SNSF does not consider applications that are incomplete.

2.3 Types of grant/contribution

A Flexibility Grant can be used in different ways:

- a.) to finance the employment of a scientist, technician or student as a support person within the scope of the research project funded by the SNSF. The grant towards the salary costs of a support person allows researchers to reduce their work quota to a minimum quota of 60% and hire a support person. The beneficiary of the grant can also apply for a Flexibility Grant to finance a support person without reducing his/her own work quota. In such cases the support person's work quota will be 20%.
- b.) to cover the actual costs of external child care arrangements (up to an upper limit).
- c.) The two measures can be combined.
- d.) Doctoral students may only apply for a grant to cover child care costs. As the doctoral thesis constitutes a personal achievement, doctoral students may not apply for financing of a support person.
- e.) Holders of a Postdoc.Mobility return grant may only apply for a grant to cover child care costs. As the grantees have sole responsibility for the project during the return phase, they may not apply for financing of a support person.

2.4 Eligible costs

For administrative purposes, a Flexibility Grant is considered to be a supplementary grant for the ongoing research project and can therefore be applied for in the "Supplementary grants" section on the *mySNF* web platform. The applications are evaluated by the Administrative Offices within

two months. The assessment of applications is limited to checking the personal requirements and whether the grant is justified.

Detailed information on which costs are eligible for funding can be found in Clause 4.9 of the [Annex 4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations: Flexibility Grant](#).

3. Creating the upload documents

In accordance with the requirements set out in 3.4 in this document, the documents you need to upload with your application must be in PDF format. The SNSF will not get back to you if any information is missing. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

The Flexibility Grant application must be written in the language of the main application or in English.

3.1 Description of the grant beneficiary's situation

Please describe your role in the research project and explain how the Flexibility Grant would benefit your research work. In addition, please describe your current child care situation, the work quota (in percentage terms) of each parent, and indicate which variant of the Flexibility Grant you are applying for. If you wish to hire a support person, please describe the tasks he/she will need to accomplish for the project, as well as your planned collaboration. You should also draw up a budget for the Flexibility Grant. Please enter your annual gross salary as the SNSF will calculate the amount available for the support person based on this information.

3.2 Child's birth certificate

Please submit a copy of your child's birth certificate.

3.3 Proof of child care including statement of costs

Please provide proof of child care costs and of any contributions towards child care costs to you or to the other parent from an employer.

3.4 Requirements for the individual documents

| | Document | Contents |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Description of his/her own situation by the postdoc or doctoral student (at the most 1 DIN A4 page, with a font of at least 10 and 1.5 line spacing) | Here you describe your role in the research project, your current child care situation, the work quota (in percentage terms) of each parent, your preferred funding option under the Flexibility Grant, the grant's usefulness in your situation, the tasks, collaboration and coordination with the support person, and the budget outlining how the grant is to be used. Please enter your annual gross salary as the SNSF will calculate the amount available for the support person based on this information. |
| 2 | Document certifying birth of the child | Copy of the birth certificate |
| 3 | Proof of child care including statement of costs | Proof of child care costs and of any contributions towards child care costs to you or the other parent from an employer. |

4. Submission through *mySNF* and assessment of the applications

4.1 Supplementary grant for current project in *mySNF*

The supplementary grant application and the mandatory documents are uploaded to *mySNF* by the corresponding grantee via the SNSF-funded project. First call up the ongoing project and select the option "Supplementary grants" and subsequently the type of supplementary grant (Flexibility Grant). The mandatory information and documents concerning the supplementary grant then need to be entered in the *mySNF* input screen. Grants generally last for two years (Clause, Annex 4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations: Flexibility Grant).

It is possible to choose between a) a new application, b) a follow-up application (unchanged situation), or c) a follow-up application (changed situation):

- a) A new application may be submitted if a Flexibility Grant has not previously been obtained.
- b) A follow-up application (unchanged situation) can be submitted if already a Flexibility Grant had been obtained and neither the personal requirements nor the own situation has changed. The follow-up application (unchanged situation) may cover the remaining period of the project on which the Flexibility Grant is running including any extension (cost-neutral or via a supplementary grant) of the project. For a follow-up application (unchanged situation), no situation description needs to be submitted.
- c) A follow-up application (changed situation) can be submitted if a previous Flexibility Grant has expired and there has been a significant change in the own situation (e.g. another child, changes in child care, significantly changed care costs, changed level of own employment, changed level of support person's employment). A follow-up application (changed situation) can also be submitted during the duration of an ongoing Flexibility Grant if the own situation has changed significantly. For a follow-up application (changed situation), a situation description must be submitted again.

4.2 Manage authorisations in mySNF

Project leaders can allow project staff to collaborate on their applications and projects in *mySNF*. Given writing authorisation, staff members are able to fill in all of the forms on *mySNF*. However, based on existing regulations the responsible applicant may not delegate the following processes:

- Submission of the application
- Submission of a request for the release/transfer of funds
- Submission of a financial report
- Submission of a scientific report

All other forms may be transmitted to the SNSF by the staff with writing authorisation themselves.

4.3 Evaluation of applications by the SNSF Administrative Offices and decision-making

For each application for a Flexibility Grant, the SNSF Administrative Offices check whether the personal requirements are met (see Article 2.2 above). The SNSF only considers the application if all requirements are met. The SNSF then assesses whether the measures are warranted in accordance with [Annex 4](#), Clause 4.7. It does not request any further documents at a later stage or return documents for revision. No enquiries are made.

The SNSF usually evaluates the applications for a Flexibility Grant within two months. The grant holder for the SNSF-funded project receives the decision on the Flexibility Grant in the form of a ruling sent via postal letter. A copy is forwarded by e-mail to the relevant postdoctoral or doctoral researcher employed in the project.

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

Please address any questions arising prior to or during the submission procedure to the responsible division of the SNSF Administrative Offices via phone or e-mail. The SNSF does not provide you with any information concerning the submitted applications while the evaluation is in progress and until the decision is communicated in written form.