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Regulations on grants awarded to doctoral students ("Doc.CH")

of 1 July 2020

The National Research Council,

based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015¹,

issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards grants to very well qualified researchers who wish to write a dissertation on a topic of their own choice (hereinafter "Doc.CH grants").

² Doc.CH grants are awarded to doctoral students in the humanities and social sciences.

³ Doc.CH grants are awarded for dissertations by doctoral students who are matriculated and employed at a Swiss higher education institution. However, the provisions governing employment at universities of applied sciences or of teacher education remain reserved.

⁴ The work-time percentage must generally be appropriate to the task of completing a dissertation within a period of four years. This is based on the presumption that 80-100% of a full-time equivalent position is devoted to a dissertation.

Article 2 Applicable law

Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations² as well as the provisions set out in the call document apply in particular.

¹ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

² http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snf-ausfuhrungsreglement_beitragsreglement_e.pdf

Article 3 Duration and type of funding

¹ A Doc.CH grant covers the grantee's salary and the funds needed to carry out the project.

² It is awarded for two to a maximum of four years.

³ The first part of the grant is awarded for a period of two years, the second for one to two years.

⁴ Doc.CH grants may not be awarded retroactively.

⁵ A Doc.CH grant cannot be extended. However, the SNSF reserves the right to permit extensions for the reasons defined under Clause 5.4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 4 Place of research and employment

¹ Recipients of Doc.CH grants must be employed as doctoral students at a Swiss higher education institution and matriculated at a Swiss university for the duration of the grant. Matriculation at a higher education institution abroad is permissible for grantees employed at a university of applied sciences or of teacher education if no partner in the same field as the dissertation topic can be found at a Swiss university.

² It is permissible to do part of the dissertation abroad. Recipients of Doc.CH grants remain employed as doctoral students at their higher education institution in Switzerland for the duration of the stay abroad. A stay abroad may be approved by the SNSF in response to a written request giving reasons.

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 5 General personal requirements

¹ Applications may be submitted by researchers who meet the following requirements:

- a. At the time of the submission deadline, they have a degree (master's or equivalent degree³) from a Swiss higher education institution which entitles them to start doctoral studies at a Swiss university in the areas specified in Article 1 paragraph 2. Researchers with an equivalent foreign degree (master's or equivalent⁴) are also entitled to submit an application if they are Swiss nationals or if, at the time of the submission deadline, they are matriculated at the relevant higher education institution in Switzerland.
- b. They obtained their degree no more than three years before the submission deadline. In accordance with the provisions of Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, this window may be expanded in response to a reasoned request.
- c. They must provide a positive assessment of their degree thesis (master's thesis) as well as evidence of very good marks in their degree.

² Applicants must be able to show that they are matriculated and employed as doctoral students on the envisaged start date of the grant.

³ The master's or equivalent degree must correspond to 90-120 ECTS points (1.5 to 2 years of full-time studies). A "Master of Advanced Studies - MAS" (which corresponds at least to 60 ECTS points or one year of full-time studies) and other higher education degrees do not grant eligibility to submit a Doc.CH application.

⁴ Ibidem.

Article 6 Other personal requirements

¹ Applicants must be prepared to carry out their research activities on a full-time basis (100%). Where there is good cause, the applicant's working hours may be reduced, but - except during very short periods - should never fall below 80%.

² Working hours corresponding to less than 100% may be applied for if one of the two following reasons is provided in the application:

- a. Care duties or
- b. Fulfilment of activities that serve to qualify them for a scientific career (e.g. teaching, training or continuing education in their field).

³ Applicants may also change from full-time to part-time work during the funding period of a Doc.CH grant for the reasons stated in paragraph 2. Such changes must be approved by the SNSF.

Article 7 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for Doc.CH grants must be submitted to the SNSF electronically.

² The SNSF periodically launches calls for proposals for Doc.CH grants. The call may include additional provisions that supplement these Regulations. The submission deadlines are published on the SNSF website.

³ All further formal requirements for the submission of applications also apply pursuant to the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations.

3. Applications

Article 8 Applications

¹ Applications for Doc.CH grants must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF and must contain all the necessary data and documents.

² The mandatory documents include, in particular:

- a. Written confirmation from the responsible office at the host institute in Switzerland that it will support the integration of the grantee at the research institution and assure him/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 inclusion in a doctoral school or programme.
- b. Two statements from different persons, written at the applicant's request in line with the guidelines issued by the SNSF. The first person must work at the Swiss higher education institution at which the applicant will be employed as a doctoral student (supervisor); as a person authorised to supervise dissertations, he/she must undertake to supervise the applicant's dissertation. The second person must work either at another Swiss higher education institution or abroad; he/she must support the dissertation. In their respective statements, the two persons comment particularly on the scientific qualifications of the applicant, on his/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 4 paragraph 2. In this letter, the host institution confirms, in particular, that it can guarantee integration and supervision. If the stay abroad is organised after the Doc.CH

grant has been awarded, the grantee must have the stay abroad approved by the SNSF and submit this letter to the SNSF together with a reasoned application.

Article 9 Mobility

¹ Mobility is aimed at broadening the scientific experience of the grantee.

² Mobility is an assessment criterion for Doc.CH grants, and the applicant must therefore include an explanatory statement on this subject in the application. When assessing the applicant's development (retrospective mobility) and the measures planned under the grant (prospective mobility), the SNSF takes into account different types of mobility.

³ If no change of higher education institution took place between obtainment of the bachelor's degree and matriculation as a doctoral student, the applicant needs to show how he or she intends to include mobility in the Doc.CH grant period.

⁴ The necessary mobility under a Doc.CH grant pursuant to paragraph 3 may be achieved as follows:

- a. stay at a non-commercial research institution (host institution) in Switzerland or abroad;
- b. other types of mobility, particularly short visits or international collaborations.

⁵ Plans for a stay at a host institution abroad may be included in the application and the stay may be applied for under the "Mobility grants in projects" funding scheme during the grant period. The mobility grant is awarded once for a period of six to twelve months.

4. Grants and eligible costs

Article 10 Grants

Doc.CH grants are awarded and managed according to the applicable rules of the SNSF, in particular the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations. The grants must be administered by a grant administration office recognised by the SNSF.

Article 11 Second part of the grant

¹ For the second part of the Doc.CH grant pursuant to Article 3 paragraph 3, the grantee must submit, after the first eighteen months have passed, an interim report (Article 18) and a request for the second part of the grant to the SNSF.

² The application must include justification in accordance with SNSF guidelines as well as a letter from the dissertation supervisor. The letter provides information about the grantee's progress with the dissertation and the expected date of completion.

³ The second part of the grant is awarded based on this request. The application may be rejected if it is considered unlikely that the grantee will be able to complete the dissertation.

⁴ The second part of the grant may last for a maximum of two years. If less than two years are awarded, the grantee may apply for a supplementary grant, if necessary to complete the dissertation. The total duration of the second part of the grant must not exceed two years.

Article 12 Eligible costs

The following costs are covered by the Doc.CH grant:

- a. The grantee's own salary in accordance with the provisions of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations; and
- b. Project costs directly related to the realisation of the project, particularly material of enduring value, consumables, travel and conference costs and other costs in accordance with the provisions of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

5. Submission of applications: restriction

Article 13 Repeated submissions: restriction

¹ Applicants whose application has been rejected may apply at the most a second time for a Doc.CH grant, regardless of the subject matter of the project, provided the personal and formal requirements are met.

² Application procedures terminated because the applicant has breached scientific integrity rules are regarded as rejections in accordance with this provision.

6. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 14 Assessment criteria

¹ Applications that meet the personal and formal requirements are evaluated scientifically.

² The assessment criteria are as follows:

- a. the applicant's scientific achievements up to the point of submission:
 - academic qualification and quality of degree thesis (Master's thesis);
 - achievements since obtaining the Master's
 - ability, based on achievements to date, to conduct the project and thereby make a personal contribution;
- b. applicant's career development as well as mobility as regards his/her envisaged workplace, based on the submitted statement; in particular, the applicant's overall mobility by the end of the project is assessed in view of the scheme's goals and the applicant's career goal;
- c. scientific relevance, quality, originality and topicality of the dissertation project;
- d. approach and methodology of the dissertation project as well as its feasibility;
- e. applicant's contribution towards the topic and concept of the dissertation project;
- f. Quality and suitability of the research institution in view of supporting the dissertation scientifically, particularly through the dissertation supervisor, as well as in terms of facilitating continual, intellectual development and education;
- g. in the case of proposals for use-inspired basic research, the project's broader impact outside science is considered in the evaluation.

Article 15 Evaluation procedure and decision

¹ Applications that meet the personal and formal requirements are evaluated in a two-step procedure.

² In the first phase, the SNSF selects the best applications based on the evaluation criteria; these applications go through to the second phase, in which the final selection is made.

³ Applicants that reach the second phase are generally invited by the Research Council for a personal interview at the SNSF's offices in Bern. If the interview takes place, it may be conducted in special cases (e.g. long travelling distance) as a video conference.

⁴ At the interview or video conference, applicants are given the opportunity to present their research project and their career plans verbally and answer questions from the panel members.

⁵ The negative decisions from phase 1 and the decisions made in phase 2 are communicated to the applicants in a written ruling.

7. Grants and grant administration

Article 16 Grants, start of grants and changes

¹ Doc.CH grants are awarded, transferred and managed according to the rules issued by the SNSF, in particular the provisions of the Funding Regulations and its Implementation Regulations.

² Doc.CH grants may generally be started six months after the submission deadline at the earliest. The earliest possible start of funding is announced in the call.

³ Any changes relating to the described research work and conditions, particularly with regard to the research institution or supervision, must be reported to the SNSF in advance. The SNSF may approve changes to an award if significant reasons are cited in the change request.

Article 17 Non-acceptance or premature termination

In the event of grantees deciding not to accept the Doc.CH 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.

Article 18 Reporting

¹ After eighteen months, the grantees must submit an interim scientific report along with the request 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.

² Within six weeks of the second part expiring, the grantees must submit a final scientific report that includes, in particular, information about the completion and acceptance of the dissertation.

³ In addition, financial reports must be compiled in accordance with the relevant directives issued by the SNSF.

⁴ The duty to provide output data will remain in place after submission of the final report and end three years after expiry of the grant.

8. Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

Article 19 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 December 2020.

Article 20 Repeal of existing regulations

These Regulations replace the Regulations on the awarding of grants to doctoral students in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) in Switzerland, "Doc.CH (HSS)" of 20 March 2012.