



Return CH Postdoc.Mobility: Guidelines to submit a proposal via mySNF

Submission deadline: 3 February 2025

Table of contents

1	Important remarks	2
1.1	Evaluation procedure	2
1.2	Submission and deadline	2
1.3	Language of the application	2
1.4	Return CH Postdoc.Mobility in relation to other funding options offered by the SNSF	2
1.5	Resubmission	3
1.6	Follow-up applications	3
1.7	Decision	3
1.8	Decision of non-consideration	3
2	Personal and application data (to be filled in online in mySNF)	3
2.1	Designated host lab / Institution	3
2.2	References	3
2.3	Basic data I	4
2.3.1	Requested starting date	4
2.3.2	Requested duration	5
2.4	Available or requested funds	5
2.5	Requested funding	5
2.5.1	Salary of the applicant	5
2.5.2	Social security contributions	5
2.5.3	Research funds	6
3	Annexed documents (PDF format required, max. 10 MB per container)	7
3.1	Research plan	7
3.2	CV and major achievements	9
3.3	Statement of mobility	10
3.4	Confirmation letter from host institution and support letter from mentor	10
3.4.1	Instructions for the confirmation letter from each host institution	10
3.4.2	Instructions for the support letter from the mentor at the host institution	11
3.5	Family register, child(ren)'s birth certificate(s)	12
3.6	Other annexes	12

1 Important remarks

1.1 Evaluation procedure

A detailed description of the evaluation process can be found on the following page:

<https://www.snf.ch/en/6cs2wnfJtcfFDL6o/page/evaluation-procedure>

Please note that no interviews will be conducted with applicants for a return grant. Also note that applications for a return grant are all evaluated with this [evaluation form](#). The assessment criteria can be found in the [Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to postdocs \(Postdoc.Mobility Regulations\)](#) (article 18).

1.2 Submission and deadline

Please submit your application via the platform mySNF: www.mySNF.ch > What would you like to do? > Create a new application > Careers > Return CH Postdoc.Mobility. The mySNF platform will be opened for submission three months before the respective submission deadline. If you do not yet have a mySNF user account, please register at www.mySNF.ch at least one month before the submission deadline so you can prepare the required information and documents (e.g. the reference letters that have to be requested via a special link) early enough. Your registration will then be processed by the SNSF. Within a few days, you will receive an e-mail confirming the opening of your user account.

Applications for a return grant can only be submitted during an ongoing Postdoc.Mobility fellowship at the official submission deadlines. Exception: if the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship ends on 31 January or 31 July of the same year, a proposal for a return grant can still be submitted on 1 February or 2 August, respectively.

A funding proposal is regarded as submitted in due time if received by the SNSF by **17:00:00 Swiss local time** on the submission date (1 February resp. 2 August). If the submission date falls on a Saturday, a Sunday or a holiday recognised under Swiss federal law, the submission date will be moved forward to 17:00:00 Swiss local time on the next working day.

Please submit your application in time before 17:00:00 Swiss local time. The submission deadline is not negotiable.

Due to the large number of applications submitted shortly before the deadline, be aware that it might take time to upload your documents on mySNF. Upload your documents early enough to submit your application on time.

1.3 Language of the application

In mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, biology, medicine, psychology, economics and political sciences, applications have to be submitted **in English**. In all other research areas, applications can be submitted in one of the official Swiss languages. Special rules apply for political sciences (Clause 1.16 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)).

1.4 Return CH Postdoc.Mobility in relation to other funding options offered by the SNSF

A Return CH Postdoc.Mobility application may only be submitted for a duration of support for which no other financing has been obtained for the planned project from the SNSF or third parties. During the

evaluation process for a return grant, it is possible to submit a parallel application for Ambizione, Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships, and SNSF Starting Grants.

The submission of applications in career and project funding or within the scope of programs of the SNSF is possible for a duration of support beyond the expiry of the return grant (article 16 of the [Postdoc.Mobility Regulations](#)).

1.5 Resubmission

Applicants, whose application for a return grant was rejected, may apply at the most once more for a return grant regardless of the subject matter of the project, provided the personal and formal requirements are met (article 17 of the [Postdoc.Mobility Regulations](#)).

In case of a resubmission, you must create a new application in mySNF (please note the guidelines regarding the length of the research plan!). Please upload in the container “Research plan” **a separate document** providing a **point-for-point** response to the critique raised in the rejection letter and a comment on significant changes or additions in the research plan, if applicable. This statement must be written in the same language as the research plan and must **not be longer than 2 pages**.

1.6 Follow-up applications

It is not possible to submit a follow-up application of an ongoing return phase. However, the SNSF reserves the right to permit extensions for the reasons set out in Clause 5.4 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#).

1.7 Decision

Please note that the decisions are communicated in a letter approx. 5 months after the submission deadlines of 1 February and 2 August (mid-June resp. mid-December).

1.8 Decision of non-consideration

Please note: Applications must meet the requirements with regard to, for example, the length of the research plan and the other mandatory data. The SNSF may decide not to consider applications that do not meet all of the requirements.

2 Personal and application data (to be filled in online in mySNF)

2.1 Designated host lab / Institution

The research stay funded under the return grant must be conducted at a non-commercial research institution (host institution) in Switzerland.

Recipients of a return grant must in principle devote their entire work time (100% worktime percentage) to the research project funded by the SNSF. Applicants who are able to show that they meet the requirements defined in article 6 paragraph 1 letter e of the [Postdoc.Mobility Regulations](#) may request a worktime percentage below 100%, but at least 80%.

2.2 References

Please indicate **two reference persons** (more than two will not be accepted). There are no restrictions regarding the choice of reference persons, but they cannot be family members of the applicant.

The reference persons write the reference letters according to the following criteria:

- They are confidential and therefore cannot be viewed by the applicant.
- They have to be written in English (in Social Sciences and Humanities letters in French and German will also be accepted).
- They must not exceed 2 pages (a minimum of point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing).
- They must bear the official letter head and an original signature (no digital signature from a certification service provider) of the reference person.
- The reference person must comment on the applicant for a return grant by answering the following questions specifically and in detail:
 1. Since when and in what context have you known the applicant?
 2. How do you rate their previous **academic performance**?
 3. How do you rate their **scientific competences**?
 4. How do you rate their previous **mobility**? Mobility should be considered in a general way, for example institutional, international, sectoral, disciplinary and intellectual mobility, depending on the situation of the person concerned.

You need to request the reference letters via mySNF by using the following link: [Reference letters](#) (link becomes active as soon as you have created an application in mySNF). Once you have received the reference letters, you must upload them to the “Reference letters” container before 1 February or 2 August (**17:00:00 Swiss local time**). Please specify if any of your reference persons has advised you in the drafting of the research plan.

Please request the reference letters at an early stage so that you are able to submit your full application in good time. In no circumstances will the SNSF accept a delay in submission because the reference letters are not yet available.

Additional reference letters attached as a PDF in the container “Other annexes” will not be taken into account and will be deleted.

2.3 Basic data I

2.3.1 Requested starting date

Deadline of 3 February 2025

Earliest start on 1 August 2025, latest start on 1 July 2026.

Deadline of 4 August 2025

Earliest start on 1 February 2026, latest start on 1 January 2027.

The earliest possible start of the return grant is 6 months after the submission deadline of 1 February and 2 August respectively. The return grant must be started no later than 12 months after the date of the ruling. Return grants always start on the first day of the month.

The research period in Switzerland financed by a return grant generally represents a seamless continuation of the completed Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, **starting immediately upon the fellowship holder's return from abroad**. Exceptions may be considered if the fellow continues research at the host institute abroad for a limited time after the end of the fellowship. In this case, the return grant must be

started no later than 12 months after the end of the fellowship. An exception is also possible if there is a gap between the end of the fellowship and the earliest possible start date for the return grant fixed by the SNSF (see above under 2.3.1). In this case, the return grant must start on the earliest possible date according to these guidelines (2.3.1). If the return period does not start immediately upon the end of the fellowship, please clearly state in your application under "Link to other SNSF projects" whether you are funded or not during this time and where you are staying during this interruption.

2.3.2 Requested duration

A return grant is awarded for a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 12 months. It is **not possible to request an extension of the return phase**.

2.4 Available or requested funds

The SNSF does not grant any award for research projects that are already being funded by the SNSF or third parties (article 8 paragraph 3 letter e of the [Funding Regulations](#)). **If you already have corresponding funds at your disposal to cover the living costs during the project or during the expected duration of the return grant (salary or a separate stipend), it is in general not possible to supplement these funds with an SNSF return grant.** If you have requested or obtained additional funds (salary, fellowship, funds to cover congress costs, research costs, etc.), please provide detailed information and, if possible, upload a copy of the decisions under "Authorisation third party funding". Note that even after you have submitted your application, you must inform the SNSF in case you obtain or request additional funds from other funding bodies while your proposal is being evaluated. Third party funds that exceed CHF 15,000 per year will be deducted from any granted return grant. However, if the third-party funding exceeds 2/3 of the corresponding SNSF return grant, it is not possible to combine this with a return grant. **In case of questions, please contact the SNSF Administrative Offices (pm@snf.ch) in advance.**

Please also inform the SNSF immediately during the evaluation process if you accept another position or receive other funding and therefore wish to withdraw your application.

2.5 Requested funding

2.5.1 Salary of the applicant

Beneficiaries of a Postdoc.Mobility return grant must in principle devote their entire work time corresponding to a worktime percentage of 100% to the research funded by the SNSF. Regarding the salary, the SNSF grants CHF 110,000 (incl. social security contributions) resp. CHF 95,000 (without social security contributions) for 12 months for a full-time equivalent. The SNSF and the Human Resources office of the higher education institution where the grant holder is employed will define the exact salary.

The SNSF normally recognizes the local salary norms as the upper limit, but reserves the right to reduce salaries, which lie above the national average. Do not indicate predictable but not yet effective cost-of-living allowances. If the approved research funding is exceeded due to cost-of-living allowances, this will be compensated later by the SNSF.

2.5.2 Social security contributions

This concerns the local percentage of employer's contributions without additional possible social security contributions such as child or family allowance. Check this percentage against the current guidelines for the utilisation of funds (Appendix 12 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding](#)

[Regulations](#)). Important note: the system does not accept commas, therefore please use a full stop (e.g. 12.5).

University of Basel	14 %
University of Bern	15 %
EPFL	16 %
ETHZ	16 %
EAWAG, EMPA, PSI, WSL	16 %
University of Fribourg	19 %
University of Geneva (incl. IHEID)	23 %
University of Lausanne (incl. CHUV)	16 %
University of Lugano	14 %
University of Luzern	16 %
University of Neuchâtel	23 %
University of St. Gallen	14 %
University of Zürich	15 %
Other Institutions, normally	16 %

2.5.3 Research funds

A maximum of CHF 5,000 annually can be granted for the research funds (conference costs and research costs) that are directly linked to the completion of the project. Please list your financial requirements and the intended use for the entire duration of your return phase as detailed and precise as possible. **IMPORTANT: Contributions towards research costs (conference costs and research costs) need to be requested in the application for a return grant. The conditions are defined in the guidelines. Any requests for coverage of conference costs and research costs at a later stage will not be considered.** Costs will only be covered if they are explicitly designated as eligible costs in the guidelines. Requests to cover costs that are ineligible will not be granted.

a) Research costs

The following costs are eligible: Costs that are unavoidable for completion of the research project: library fees, photocopies in libraries or archives, transcription costs of interviews, documentation (e.g. access to data, microfilm), expendable items, computing time and cloud computing (excluding general costs for the maintenance and servicing of infrastructure). Travel costs connected to field studies or visits to archives as well as costs for overnight stays (hotels up to three-star category) and meals (if not included in the price of the room) may be claimed in full or according to SNSF flat rates (chapter 11.2 of the [Information set "Postdoc.Mobility"](#)).

The following costs are ineligible and will not be covered: Proofreading, translations, language courses and continuing education, books, subscriptions to journals, stationery, memberships, postage, e-mail, internet and phone charges, photocopies at the host institution, offline storage or media (such as Dropbox, Google Drive, hard disks, memory sticks, ...), material of enduring value (e.g. laptops, printers, digital cameras, standard equipment such as centrifuges, microscopes, etc.), health insurance premiums, overhead contributions and fees connected to visa applications. In addition, publication costs are not covered by the SNSF mobility fellowships. SNSF contributions to the cost of fully open

access publications can be applied for via the OA platform (mySNF). For more detailed information, please visit the [SNSF's open access website](#).

b) Conference costs

Please indicate whether you intend to take part in congresses during the return grant and enter the envisaged budget for these activities for the entire funding period. Conference costs can be used for registration fees at the conference, outward and return journey, accommodation and meals. The attendance of courses and workshops that are not directly linked to the funded research project (e.g. courses for personal career development) is not covered.

3 Annexed documents (PDF format required, max. 10 MB per container)

3.1 Research plan

A. General remarks

The research plan provides the basis for scientific evaluation, particularly of the quality of the proposed research project, i.e. its scientific relevance, topicality, originality, feasibility, and the suitability of its methods. Together with the CV and the applicant's track record, the research plan also serves as a basis for assessing the researcher's scientific qualifications, particularly their expertise with regard to the project.

The SNSF's requirements with regard to the form and content of the research plan help to ensure the comparability of applications. This is an important prerequisite for a comparative evaluation based on the principle of competition and for the equal treatment of all applicants.

The research plan must consist of original text that has been written by the applicant themselves. A limited amount of text (or other material, graphs, etc.) by third parties or text published by the applicant themselves is permissible in the sections describing standard methods. The quoted texts must be clearly designated as such (quotation marks or appropriate wording), and a verifiable source must be mentioned nearby and in the bibliography. The SNSF uses a special software to compare texts and analyse suspected cases of plagiarism. A number of universities have made such programs available to their students and employees. We recommend that you contact your institution for further information. For more details see the SNSF dossier on [Scientific integrity \(snf.ch\)](#).

In **mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, biology, medicine, psychology, economics and political sciences**, applications have to be submitted in **English**. In all other research areas, applications can be submitted in one of the official Swiss languages. Special rules apply for political sciences (clause 1.16 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)).

The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet the requirements for the research plan, the formal requirements for applications (article 14 of the [Funding Regulations](#)) and the requirements for research integrity and good scientific practice (article 15 of the [Funding Regulations](#)).

B. Structure of the research plan

The research plan (sections 1 – 3, see table below) must **not exceed 4 pages (A4 paper size) and 15,000 characters¹** (incl. spaces, line spacing 1.5, min. point 10 font size, no condensed fonts). This includes the title, footnotes, illustrations, formulae, tables, etc., but not the bibliography (mandatory list of sources/references at the end of the document). The research plan must be uploaded in its final form as a single file and it may not include attachments of any kind. No modifications are allowed after submission.

Please note: Applications must meet all formal requirements (number of pages, characters, etc.). The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet all the requirements for the research plan and/or are manifestly inadequate.

The research plan must be structured into the following sections (max. 4 pages without bibliography):

<p>Section 1</p> <p>Current progress of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship and plan for the remaining time abroad</p> <p>(approx. 1 – 2 pages)</p>	<p>1a) Present the research work you have already undertaken during the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, describe the results obtained so far and any modifications made to the approved research project.</p> <p>1b) Describe the work you plan to complete during your remaining time abroad in the light of the original project goals and any modifications to the original project that have been made.</p>
<p>Section 2</p> <p>Research plan outline for the return grant</p> <p>(approx. 1 – 2 pages)</p>	<p>The aim of a return phase is to enable the applicant to complete the project conducted abroad in Switzerland or to launch a new project. In both cases, structure the research plan outline as follows:</p> <p>2a) Explain the aims and the planned objectives.</p> <p>2b) Specify the approach you are taking and the methodology you will apply.</p> <p>2c) Compile a schedule that includes the main tasks (milestones).</p>
<p>Section 3</p> <p>Relevance for professional and personal career development, including mentoring from the host</p> <p>(approx. 0.5 – 1 page)</p>	<p>3a) Describe the further professional competences that you will acquire through the implementation of the return phase (e.g. further methods, languages, IT skills, etc.)</p> <p>3b) Briefly explain how the return grant would allow you to develop your profile as a researcher as compared with your research achievements and training to date.</p> <p>3c) Mentoring: describe the planned training activities (scientific aspects, management/organisation, horizontal and key transferrable skills, etc.). Address the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and host organisation.</p>

¹ Page and character limits must always be respected:

15,000 characters on 4 pages is within the limit.

15,000 (or less) characters on **more than 4 pages** is **NOT** within the limit and will **result in a decision of non-consideration**.

More than 15,000 characters on less than 4 pages is **NOT** within the limit and will **result in a decision of non-consideration**.

<p>Section 4</p> <p>Bibliography</p> <p>The bibliography is not included in the maximum number of pages (4) and characters count (15,000 incl. spaces).</p>	<p>List the sources. Give the full reference, especially the title, source and full author list. Do not use “et al.” to shorten the author list (exception: the author list can be shortened if a publication involves large international consortia with over 50 authors. In this case, a link to the complete reference has to be included). The use of “et al.” is authorized if the names of the authors are mentioned in the body text of the research plan.</p>
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C. Revised application (resubmission)

If this application is a revised version of a rejected application, please **upload in addition to the research plan, but in a separate document, a point-for-point response** to the critique raised in the rejection letter and comment on significant changes or additions in the research plan, if applicable. This **statement** must be written in the same language as the research plan and must **not be longer than 2 pages**. Please upload a point-for-point response even if you completely changed the content of your research project.

3.2 CV and major achievements

The SNSF has signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), which recommends funders to be explicit about the criteria used in evaluating the scientific productivity of applicants. The scientific quality, value and impact of the **entire research output** is taken into consideration (including datasets, software, prototypes) in addition to research publications. In this context, the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the name of the journal in which it was published. Within the scope of this evaluation, the scientific discipline, the academic age and the personal situation (incl. career breaks, care duties, etc.) of the applicants will be considered.

To comply with the DORA principles, the SNSF defined a new structure for the CV and requests a standardised set of information from all applicants. **Specifically, applicants will have to compile their CV according to a template on the SNSF Portal and subsequently upload a PDF in the data container “CV and major achievements” in mySNF.**

For applications for a return grant, the following information in particular is mandatory in the CV:

- Date of defence of your doctoral thesis (PhD), university/place and **supervisor**.
- Applicants with medical training: Date of state examination (or equivalent degree) and date of doctorate in medicine (MD), university/place and **supervisor**.
- Other degrees (e.g., MSc, BA etc.): Date, university/place and **supervisor** (if applicable).
- Previous employment(s) and current position(s) with **name of supervisor**.
- In case you did not have a supervisor for a specific degree or employment, please write N/A.

For more details on the new CV format see: [Your curriculum vitae – all about the CV format](#).

The SNSF portal can be accessed under portal.snf.ch.

This information is intended for evaluators to specifically assess the scientific quality and relevance of the research output. The CV must be written in the language of the research plan. The document is sent out for scientific evaluation. **Please note that the CV cannot be updated after the submission of your application.**

3.3 Statement of mobility

Mobility is recognised as a necessary factor for a successful scientific or academic career. To assess the applicant's past and planned mobility concept, a statement of mobility is required.

The concept of academic mobility encompasses five dimensions, taking alternative career paths into account:

- **Institutional:** collaborations with or move to an institution that provides an infrastructure and expertise beneficial to your career as a researcher. Show the added value to your career trajectory so far and to the proposed research.
- **International:** describe the lasting effects of a stay abroad (including several short-term stays over a certain time period), international collaborations and your involvement in international networks.
- **Sectorial:** experience in the private sector or other areas that offer practical experience valuable for the proposed research, particularly in applied research and according to the career goal in this area.
- **Disciplinary:** move across research fields different from your core discipline.
- **Intellectual:** sharing of your knowledge beyond academia (e.g. science communicator, contributions to the standing of science in society, translation into practice).

Please use [this form \(Statement of Mobility\)](#), comment (in the language of the research plan) on each of these dimensions where applicable, and consider the following points:

- Address all dimensions prospectively and retrospectively.
- Your statement can, but does not have to contain information for all dimensions.
- To guarantee fair and equal treatment, a statement will be required by all candidates.

Only use Adobe Acrobat Reader/Adobe Acrobat to open, edit and save the form, or to print the document and save your input in a new PDF file.

The applicant's mobility will be assessed based on the statement of mobility provided. The mobility performed by the end of the grant will be assessed regarding the aim of the respective funding scheme. The statement of mobility will be rated on the background of the research plan, the CV, and the choice of the research institution.

3.4 Confirmation letter from host institution and support letter from mentor

The SNSF requires both a confirmation letter from the host institution and a support letter from the mentor.

3.4.1 Instructions for the confirmation letter from each host institution

Please enclose a confirmation letter from each host institution with the application. A confirmation letter from the host institute must be uploaded for a stay of 1 month or more. No form or template is provided by the SNSF, but the letters must be written according to the following criteria:

- The confirmation letters must bear the official letter head of the host institution and an original signature (please do not use a digital signature from a certification service provider) of the head of the institution or host professor (no e-mail).
- The start and end dates of the return phase must be mentioned.
- The confirmation has to state clearly that the necessary infrastructure is available for the full duration of the research stay.
- If you submit a proposal for a project requiring authorisations or notifications, the letter must confirm compliance with the legal provisions and ethical guidelines in Switzerland. If the letter cannot provide such confirmation by the time the fellowship application is submitted, a second letter from the host institute indicating that the authorisations have been obtained must be provided by the time the funds are released at the latest. In any case, the funds can only be released for payment once the SNSF is in possession of such confirmation from the host institute.

3.4.2 Instructions for the support letter from the mentor at the host institution

The proposed mentor(s) should have sufficient expertise in supervising the proposed research, and have the time, resources, knowledge, experience, expertise, and commitment to be able to offer the postdoctoral researcher appropriate support and provide for the necessary progress and review procedures, as well as the necessary feedback mechanisms. The SNSF Return CH Postdoc Mobility scheme aims to enable the fellowship holder to complete the project conducted abroad or to launch a new project in Switzerland and so be more competitive for a career in research in an academic or extra-academic setting. The support letter from the mentor should outline how they will guide, support, direct, advise and supervise the beneficiary and what supporting resources they will make available that are needed for the research.

Please enclose a support letter from the mentor at the host institution with the application. A support letter must be uploaded for each stay of 6 months or more.

- The mentor at the host institution must confirm their willingness to support the applicant for their future career path.
- The SNSF requires the mentor at the host institution to comment on the following aspects:
 - How will the research project be supported scientifically?
 - How will the applicant's scientific independence be ensured and promoted?
 - How will the continuous intellectual development and continuing education of the applicant be facilitated?
 - What resources needed for the research will the mentor make available to the applicant should they receive a return grant?

With regard to the host institution, the following assessment criteria are applied:

- Suitability and added value of the research institution in supporting the research project scientifically and ensuring and promoting the independence of the applicant, as well as facilitating their continual intellectual development and continuing education.
- Added value of the research period immediately after the applicant's return from abroad for a scientific or academic career in Switzerland.

The confirmation letter of the host institution, the support letter from the mentor as well as your justification in the section “Choice of research institution” in the document “Statement of mobility” are used by the evaluators to assess these criteria.

3.5 Family register, child(ren)’s birth certificate(s)

If you have children that you are obliged to support, please upload the family register or the birth certificate(s).

3.6 Other annexes

You have the possibility to attach other documents relevant to the application in PDF format. **Please note that all publications attached as a PDF in the container “Other annexes”, as well as additional reference letters, career plans, and annexes to the research plan will not be taken into account and will be deleted.**