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Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to post-docs starting their careers

"Early Postdoc.Mobility"

20 March 2012

The National Research Council

based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations^{1 2}

issues the following regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Principle

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") awards fellowships to researchers for further scientific education (hereinafter "mobility fellowships"). Mobility fellowships enable young scientists who are starting their careers after obtaining their doctorate and who subsequently wish to pursue a scientific career in Switzerland to make a research stay abroad in order to acquire more in-depth knowledge and enhance their scientific profile.

² The supported researchers generally work at least 80% for the approved research project. A lower work-time percentage may be permitted in response to a request giving reasons, particularly in the event of teaching commitments, clinical activities or family care duties.

Article 2 Duration and start of the fellowship

¹ In principle, a mobility fellowship is awarded for a period of eighteen months. A shorter duration of a minimum of twelve months is possible in justifiable cases, particularly if requested by the applicant or if subsequent funding by the host institution is foreseeable.

¹ www.snsf.ch > Profile > Statutes & legal framework

² Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1.1.2016.

² The earliest possible start of the fellowship is announced by the responsible commissions (twelve research commissions at higher education institutions, hereinafter the "SNSF Research Commissions", and a fellowship commission of the SNSF, hereinafter the "SNSF Fellowship Commission") in the relevant calls for proposals.

³ The mobility fellowship must be started no later than twelve months after the date of the ruling. Where there is good cause, a delay of up to twelve months in starting the fellowship may be approved on request.

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

⁵ Mobility fellowships may not be awarded retroactively.

Article 3 Research location abroad

The mobility fellowship finances the researcher's stay at a host institution abroad. The place of research must be different from the place of education. Furthermore, the host institution should not lie in the home country of the applicant; an exception may be granted upon request, generally for scientific reasons. Applicants who have obtained their doctorate at a university abroad must conduct the mobility fellowship at a different institution.

Article 4 Swiss delivery address

A Swiss delivery address must be mentioned in the application to which official messages may validly be sent in the course of the evaluation procedure and the mobility fellowship.

2. Formal requirements

Article 5 Personal requirements

Applications for 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) or have completed their education in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine with a doctorate (MD) or will complete their doctorate within the next nine³ months. The examination or viva voce must have been completed by the time the fellowship is started.
- b. Applicants with the doctorate (PhD) must have obtained the same a maximum of two years prior to the submission deadline. The date of the examination or viva voce shall be the decisive date. Candidates may be exempted from this requirement for valid reasons, such as family care duties. Requests for exemption must be well-founded and submitted in writing together with the application.
- c. Applicants who finished their medical training with a doctorate (MD) must have passed the state examination (or a similar examination) no more than six years before the submission deadline. The period between the state examination and the submission deadline must have been used for clinical or academic further education within the discipline. Candidates

³ Amended based on the decision of 17.6.2014, takes effect immediately.

may be exempted from this requirement for valid reasons, such as family care duties. Requests for exemption must be well-founded and submitted in writing together with the application. Doctoral studies for attainment of an MD-PhD degree cannot be financed via a postdoc mobility fellowship pursuant to these Regulations.

- 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. Swiss nationals domiciled abroad and foreign nationals must declare in writing that they intend to pursue a scientific career in Switzerland after the mobility fellowship. Candidates who are not Swiss nationals must at the time of the submission deadline additionally provide evidence of at least three years of activity at a research institution in Switzerland.

Article 6 Objective requirements

¹ Applications for mobility fellowships must be submitted in accordance with the relevant directives, in electronic form and in the prescribed file formats and must contain all data and documents designated as mandatory. The mandatory documents include, in particular, a confirmation from the host institution and the necessary letters of recommendation.

² The applications may be submitted either in an official Swiss language or in English. The National Research Council may issue additional directives regarding application submission for individual disciplines.

³ Researchers who have submitted an application for a mobility fellowship for postdocs (Postdoc.Mobility)⁴ may not submit an application for a mobility fellowship for postdocs starting their career (Early Postdoc) pursuant to these Regulations before a formal decision on their current application is made.

Article 7 Submission procedure

¹ Two deadlines for the submission of applications are set per year. The SNSF Research Commissions and the SNSF Fellowship Commission announce submission periods by means of a call for proposals. The submission deadlines are published on the Internet. The call may contain additional provisions that complement these regulations.

² Applications for mobility fellowships must be submitted to:

- a. the SNSF Research Commission of the Swiss higher education institution where the applicant obtained or will obtain his or her doctoral degree or, in the case of medical graduates, his or her medical licence (state examination);
- b. the SNSF Fellowship Commission in all other cases.

³ The applications must be completed and submitted by the specified deadline via the electronic application platform mySNF. The punctuality of applications is regulated in Article 14 paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations and Clause 1.15 of the General Implementation Regulations.⁵

⁴ Amendment; in force since 1.1.2018.

⁵ Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015 and General Implementation Regulations of 9.12.2015, both in force since 1.1.2016.

3. Application procedure

Article 8 Responsibility

The SNSF Research Commissions and the SNSF Fellowship Commission are responsible for scientific evaluation and decision-making with regard to the awarding of mobility fellowships. They conduct their activities in accordance with the procedural rules of the Framework Regulations for the Research Commissions of the Swiss National Science Foundation as well as any other directives issued by the SNSF.

Article 9 Evaluation criteria

¹ Applications that meet the formal requirements are evaluated scientifically.

² The following evaluation criteria are applied:

- a. the quality, originality and topicality of the research project to be carried out during the research stay;
- b. the scientific track record of the applicants;
- c. the likelihood of the applicants successfully completing the planned further education;
- d. the personal aptitude of the applicants for a scientific career;
- e. the quality of the intended research location, i.e. the working conditions, possibilities for professional supervision and further education, and the expected extent of mobility.

Article 10 Evaluation procedure

The SNSF Research Commissions and the SNSF Fellowship Commission select the best applications. They communicate their decisions to the applicants in the form of a ruling.

Article 11 Applications for extending the fellowship (follow-up applications)

No follow-up applications may be submitted. The research stay may be extended by applying for a mobility fellowship for postdocs (Postdoc.Mobility).⁶

Article 12 Legal effects of the award

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

² The grantees use the fellowship for their scientific education.

⁶ Amendment; in force since 3.8.2017.

4. Eligible costs

Article 13 Grant for subsistence costs

¹ With the mobility fellowship, the SNSF awards grantees a grant for subsistence costs at the research location. The grants are defined according to the rates applicable in the year the award is made.

² Higher rates are allocated for grantees accompanied for at least six months by spouses or partners who do not pursue any paid employment. For childless, unmarried couples, the higher rate applies only if they have a stable partnership at the time of the submission deadline.⁷

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

Article 14 Travel allowance

¹ In addition to the subsistence costs, grantees and family members (spouse or partner pursuant to Article 13 paragraph 2 and children) who accompany them for at least six months are granted a travel allowance by the SNSF for the essential outward and return journey between the research location and the current place of residence (e.g. Switzerland).

² The SNSF reviews the amounts awarded as travel allowances periodically.

Article 15 Further costs

¹ Researchers may request the following additional grants, provided that the relevant requirements are met:

- a. A grant towards their matriculation fees at the host institution, provided they can prove that the said institution has rejected a request from the researchers for such fees to be waived.
- b. A grant for attending scientific conferences that are relevant to their own research.
- c. A grant to cover the essential costs for conducting the research project, provided they can show that the host institution is not making any corresponding contributions.

² The SNSF may set binding maximum rates for the grants pursuant to paragraph 1.

Article 16 Late fulfilment of requirements

¹ If the requirements for a grant pursuant to Articles 14 and 15 are only met in the course of the mobility fellowship, grantees may apply for payment of the said grant as a supplementary grant in the course of the fellowship. Grant applications for attending scientific conferences must be submitted at least two months before the conference is held.

² Furthermore, grantees may apply for a supplementary grant if the parameters for calculating grants for subsistence costs pursuant to Article 13 should change.

⁷ Amended based on the decision of 17.6.2014, takes effect immediately.

Article 17 Additional funds

¹ Grantees must inform the responsible Commission without delay in writing should they receive any funds from other organisations or institutions in connection with the research stay covered by the mobility fellowship from the SNSF.

² Additional funds may be deducted from the grants pursuant to Articles 13 to 15 if they exceed a specific amount to be defined periodically by the SNSF.

5. Rights and obligations of grantees

Article 18 Grant release and expiry

¹ The approved grants are released at the grantees' request pursuant to Article 33 paragraphs 2 and 5 of the Funding Regulations.⁸ The funds are transferred in Swiss francs to a bank or postal account in Switzerland one month before the fellowship starts at the earliest.

² If grantees do not commence their mobility fellowship on time, the grant is forfeited pursuant to Article 2 paragraphs 3 and 4.

Article 19 Taxes and insurances

¹ The Early 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.⁹

² All forms of insurance, including accident insurance, are the responsibility of the grantees.¹⁰

³ Detailed information on the tax and insurance situation is given in the information sheet "SNSF Fellowships".

Article 20 Maternity or paternity, illness and accident, military or civilian service, civil defence

¹ Grantees who become mothers in the course of the mobility fellowship are entitled to paid maternity leave of four months.

² In response to a reasoned request, grantees who become fathers may be granted paid paternity leave of up to four months in the course of the mobility fellowship if they are demonstrably the carer. Irrespective of the care situation, the SNSF awards one month's paid paternity leave on request.¹¹

⁸ Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

⁹ Amendment of 23 April 2018.

¹⁰ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 5.5.2021, in force as of 1.1.2022.

¹¹ Amendment of 18 August 2020, in force as of 1.1.2021. Can only be granted if paternity leave is taken within six months after the child's birth.

³ In the event of an illness or accident occurring in the course of the mobility fellowship, the SNSF may increase the grant pursuant to Article 13 and extend the duration of the fellowship on request if the scientific objectives pursued with the research stay could not otherwise be achieved.

⁴ In the event that a grantee is required to perform military, civilian or civil defence service during the fellowship, the duration of the fellowship may be extended on request.

⁵ In the cases described in paragraphs 1 to 4, fellowships may be extended on request by a maximum of one year.¹²

Article 20^{bis} Supplementary funding due to maternity¹³

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 13 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 21 Changes to 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 responsible SNSF Research Commission or the SNSF Fellowship Commission.

Article 22 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ In the event of grantees deciding not to pursue mobility fellowships or having to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the responsible SNSF Research Commission or the SNSF Fellowship Commission immediately of the fact in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

² They must redeem pro rata temporis to the SNSF any grant already paid towards subsistence costs pursuant to Article 13. The other grants, if already paid, must be refunded insofar as the grantees have not incurred any corresponding expenses.

Article 23 Reporting

Grantees report to the responsible SNSF Research Commission or the SNSF Fellowship Commission pursuant to Article 41¹⁴ of the Funding Regulations.

¹² Amended based on the decision of 14.8.2018, takes effect immediately.

¹³ Amended based on the decision of 14.8.2018, takes effect immediately.

¹⁴ Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1.1.2016.

6. Final provisions

Article 24 Further provisions

¹ In the absence of any relevant provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the Implementation Regulations¹⁵ apply.

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³ Article 43¹⁷ of the Funding Regulations applies in the event of any misuse or violations in connection with the grants.

⁴ In the event of any scientific misconduct, the Regulations of the National Research Council on the treatment of scientific misconduct by applicants and grantees apply.

Article 25 Entry into force and replacement of existing regulations

¹ These Regulations enter into force on 1 January 2013.

² They replace the Regulations on the award of research fellowships to prospective researchers of 16 October 2001.

Article 26 Transitional provisions and discontinuation of the Early Postdoc.Mobility funding scheme¹⁸

¹ The provisions of these Regulations shall remain in force after the final call of 1 September 2020 as far as they are relevant to applications and fellowships that are pending, ongoing or awarded as of this date. Once all Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowships have been completed, the Regulations will be repealed through a Research Council decision, presumably on 31 December 2024.

² As of 1 January 2021, the Administrative Offices of the SNSF shall be responsible for all matters relating to Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowships. If necessary, the Administrative Offices may enlist the help of members of the Specialised Committee Careers as referees to clarify scientific questions.

³ Any other applications linked to fellowships, all information and reporting pursuant to Article 23 must be submitted to the Administrative Offices as of 1 January 2021. The Administrative Offices shall be responsible for approving the reports.

¹⁵ Amendment; in force since 1.1.2016

¹⁶ Repealed; amendment; in force since 1.1.2016.

¹⁷ Amendment; Funding Regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1.1.2016.

¹⁸ Inserted based on the Research Council's decision of 18.8.2020, in force as of 1.9.2020.