

## PRIMA

### Guidelines for submitting a proposal via mySNF

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## 1. Submission of proposal

### 1.1 Regulations and relevant documents

The PRIMA Regulations and relevant documents are available on our website in [German](#), [French](#) or [English \(see section "Documents"\)](#). Alternatively, the documents are also accessible in your PRIMA application on mySNF under "Information/Documents". For any questions contact: [prima@snf.ch](mailto:prima@snf.ch)

The SNSF will formally reject applications that do not meet the personal requirements (Art. 5 and 6 of the [PRIMA Regulations](#)), the requirements for the research plan, the formal requirements for the application (Art. 14 of the [Funding Regulations](#)) and the requirements for research integrity and good scientific practice (Art. 15 of the [Funding Regulations](#)).

### 1.2 Personal requirements

You must have at least 24 months of postdoctoral research experience and submit an application no later than 10 years after your PhD defence or 14 years after your medical exam (article 5 [PRIMA Regulations](#)).

This eligibility window can be extended by the actual duration of your career interruption according to one or more reasons listed in the Art. 1.11 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#). Mothers are entitled to 18 months extension per child.

Professors in permanent or temporary employment are not eligible for PRIMA.

### 1.3 Next deadlines

The annual call for proposals opens on 1 August 2020.

Submission deadline in 2020: **1 November 2020** (before 17:00:00 Swiss local time).

An application is regarded as submitted in due time if received by the SNSF on the day of the deadline before 17:00:00 Swiss local time at the latest. If the deadline falls on a Saturday, a Sunday or a holiday recognised under Swiss federal law, the deadline will be moved forward to 17:00:00 Swiss local time on the next working day.

### 1.4 Parallel submissions

The requested duration of your PRIMA application can't overlap with the duration of support of SNSF grants under the project funding scheme, Sinergia grants, SPIRIT grants or programmes (as applicant or co-applicant) that have been applied for, approved or are ongoing.

Within the career funding schemes, it is permissible to submit in parallel an application for a Postdoc.Mobility return grant. PRIMA grantees can apply for an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship 18 months after starting the PRIMA grant (Art. 13 for the [PRIMA Regulations](#)).

An application for an ERC Grant does not prevent candidates from applying for PRIMA. In case of a parallel evaluation of an ERC grant: If you are invited for a PRIMA interview, you will be asked for information in order to compare your PRIMA and the ERC project. In case your projects significantly overlap and if you have been or will be awarded a grant from the ERC, the funding granted by the SNSF will be limited to your salary (see Article 10 paragraph 4 of the PRIMA Regulations).

Applicants who reach the second phase of the Eccellenza evaluation may submit an application for a PRIMA grant as of the next submission deadline after the positive decision of the first phase.

When they are selected for and accept an SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship, they must withdraw their PRIMA application (Art. 13 for the [PRIMA Regulations](#)).

### **1.5 Create a new application via mySNF**

Proposals have to be submitted electronically via [mySNF](#). Select the corresponding division and funding instrument (Careers/PRIMA). To create a new mySNF account it may take several days. If you already have a mySNF account, check that the role "grant applicant" is present.

### **1.6 Duration of grant**

PRIMA grants are awarded for a maximum of five years. The minimum duration of funding is three years. If the maximum duration of the grant is not requested, the applicant must give an explanation for the shorter duration in the cover letter.

### **1.7 Earliest and latest possible starting date**

PRIMA grants may generally be started ten months after the submission deadline at the earliest. For a submission on 1 November 2020, the earliest possible starting date is therefore 1 September 2021. The grant will have to be started by 1 September 2022 at the latest. Note that the starting date can still be changed after a PRIMA grant has been awarded.

### **1.8 Revised application/resubmission**

As stated in Art. 14 of the [PRIMA Regulations](#), you can apply only one more time for a PRIMA grant if your application has been rejected, regardless of the subject matter of the project, as long as the applicant still fulfils all personal requirements. If you resubmit, upload a document (max. 2 pages) in the container "Research plan" providing a point-for-point response to the critique raised in the rejection letter and a comment on significant changes in the research plan.

### **1.9 Budget for your salary**

The budget for your salary is determined by the SNSF in agreement with the research institution. Please note that the budget for your salary is separate from the budget for the project funds.

Contact the HR department of your research institution for your accurate salary. The social security contributions of the employer are covered as well. The fields labelled "Social security contributions (%)" are automatically calculated according to the selected research institution in the container "University or research institution".

PRIMA grantees are expected to work full time (100%). You may reduce your work-time percentage in justified cases (Art. 6 of the [PRIMA Regulations](#)). The reasons should be explained in the cover letter. Clinical scientists can opt to dedicate a share of their work time to clinical activities: up to 20% for the first 2 years and up to 50% from year 3 onwards. The salary share dedicated to clinical activities is not covered by the PRIMA grant.

You must enter your own salary. If you don't know the accurate number, enter an average gross salary of 130'000 CHF per year for a work-time percentage of 100%.

### **1.10 Budget for project funds**

The project funds amount to max. **750'000 CHF for the 5 years** of the grant.

Under the project funds you budget the personnel of your team (e.g. PhD student, postdoc, other employees). Justify the work-time percentage in the comment section of the Budget. The official supervisor of the PhD student(s) must be confirmed in the [written confirmation of the research institution](#) (see 1.16). Contact the HR department of your research institution for the accurate salaries of the personnel. The social security contributions of the employer are covered as well. The fields labelled "Social security contributions (%)" are automatically calculated according to the selected research institution in the container "University or research institution".

In general, the budget should be as detailed as possible. Costs for [open access publications](#) must be applied for separately.

Changes in the budget after the submission of the application are not possible. For more details see Art. 10 and 11 of the [PRIMA Regulations](#).

### **1.11 Data Management Plan**

The proposal must include a [Data Management Plan](#) (DMP). The aim of a DMP is to plan the lifecycle of data. It offers a long-term perspective by outlining how data will be generated, collected, documented, shared and preserved. **The proposal can only be submitted once the DMP has been completed.** The [content of the DMP](#) is directly entered in the mySNF submission form. You must enter a DMP that is understandable, suits your project and meets the standards set by your research community.

At this stage, the DMP is considered a draft and excluded from the evaluation process. It is not part of the scientific evaluation process and is not shared with external reviewers. However, the definitive DMP must be provided by the end of the project at the latest.

### **1.12 External peer-reviewing**

A list of potential external reviewers is not accepted. You are entitled to submit a list of **persons who are not to be asked** for an external review during the second phase of the evaluation. The SNSF may abide by this list if a valid reason is provided and if a sufficient number of other experts is available.

### **1.13 Career plan**

You should briefly describe your past career achievements and then explain your objectives during and after completion of the PRIMA grant. In particular, state the reasons why the PRIMA grant may increase your chances to be appointed as a professor. The career plan must not exceed one page (min. point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing).

### **1.14 Eligible research institutions**

PRIMA grantees carry out their project at a research institution in Switzerland. All publicly funded research institutions are eligible: universities, university hospitals, universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education, research centres (e.g. PSI, EMPA, EAWAG) or institutes of postgraduate education (e.g. IDIAP, IHEID).

### **1.15 Choice of research institution**

The suitability of and the support guaranteed by the chosen research institution are assessment criteria (PRIMA regulations article 15). You should therefore carefully justify the choice of the research institution in the cover letter. Furthermore, mobility is an important evaluation criterion

(see articles 9 and 15 of the PRIMA Regulations [PRIMA Regulations](#)). Justify the choice of the research institution in the document "Statement of Mobility" (see paragraph 2.5) as well as briefly in the cover letter.

### **1.16 Written confirmation of the research institution**

You must contact as soon as possible your chosen research institution to ask for a written confirmation which refers to the obligations stated in the [PRIMA Regulations](#), in particular Art. 8 and Art. 12.

The written confirmation of the research institution consists of two separate letters:

1. Detailed confirmation of the research institution signed by the contact person mentioned in the application and the head of the institute/department.
2. General confirmation of the vice rectorate for research (or equivalent).

Both confirmations must follow the text template available in [German](#), [French](#) and [English](#) and use the official letterhead of the research institution.

### **1.17 Support letters**

According to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) signed by the SNSF, applications are evaluated based on the quality of past and ongoing research activities, not on the opinion of mentors, supervisors or collaborators. Consequently, the submission of support letters is not authorized, unless the letters provide a proof of support for the realization of the project. All other support letters, either uploaded on mySNF or forwarded to the SNSF, will be discarded.

### **1.18 Evaluation procedure**

The evaluation procedure takes place in two phases. In phase 1, the National Research Council of the SNSF makes an initial selection based on the documents submitted. Applications selected for phase 2 are peer-reviewed. Candidates selected for phase 2 are generally invited for an interview to present their research project and career plan. Applicants rejected in phase 1 as well as applicants selected for phase 2 will receive the decision by the end of April. The interviews are held in May. These candidates will be informed about the final decision around the end of August.

The SNSF subjects all applications for a PRIMA grant to a stringent scientific evaluation procedure and rates them based on pre-defined criteria at its due discretion. Based on assessments by referees and co-referees and the comparison and discussion of applications by the evaluation body, a small share of applications may emerge that are of equal quality and equally worthy of funding. As no further differentiation is possible, decisions for this group of applications will be reached by drawing lots according to Article 23 paragraph 5 of the [Organisational Regulations of the National Research Council](#). Applicants affected by this procedure are informed accordingly in the decision letter. The letter includes a justification for applicants who are excluded as a result of the procedure.

## **2. Instructions for CV and major scientific achievements, research output list, net academic age, and statement of mobility**

## 2.1 General remarks

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, and 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. Furthermore, during its evaluation procedure, the SNSF takes into account the scientific discipline, academic age and personal situation (e.g. career breaks, child care duties).

In order to comply with DORA, the SNSF requests a standardised set of information from all applicants, i.e. "**CV and major scientific achievements**", "**Research output list**", "**Net academic age**", and "**Statement of mobility**". The first two documents must be written in the same language as the research plan and must be structured as specified below. For the "**Net academic age**" and the "**Statement of mobility**" the provided forms must be used. **Proposals that lack the relevant information will not be considered for evaluation.**

## 2.2 CV and major scientific achievements

The CV (max. 3 pages; min. point 10 font size) and a statement of major scientific achievements (max. 1 page) should be assembled in one document and be written in the same language as the research plan.

It is important that all dates include month and year. The CV must be structured as follows:

1. Personal information, including the researcher ID (e.g. ORCID, ResearcherID, Google Scholar ID)
2. Education: date of PhD defence / medical exam (Staatsexamen or equivalent exam) / MD thesis and the name of the advisor(s). If applicable, add separate sections on clinical education and scientific education and quantify the corresponding periods in months and years. Continuing education in connection with the applicant's research activities should also be listed (e.g. internships, postgraduate studies, clinical work, residency/board certificate for physicians, training in clinical psychotherapy, etc.)
3. Employment history including current position and the name of the advisor(s)
4. Institutional responsibilities
5. Approved research projects
6. Supervision of junior researchers at graduate and postgraduate level (summary information, the names of the junior researchers should be indicated)
7. Teaching activities (summary information)
8. Memberships in panels, boards, etc., and individual scientific reviewing activities
9. Active memberships in scientific societies, fellowships in renowned academies
10. Organisation of conferences
11. Prizes, awards, fellowships
12. Career breaks (provide justification)

For the major scientific achievements, describe your most important scientific achievements. For each achievement indicate your specific contribution and the overall impact of the work.

### 2.3 Research output list

The SNSF has signed the DORA declaration and is continuously striving to improve the way in which the research output is evaluated. Your research output is evaluated in the context of your net academic age and takes into account your CV and major scientific achievements.

Journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors (JIF) are not appropriate surrogates to evaluate the quality of your research output. Therefore, do not indicate journal-based metrics in your application. Your research output is evaluated based on defined criteria, namely:

- Scientific quality of your research output
- Research output at all career stages
- Productivity
- Scientific independence
- Impact in the field
- Expertise required for the submitted proposal

Members of the SNSF evaluation bodies and external peer reviewers may support their expert judgement for your productivity or your impact in the field with article counts or number of citations, respectively. All aspects are also taken into account in the evaluation of the feasibility of the proposed research project.

Depending on the research field, the applicant's position in the list of authors may give an indication on her contribution to the scientific work (see also: Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences: [Integrity in scientific research, Principles and procedures](#)).

Separate your publications **resulting from your PhD/medical exam (or prior) and from your postdoctoral time** and **highlight the 5 most important**. For all publications listed from your postdoctoral time, give a very short comment on your contribution; in particular for publications with several authors, where the applicant is not first or last author, or for disciplines where the authors are in alphabetical order.

**The applicant's name in the list of authors and the publication year must be clearly visible** (e.g. boldfaced or underlined). Give the full reference and **do not use "et al." to shorten the list of authors**, unless the research project was conducted by a large international collaboration with more than 50 authors and a direct link to the full publication is given. In order to support the principle of open electronic access to scientific knowledge nationally and internationally, **provide a direct internet link for each publication**, if applicable.

Candidates in **Humanities and Social Sciences** must expose the status of their PhD thesis publication. They have to state whether their PhD thesis monograph is published or submitted. Otherwise, specify when the publication is expected and upload a corresponding contract/agreement with the publisher in the container "Other annexes".

**Under points 1-4 only "published", "in press" or "accepted" publications can be listed** ("submitted" or "forthcoming" publications cannot be included). All entries in every section should be numbered. **Important: Do not change the order of authors, in particular for publications with shared first authorship. Ensure that all required categories below are listed and indicate "none" in case of absence of items in a given category.** The research output list should be structured as follows (if applicable):

1. Publications in international peer-reviewed scientific journals
2. Peer-reviewed books/monographs
3. Peer-reviewed conference proceedings
4. Contributions to books

5. Patents and licenses
6. Oral contributions to conferences (talk or poster)
7. Outreach activities (e.g. public engagement in science, technology and knowledge transfer activities, scientific art performances, etc.)
8. General contributions to science (e.g. spokesperson for experiments, leader of expeditions, founder of networks and training programmes, etc.)
9. Other artefacts with documented use (e.g. maps, methods, prototype demos, software, databases, design, contributions to big data collaborations, etc.)
10. Preprints (e.g. arXiv, bioRxiv, EarthArXiv, etc.).
11. If a manuscript/monography is not accessible via a repository for preprints, specify the journal/publisher where it has been submitted and upload the proof of submission, as well as the file in the container "Other annexes".

## 2.4 Net academic age

Applications submitted to SNSF career instruments are to be assessed according to the evaluation criteria listed in the specific regulations. One of the criteria refers to the applicant's previous scientific achievements. These achievements are assessed in relation to the applicant's net academic age. The net academic age is defined as the period from the date of the thesis defence or equivalent qualification or from the medical degree until the submission deadline, minus all non-academic activities, calculated in full-time equivalents (FTE).

The net academic age and detailed information including non-academic activities must be listed in a separate document. Please use the [form provided](#) to calculate and substantiate your net academic age.

The following non-academic activities can be listed: Maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave; inability to work due to illness or accident; care duties; services that benefit the general public, particularly military or civilian service; continuing education; non-academic employments (e.g. industry, government) or clinical activity; unemployment; other (please specify).

For each non-academic activity, please provide a brief description and specify the time period (from - to) as well as the duration in FTE. All entries must also be visible in the CV.

## 2.5 Statement of mobility

Mobility is recognised as a necessary factor for a successful scientific or academic career. As stated in the regulations of each funding scheme, applicants who do not have the expected physical mobility record at the time of the submission deadline will have the **possibility to perform their mobility during the funded period**. In order 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 into account alternative career paths:

1. **Institutional:** collaborations with or move to an institution that provides the 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.
2. **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.

3. **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.
4. **Disciplinary:** move across research fields different from your core discipline.
5. **Intellectual:** sharing of your knowledge beyond academia (e.g. science communicator, contributions to the standing of science in society, translation into practice).

Please use the [form provided](#), comment 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, meaning that also candidates fulfilling physical mobility expectations by the submission deadline according to the respective regulations will have to comment on their academic mobility.
- If it was not possible to perform physical mobility before the submission deadline, please comment on the reasons why and elaborate on the measures you will take in order to close the gap.
- Comment on the choice of your research institution with regard to its suitability to provide scientific support for your project as well as the possibilities to develop your intellectual background and your scientific independence.
- Explain how your mobility will contribute to meet your career goals.

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

### 3. Instructions for the research plan

#### 3.1 General remarks

The research plan must consist of original text that you have written. A limited amount of text (or other material, graphs, etc.) by third parties or text published by yourself is permissible if 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 to analyse suspected cases of plagiarism. For more details see the [SNSF policy on scientific integrity](#).

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. An English translation must be enclosed if requested by the SNSF. Special rules apply for political sciences; researchers will still be able to submit proposals in an official Swiss language should this be justified for scientific reasons, particularly if working in a specific language is appropriate to the nature of the research topic.

#### 3.2 Structure and content of research plan

The research plan must not exceed **15 pages** (DIN A4) and **60'000 characters** (with spaces); this includes the title or title page, possible table of contents, summary, footnotes, illustrations,

formulae, tables, **but not** the bibliography. The research plan may not contain any annexed documents. A minimum of point 10 font size (condensed fonts not allowed) and 1.5 line spacing must be used. The research plan needs to be structured as follows:

<b>Research plan</b>	
<b>1. Summary (~1 page)</b>	Present the background and rationale of the project, list its overall objectives and specific aims, mention the methods to be used, and briefly discuss the expected results and their impact in the field.
<b>2. Proposed research</b>	
<b>2.1 Current state of research in the field</b>	Describe your project in the context of the current state of knowledge in your field. Reference the most important publications, particularly by other authors.  Describe:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- which previous insights provided the starting point and basis for the planned studies;</li> <li>- in which areas is research needed, and why;</li> <li>- which important, relevant research projects are currently underway in Switzerland and abroad.</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Current state of personal research</b>	Present the research work you have already undertaken in the relevant field or in related fields, describe the results obtained so far as well as the relevance of these preliminary undertakings for your project.
<b>2.3 Detailed research plan</b>	Based on the information provided under 2.1 and 2.2, specify the approach you are taking and the concrete objectives that you aim to achieve in the period of funding. The following points should be addressed:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- describe the studies or experiments needed to reach the set goals. Assess the risks involved and propose alternatives if necessary;</li> <li>- characterise existing sources and datasets and describe the data collection strategy and possible alternative strategies;</li> <li>- methods by which the research goals are to be reached (by you and your team or with collaborations) and methods that first have to be developed;</li> <li>- explain the role and the planned work of each member of the research team (incl. you, personnel and collaborations).</li> </ul> <p>Your description should be as detailed as necessary to enable an expert to assess whether your methodology is appropriate and your project feasible. Refer to the work described here in the budget.</p>
<b>2.4 Schedule and milestones</b>	Compile a schedule that includes the most important milestones (e.g. table, Gantt chart). This plan should also indicate the main tasks with which the persons funded by the SNSF/involved in the project are to be entrusted.
<b>2.5 Relevance and impact</b>	Describe the scientific relevance and expected impact of your project for the discipline and for science as a whole (research and education/teaching). Mention the form in which you wish to publish your research results. If applicable, indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project will have a broader impact and what this impact will be.
<b>3. Bibliography</b>	List the sources of all concluded or ongoing work referred to in the research plan. Give the full reference and do not use "et al." to shorten the author list. The author list can only 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 bibliography is not included in the maximum number of pages (15) and characters (60'000) count.

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