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Regulations on PRIMA¹ grants

of 1 July 2020

The National Research Council,

based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015²,

issues the following Regulations:

1 General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards PRIMA grants to outstanding female researchers in all disciplines who are postdocs or have equivalent research experience and are pursuing an academic career with a view to a professorship in Switzerland.

² PRIMA grants promote the scientific independence of highly qualified female researchers with excellent research ideas who want to carry out their research project at least in a research position with independent project and management responsibility (group leader or equivalent). With this funding scheme, the SNSF aims to contribute to increasing the share of women professors in Switzerland.

³ PRIMA grants are flexible, cover salaries and project funds and facilitate academic mobility. In order to achieve higher academic qualifications, PRIMA grantees must in principle devote all their work-time to the research funded under the PRIMA grant.

⁴ If a PRIMA grantee obtains a professorship at a higher education institution in Switzerland before the grant expires, she may take all the remaining PRIMA funds with her. This increases the appeal of PRIMA grantees for higher education institutions.

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 Regulations, in particular, apply.³

¹ PRIMA; Promoting Women in Academia

² http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

³ <http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

Article 3 Grant type and duration

¹ PRIMA grants include project funds and the applicant's salary.

² The maximum funding duration is five years, the minimum three years.

³ PRIMA grants 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 Transfer of the grant

If a grantee is appointed to a professorship at a higher education institution in Switzerland during the funding period of the PRIMA grant, the remaining funds awarded under the grant may be transferred to the new post. In this context, funds financing the salary are converted into project funds which must be used within five years of the grantee's starting in her new role. The SNSF may issue corresponding requirements⁴.

2 Personal and formal requirements

Article 5 General personal requirements

¹ Professors in permanent or temporary employment, with or without tenure track, are not eligible to submit applications for PRIMA grants.

² Applicants must have:

- a. a doctoral degree (PhD) or must have completed their studies in human, dental or veterinary medicine (state examination or an equivalent examination, hereinafter referred to as "medical degree"). Applicants without a doctorate (PhD) are also eligible if they have conducted research work for three years since their higher education degree; this may be deemed to be equivalent to a doctorate;
- b. a proven record of research work lasting at least 2 years (with an average work quota of 80%) since receiving their doctorate (the date of the exam or thesis defence is the relevant date) or equivalent qualification; or
- c. completed, as an applicant with a medical degree, at least three years of clinical work and at least two years (with an average work quota of 80%) of research work since their medical degree.

³ Applications must be submitted within ten years after receiving the relevant degree pursuant to paragraph 2 letter a. For applicants with a medical degree, the window is 14 years.

⁴ The time windows pursuant to paragraph 3 will be calculated based on the relevant submission deadline for PRIMA applications. The time windows may be extended if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply. The reasons for extending the time window must be explained in the application.

Article 6 Other personal requirements

¹ Applicants must:

- a. have an excellent scientific research output;

⁴ After the transfer of the PRIMA grant, the former PRIMA grant holders must respect the general rules of the SNSF governing the use of funds, in particular the reporting duties. In all other respects, the PRIMA rules do not apply to them anymore.

- b. be capable of carrying out the proposed research project independently;
- c. commit themselves as grantees to a work quota of 100%. A part-time work quota corresponding to at least 80% is permissible if the grantee has care duties or is pursuing qualifications at a higher education institution to advance her career.
- d. have any work quota reduction based on the reasons set out in letter c in the course of the ongoing grant approved by the SNSF. Any further work quota reduction may be approved on request in the event of the successful acquisition of significant third-party funding (e.g. ERC grant);
- e. in the first two years, as grantees in the area of clinical research, devote at least 80% and thereafter at least 50% of their work quota to the project and training related to the project. In the first two years, they may devote on average a maximum of 20% and thereafter a maximum of 50% to clinical work and other tasks.

² In addition to the above-mentioned requirements, applicants must meet the general application requirements pursuant to the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 7 Formal requirements

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

² The submission deadlines are published on the SNSF website.

3 Applications and eligible costs

Article 8 Applications

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

² Applicants must briefly outline their career progression in a career plan and set out the goals they aim to achieve with the PRIMA grant. In particular, they must explicitly state how a PRIMA grant would boost their chances of obtaining a professorship.

³ The mandatory documents include, in particular, written confirmation by those responsible at the research institution, provided according to the SNSF requirements, with regard to the following points:

- a. integration of the grantee at the research institution;
- b. provision of a workplace and access to the research infrastructure;
- c. assumption of an appropriate share of the research costs by the institution;
- d. ensuring supervision of doctoral students employed in the project, where applicable;
- e. statement confirming the independence of the project and the self-reliance of the researcher as well as her career prospects.
- f. Assurance of a position as a researcher with independent project and management responsibility (group leader or equivalent position at least).

Article 9 Mobility

¹ Mobility is aimed at enhancing the grantee's scientific profile and creating optimal preconditions for an academic career.

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

³ If the applicant did not change her institution after the doctorate, or after the equivalent degree or the medical degree, she must explain in the application how she plans to achieve the necessary mobility in the course of the PRIMA grant.

⁴ The necessary mobility under a PRIMA 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. stay at an institution in the practical realm (industry, administration, etc.; intersectoral mobility) in Switzerland or abroad;
- c. other types of mobility, particularly short visits or international collaborations.

⁵ Stays at a host institution pursuant to paragraph 4 letters a and b may not exceed 24 months in total; they may be spent at more than one institution and split into a number of shorter periods. If the duration of the PRIMA grant is less than five years, the maximum amount of time that may be spent at host institutions will be reduced proportionally.

⁶ The applicant may request a stay at a host institution either in the application or during the grant period within the scope of the approved budget.

⁷ Each request for a stay at a host institution must be accompanied by an invitation letter from the relevant host institution confirming that the requirements pursuant to Article 8 paragraph 3 letters a and b are met for the duration of the stay.

Article 10 Eligible costs: salary

¹ A PRIMA grant covers the grantee's salary including her social security contributions. The SNSF determines the amount of the salary by agreement with the research institution and in accordance with the salary scales generally applied by the institution to researchers with comparable qualifications.

² For researchers doing clinical work, the SNSF covers the share of the salary awarded for the research work. The share allocated for clinical work must be financed by the research institution.

³ The SNSF may set an upper limit for the salary.

⁴ When awarding a PRIMA grant, the SNSF takes into account any significant third-party funding acquired for the same or for a strongly overlapping research project, such as an ERC grant. In such cases, the SNSF grant is limited to the salary financed pursuant to paragraphs 1 and 2.

Article 11 Eligible project funds

¹ In addition to the grantee's salary, the grant may cover project costs as set out below. These costs must not exceed CHF 750,000 for five years. If the duration of the PRIMA grant is less than five years, this maximum amount will be reduced proportionally.

² The following costs may be covered:

- a. salaries of employees whose positions are approved by the SNSF;

- b. material costs that are directly linked to the approved project, in particular material of enduring value, consumables, field expenses, travel costs, third-party charges, costs for computing time and data as well as costs for making research data freely available (Open Research Data);
- c. direct costs of the use of infrastructure for conducting the research project;
- d. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research;
- e. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities regarding the funded research;
- f. costs for career measures;
- g. costs for gender equality measures;
- h. mobility costs incurred by the grantee.

Article 12 Employment of staff

¹ PRIMA grantees may employ their own staff. The provisions set out in Clause 7 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

² For any requested doctoral positions, the relevant office at the institution must guarantee supervision and due completion of the dissertation as planned, in particular if the grantee's employment is terminated ahead of time.

4 Submission of applications and other SNSF grants: restrictions

Article 13 PRIMA grants in relation to other forms of funding offered by the SNSF⁵

¹ Proposals may only be submitted for a duration of support for which no other

- a. project grants have been requested, approved or started under the project funding scheme, the Sinergia or SPIRIT funding schemes, or the programmes of the SNSF;
- b. career grants of the SNSF have been applied for.

The restrictions apply to the entire application procedure.

² Parallel applications may be submitted for Postdoc.Mobility only if the application is for a return grant.

³ 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. Should they wish to continue the application procedure, any awarding of an SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship shall be null and void.

⁴ If a parallel submission is ruled impermissible, the proposal will not be considered by the SNSF.

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⁵ Pursuant to a decision by the Research Council's Presiding Board of 18 September 2020, there is no waiting period for the submission of applications by holders of Postdoc.Mobility fellowships.

⁶ Repealed based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 5 July 2023, in force with immediate effect.

⁶ Grantees may not apply for any further career grants of the SNSF. As an exception, grantees may apply for an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship 18 months after starting their PRIMA grant at the earliest. If an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship is awarded, the PRIMA grant will lapse as soon as the Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship is started, and the unspent money already transferred to the grantee will have to be refunded to the SNSF.

Article 14 Repeated submissions: limitation

¹ Applicants whose application has been rejected may apply at the most a second time for a PRIMA grant, regardless of the subject matter of the project.

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

5 Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 15 Assessment criteria

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

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. Applicant's scientific research output:
 - scientific quality and independence in achievements to date as well as their impact in the field;
 - achievements to date in relation to net academic age⁷;
 - evidence of ability to carry out the project based on the achievements to date.
- b. The applicant's career development and retrospective and prospective mobility based on the submitted statement; in particular, the applicant's overall mobility will be assessed at the end of the project in view of the goals of the scheme and the applicant's career goal.
- c. scientific independence of the applicant at the chosen research institution;
- d. scientific relevance, originality, topicality and independence of the research project, particularly in respect of innovative research aims that are outside the "mainstream".
- e. approach and methodology of the research project as well as its feasibility;
- f. 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 her continual intellectual development and continuing education;
- g. guarantee of support from the research institution and assurance that the applicant's career will be promoted;
- h. broader impact for applications in use-inspired basic research.

Article 16 Evaluation procedure and decision

¹ The selection procedure is divided into two phases. In the first phase, the best applications are selected for the second phase based on the submitted documents. If necessary, proposals may be

⁷ The net academic age comprises the time span starting with the date of the thesis defence or equivalent qualification or with the medical degree and ending with the submission deadline, minus all non-academic activities (including any interruptions for the reasons stated in Clause 1.11 paragraph 2 letters a-e of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations), calculated in full-time equivalents.

reviewed externally. Applicants who are not admitted to the second phase are informed through a written ruling in which the reasons for the decision are stated.

² The SNSF arranges for the applications chosen for the second phase to be reviewed by external experts. In the second phase, the SNSF generally asks the applicant to present the research project and career plan in person, as well as answer the questions put to her by the evaluation body.

³ The decisions taken in phase 2 are communicated to the applicants in a written ruling.

6 Grants and administration of grants

Article 17 Grants, start of grants and changes

¹ PRIMA 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 PRIMA grants may generally be started ten months after the submission deadline at the earliest. The earliest possible start of funding is announced in the call.

³ Any changes to the research project or the conditions for conducting it must be submitted to the SNSF in advance for approval.

Article 18 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ If grantees forego PRIMA grants or have to terminate their research work prematurely, they must notify the SNSF without delay in writing, stating their reasons.

² In such cases, the SNSF terminates the grant. The remaining amount of the grant must be refunded to the SNSF.

Article 19 Reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to send the SNSF periodic reports in accordance with the requirements defined by the SNSF, notably financial and scientific reports.

² 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.

7 Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

Article 20 Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

These Regulations enter into force on 1 August 2020. They replace the Regulations on PRIMA grants of 11 July 2018.

Article 21 Transitional provisions

On the date these Regulations enter into force, any approved or ongoing PRIMA or Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants will remain valid as regards the rights granted with the award under the old regulations, even if they are not enshrined in the new Regulations. In particular, applications for coverage of childcare, conference and research costs and for grant extensions may be submitted based on the ongoing grants.