Profile of the Research Council

1   The Research Council

The Research Council is the scientific body of the SNSF. As such, it is responsible for funding policy in accordance with the SNSF's overall strategies, funding guidelines, scientific evaluations and funding decisions. Overall responsibility for all tasks assigned to the Research Council lies with its governing body, the Academic Board. It organises the Research Council in such a way that it can fulfil its tasks and responsibilities. The Academic Board delegates individual tasks to its members and to the members of the Research Council and its committees or working groups.

The Research Council is composed of a maximum of 80 members who are organised in committees. To fulfil the tasks and responsibilities stipulated in the Statutes[1] (Art. 9) and the Organisation Regulations for the Research Council[2] (Art. 10, 11 and 12), members of the Research Council shall have excellent scientific qualifications and experience as well as specific expertise in the Research Council's area of responsibility. Regarding the composition of the Research Council, particular attention is paid to ensure that

– the science areas, disciplinary cultures and scientific themes are represented in their diversity;
– strategic expertise in research funding is present;
– there is appropriate representation of younger scientists and those who can demonstrate experience of both research and the professional world or experience of use-inspired research;
– there is appropriate gender diversity,

as set out in Art. 8.4 of the Statutes.

When composing the Research Council, the institutional diversity of Switzerland should also be appropriately taken into account.

1.1   Qualifications for members of the Research Council
The members of the Research Council meet the below-listed qualifications and requirements.

Qualifications:

– Excellent track record and internationally recognised research activity
– Excellent knowledge of national and international research in their field
– Broad interest in all areas of research
– Knowledge and overview of developments and trends in research and research funding
– Knowledge of the Swiss research landscape
– Interest and foresight thinking with regard to the development of new approaches in research funding

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[1] Statutes
[2] Organisation Regulations for the Research Council

- Knowledge and awareness of best practices in research ethics and evaluation
- Experience with SNSF funding schemes and/or other national and international funding programmes and their relevant regulatory frameworks
- Experience in grant evaluation, including the evaluation of collaborative or interdisciplinary research
- Leadership experience, including competence and experience chairing research evaluation or decision bodies, as well as experience in group decision-making

Requirements:

- Identification with and commitment to the SNSF's fundamental funding principles, mission and values and to represent them internally and externally
- Ability to work in a team
- Independence in the mandate activity
- Personal integrity, social responsibility
- Excellent knowledge of English, very good knowledge of at least one national language and passive understanding of a second national language

1.2   Conditions of the mandate

The term of office as a member of the Research Council is four years, renewable once[3]. The time commitment is up to 20% of an FTE[4]. The minimum commitment (less than 20%) includes one membership in a Programme Committee or the Policy Committee and the oversight and chairing of at least one panel or the chairing of or participation in a Policy Group. A second membership in either the Policy Committee or a Programme Committee or the participation in the evaluation of applications is possible and expected. Depending on needs, expertise and interests, participation in other Research Council bodies, such as Policy Groups or Working Groups, is also possible.

Vested interests must be disclosed and shall be made public.

Incompatible with a membership in the Research Council are, according to the Foundation Regulations[5] (Art. 28.5):

a. overall management and supervisory functions at organisations whose members apply for funding from the SNSF, such as rectorate members, presidents, directors or members of school management,
b. management functions at important organisational units or research subdivisions or research infrastructures of organisations under letter a, such as the deans of faculties of the cantonal universities,
c. management and supervisory functions in organisations whose purpose or activity involves safeguarding the interests of specific areas of research or of researchers vis-à-vis the SNSF,
d. management functions in a National Centre of Competence in Research, limited to eligibility for election to the corresponding body of the Research Council,
e. other scenarios that could compromise impartiality.

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[3] The next term of office will begin on 1 April 2025. During the transitional period, current members of the Research Council may continue to serve up to the maximum term of eight years.
[4] The FTE information is based on the distribution of tasks and workloads of the current members of the Research Council.
[5] Organisation Regulations for the Research Council

2 The Research Council's bodies

The Research Council is organised in a Policy Committee, five Programme Committees (Projects, Careers, International Cooperation, Long-term Research and Infrastructures as well as Thematic and Solution-Oriented Research), and a Special Committee BRIDGE. Their tasks are outlined in the following.

2.1 Policy Committee

Under the mandate of the Academic Board, the Policy Committee analyses, coordinates and develops the SNSF's transversal funding policy. The tasks include:

1. Foresight research funding
   – Identifying emerging topics and trends in areas such as research funding, funding policy, funding mechanisms, research evaluation, and the SNSF's positioning in the research environment
   – Determining needs for action and addressing the identified topics in the best possible way
   – Using existing and developing new channels for engaging with all stakeholders

2. Value of research / Effectiveness of funding as a whole
   – Identifying new trends and providing expertise on measures to ensure the quality and visibility of funded research
   – Advising about and further developing measures to demonstrate, promote and assess the impact and added value of research for science, society and stakeholders
   – Assessing the effectiveness of the funding portfolio to ensure the above

3. Research Environment
   – Proposing the framework for national and international partnerships to the Academic Board
   – Contributing to shaping the national and international coordination of research and science
   – Networking and identifying common interests with stakeholders, organisations and initiatives within the research sector and beyond
   – Identifying and addressing the most pressing issues pertaining to the academic work environment

4. Funding portfolio / Portfolio planning
   – Proposing the framework for the strategic alignment of the SNSF's funding portfolio and evaluation processes with its overall strategic goals to the Academic Board
   – Drafting and coordinating the multi-year programme and the action plan (in cooperation with the other SNSF bodies)
   – Continuously reviewing the coherence of the funding portfolio

5. Policy Groups
   – Establishing and overseeing policy groups on transversal policy topics as needed (e.g. quality assurance and effectiveness of research funding; funding of early-career researchers; international collaboration; ethics and scientific integrity; equality, diversity and inclusion)
   – Ensuring a regular review of the policy groups and their mandates within the multi-year planning framework

Please refer to table 1 for detailed information about the Policy Committee's mission, size, general characteristics and specific qualifications. The desired competences pertain to the committee as a whole and are not expected to be fulfilled by each individual member.

Table 1. Specificities of the Policy Committee

Mission	Mandated by the Academic Board, the Policy Committee analyses, coordinates and develops SNSF's transversal funding policy. Its objective is to anticipate developments in research and research funding so that the SNSF is always a step ahead when carrying out its mission of funding research. This committee ensures the coherence and coordination of the SNSF's transversal funding policy. The Policy Committee provides the necessary expertise and can establish policy groups on significant topics. In this way, it identifies and assesses gaps and areas of improvement and formulates concepts, recommendations and policy actions.
Size	Up to 15 members

General characteristics	– Diversity with respect to
	  – expertise in the different topics to be covered by the Policy Committee
	  – research fields and scientific disciplines, including interdisciplinary research
	  – principles of diversity, equality and inclusion
	  – basic research and applied/use-inspired/solution-oriented research
	– Interaction and coordination between committees: close coordination with the Academic Board as well as regular exchanges of information and coordination at the coordination conferences of the Academic Board together with all committee chairs
	– Overlapping memberships: close coordination on policy topics will be ensured through dual mandates between the Policy Committee and the Programme Committees. To ensure effective communication, each Programme Committee includes at least one member who is also part of the Policy Committee. Additionally, the Programme Committees can contribute to the development of policy topics by actively participating in Policy Groups.

Specific qualifications for the committee	– Excellent knowledge of and network in the Swiss and international ERI landscape – Excellent knowledge of the Swiss political system, the legal framework of research funding and public relations – Practical experience in hands-on policy work and demonstrated engagement with topical discussions and literature (e.g. Open Science, Impact and Research Assessment, Research Ethics, Diversity) – Proven strategic competences, experience with change processes, leadership qualities and negotiation skills – Experience in successful collaboration and effective co-creation with external experts and stakeholders – An active international and policy-specific network – Familiarity with financial budgeting processes and knowledge of service level agreements

2.2 Programme Committees

Programme Committees are responsible for the SNSF funding schemes. The tasks in this respect are:

1. Implementation of funding schemes
   - Elaborating call documents and funding guidelines
   - Setting up evaluation procedures that
     - are adapted to the goals and characteristics of the funding schemes
     - ensure fair procedures in accordance with SNSF evaluation standards
     - strive for high quality, oriented towards best practices in research evaluation
     - consider equality, diversity and inclusion
     - are consistent across panels and over time
   - Composing evaluation panels that

- – cover the expertise needed to evaluate the assigned applications
- – fulfil the diversity standards of the SNSF
- – know and follow the standards, procedures and values of the SNSF
- – Assuming the chairing of the evaluation panels by
  - – assigning a chair (and co-chair) for each panel
  - – training panels and panel chairs
- – Management of budget and funding decision making
  - – accountable for the attributed budgets
  - – distributing the budget between panels (or funding schemes) in accordance with the frame-work conditions set by the Academic Board
  - – making funding decisions
- – Lifetime management of projects
  - – monitoring of running projects
  - – reviewing the success of funded projects

2. Monitoring and development of the funding schemes
   - – Monitoring the effectiveness of the funding schemes in view of
     - – the SNSF's strategy, mission and vision and relevant research policies
     - – the Swiss academic landscape and the structural peculiarities of different higher education institutions
     - – disciplinary needs and developments
     - – diversity of science areas, disciplinary cultures and types of research
     - – the overall SNSF funding scheme portfolio
     - – additional committee-specific aspects as listed in table 2
   - – Elaboration of adaptations to the funding schemes
   - – Proposition of systematic evaluation of instruments or specific aspects of instruments

3. Contribution to the overall strategy of the SNSF with
   - – statements and positions of the SNSF on issues related to the funding schemes attributed to the committee
   - – analyses and strategic considerations regarding the long-term development of the Swiss research landscape

Table 2 outlines the specificities of the five Programme Committees, detailing the competences expected to be fulfilled by the committees as collective entities rather than by each individual member.

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Table 2. Specificities of the five Programme Committees

	Programme Committee Projects	Programme Committee Careers	Programme Committee International Cooperation	Programme Committee Long-term Research and Infrastructures	Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-oriented Research
Mission	Responsible for: – bottom-up funding of predominantly thematically open research projects Aim: – to promote all disciplines and types of research as well as interdisciplinary research.	Responsible for: – career funding of highly qualified Early Career Researchers (ECR) Aim: – to promote the professional development of ECR in academia, research and society.	Responsible for: – promoting and facilitating international scientific exchange and cooperation – implementing international research cooperation activities on behalf of the Confederation – coordinating with partner countries Aim: – to strengthen the international position and competitiveness of Swiss research.	Responsible for: – long-term, potentially large-scale funding with developmental, structural or capacity-building goals and research infrastructures Aim: – to maintain and strengthen Switzerland's position in research fields and research infrastructures of strategic importance.	Responsible for: – thematic and solution-oriented research funding Aim: – to provide research-based analysis and solution-oriented approaches to potential beneficiaries of research results to promote the implementation of research in science, society, economy and politics.
Size	Up to 30 members	Up to 14 members	Up to 11 members	Up to 15 members	Up to 14 members
Assigned funding schemes	– Project funding, including individual, collaborative and interdisciplinary applications – Weave/Lead Agency applications* and international Co-Investigator Scheme applications* (evaluation) – Spark	– SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships – Postdoc.Mobility – Ambizione – SNSF Starting Grants (currently undergoing redefinition)	– Bilateral Programmes – European Partnerships** (funding scheme development) – Swiss contribution to selected EU countries – SPIRIT – COST – Scientific Exchanges – Scholars at Risk – International complementary measures	– NCCR – FLARE – MARVIS – BioLink – Roadmap on Research Infrastructures – Cohort studies – FORS – DaSCH	– NRP – SOR4D – Implementation Networks – Agora – Quantum (evaluation) – BRIDGE (scheme development) – IICT

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	Programme Committee Projects	Programme Committee Careers	Programme Committee International Cooperation	Programme Committee Long-term Research and Infrastructures	Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-oriented Research
Monitoring of the effectiveness of funding schemes in view of	– the Swiss academic landscape and the structural peculiarities of different higher education institutions – the different SNSF funding schemes – disciplinary needs and developments	– the Swiss academic landscape and the structural peculiarities of different higher education institutions – the different SNSF funding schemes – disciplinary needs and developments – diversity and challenges to career development of early-career researchers – the European funding landscape for early-career researchers	– federal requests and political developments – federal-international research politics and corresponding mandates to the SNSF – issues and peculiarities potentially associated with foreign countries (e.g. ethical standards or data security) that might influence the evaluation of applications – mutual interests and added value for the Swiss research landscape and partner countries – the different SNSF funding schemes and opportunities for international collaborations within them	– the Swiss academic landscape and the structural peculiarities of different higher education institutions – existing and lacking infrastructures in the Swiss and European research landscape – disciplinary and inter-/transdisciplinary needs and developments – effective programme management and implementation – the development of and connection within the Swiss research landscape	– institutional partnerships within the Swiss research landscape and higher education institutions and federal offices – disciplinary and inter-/transdisciplinary needs and developments in the different SNSF funding schemes – effective programme management and implementation – exchanges between science and society
Additional, committee-specific tasks			– proposing participation in international initiatives and calls		– composing steering committees that are experienced in programme management and coordination

	Programme Committee Projects	Programme Committee Careers	Programme Committee International Cooperation	Programme Committee Long-term Research and Infrastructures	Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-oriented Research
Specific qualifications to be met collectively by the committee	– Disciplinary breadth and attention to interdisciplinarity and different types of research – Awareness and knowledge of emerging research areas and the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of research – In-depth knowledge of the peculiarities of the different Swiss higher education institutions	– Disciplinary breadth and attention to inter-/trans-disciplinarity and different types of research – Awareness of the diversity of career paths and the challenges early-career researchers face – Profound knowledge of the peculiarities of the different Swiss higher education institutions and associated policy issues (Mittelbau, working conditions)	– Expert knowledge in Swiss foreign affairs and research politics – Experience in international policymaking – Knowledge of the European and global research landscape – Knowledge of scientific cooperation with a focus on countries involved in Swiss international research politics – Cross-cultural experience – Excellent language skills for cooperation with international partners, diplomatic skills	– Strategic competences, foresight thinking and attention to national and international developments in research and their impact on the scientific landscape – In-depth knowledge of existing infrastructures and infrastructural gaps in the Swiss research landscape – Experience in knowledge and technology transfer – Experience in research outreach and communication – Experience in the promotion of scientific careers – Experience in large research consortia and negotiations with higher education institutions	– Experience in inter-/trans-disciplinary and applied/use-inspired/solution-oriented research – Expertise and experience in knowledge and technology transfer – Expertise in fostering dialogue between science and society – Experience with institutional cooperation and partnerships – Expertise in thematic and large-scale collaborative research programmes and their broader societal, environmental, economic or political impact

* in cooperation with the Programme Committee International Cooperation and the Policy Committee

** in cooperation with other Programme Committees

2.3 Exchange and coordination between the bodies

The Academic Board and all of the committee chairs meet regularly to exchange information and coordinate their activities at the coordination conferences as well as at the plenary meetings of the Research Council. In addition, committees consult one another on the development or amendment of funding schemes and related guidelines that have common or comparable characteristics or that may affect one another.

To foster cross-committee cooperation, dual membership between committees is anticipated. At least one overlapping membership is expected between the Policy Committee and the Programme Committees. Between the Programme Committees, dual membership is particularly recommended in cases such as:

– shared responsibilities for funding schemes
– similar eligibility conditions associated with calls
– the funding schemes' mission or strategy require coordination in a wider context

In addition to overlapping committee memberships, the Policy Committee can propose the assignment of Programme Committee members to Policy Groups.

In accordance with Art. 11 of the Organisation Regulations for the Research Council[6], for funding schemes that are managed by a special committee in collaboration with third parties (e.g. design of the funding scheme, funding guidelines, review of funding quality), the Academic Board may delegate the internal management, monitoring and periodic review of the collaboration to a programme committee.

2.4 Transitional provisions

In the transitional phase, the Academic Board ensures the organisation of the Research Council's committees as set out in the Organisation Regulations for the Research Council[6] and assures the proper fulfilment of their tasks. The current Divisions and Specialised Committees of the Research Council will continue their tasks until 31 March 2025. The new committees will begin their activities on 1 April 2025 and will set up the evaluation panels and the specialist and working groups by 31 October 2025 at the latest.

Until 31 March 2025, the responsibilities and the procedure for evaluating applications and making funding decisions are governed by the old law. The Academic Board is responsible for resolutions and decisions that are delegated to the Presiding Board of the Research Council. Evaluation and re-consideration procedures under way on 1 April 2025 will be carried out by the evaluation panels in accordance with the old law. Funding decisions will be taken by the new Programme Committee responsible for each funding scheme.

2.5 Special Committee BRIDGE

BRIDGE is a programme with two funding lines, BRIDGE Proof of Concept and BRIDGE Discovery, which provides funding at the interface between basic research and science-driven innovation across all disciplines. The programme is jointly managed by the SNSF and Innosuisse. The Steering Committee, which is responsible for the successful implementation of the two funding lines, currently consists of 7-9 members, 2 from Innosuisse, 2 from the SNSF and 3-5 external members and which appoints

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[6] Organisation Regulations for the Research Council

an evaluation panel for each funding line to assess the applications, has the status of a Special Committee in accordance with Art. 11 of the Organisation Regulations for the Research Council[7].

The tasks of the Steering Committee are defined in a contract (collaboration agreement) between the SNSF and Innosuisse. With respect to evaluation tasks, the Steering Committee takes the final evaluation decisions. With respect to the development of BRIDGE, there is an interaction between the Steering Committee and the bodies of SNSF and Innosuisse.

On the SNSF side, Special Committees report to the Academic Board. However, the aim of BRIDGE overlaps with the aims of the Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-oriented Research. BRIDGE promotes interactions between basic and applied research to exploit the innovation potential of scientific results. A direct exchange of the expertise, work and development of funding schemes overseen by the Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-oriented Research (TSOR) ensures an overview regarding the funding of solution-oriented research and fostering the interface with innovation. It also increases the SNSF's weight in coordination with stakeholders to identify needs, and in negotiation with Innosuisse to further develop the instrument. To support the interface between the BRIDGE Steering Committee and TSOR, the two SNSF members of the Steering Committee shall also be members of TSOR. To further anchor BRIDGE in TSOR, it is recommended that the Academic Board delegates the competence for developing BRIDGE and the day-to-day relationship with Innosuisse to TSOR.

This profile was approved by the Foundation Council on 28 August 2024.

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[7] Organisation Regulations for the Research Council