

Guidelines for the «UniBE Short Travel Grants for (Post)Docs» Funding Program

General Information and Principles

The University of Bern, by way of its «UniBE Short Travel Grants for (Post)Docs» funding program, supports short research stays of doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers abroad that enable early career researchers to advance their own research projects, gain more experience abroad and thus improve their academic profile.

Short research stays abroad can encompass

- **Field research stays,**
- **Research stays at universities or other research institutions and/or**
- **Stays for scientific work in libraries, scientific collections, archives, laboratories, etc.**

A research stay can include several of the above-listed activities and several locations of stay. However, it must be completed without interruptions.

Participation in summer/winter schools, conferences, and scientific method courses is generally possible in combination with a short research stay, but is usually not supported as a single activity (i.e., generally no support will be given for sole participation in summer schools, scientific congresses or scientific method courses).

The short research stay should be at least two weeks but no more than eight weeks. Exceptions are possible but must be well-justified. An appropriate justification must be enclosed with the application. Even in such exceptional cases, however, the budget may not exceed the maximum funding amount.

The activity performed within the scope of the requested research stay must have a substantial impact on the applicant's academic qualification, i.e., on the progress of the applicant's research project.

Eligibility

Eligibility extends to

- Doctoral students registered at the University of Bern and involved in research (meaning doctoral students who are completing a research doctorate), regardless of whether they are employed at the University of Bern.
- Postdoctoral researchers in the categories of Early Postdocs, Advanced Postdocs and Senior Research Assistants employed at the University of Bern.
- Postdoctoral researchers who are still employed by the University of Bern under the old regulations as Teaching and Research Assistants I or Senior Teaching and Research Assistants ("Oberassistentinnen" und "Oberassistenten"), provided that they are guaranteed an absolute protected research time of at least 50% within the scope of their employment.

This regulation is valid until July 31st, 2024. Per August 2024, Teaching and Research Assistants I and Senior Teaching and Research Assistants are no longer able to apply.

- Early career researchers employed at the University of Bern by way of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship.
- Early career researchers at the postdoc level who are employed at the Inselspital Bern, provided they complete a substantial part of their research work at the University of Bern, and they have a corresponding workplace at the University of Bern. The degree of employment and the guaranteed protected research time at the Inselspital must correspond with the regulations of the University of Bern (cf. Art. 7 Para 1-3 Reglement über Aufgaben und Anstellung von Postdotorandinnen und Postdotoranden (Postdoc Regulations) der Universität Bern vom 16.04.2019).

The following conditions must be met for a UniBE Short Travel Grant:

- Applying doctoral students must be registered as doctoral students at the University of Bern for at least six months at the time of the application deadline. Applying postdoctoral researchers must have been employed as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bern or at the Inselspital Bern for at least three months at the time of the application deadline.
- Doctoral students must be registered as doctoral students at the University of Bern for at least another six months after their research stay has ended. Postdoctoral researchers must be employed at the University of Bern (or the Inselspital, respectively) for at least another six months as a postdoctoral researcher after the end of their research stay. Exceptions may be considered in justified cases. A corresponding justification must be attached to the application.
- Applicants must be able to plausibly justify – if necessary, in consultation with their first academic supervisor- the funding requirements for the proposed research stay (i.e., justify why no funds are available for the proposed short research stay within the scope of their own funding). An application is only admissible under these conditions.
- All applicants must have a completed and signed doctoral or postdoctoral agreement. In the case of postdoctoral agreements, the details of employment function, degree of employment, and projected research time must be clearly explicated.

Not eligible to apply are:

- Doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers (or early career researchers at the postdoc level, respectively) who are already entitled to comparable mobility funding, e.g., as part of their employment at the University of Bern or at the Inselspital Bern or membership of a Graduate School, or if funding for the same research stay has already been granted from another university-internal or -external source.
- Doctoral students pursuing the goal of Dr. med., Dr. med. dent. or Dr. med. vet.

A maximum of two applications may be submitted per person, irrespective of doctoral or postdoc level. First-time applications will be treated preferentially.

Only one application may be submitted per person per application round.

Contributions and Funding

«UniBE Short Travel Grants for (Post)Docs» primarily provide funding for travel and accommodation costs. Applications may be made to cover fees for participation in summer/winter schools and academic conferences, provided such participation occurs in combination with a research stay. Costs for food and meals will not be reimbursed. Material expenses for consumables needed for research (e.g., costs for renting drones, reimbursement of test persons) may also be approved in well-justified exceptional cases (purchase of equipment is excluded).

The maximum grant amount per application is CHF 7'000.- for stays within Europe and CHF 8'000.- for stays outside of Europe.

Within the framework of the «UniBE Short Travel Grants for (Post)Docs», no contributions will be given for research stays that have already been completed.

In principle, the rules for business trips applicable at the University of Bern are to be observed. Cost approval for travel by train will cover tickets in second class. For air travel, the most inexpensive marketplace fares are to be applied for (Economy). Cost approval for overnight stays will cover mid-range accommodation. Travel is to be planned paying maximum heed to environmental sustainability (see also [Climate Neutrality 2025 / Travel Policy of the University of Bern](#))

Approved «UniBE Short Travel Grants» will be transferred by the Vice-Rectorate Development to the operational fund (“Betriebskredit”) of the institute or university unit of the person being supported. On completion of the short research stay abroad, unused funds will be reimbursed to the Vice-Rectorate Development.

Application

The following documents must be submitted in the following sequence as one single PDF file:

- Fully completed and signed application form. The application form must be signed by the applicant, their primary academic advisor in accordance with the doctoral or postdoctoral agreement and by the respective head of the institute.
- Current letter of support in relation to the planned research stay within the scope of the «UniBE Short Travel Grants for (Post)Docs» issued and signed by the first academic supervisor as per the doctoral or postdoctoral agreement.
- Complete and signed doctoral agreement or postdoctoral agreement.
- Complete and current CV including major scientific achievements (max. scope, content and structure in line with the [guidelines of the SNSF for devising a CV](#)).
- In the case of short research stays at universities or other research institutions: Invitations and/or confirmations of the host universities / research institutions. The accurate length of the stay is to be specified in invitations and/or confirmation letters issued by host universities/research institutions, and it is to be stated, furthermore, that the necessary infrastructure for the entire stay will be available and supervision by the reference person assured. For research that is subject to notification or approval, the host institution must also confirm that all legal and ethical requirements will be observed. Invitations or, as the case may be, confirmation letters must have an official letterhead and original signature of an institute executive or the host professor.
- Confirmation/s of participation in summer/winter schools, scientific conferences, and/or scientific method courses.
- Tabular time and work schedule with the most important milestones for the planned research stay abroad (max. one page).

Procedure and Assessment

As a rule, calls for „UniBE Short Travel Grants for (Post)Docs» funding requests will be made twice yearly. The submission deadlines are March 1st and September 1st.

The assessment process generally takes about a month. Applicants will be informed in writing by email as to approval, partial approval or non-approval of their application.

It is recommended to start the planned research stay at the earliest two months after the respective application deadline has ended. In the case of research stays applied for and already commenced within this two-month period, the funding risk lies with the respective institute in the event that the application is rejected. Please note that visa processing for overseas stays may take longer.

The research stay abroad must be commenced at the latest six months from the date of notification of approval of the application. Exceptions may be considered in justified cases. Assessment of applications submitted in the correct form and within the stipulated deadline shall be performed by a committee specially established for this purpose consisting of members of the Vice-Rectorates Development, Research and Quality.

Assessment of applications is based on the following criteria:

- Fulfillment of the formal requirements,
- Concise and well-founded presentation of the purpose, added value and relevance of the research stay abroad for the applicant's academic (further) qualification and progress of the applicant's own current research project,
- A well-founded statement for the funding for the proposed research stay
- Practicability of the planned activities within the scope of the research stay abroad,
- Quality, originality and topicality of the current research project (e.g., thesis) in relation to which the requested research stay abroad is to take place,
- Meaningfulness/significance of the letter of support issued by the first academic supervisor,
- Transparent budget and cost efficiency.

Final Report

On completion of a research stay abroad, an activity and financial accountability report is to be submitted for the attention of the Vice-Rectorate Development by the person being supported, with inclusion of the competent organizational unit (institute). The report must be signed by the person being supported and the first academic supervisor. An appropriate reporting form will be made available by the Vice-Rectorate Development after completion of the research stay.