

Guidelines on the funding instrument UniBE Doc.Mobility

06. July 2023

General information and principles

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) has ended with its Doc.Mobility funding program, providing doctoral students with grants for a research stay abroad (last call 9.1.2020). From now, the SNSF will only fund stays abroad by doctoral students who are already employed in an SNSF project (called [mobility grants](#)).

For this reason, the University of Bern has created the funding instrument [UniBE Doc.Mobility](#) in order to enable all doctoral students at the University of Bern, in principle, have the opportunity to complete a research stay abroad.

As a matter of principle, a Doc.Mobility funding at the end of an employment as a doctoral student or assistant IIII at the University of Bern cannot lead to its extension, as this would circumvent the maximum duration of employment.

Financial questions and employment conditions for the time of the mobility stay (especially in the 3rd/4th year of the doctorate and in case of additional employment) must be clarified with the supervisors **in advance**, since the amount granted always corresponds to the salary for doctoral students in the 2nd year, regardless of the previous duration of studies. In principle, current contracts should not be touched and any difference should be covered by the institute.

It is also advisable to obtain information from your health insurance company about insurance coverage abroad and to clarify visa conditions at an early stage.

Persons eligible to submit an application for UniBE Doc.Mobility

All doctoral students with or without an employment at the University of Bern, who at the time of submitting the application for UniBE Doc.Mobility have been enrolled at the University of Bern for at least twelve months, are entitled to submit an application. Exceptions are possible in justified cases (cf. Art. 3 of the regulations of UniBE Doc.Mobility).

UniBE Doc.Mobility is open to all doctoral students of all disciplines at the University of Bern. The requirement is a doctorate in research, i.e. aiming for a Dr.phil., PhD or MD PhD. Doctoral students usually not entitled to apply are those aiming for a Dr.med., Dr.med.dent. or Dr.med.vet., since in most cases the requirements for a research stay of several months at a research institution abroad are not met. Exceptions are possible in justified cases.

Host institution

The host institution is a research institution abroad (not just universities, but also libraries, research institutes etc.). The host institution may not be located in the applicant's country of origin and may not be the place of education (place of study). Exceptions, usually with an scientific justification, are possible (cf. Art. 5 of the regulations of UniBE Doc.Mobility).

The letter(s) of confirmation and support from the host institution must have an official letterhead and an original signature from a person in charge of the institute or the visiting professor. These declarations can be summarized in one letter, or two separate letters can be submitted (confirmation institute / support of host professor).

The confirmation by the host institute must state that the necessary infrastructure is available for the entire stay (with indication of the start and end dates) and that supervision by the host professor is guaranteed. It must also be stated here that all ethical and legal regulations are respected (and, if necessary, confirmed in separate documents) in the case of research re- quiring approval and registration.

Make sure to clarify the conditions at the host institute as early as possible. Please note that the University of Bern does not cover any overhead costs while you are staying abroad and does not finance employment at the host institute. If needed, it should be checked whether an "hosting agreement for volunteer researcher" can / must be signed (this particularly applies to France). In some cases, it can be useful to obtain the status of a visiting researcher. Being employed at the University of Bern can also be used to prove that sufficient accident, medical and liability insurance cover is available.

Documents for the application

In addition to the completed application form, the following documents must be submitted (cf. Art. 10 of the regulations of UniBE Doc.Mobility):

- Details on the doctoral student (including Curriculum Vitae, a list of academic achievements to date and a career plan). The format of the CV and academic achievements follows the specifications which are listed below.
- In addition, a SciCV is required as specified by the SNSF ([link](#) to information and instructions);
- Research plan for the stay abroad.
- The letter(s) of confirmation and support from the host institute which is written and
- (co-)signed by a person scientifically responsible for the project (usually the supervising person at the host institute).
- Confirmation letter and letter of reference from the main supervisor at the University of Bern as well as a second supervisor/collaborator.
- Doctoral agreement.
- If applicable:
justified applications for exemption if
 - enrolled for less than 12 months for doctoral studies at UNIBE, see Art. 3 of the regulations

- reduction of the requested research stay (< 12 months), see Article 4 of the regulations

The following specifications apply to the individual documents:

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Curriculum Vitae (CV) and most important academic achievements

The CV (incl. the most important academic achievements), together with the research output, must not exceed three pages.

The CV has the following structure (only relevant points should be included):

1. Information on the person, incl. researcher ID (e.g. OrCID, ResearcherID, Google Scholar ID)
2. Degree: incl. information on when the doctorate was started. Applicants with a medical degree must provide the date of the state exam and the MD.
3. Previous employment incl. current position with the name of the supervisor.
4. Tasks within the institution
5. Approved projects
6. Supervision of students (summarily)
7. Teaching (summarily)
8. Activity on panels, boards, etc. and individual academic expert activity
9. Active membership in academic societies
10. Organization of conferences, congresses etc.
11. Prizes, awards, grants
12. Personal skills (e.g. languages, digital competencies)
13. Interruptions to your career (which had a significant impact on academic work, e.g. absences due to illness, family obligations etc.)

Research output

The research output is used in the selection process to be able to assess the academic productivity in relation to the proposed project. The list is drawn up in accordance with the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) to which the University of Bern is committed. In publications, the name of the applicant must be highlighted (e.g. bold or underlined, abbreviations such as “et al.” are not admissible). Depending on the field of research, the position of the applicant in the authorship of a publication can give an indication of their academic contribution (see also: [Swiss academies of arts and sciences: Authorship in scientific publications](#)).

The list of research output must be structured as follows (only points which are relevant should be listed):

1. Publications in international, peer-reviewed scientific journals
2. Peer-reviewed books and monographs
3. Peer-reviewed conference contributions
4. Contributions to books
5. Patents and licenses
6. Contributions at international conferences (e.g. presentations, posters)
7. PR work (e.g. public commitment to academia, academic communication, academic art)
8. General contributions to academia (e.g. founder of an academic network, leader of a research trip, etc.)

9. Other applicable results (e.g. maps, methods, prototypes, software, databases, design etc.)
10. Unpublished articles

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Career plan

The career plan must not exceed one page, there are no formal requirements. Briefly describe your past professional achievements and focus on your medium- and long-term career goals. Please also confirm that you intend to continue at the University of Bern and complete your doctorate there after receiving a mobility grant.

Research plan

The research plan must not exceed 10 pages and 40,000 characters (incl. spaces) (minimum font size 10, e.g. Arial, Helvetica, line spacing 1.5). Title, summary, footnotes, illustrations, formulas, tables (including a possible table of contents), but not the bibliography are included in these limits. Appendices are not allowed. The research plan has to be written in either German or English.

The research plan must have the following structure:

1. Summary of the research plan (max. 1 page, with justification of the project, based on the general state of knowledge in the field, general research question, specific objectives if applicable, research methods, expected results)
2. Research plan
 - State of research in the field (with reference to the most important publications, presentation of previous findings, important ongoing research work in Switzerland and abroad, and research needs as a basis for the planned research project)
 - Status of own research (taking into consideration whether it is a new project or a continuing project)
 - Detailed research plan (what concrete objectives do you want to achieve in the period of funding, e.g. description of the experiments, characterization of the sources or data sets, which methods are used, are there or should there be any alternative strategies)
 - Schedule and milestones (e.g. table or Gantt chart with milestones)
 - Reasons for the choice of the research institution
 - Relevance and impact of the research project (possible expected impact on the research field, how should the results be made public, is there also a non-academic significance?)
 - Relevance for personal career development (what impact will / should the project have on your career?)
3. Bibliography

Budget for expenses

Expenses totaling a maximum of CHF 5000 may be requested. The following guidelines apply:

- Max. 2000 CHF for outward and return travel, whereby attention must be paid to cost-conscious travel planning. The UniBE guidelines for sustainable travel apply ([link](#)).
- Max. 2000 CHF for research costs
- Max. 2000 CHF for other expenses.

A meaningful budget must be prepared for all expenses. The research committee decides which expenses can be covered and to what extent.

Evaluation

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The evaluation of applications submitted in time and in the correct form is carried out by the [Research Commission](#) of the University of Bern. There is no entitlement for support and the annually fixed funds for UniBE Doc.Mobility are limited.

The Research Commission evaluates the applications in a dual-review principle in accordance with the criteria laid down in the regulations (cf. Art. 9); the final decision is made by the entire Commission. The applicant can be asked to give a short presentation.

In its evaluation, the Commission takes the following criteria into consideration:

- the quality, originality, and topicality of the research project to be carried out during the research stay
- scientific track record of the applicant to date
- the prospects of achieving the goals set at the host institute
- the personal aptitude of the applicant:
 - to successfully complete the doctorate after the stay abroad
 - and the prospect of pursuing a scientific career
- the quality of the intended research location, in particular the working conditions and professional supervision and continuing education opportunities there, as well as the expected benefit of the mobility.

The Research Commission can ask the applicant to give a short presentation. The evaluation procedure usually takes max. three months. A negative decision is justified in brief. In the case of a resubmission (which is possible once), reference must be made to the rejection points.

Start of the mobility grant and procedural aspects

The stay abroad can start at the earliest three months after the application deadline (Please note that in the case of a stay overseas, the visa process can take longer than that.). It is also a requirement that, if the research project is subject to approval or registration, confirmation needs to be provided by the host institution that all legal and ethical regulations will be complied with.

The stay abroad is organized as an employment as a doctoral student at the University of Bern but with a place of work abroad. The funding corresponds to the salary of doctoral students in their second year. The corresponding salary rates are [published](#) by the Human Resources Office (this website can only be visited with a Campus login). The employment is officially handled by the institute of the first supervisor at the University of Bern; this institute is responsible for initiating the necessary administrative measures for the employment.

The employment includes, in particular, the following (cf. Art. 12 of the regulations of UniBE Doc.Mobility):

- Entitlement to paid maternity or paternity leave in accordance with the applicable cantonal legislation during the stay abroad.
- Appropriate increase of the contribution or of the duration of the period of entitlement in the case of illness or accident during the stay abroad upon appropriate request, if the academic objectives pursued with the research stay cannot otherwise be achieved.

- Insurance during the stay abroad in accordance with the applicable employment conditions of the University of Bern (social security contributions, liability insurance, accident insurance, daily sickness benefits insurance).
- Entitlement to family allowance in accordance with applicable cantonal legislation.
- Possibility of extending the stay abroad in the case of maternity, military or civilian service as well as civil defense upon appropriate request.

In all other respects, the provisions of the University Law and its ordinance as well as the Personnel Law of the Canton of Bern and its ordinance shall apply. All decrees of the University and Personnel Law can be found in the [Legal Collection](#) (in German only) on the homepage of the University of Bern.

For doctoral students from third countries, it should be noted that before returning to Switzerland after the mobility stay, a new application for work and residence permit must be submitted according to the usual process, because for persons from third countries the residence permit usually expires after 6 months (information is available from the Human Resources Department of the University of Bern, Coordination of Work Permits: kab.pers@unibe.ch).

For the financial means of Doc.Mobility, a separate third-party account must be opened at UniBE so that the spoken amount can be transferred to the institute for the payment of the salary.

Further administrative information and tips will be provided at a later point in time or clarified for individual cases.

Cancellation of the mobility stay or premature termination

If the supported person renounces the mobility stay or if he/she has to terminate his/her research work prematurely, he/she has to inform the responsible offices in the Vice Rectorate Research immediately in writing, stating the reasons.

Final report

At the end of the stay abroad, the doctoral student writes a final report involving the host institution abroad and the responsible organizational unit of the University of Bern and submits it to the Vice-Rectorate Research. The corresponding form is provided by the Research Commission Administrative Office.