

Bern, 13.9.2023

## Guidelines UniBE Venture Fellowship

### 1. Fellowship objectives

The UniBE Venture Fellowship aims to encourage entrepreneurial ventures and promote an entrepreneurial culture at the University of Bern, the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, and the University Hospital of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (UPD) by supporting individuals who facilitate the translation of cutting-edge research into new products or services.

Specifically, the program provides financial support allowing the Fellow to:

- further develop application-focused research to validate the Proof-of-Concept and determine the potential for commercialization with the aim to start her/his own business, and
- acquire entrepreneurial skills and develop a relevant network.

### 2. Eligibility criteria

Fellows must have the following qualifications.

- MA and PhD applicants as well as applicants with a medical degree can submit their application up to 6 months before and no later than 12 months after the graduation date.
- Postdoctoral applicants, Assistant Physicians, and scientific staff of the University and the Inselspital are also eligible to apply but would need to end the current employment contract before starting the Venture Fellowship<sup>1</sup>.
- Basic research projects are not eligible.
- The candidate must be supported and hosted by a Research Group Head at the University of Bern, the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, or the University Hospital of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (UPD), which confirms that the Fellow receives access to the necessary infrastructure.
- Applicants have not yet founded the company.

Where the applicant's initial proposal has been rejected, he/she may re-submit a proposal on the basis that substantial improvements have been made. Candidates may not apply more than twice for the same project. On specific request or recommendation, applications of individuals who have not yet been affiliated with the University of Bern, the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, or the UPD can be accepted on a case-to-case basis provided they are supported by a Research Group Leader of either institution.

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<sup>1</sup> See also 6.3. Employment conditions.

The candidate must be able to start the Fellowship within six months of being awarded the grant. Under this Fellowship program, there is no obligation to award a Fellowship grant to any person or entity.

### 3. Funding sources and scope of research

The Fellowships are funded jointly by the Vice-Rectorate Research of the University of Bern (2 Fellowships per year) as well as the ARTORG Center for Biomedical Engineering Research and the Direktion für Lehre und Forschung (DLF) of the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital (each funding 1 Fellowship per year).

### 4. Application process

#### 4.1. Application form

The applicant will fill in the application form in English, which covers the following aspects:

- A **short summary** of the relevance of the proposed solution and innovation potential, the activities undertaken during the fellowship, and the market potential.
- A short **motivation statement**, incl. motivation for undertaking entrepreneurial project, long-term career goals, etc.
- A detailed **description of the idea**, which is based on the research conducted primarily at the University of Bern, the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, or the UPD. The description should put particular focus on:
  - what problem the proposed solution or technology is addressing,
  - what the innovative aspect of the product/service is,
  - detailed information about the envisioned business plan (market need and USP),
  - technical and/or market-relevant feasibility studies, IP situation (including a basic assessment of “Freedom-to-Operate”),
  - potential or current partner organizations.
- A **project plan** of the main activities during the Fellowship, incl. milestones, deliverables and expected final results.
- Information related to **intellectual property** protection (also see point 4.3).
- A detailed **project budget**, including the use of the grant (salary<sup>2</sup>, consumables, etc.).
- Explanation of any **potential conflicts of interests** or inform about other factors that might adversely affect his/her Fellowship.

#### 4.2. Annexe

- A complete **Curriculum Vitae**.
- A **letter of support issued by the Research Group Head**, stating the following:

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<sup>2</sup> Budgets must consider employment conditions as defined in Chapter 6.3.

- Motivation to support the applicant in pursuing the Fellowship.
- Confirmation that the Institute/Department will provide to the Fellow the necessary infrastructure to conduct the research for the entire duration of the Fellowship.
- Confirmation that the provisions in the Guidelines, in particular with respect to financial responsibility and accountability have been acknowledged.

#### **4.3. Basic intellectual property assessment**

Prior to the UniBE Venture Fellowships, applicants are required to disclose the invention/idea to Unitectra (with reference to the UniBE Venture Fellowship Application) and have a meeting with the relevant Technology Transfer Manager for an initial assessment of the IP protectability ([Unitectra website](#)).

### **5. Evaluation process**

#### **5.1. Formal evaluation**

The Innovation Office will check whether the submitted applications are complete and meet the eligibility criteria (see section 2 above). Applications that are incomplete or do not meet the criteria will be rejected directly by the Innovation Office.

#### **5.2. Evaluation criteria**

The application will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

##### **Criteria 1: Quality of research project and innovation potential**

- Research project plan is clear, coherent, well structured, (within the given timeline) feasible and with realistic milestones,
- Problem statement is relevant and clear,
- Great innovation potential in terms of novelty,
- Questions related to intellectual property rights are clarified or addressed (basic Freedom-to-Operate analysis is available).

##### **Criteria 2: Market and Product**

- Applicant presents sizable and realistic market potential and important market growth/trends,
- Product creates a positive impact for society,
- Proposed solution and value-proposition is able to distinguish itself clearly from the competition (USP),
- Customer needs/demands can be demonstrated.

##### **Criteria 3: Business Model**

The application presents a clear and sustainable business model, indicating aspects such as

- planned revenue model,
- scalability of proposed solution,
- possible distribution channels,
- resource requirements and
- existing or planned partnerships.

## **Criteria 4: Entrepreneurial skills/attitude and team**

The applicant

- demonstrates high entrepreneurial attitude, relevant skills, and strong personal motivation,
- has some entrepreneurial experience or participated in entrepreneurial trainings
- receives strong and relevant support from host department, research group heads and other relevant supporters/advisors.

### **5.3. Evaluation Committee**

The Evaluation Committee is composed of representatives from the following institutions:

- Inselspital, Bern University Hospital
- ARTORG, University of Bern
- Innovation Office, University of Bern
- 2-3 UniBE related experts or ecosystem representative (i.e. UniBE spin-off founders, foundation, investors, industry representatives etc.)

The supporting partner institution Unictetra and Be-Advanced will assist the evaluation process by providing inputs and answer questions from their respective perspective.

### **5.4. Pre-Selection**

The Evaluation Committee will make a pre-selection based on the written applications. Additional inputs from subject matter experts may be requested.

### **5.5. Pitch and Final Selection**

The applicants who successfully passed the pre-selection will be invited for an interview (short pitch and Q&A) of 15min with the panel, which is composed of the Evaluation Committee, the Vice-Rector for Research and representatives of the supporting partner institutions (Unictetra, Be-Advanced). Based on the recommendation of the committee, the Vice-Rector for Research will take the final decision.

## **6. Fellowship Features**

### **6.1. Contact point and review meetings**

The Innovation Office will be the primary contact point for the Fellow to support and guide him/her in the process. In the first week of the Fellowship, a kick-off meeting with the Innovation Office's Case Manager will take place to, among other aspects, formally agree on milestones, training program, and schedule for further review meetings.

### **6.2. Funding**

The Fellowship includes a funding budget of CHF 100'000.-, which must not be exceeded. The employment is based – in principle - on an 80% employment (see Point 6.3.), the Fellowship typically lasts 12 months<sup>3</sup>. The Fellowship can be extended by a maximum of 6 months, provided that sufficient additional budget (third-party funds or from the institute's budget) is available. Any extension must be pre-approved by the Innovation Office and the Research Group Head.

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<sup>3</sup> As the funding of CHF 100'000.- must not be exceeded, the Fellowship might be shortened if necessary. A 100% employment contract is possible, if additional salary costs – according to Point 6.3. - and other necessary research expenditures (see Point 7.2.) can be covered with the Fellowship.

The Fellowship amount covers:

- Salary costs, including social security contributions of the employer, based on the salary categories of the University of Bern for members of scientific staff,
- Expenses for recommended Entrepreneur Training sessions,
- Expenses for patent searches as academic institution at IGE<sup>4</sup>
- Project costs (consumables, machines, etc.), and
- Costs for project-related travels and networking events.

The Fellow is given the role of the budget manager (owner of External Funds (Drittmittel) Account). He/She can freely dispose of the project funds (within the framework defined above) and is accountable for spending the money in a responsible and effective way. In this respect, the Fellow provides to the Research Group Head, who remains responsible to cover any overspending of the project budget, an extract of the expenditures on a regular basis. At the beginning of the Fellowship, the Fellow and the Group Research Head agree on the specific mechanisms and processes with respect to accountability and budget discipline.

The amount will be transferred by the Innovation Office on a separate third-party fund account dedicated specifically to the project. Any remaining amount at the end of the Fellowship will have to be transferred back to the Innovation Office. The Innovation Office can decide to transfer the amount in several installments.

In general, the Fellowship grant can be complemented with project grants from other organizations that support applied research and commercialization, but not with grants that support basic research. With respect to BRIDGE Proof-of-Concept (PoC) grants, the following applies:

- If the researcher submits the same application in parallel to the UniBE Venture Fellowship and the BRIDGE PoC program, he/she needs to indicate it on the Venture Fellowship application form. If both grant applications are successful, the researcher needs to inform the Innovation Office, which one of the two grants he/she accepts.
- If *during* the Fellowship, the Venture Fellow applies for and is granted a BRIDGE PoC grant, he/she can make a request to the Innovation Office to use the remaining amount of the Venture Fellowship to pay for other expenses, other than his/her own salary.

Any assets and materials, such as IT equipment, phones, software, machines, and other items purchased with the Venture Fellowship grant, is property of the University of Bern. If the Venture Fellow wishes to purchase used items at the end of Fellowship, he/she is to negotiate the terms with the responsible representative of the institute.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the Innovation Office has a partnership with the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI), according to which expenses for patent searches may be covered to a certain extent.

### **6.3. Employment conditions**

The Fellow will be hired as a member of scientific staff (Wissenschaftliche\*r Mitarbeiter\*in) typically on an 80% basis (0.8 FTE), with a probationary period of six months. With respect to the salary grade, the Fellow will be classified according to one of the following categories:

- Candidate with Master diploma<sup>5</sup>: WisMa<sup>6</sup> VI, GK 18 (approx. CHF 80'000.- + Social Security Contributions)
- Candidate with PhD diploma: WisMa IV, GK 20 (approx. CHF 92'000.- + Social Security Contributions)
- Candidate with at least 2 years Postdoc experience: WisMa III, GK 21 (approx. 105'000.- + Social Security Contributions)

To determine the exact yearly salary and costs, the Human Resources Office of the University of Bern can provide you with an exact estimate. A request with your CV and the reference “Application for Venture Fellowship” can be sent to [info.pers@unibe.ch](mailto:info.pers@unibe.ch). Please count 5 working days for an estimate. For an approximate estimation of the salary, the following online tool could be used: <https://gehaltsberechnung.unibe.ch/gehaltsberechnungstool/>

### **6.4. Milestones**

The milestones and deliverables defined in the accepted proposal will be reviewed and, if necessary, adapted in the kick-off meeting with the Innovation Office Case manager and potentially other involved stakeholders (i.e. Research Group Head, Coach, etc.). The document “Defining Milestones for the UniBE Venture Fellowship” offers further details on how to formulate realistic and useful milestones. The Fellow meets with the Innovation Office on a regular basis to review the progress and achievements, charting the milestones reached and discuss any further support needed.

### **6.5. Infrastructure**

The infrastructure will be provided by the Research Group Head, who confirms in the Letter of Support that access to the necessary infrastructure is without cost to the Fellow.

### **6.6. Intellectual Property**

The University of Bern owns all the rights to the outcomes of the research project during the course of the Fellowship, and possible related intellectual property rights. Any commercialization of research results and property rights are subject to licensing agreements with the University of Bern, represented in the respective negotiations by Unitetra. At the beginning of the Fellowship, a meeting between the Fellow and Unitetra, which is responsible for the protection and licensing of research results produced at the University, will be arranged.

### **6.7. Research integrity and Spin-off regulations**

The UniBE Venture Fellow adheres to the principles of scientific integrity<sup>7</sup> and the Guidelines from the Executive Board for the establishment of spin-off companies at the University of Bern (April 13, 2021).

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<sup>5</sup> Including applicants with a medical degree

<sup>6</sup> Wissenschaftliche\*r Mitarbeiter\*in

<sup>7</sup> See in particular the University of Bern’s *Regulations concerning scientific integrity*, dated March 27, 2007.

### **6.8. Training**

In discussion with the Fellow, the Innovation Office will suggest potential training programs, if needed. The primary partners for the training programs are the Entrepreneurship Center of the University of Bern, offering the Business Concept course (Innosuisse Module 2), and the sitem-insel School (sitem Center for Translational Medicine and Biomedical Entrepreneurship) offering education programs in translational medicine. If not specified otherwise, the potential costs for the training program will need to be covered by the Fellowship grant,

### **6.9. Coaching**

The Venture Fellow will be connected with Be-Advanced regarding support by Be-Advanced Coaches and, possibly, participating in the Be-Advanced Challenge program. Furthermore, depending on the needs and the progress of the Venture Fellowship project, the Fellow may be connected with the Innovation Office's network of industry experts.

### **6.10. Networking**

The Fellow is required to participate in relevant networking events. While the Innovation Office will also make some suggestions, it is the Fellow's responsibility to identify relevant events and platforms to meet with potential experts, partners, investors and other key players. Costs are to be covered by the Fellowship.

### **6.11. Communication**

The UniBE Venture Fellow is requested to mention and refer to the Fellowship program in all her/his pitches and communication material and participate in any outreach activities of the Venture Fellowship program.

### **6.12. Final Evaluation and presentation of results**

Towards the completion of the Fellowship, the Fellow will have a concluding meeting with the Innovation Office case manager for a final evaluation of the milestones. Furthermore, a presentation of the progress made, and the results gained in the process of the fellowship to a selected panel of stakeholders may be envisaged.

### **6.13. Post-Fellowship & Certificate**

Upon completion of the Fellowship, the Fellow will receive a certificate of successful completion, signed by the Vice-Rector for Research.

It is expected that the Fellow further promotes the program in his/her network, share his/her learnings with future Fellows and other entrepreneurial scientists at the University of Bern, the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, and the UPD, and contributes to building a strong entrepreneurial community in Bern.