

Guidelines on the funding instrument UniBE Doc.Mobility

18.12.20

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.

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 letters 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.

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 requiring approval and registration.

Make sure you clarify the conditions at the host institute as early as possible. Please note that the University of Bern does not cover any overhead costs where 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 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 of the SNSF;

- Research plan for the stay abroad;
- The letters 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;
- Doctoral agreement.

The following specifications apply to the individual documents:

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 (likewise, only the 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

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 long (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
 - 2.1 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)
 - 2.2 Status of own research (taking into consideration whether it is a new project or a continuing project)
 - 2.3 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)
 - 2.4 Schedule and milestones (e.g. table or Gantt chart with milestones)
 - 2.5 Reasons for the choice of the research institution
 - 2.6 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?)
 - 2.7 Relevance for personal career development (what impact will / should the project have on your career?)
3. Bibliography

Evaluation

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 the annually fixed funds for UniBE Doc.Mobility are limited.

The Research Commission evaluates the applications in a dual-review principle at least 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 profit of 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 expiry of 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 through 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.

In the case of doctoral students from third countries, it should be noted that before returning to Switzerland after the stay abroad, a new application for a work and residence permit must be submitted in the usual manner (information can be obtained from the Human Resources Office of the University of Bern) because for persons from third countries the residence permit is usually only valid for six months.

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

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 Vice-Rectorate Research.