

Bern, 25.10.2021

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 and the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital 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 and Assistant Physicians are also eligible to apply but would need to end the current employment contract before starting the Venture Fellowship¹.
- Basic research projects are not eligible.
- The candidate must be supported and hosted by a Research Group Head at the University of Bern or the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, who confirms that the Fellow receives access to the necessary infrastructure.

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 or the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, can be accepted on a case-to-case basis provided they are supported by a Research Group Leader of either institutions.

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.

¹ See also 6.3. Employment conditions.

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).

While the Fellowships by the Vice-Rectorate Research is open to all disciplines, the Fellowship funded by ARTORG is dedicated to MedTech-related projects, and the Fellowship funded by the Inselspital is dedicated to projects related to the Campus Inselspital.

4. Application process

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 or the Inselspital, Bern University Hospital. 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.
- A **project budget**, including the use of the grant (salary², consumables, etc.).
- Explanation of any **potential conflicts of interests** or inform about other factors that might adversely affect his/her fellowship.

The following documents must be added to the Application form:

- A complete **Curriculum Vitae**.
- A **letter of support issued by the Research Group Head**, stating the following:
 - Motivation to support the applicant in pursuing the Fellowship.

² Budgets must consider employment conditions as defined in Chapter 6.3.

- 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.

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:

- 1) Quality of research project
 - a. Scientific excellence
 - b. High innovation potential (novelty of technology)
- 2) Business aspects: Implementation and Business relevance
 - a. Feasibility (incl. IP aspects, Business model)
 - b. Market potential and/or potential to create positive impact for society
- 3) Entrepreneurial qualifications of applicant
 - a. High entrepreneurial attitude and personal motivation
 - b. Composition and diversity of actual or proposed team members

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
- 1-2 UniBE related experts (i.e. UniBE spin-off founders)
- 1 startup ecosystem representative (foundation, investors, industry representative etc.)

Unitectra will assist the Evaluation process by providing inputs and answer questions from the perspective of IP and commercialization potential.

5.4. Pre-Selection

The Evaluation Committee will make a pre-selection based on the written applications. If the Committee Members do not have the relevant subject matter expertise, 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 in total 15min with the panel, which is composed of the Evaluation Committee and the Vice-Rector for Research. Based on the recommendation of the committee, the Vice-Rector for Research will take the final decision.

5.6. Timeline

1 November 2021	Launch of Call for Proposals
12 December '21	Submission Deadline
Mid-January '22	Selection Committee determines pre-Selection
Week of 24 January '22 (tbc)	Pitch session with finalists

6. Fellowship Features

6.1. Contact point and review meetings

The Innovation Office will be the primary contact point for the Fellow to support him/her in the process. In the first week of the Fellowship, a kick-off meeting 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. Based on an 80% employment contract (see Point 6.3.), the Fellowship lasts 12 months.³ The Fellowship can be extended by a maximum of 6 months, provided sufficient additional third-party budget is available. Any extension must be pre-approved by the Innovation Office and the Research Group Head.

The Fellowship amount covers:

- Salary costs, including social security contributions, 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

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

- 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 but 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. In 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 in several installments 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 Fellowship grant can be complemented with grants from other organizations that support applied research and commercialization, including Innosuisse, Bridge, Gebert Rűf, etc. However, the Fellowship may not be complemented with grants that support basic research, such as SNF grants.

6.3. Employment conditions

The Fellow will be hired as a member of scientific staff (Wissenschaftliche*r Mitarbeiter*in) 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 diploma⁴: WisMa⁵ 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 . Please count 5 working days for an estimate.

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 and the Mentor. 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.

⁴ Including applicants with a medical degree

⁵ Wissenschaftliche*r Mitarbeiter*in

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 Unitectra. In the beginning of the Fellowship, a meeting between the Fellow and Unitectra, which is responsible for the protection and licensing of research results produced at the University, will be arranged.

6.7. Training

In discussion with the Fellow, the Innovation Office will suggest potential training programs if needed. In principle, the potential costs for the training program will be covered by the Fellowship grant.

6.8. Mentoring and Coaching

After an initial meeting between the Innovation Office and the Fellow, a Mentor will be assigned to the Fellow. For that purpose, the Innovation Office will suggest possible mentors with the relevant background.

6.9. Networking

The Fellow will be encouraged to participate in relevant networking events. Where this incurs a cost, the Fellow may request the Innovation Office to cover this. The Innovation Office will also suggest to the Fellow relevant networking opportunities.

6.10. Final Report and Review Meeting

Towards the completion of the Fellowship, the Fellow will submit a final report. The final report will be subject to a final review meeting with the Innovation Office and, if requested, other supporting divisions (i.e. Research Group Head, Mentor, Unitectra).

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