



EXCELLENCE FELLOWSHIP GUIDELINES

MASTER Students



Aerial view EPFL Campus
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1. FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

EPFL offers a limited number of fellowships at master's level to students with outstanding academic records. Anyone applying to an EPFL master's program is eligible.

The selection of candidates and the granting of the fellowships are based on the evaluation of the academic records of the candidates. The fellowship Committee, comprising members of the EPFL sections representatives of the Associate Vice-Presidencies for Student Affairs and Outreach as well as for Education and representatives from other school services, selects the candidates. The selection process is very competitive, only about 3% of the master students receive such financial support.

Some fellowships are funded by EPFL directly while others are funded through partnerships with foundations or private companies.

These guidelines aim at providing all necessary details for EPFL excellence fellowship holders to prepare for their master's and to meet performance expectations.

For any queries or clarification, please contact master.fellowship@epfl.ch.

2. APPLICATION & SELECTION

2.1. Eligibility

Anyone applying to an EPFL master's program is eligible. EPFL grants a limited number of fellowships to the most deserving candidates based on their academic records.

Cumulating this fellowship with other substantial scholarships is not possible. Candidates are required to declare all the scholarships they receive during their master's (see section 4.2).

If the master at EPFL is a second master's degree, candidates are not eligible for an excellence fellowship.

2.2. Fellowship amount and benefits

- CHF 10'000 per semester
- Reservation of a student room in a student residence (for "external" candidates only)
- A certificate of excellence (at the end of the master's program)

Fellowship holders will be responsible to cover **all expenses** on their own (tuition fees, rents, etc.).

The fellowship will be paid :

- provided that fellowship holders are registered as regular EPFL students (see section 4.6)
- for a maximum of 4 semesters (3 for a 90-credit Master's program). No extension is possible, even in case of a minor or for any other reason that might extend the duration of studies.

If there is a paid internship or Master's project (see section 4.4), only 3 payments will be possible (2 for a 90-credit Master programme), provided that the renewal criteria are met at the end of the 1st year (see section 3.1).

2.3. How to apply?

2.3.1. External candidates (*Bachelor degree from an university abroad*)

They should apply via the same online form than their application to a master's program by **March 31** or **December 15** (there is a box to tick indicating that the candidates profile should also be considered for an excellence fellowship).

There are no specific documents to be provided in addition to [those required](#) for the admission.

2.3.2. Internal candidates (*Bachelor degree earned at EPFL / same field of study*)

Sections might contact students to ask if they want to submit an application for an excellence fellowship. Students can also submit an application to their section by **January 31** or **April 30**.

The application should contain:

- a CV
- a motivation letter
- 2 recommendation letters from professors familiar with students' work and achievements
- a transcript of all grades earned at EPFL

Recommendation letters must be submitted directly by referees to master.fellowship@epfl.ch.

2.3.3. Internal candidates (*Bachelor degree earned at EPFL / another field of study*)

Sections might contact students to ask if they want to submit an application for an excellence fellowship. Students should apply by providing the [required documents](#) via the admission form to a master degree (available on IS-Academia).

Two recommendation letters must be submitted directly by referees to master.fellowship@epfl.ch.

2.4. Selected & reserve candidates

After a first screening by the sections, the excellence fellowships Committee awards the fellowships. Selected candidates are notified at the beginning of April (December deadline) and mid of June (April deadline).

In order to receive the fellowship, students must confirm their intention of coming to EPFL for a master's degree within the requested deadline by using the link provided in the email «*Your application for a master's program at EPFL*» sent by the Registrar's Office.

In case of withdrawal or failure to reply, the fellowship is offered to the next candidate on the waiting list (reserve candidate) who has a new deadline to confirm his/her matriculation.

Once the matriculation confirmed, an attestation will be sent and will allow fellowship holders to start handling the administrative formalities.

2.5. Rejected fellowship applications

Unsuccessful fellowship applicants cannot appeal against the decision of the committee, nor will the committee review refused applications. Students who received an e-mail stating they were not awarded a fellowship are not on the waiting list.

Students can re-apply for an excellence fellowship the following year if they decide to postpone their master's for a year. The procedure will be the same as for students applying for that year.

3. PAYMENT SCHEDULE & RENEWAL

Payment of the fellowship will take place at the beginning of each semester. Fellowships are paid on a Swiss bank or postal account (see section 6.3.).

As it might take some time to proceed to the first payment, fellowship holders should take money with them to cover expenses for the first month (see section 5.2.).

3.1. Renewal

The renewal and payment of the fellowship for a second year of studies is conditional upon excellent academic performance.

At the end of the first MA year, once the results are published, fellowships are renewed provided that fellowship holders have:

1. reached at least the **average of 5.0** (6 = max / 4 = pass). The average is weighted with the ECTS credits of each course. All numerical grades from all chosen courses and exams during the first MA year, count for the average.
2. earned at least **50 credits** (credits for language courses do not count, neither do the credits for the industrial internship completed over the summer break).

There will be no exceptions for students who have not reached their average or number of credits.

If the fellowship is:

- Renewed: payments will be either for 1 or 2 semesters, depending on a paid internship/master's project (see section 4.4) and the number of credits of the master's program (see section 2.2).
- Not renewed: the amount received during the first year does not have to be reimbursed.

4. RULES

4.1. Deferment of fellowship

Fellowship holders who decide to defer or postpone their admission at EPFL, lose their excellence fellowship. They can apply for this fellowship scheme the following year. The procedure will be the same as for all students applying for that year.

4.2. Other scholarships or position as research scholar

Other substantial scholarship or funding programs financed by EPFL (ex. Research scholar) are not compatible with EPFL Excellence fellowships. Funding of up to CHF 6'000 per semester is however tolerated.

4.3. Employment

Fellowships will not be reduced or stopped if Excellence fellowship holders are working in Switzerland (see section 5.3.).

4.4. Paid internship or Master's project (in Switzerland or abroad)

If the cumulated salary exceeds CHF 6'000 (net), the payment of the fellowship will be stopped for one semester.

Students who are about to do a paid internship or a paid Master's project students are expected to inform the Excellence fellowship administration (master.fellowship@epfl.ch) as soon as they sign the internship agreement or contract.

Specific cases will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4.5. Double degree

In case of a double degree, the fellowship will only be paid during the semesters at EPFL (if the requirements for renewal are met).

4.6. Inability to study

In case of (un)expected event, students are expected to inform the Excellence fellowship administration (master.fellowship@epfl.ch) immediately:

- Sickness and pregnancy: if the excellence fellowship holder cannot continue to study and pass examinations, the excellence fellowship will be suspended.
- Army and civil service (for Swiss citizens who have an obligation to serve): the excellence fellowship will be suspended. It will resume upon return if the requirements for renewal are met.
- Personal motive: fellowship payment will be suspended for students who leave for a personal motive. Fellowship payment will be resumed upon return if the requirements for renewal are met.

5. **PREPARING FOR ARRIVAL IN LAUSANNE**

To organise students' arrival at EPFL as best as possible, an interactive checklist with information about every step to be taken, from insurances to course registration, is available. To activate this list please refer to the e-mail received upon matriculation.

5.1. **Visa procedure** ([web page](#))

Fellowships holders who need a visa for Switzerland, should be aware that the visa application must be submitted at least 3 months before the beginning of the academic year.

5.2. **Budget** ([web page](#))

The cost of living is high in Switzerland, around CHF 2'000 a month for a student.

5.3. **Employment** ([web page](#))

Working whilst studying is difficult. A students' typical weekly schedule may include up to:

- 32 hours of lectures, assignments and practical exercises
- 15 - 20 hours of preparation for courses (not including exam preparation)

EU students are allowed to work (with a work permit) up to 15 hours per week during the semester (full time during the semester break). Non-EU citizens are allowed to work 6 months after their arrival.

5.4. **Housing** ([web page](#))

Fellowship holders are given priority access to student housing. EPFL housing information will get in contact soon after the fellowship is confirmed.

A deposit, the equivalent of 1 to 3 rents, and the first rent must be paid before arrival.

5.5. **French course** ([web page](#))

Learning French is strongly recommended, as it will make life in Lausanne easier. EPFL offers a free of charge intensive French course for foreign students. This three weeks' course generally starts at the end of August.

5.6. **Insurance** ([web page](#))

Any person staying in Switzerland is legally obliged to get a healthcare insurance and an accident insurance scheme. The Agepoly (General Association of EPFL students) gives advice.

6. UPON ARRIVAL IN LAUSANNE

6.1. Welcome event

Excellence fellowship holders will be invited to a welcome session. This event takes place at the beginning of the academic year (early October) and allows students to get to know other fellowship holders.

6.2. Residence permit ([web page](#))

Fellowship holders must register within 14 days after arrival at the local Resident's registration office (*Contrôle des habitants*), which will issue a temporary residence document. This document is required for administrative purposes during the stay in Switzerland (i.e. bank account, phone contract, insurances, subscriptions, etc.).

6.3. Bank account

Fellowships are paid on a Swiss bank or postal account. Therefore, fellowship holders should open their own Swiss bank or postal account (of their choice) upon arrival in Switzerland. EPFL never pays a fellowship in cash, nor on a foreign bank account.

Early September, they will receive an email asking them to complete their IBAN in the IS-Academia profile. Payment will be made 10-15 days after this has been done but at the beginning of the semester at the earliest.

6.4. Taxation

Fellowships should be tax-free. This may however vary from canton to canton. For more information, please submit all tax queries concerning your fellowship to the [competent offices in Switzerland](#) or abroad.

CONTACTS

- General and academic queries: Student services desk student.services@epfl.ch
- Queries about the number and type of courses to choose (course content, approval of a specific study plan variation etc.): [program deputies or program secretaries](#)
- In case of inability to study (see section 4.6.): master.fellowship@epfl.ch
- General questions about the excellence fellowships program: master.fellowship@epfl.ch

Version: 09.12.2022