

# Regulations for the EPFL Doc.Mobility programme

## 1. General provisions

### 1.1 Purpose

<sup>1</sup> These regulations specify the conditions, the call and selection process as well as the rules for the use of Doc.Mobility grants from the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (hereafter: EPFL).

### 1.2 Description of the programme

<sup>1</sup> The Doc.Mobility programme is a programme jointly financed by Swissuniversities and EPFL that provides mobility grants to doctoral students who are not otherwise funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). By contributing to the costs of their stay in a foreign academic institution, this grant offers doctoral students the possibility to deepen their scientific knowledge, to develop their scientific network and to advance their PhD work.

<sup>2</sup> The selection process and logistics are handled by EPFL.

<sup>3</sup> The grants are aimed at doctoral students enrolled at EPFL who wish to improve their scientific and professional profile through a stay in a research entity abroad.

<sup>4</sup> The aim of a Doc.Mobility stay is in particular:

- a) to complete research experience, work on a publication, access to experimental equipment;
- b) to broaden the CV of doctoral students by giving them access to a highly reputable research team;
- c) to give PhD students the benefit of a culturally diversifying experience in a research and development environment;
- d) to acquire additional professional experience, with a particular focus on the acquisition of transversal or interpersonal skills.

<sup>5</sup> The grant is available to doctoral students in all disciplines represented at EPFL.

### 1.3 Start and duration of the fellowship

- <sup>1</sup> The EPFL Doc.Mobility grant is awarded for a minimum of six months and a maximum of twelve months<sup>i</sup>. No request for extension can be submitted, other than the conditions specified in point [5.3](#).
- <sup>2</sup> A division into stays of at least 3 months each is possible in exceptional cases and if special reasons are given. The reasons for splitting the stay may be as follows:
  - a) Research is facilitated: conditions of experimentation, calendar of the two laboratories involved, agenda of the referees and thesis director
  - b) The concept of the mobility stay is enhanced by the splitting of the stay: the doctoral student can better benefit from the stay in terms of training, acquisition of skills and immersion in the activities of the destination institution or the sending institution
  - c) Family commitments
- <sup>3</sup> The mobility grant cannot be awarded retroactively.
- <sup>4</sup> The research stay may start no earlier than three months after the deadline for submission and no later than twelve months after the date of the award decision.
- <sup>5</sup> In the event of a medical reason or force majeure, the doctoral student may contact the Doctoral School in writing in order to request a change in the start date of the stay by attaching supporting documents.

### 1.4 Research location abroad

- <sup>1</sup> The Doc.Mobility grant contributes financially to the research stay at a host institution abroad i.e. outside Switzerland.
- <sup>2</sup> The place of research must be different from the place of study prior to the doctorate (Bachelor, Master).
- <sup>3</sup> The host institution must not be in the doctoral student's country of origin or previous residence. Exceptions may be granted upon justified request, generally for scientific reasons.
- <sup>4</sup> The research visit must not be part of a joint thesis or doctoral partnership or joint doctoral programme.
- <sup>5</sup> The host institution must be a non-profit organisation.

## 2. Formal requirements

### 2.1 Personal requirements

- <sup>1</sup> Doctoral students from all disciplines may apply for a Doc.Mobility grant if they meet the following conditions:
  - a) They have been registered for at least twelve months as a doctoral student and are employed at EPFL at the date of the application deadline.
  - b) They have passed the candidacy exam at the time of the start of the mobility stay.

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<sup>i</sup> PhD Students from abroad must contact the competent cantonal authority for foreigners to ensure that their residence permit can be maintained during their stay outside Switzerland and must inform the same authority of their temporary departure from Switzerland.

- c) They are not in the last six months of their PhD studies. If they are in the first 6 months of their last year of studies they must prove that the number of ECTS required for the end of their PhD cursus will be met.
- d) They are not funded by a project of the Swiss National Research Foundation (SNSF).
- e) They are Swiss citizens, have a valid residence permit or a valid cross-border commuter permit, are married to or living in a registered partnership with a Swiss citizen.
- f) They confirm in writing their intention to continue their doctorate at EPFL after the mobility stay and to obtain the doctorate there.

<sup>2</sup> When intellectual property issues are to be considered, the thesis director, the director of the partner laboratory and the doctoral student sign an agreement.

<sup>3</sup> PhD students will be registered at EPFL during their mobility stay. Their existing doctoral employment contract at EPFL will remain in force, and they will continue to receive a salary during their stay abroad.<sup>ii</sup> Consequently, the Doc.Mobility grant consists of a complementary subsidy which is allocated in addition to the salary.

## 2.2 Objective requirements

- <sup>1</sup> Applications must comply with these regulations and contain all the required information and documents.
- <sup>2</sup> The required documents (see section [3.2](#) of these Regulations) and letters of reference are an integral part of the application. They must be submitted at the latest by the submission deadline.
- <sup>3</sup> Applications received after the deadline cannot be considered.
- <sup>4</sup> Applications should be submitted in English.

## 3. Application process

### 3.1 Deadlines and submission forms

- <sup>1</sup> There are two deadlines per year for the submission of applications. The deadlines are published on the [website of the Doctoral School](#).
- <sup>2</sup> Complete applications must be submitted by doctoral students in electronic format via the dedicated [Google Form](#) by the submission deadline.

### 3.2 Composition of the application file

- <sup>1</sup> Applications must contain the following documents:
  - a) a CV of two pages maximum;
  - b) the transcript of Doctoral School credits;

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<sup>ii</sup> The doctoral school cannot guarantee to doctoral students that their existing employment contract will remain in force and that they will continue to receive a salary if they have an external contract i.e. if the salary is not paid by EPFL. In this case, doctoral students must make the necessary arrangements in advance directly with their external employer.

- c) a project plan using the template provided;
- d) a copy of the last salary slip;
- e) a copy of any financial contribution received from other organisations or institutions related to their thesis;
- f) a letter of support (using template provided)
  - i. by thesis director
  - ii. by academic host abroad
  - iii. by academic institution abroad
- g) the partnership and/or family certificate, if applicable.

- <sup>2</sup> Applicants are responsible for the accuracy and veracity of the information contained in the documents they submit. In the event of a breach, the Doctoral School is entitled to refuse, suspend and/or revoke the award of the mobility grant.
- <sup>3</sup> The Doctoral School may ask the applicants for any additional information and documents considered useful and pertinent to its decision on the application.
- <sup>4</sup> A Swiss delivery address must be mentioned in the application to which official messages may validly be sent in the course of the evaluation procedure and the mobility fellowship.

### 3.3 Non-consideration and re-submission

- <sup>1</sup> The Doctoral School will not consider applications that are incomplete, do not meet the admission requirements or are submitted after the deadline.
- <sup>2</sup> If an application has been rejected, doctoral candidates may apply for a second time for a Doc.Mobility grant.

### 3.4 Evaluation procedure

- <sup>1</sup> Applications for the EPFL Doc.Mobility grant will be formally checked by the Doctoral School. If the applications meet the formal requirements, they will be examined scientifically by the selection committee on three aspects that together define the added value of the mobility stay for research: the quality of the scientific project, the motivation of the applicant and the quality of the host institution.
- <sup>2</sup> The selection committee is composed of:
  - a) one subject expert: ad-hoc member appointed according to the research area of the proposal;
  - b) one professor, member of the Research Commission;
  - c) one representative of the Doctoral School (either the Associate Vice-President for Postgraduate Education or the Deputy to AVP for Postgraduate Education)

### 3.5 Evaluation criteria

- <sup>1</sup> The evaluation criteria are as follows:
- a) The quality, originality and relevance of the research project to be carried out during the research stay;
  - b) The scientific achievements of the applicant at the time of the request: academic results, progress in the thesis, professional interests and motivations
  - c) The added value in terms of career: cultural immersion; career development; expansion of the professional network, research and transversal competences
  - d) The perspectives for achieving the intended research objective;
  - e) The personal aptitude of the applicant to successfully complete their doctorate, and their real potential to obtain it after their mobility grant;
  - f) The personal aptitude of the applicant to pursue a scientific career;
  - g) The quality of the intended research location, in particular the local working conditions, the opportunities for professional supervision and training, as well as the expected benefit in terms of mobility.

### 3.6 Selection and notification of the decision

- <sup>1</sup> The committee evaluates each application in comparison with the other applications. It selects the best applications for the grant and determines the amount on the basis of the criteria set by EPFL for the grant.
- <sup>2</sup> The Doctoral School communicates the decision of the selection committee to the applicants in writing, indicating the reasons.

### 3.7 Legal effects of the award

- <sup>1</sup> Applicants who are awarded a mobility fellowship become grantees.
- <sup>2</sup> The grantees use the fellowship for their scientific education.

## 4. Eligible costs

The eligible cost categories are as follows:

- a) Travel expenses
- b) Costs of participation in scientific conferences
- c) Research costs
- d) Tuition fees
- e) Family allowances

### 4.1 Travel expenses

- <sup>1</sup> EPFL pays a contribution to the beneficiaries and their accompanying family members for a round trip for the entire duration of the fellowship between their usual place of

residence (e.g. Switzerland) and their research stay location. In principle, the most advantageous economy class options should be proposed.

## **4.2 Costs of participation in scientific conferences**

<sup>1</sup> A maximum amount of CHF 2,000 per year can be paid for participation in scientific congresses/conferences/workshops that are important for the doctoral student's research and that cannot be financed by the research project.

## **4.3 Research costs**

<sup>1</sup> Applicants may apply for a contribution to cover the costs essential for the realisation of their research project (e.g.: consumables, lab animals, machine time, field expenses, analyses, minor equipment incl. software, reimbursement for study participants, Open Access publication costs, etc.) up to a maximum of CHF 3,000 per year, provided that they can prove that the host institution does not provide such benefits.

## **4.4 Tuition fees**

<sup>1</sup> Applicants may apply for a subsidy of up to 75%, but not exceeding CHF 15,000 per year, of the tuition fees to be paid to the host institution, provided that they can prove that the host institution has not waived the fees. A corresponding proof ("Confirmation of registration fees") must be submitted in writing with the other application documents.

## **4.5 Family allowances**

<sup>1</sup> EPFL pays beneficiaries with children an allowance of CHF 12,000 per year per child. Allowances for children received from EPFL are deducted from this allowance.  
<sup>2</sup> Expenses for family members (spouse, partner) may also be considered up to a maximum of CHF 4,000 per year, provided that these persons accompany the doctoral student during the entire stay.

## **4.6 Personal living expenses**

<sup>1</sup> The grant does not include a contribution to personal living expenses, such as rent in the host country. These must be covered by the EPFL salary that the doctoral students will continue to receive during their mobility stay.

## **4.7 Restrictive financial conditions / Third party contributions**

<sup>1</sup> Applicants must indicate in their application any financial contribution they receive from other organisations or institutions in the context of their thesis or mobility stay.

# **5. Rights and obligations of grantees**

## **5.1 Payment of the grant**

<sup>1</sup> The approved grants are released at the grantees' request, using the [template](#) provided for this purpose.

- <sup>2</sup> The funds are transferred in Swiss francs to a bank or postal account in Switzerland, in one lump sum at the earliest one month before the start of the mobility stay.
- <sup>3</sup> All spending must be verifiable, therefore all relevant receipts must be kept and enclosed with the final report. Please note, that if there is a significant difference between the funds requested and the actual spending, the Doctoral School may request a refund of the difference. Otherwise, this difference should be subject to social charges and income tax. For your information, a difference of more than 20% is considered significant.

## **5.2 Insurance**

- <sup>1</sup> The fellowship does not include insurance for the grantees and their dependents. Grantees are responsible for all insurances themselves.

## **5.3 Maternity, Paternity, Illness and Accident**

- <sup>1</sup> Grantees who become mothers in the course of the mobility fellowship are entitled to paid maternity leave of four months.
- <sup>2</sup> Grantees who become fathers are entitled to two weeks of paid paternity leave during the period of the mobility fellowship.
- <sup>3</sup> In the event of illness or accident during the mobility fellowship, the contribution and the duration of the fellowship may be increased appropriately upon request, provided that the scientific objectives pursued with the research stay could not otherwise be achieved.
- <sup>4</sup> In the cases described in paragraphs 1 to 4, fellowships may be extended on request by a maximum of one year.

## **5.4 Changes to the Project Proposal**

- <sup>1</sup> After the grant has been awarded, no changes can be made to the submitted project plan.
- <sup>2</sup> In exceptional cases, the research and activity plan, as well as the research schedule and location, may be modified, but only with the written approval from the EPFL Doctoral School and the thesis director, following a motivated written request from the doctoral student.

## **5.5 Renouncement or early termination**

- <sup>3</sup> Grantees who give up their mobility grant or terminate their research stay prematurely must inform the EPFL Doctoral School immediately in writing, stating the reasons. They must reimburse pro rata temporis all grants that have been transferred in addition to the salary.

## 5.6 Regular contact with the EPFL thesis director and final report

- <sup>1</sup> During the mobility stay, the doctoral student maintains regular meetings with his/her supervisor as part of the supervision.
- <sup>2</sup> The grantees must submit a [final general report](#) and a [financial report](#) no later than six weeks after the end of the funding period. The final general report covers the general, scientific and organizational aspects of your stay. Whereas the financial report consists of a balance sheet of the granted amounts with all relevant receipts in annexe.
- <sup>3</sup> The report templates are available on the [EPFL Doc.Mobility website](#).

## 6. Other provisions

### 6.1 Misconduct and penalties

- <sup>1</sup> In the event of misuse of the Doc.Mobility grant or violation of these regulations the EPFL may impose disciplinary sanctions ranging from a warning to exclusion from the university.
- <sup>2</sup> In the event of misconduct in the scientific context, the National Research Council's regulations on the management of misconduct by applicants and grant recipients in the scientific context shall apply.

### 6.2 Appeals

- <sup>1</sup> All decisions on mobility grants taken by the selection committee, with the exception of the amounts awarded, may be contested within 30 days of the notification of the decision concerned.

### 6.3 Adoption entry into force

- <sup>1</sup> The present regulations are approved by the Associate Vice Presidency for Postgraduate Education (AVP-PGE) respectively on 16 November 2021.
- <sup>2</sup> They shall enter into force on 16 November 2021.