



# EXCELLENCE FELLOWSHIP GUIDELINES

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## 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 is done based on the evaluation of the academic records of the candidates. The fellowship committee, comprising members of the EPFL sections, a representative of the Vice-Presidency 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.

The Student Affairs (SAE), located in the BP building, manages the fellowships. For any queries or clarification, please contact [e-fellowship@epfl.ch](mailto:e-fellowship@epfl.ch).

## 2. APPLICATION & SELECTION

### 2.1. Eligibility

Anyone applying to an EPFL master's program is eligible. The EPFL grants a limited number of fellowships to the most deserving candidates based solely 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 your master at the EPFL is your second master's degree, you are not eligible for an excellence fellowship.

### 2.2. Fellowship amount and benefits

EXTERNAL applications	INTERNAL applications (after EPFL bachelor's degree)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ CHF 8'000 per semester (CHF 32'000 for a 2-year degree - 120 credits / CHF 24'000 for a 1.5-year degree - 90 credits)</li><li>➤ Reservation of an accommodation (student room in a student residence)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ CHF 5'000 per year (CHF 10'000 for a master)</li><li>➤ A certificate of excellence for the results achieved during bachelor studies</li></ul>

Fellowship holders will be responsible to cover all expenses on their own (i.e. accommodation, tuition fees, etc.).

The fellowship will be paid for no more than 4 semesters even in case the student decides to take a minor or for any other reason that might extend the duration of his/her studies and provided that he/she is still registered.

### 2.3. How to apply

EXTERNAL applications	INTERNAL applications (after EPFL bachelor's degree)
<p>Candidates should apply via the same online form than their application to a master's program by April 15 or December 15.</p> <p>Please note that it is necessary to tick a box indicating that the candidates profile should also be considered for an excellence fellowship.</p> <p><b>There is no other way to apply for an excellence fellowship.</b></p>	<p>Sections might contact students to ask if they want to submit an application for an excellence fellowship.</p> <p>Students can also submit an application to their section by April 30.</p> <p>The application should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ a CV</li> <li>➤ a motivation letter</li> <li>➤ a transcript of all grades earned at EPFL</li> <li>➤ a recommendation letter from the sections' director</li> </ul> <p>Students who are planning to <b>switch to another section/program</b> need a recommendation letter from the director of the section they came from and must also contact the deputy of their future section to introduce themselves. The deputy of their future section will then submit the application to the excellence fellowships committee.</p>

### 2.4. Selected candidates & reserve candidates

A first screening is done by the sections. Then, the excellence fellowships committee meets and awards the fellowships.

Selected candidates are notified in written and will be given a deadline (2-4 weeks) to confirm coming to EPFL for their master's.

In case of withdrawal or failure to reply, the fellowship is offered to the next candidate on the waiting list (reserve candidate) who then has a new deadline (1-2 weeks) to confirm his/her enrolment.

EXTERNAL applications	INTERNAL applications (after EPFL bachelor's degree)
Candidates receive an answer about their application <b>by e-mail</b> at:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ the beginning of April (December deadline)</li> <li>➤ the end of June (April deadline)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ the end of June</li> </ul>

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.

A confirmation and a certificate will be sent by e-mail and will allow all 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 as following:

		EXTERNAL applications	INTERNAL applications
Year 1	Semester 1	CHF 8'000 (15 Oct. *)	CHF 5'000 (15 Sept.)
	Semester 2	CHF 8'000 (15 Feb.)	
Year 2 (if renewal)	Semester 1	CHF 8'000 (15 Sept.)	CHF 5'000 (15 Sept.)
	Semester 2	CHF 8'000 (15 Feb.)	

\* As it might take some time to process the first payment, fellowship holders should take cash money with them to cover all expenses for a month (approx. CHF 2'000) (see section 5.2.).

Fellowships are paid on a Swiss bank or postal account. Fellowship holders should open their own Swiss bank or postal account upon arrival in Switzerland. EPFL never pays a fellowship in cash, nor on a foreign bank account (see section 6.3.).

### 3.1. Renewal

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

At the end of the first year, fellowships are renewed (for 1 or 2 semesters depending on the number of credits of the MA) provided that fellowship holders:

- Have reached the average of **5.3** (6 = max / 4 = pass) at the end of their first MA year. 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.
- Have earned at least **50 credits** after the first year. 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 not renewed, students will not have to reimburse the amount received during their first year.

## 4. RULES

### 4.1. Deferment of fellowship

No deferment is possible. Fellowship holders who decide to defer their admission at EPFL, lose their excellence fellowship and can apply for this fellowship scheme the following year if they decide to postpone their master's for a year. The procedure will be the same as for all students applying for that year.

### 4.2. Other scholarships/fellowships or position as research scholar

On a general basis, excellence fellowship holders cannot hold two scholarships/fellowships at once. Other scholarship/fellowship or any scholarship or funding program financed by EPFL (ex. Research scholar) are not compatible with the EPFL excellence fellowships.

Exceptions to this rule:

- Internal students (who have completed their bachelor studies at EPFL) regardless of the second scholarship/fellowship amount and source
- External students (students who come to EPFL only for their master) can accept other funding if the amount of the scholarship/fellowship does not surpass half of the amount of the EPFL excellence fellowship per semester.

### 4.3. Employment

As a MA student you are allowed to work in Switzerland (see section 5.3.). As a fellowship holder your fellowship will not be reduced or stopped if you decide to work.

### 4.4. Internship (in Switzerland or abroad)

- Internship included in a study program: the payment of the excellence fellowship will be maintained.
- Internship not included in a study program: the payment of the excellence fellowship will be suspended and resumed upon return, if the requirements for renewal are met.

### 4.5. Master's Thesis (in Switzerland or abroad)

The payment of the excellence fellowship will be maintained.

### 4.6. Inability to study

In case of (un)expected event, please inform the excellence fellowship administration [e-fellowship@epfl.ch](mailto:e-fellowship@epfl.ch) and the Student services desk [student.services@epfl.ch](mailto:student.services@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: this section concerns Swiss citizens who have an obligation to serve. In this case, the excellence fellowship will be suspended for the duration of the stay at the army. It will resume once the student is back at EPFL 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 you received upon your matriculation.

### 5.1. Visa procedure

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.

More information on the page about [visas](#).

### 5.2. Budget

The cost of living is high in Switzerland. Students spend around CHF 2'000 a month.

A [budget model](#) has been established with examples of typical costs and charges for students in Switzerland.

### 5.3. Employment

The employment law authorizes EU students to work:

- up to 15 hours per week during the semester
- full time during the semester break

EU nationals can ask for a work permit as soon as they arrive. Non-EU citizens are allowed to work only 6 months after their arrival.

Please note that it is difficult to work whilst studying, as 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)

More information on [go.epfl.ch/working](http://go.epfl.ch/working).

### 5.4. Housing

The housing situation in Lausanne is tight with a low vacancy rate. Luckily, fellowship holders are given priority access to [student housing](#). EPFL housing information will contact the fellowship holders soon after the fellowship is confirmed.

Please keep in mind that every tenant will have to pay an upfront deposit for a room prior to arrival, ranging from 1 to 3 months of rent. Provide budget for the first monthly rent as it has to be paid upfront too.

### 5.5. French course

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 course generally starts at the end of August and lasts about three weeks.

Registration starts at the beginning of June. Useful information and the registration form can be found on the [Centre des langues](#) page. Students should make sure that their visa is already valid when the course begins (page about [visas](#)).

### 5.6. Insurance

Any person staying in Switzerland is legally obliged to get a healthcare insurance and an accident insurance scheme.



Fellowship holders who need advice can contact the Agepoly (General Association of EPFL students) or visit the web page about [insurances](#).

## 6. UPON ARRIVAL IN LAUSANNE

### 6.1. Welcome event

All excellence fellowship holders will be invited to a welcome session. This event takes place at the beginning of the academic year in September and allows students to ask more specific questions about the fellowship and to get to know other fellowship holders.

### 6.2. Residence permit & residence tax

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.).

Please note that excellence fellowship holders can ask for a residence tax exemption.

More information on [residence permit](#) page.

### 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 upon arrival in Switzerland. EPFL never pays a fellowship in cash, nor on a foreign bank account.

Upon arrival at EPFL, fellowship holders must send the following documents by email to the excellence fellowship administration ([e-fellowship@epfl.ch](mailto:e-fellowship@epfl.ch))

- [form](#)
- a copy of ID card/passport
- a copy of copy of your bank card (both sides)

### 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.

## 7. CONTACTS

- General and academic queries: Student services desk [student.services@epfl.ch](mailto: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.): excellence fellowship administration [e-fellowship@epfl.ch](mailto:e-fellowship@epfl.ch) and [student.services@epfl.ch](mailto:student.services@epfl.ch)
- For general questions about the excellence fellowships program: [e-fellowship@epfl.ch](mailto:e-fellowship@epfl.ch)

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