

Guidelines for the ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

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Overview

The ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Program supports incoming postdoctoral researchers from all nationalities at the ETH Zurich. The program is intended to foster high-potential, young researchers, who have already demonstrated excellence in terms of internationally competitive achievements in the early stages of their professional careers. Applications have to be made jointly by the candidate and their host, who must be an ETH Zurich Professor and who will act as mentor for the fellow. The duration of an ETH Fellowship is two years and cannot be prolonged.

Given the limited number of fellowships available in a given year, it is clear that being designated an ETH Fellow is an honor and the result of a highly competitive process. It is assumed that ETH Fellows are primarily interested in following an academic career.

The ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is cofunded by the EU Commission in the Frame of FP7 Marie Curie Actions – People. Therefore, the program is not affected by the Horizon 2020 discussion.

Submission

Eligibility criteria

Applicants must have been awarded a doctoral degree within two years of the submission deadline from an institution other than the ETH Zurich or the University of Zurich. They may submit their application up to 6 months ahead of their graduation with a certification of the planned date of the defense signed by the advisor or department chair. At the time of the relevant submission deadline, researchers must also not have carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) at either of the two institutions for more than six months. Applicants need to have at least one scientific publication in a peer-reviewed journal or have been awarded a prize for their PhD thesis. Applications not complying with these rules will be rejected on formal grounds.

Application

Applications are to be made jointly by the candidate and their prospective mentor, who must be an ETH Professor. The mentor must have a guaranteed ETH position for the entire duration of the proposed fellowship. The application needs to include

- a description of the research project and the specific role and input of the candidate, as well as the way in which the ETH Fellow's project relates to other research directions in the host group (5p).
- a complete CV of the candidate including lists of publications and a brief CV of the host professor (2p).
- a brief outline of the career goals of the candidate (1p).
- an invitation letter by the host professor, stating how the candidate is deemed to be excellent.
- a filled out form, concerning ethical issues and research requiring authorization or notification.
- two external letters of reference for the candidate, to be emailed directly to the Office of Research by the persons asked to provide a reference.

Deadlines

There are two ETH Fellowship competitions per year. The relevant submission deadlines are 1 March and 1 September. Applications should be submitted electronically using the [online submission](#) tool. The letters of reference must be sent directly to ethfellows@sl.ethz.ch, 10 days before the relevant deadline. Detailed submission instructions can be found on www.ethfellows.ethz.ch.

Evaluation

Evaluation procedure

The evaluation process is a two-step procedure. Applications will be initially assessed by peer review and the Research Commission of the ETH Zurich. The results of the screening will be communicated within 5 to 7 weeks of the submission deadline. Candidates whose applications pass the first step will be invited to one of the Subcommittee meetings of the Research Commission for a 15-minute interview.

The recommendations of the Subcommittee will be forwarded to the entire Research Commission for consideration. Their recommendation will be communicated to the Vice President of Research and Corporate Relations, who makes the final funding decision, which will be sent to applicants within approx. 4 months of the submission deadline.

In case of a negative decision, it is not possible to resubmit an ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Application.

Interview

The interviews are mandatory for those candidates, who have passed the first selection step. They are conducted approx. 10 weeks after the submission deadline. The interview dates are announced in advance on www.ethfellows.ethz.ch. All expenses associated with bringing in candidates must be covered by the host professorship.

During the interview, applicants will be asked questions about their proposed research projects, the choice of the research lab, the particular strengths and skills they would bring to the host lab and how their ideas would thrive in collaboration with an ETH group, as well as about their future career prospects. Applicants will not be requested to give a presentation.

Evaluation criteria

The decision on funding is based on a strict, quality-based evaluation process. Applications will be assessed against criteria addressing both the candidate's aptitude as well as the quality of the proposed research and the synergy with the host lab. Successful applications must be compelling in all respects.

The criteria pertaining to the **candidate's aptitude** are based on the CV, the letters of reference and the career outline and include

- research performance and potential
- track record relative to opportunities and career stage
- competence for the proposed work and synergy with the host professorship
- compatibility of the ETH Fellowship with the career goals of the applicant

The criteria referring to the **research proposal** include

- the scientific quality of the planned research
- significance and innovativeness of the project
- suitability of the proposed procedures
- difficulties to be expected and chances of success
- consideration of gender aspects, where appropriate

The criteria referring to **the synergies with the host lab** include

- particular strengths and skills relevant to the host lab
- added value and integration into the host lab

Gender Aspects

ETH Zurich strives to promote gender equality in scientific research by integrating the gender dimension into the research content in all fields of research. Research in gender studies is also being supported through the ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship program.

Gender must be consistently taken into account throughout the whole research cycle (from the proposal to the research and dissemination phase), if it involves humans as research objects (e.g., as patients, consumers, end-users or as citizens in surveys) and must be considered in the experimental design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of the outcomes. If the gender dimension for such research is not being considered, a justification must be supplied, why it is not being addressed.

Research not directly involving humans should adopt the principles of gender-sensitive research, if appropriate (e.g., fundamental research on genomics, development of materials for use in the biomedical sector, product design).

Ethical Issues

The applicant has to state on the Form **Z01_Ethical Issues**, if the intended research requires authorization or notification. With this filled out form and his or her signature on the cover sheet, the applicant confirms that he or she is aware of the legal regulations at federal and cantonal level relevant to the research project. Once a fellowship has been accepted for funding, copies of the authorization or notification must be sent to the Office of Research.

This form also lists the research areas excluded under FP7 as stipulated in Art. 6 (2§), which therefore, are also excluded in this program. Furthermore, it gives instructions as to how to proceed, if the intended research needs authorization or notification. This applies in particular for research on humans, research on human embryonic stem cells, research on animals, research on GMO or pathogens and research in developing countries.

Funding

The duration of an ETH Fellowship is two years and cannot be prolonged. Employment after the initially granted time must be financed from other sources. Salary is the ETH standard postdoctoral salary (100%). ETH Fellows are also entitled to an annual individual travel/mobility allowance (1/4) and a research cost contribution budget (3/4) not exceeding CHF 12'000 annually for both categories. The ETH Fellows must be employed at the ETH Zurich, thus having a valid working contract with the ETH Zurich during the entire fellowship.

Adjustments of the salary scale might be made in adherence to the general ETH Domain remuneration policy as defined by the ETH Board. Any extra costs associated with salary scale increases effected during the funding period must be borne by the host professorship.

Obligations

ETH Fellows are expected to start their fellowship – if the application is successful – at the latest six months after the submission deadline of the application. If they cannot adhere to this set date, approval for a later start must be requested at the Office of Research.

To monitor and improve the program, each ETH Fellow is requested to submit a final report within six weeks after completion of their fellowship to the Office of Research of the ETH Zurich. The relevant form can be found [here](#).

Other

ETH Fellows are invited, twice annually, to a social event with representatives of the ETH School Administration. Furthermore, all fellows benefit from career-planning workshop organized by the ETH Zurich Human Resources Department. ETH Fellows are also expected to have the opportunity to take part (but to a minor extent only) in the teaching activities of their host group. The proposed teaching duties and an estimate of the average load must be specified in the application.

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