

# Guidelines for the ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

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## Overview

The ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Program supports incoming postdoctoral researchers at the ETH Zurich. The program is intended to foster young researchers who have already demonstrated scientific excellence in the early stages of their careers.

Applications have to be made jointly by the candidate and the potential host, who must be an ETH Zurich professor and willing to act as the mentor of the fellow. There must be convincing synergies between the host (group) and the ETH fellow. The fellowships are intended as early support towards academic independence, hence priority will be given to applicants who propose their own projects. Thus, it is important that applicants come up with their own ideas, draft the application themselves, and that the applicant and mentor have not collaborated closely prior to the fellowship.

The duration of an ETH Fellowship is two years and cannot be prolonged. The fellowship is quite competitive, with only a limited number of fellowships available each year.

The ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is cofunded by the EU Commission in the Frame of FP7 Marie Curie Actions – People.

## Submission

### Eligibility criteria

At the time of the submission deadline, applicants must hold a doctorate (PhD) or will complete their doctorate within the next six months. Applicants with the doctorate (PhD) must have obtained the same a maximum of two years prior to the submission deadline. The date of the examination or viva voce shall be the decisive date.

Applicants who earned their PhD from ETH Zurich or the University of Zurich will not be considered.

Applicants who have not yet completed their doctorate must submit a certification of the planned date of their defense signed by the advisor or department chair. The examination or viva voce must have been completed by the time the fellowship is started.

Researchers must also not have carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) at either ETH Zurich or the University of Zurich for more than six months prior to the submission deadline.

The applicants need to have at least one scientific publication in a peer-reviewed journal or have been awarded a prize for their doctoral thesis. Applications not complying with the eligibility criteria 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 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](mailto:ethfellows@sl.ethz.ch), 10 days before the deadline at the latest. Detailed submission instructions can be found on [www.ethfellows.ethz.ch](http://www.ethfellows.ethz.ch).

## Evaluation

### Evaluation procedure

The evaluation consists of two steps. First, applications will be evaluated by peer review, the results of which will be communicated to the applicants within six to eight weeks after the submission deadline. Candidates whose applications pass the first step will be invited to an interview with one of the subcommissions of the ETHZ research commission.

The recommendations of the subcommissions 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 takes the final funding decision. Applicants will be informed about the decision approx. four months after the submission deadline.

It is not possible to resubmit an ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship application after a rejection.

### Interview

The interviews last about 15 minutes and are mandatory. They are conducted approx. 10 weeks after the submission deadline. The interview dates are announced on [www.ethfellows.ethz.ch](http://www.ethfellows.ethz.ch). All expenses associated with the candidate's travel to the interview must be covered by the host professor.

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 the ETH group, as well as about their future career prospects. Applicants are not requested to give a presentation.

## Evaluation criteria

The funding decisions are 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
- ambition to move beyond his or her and the hosts' previous research

## 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 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 their signature on the cover sheet, the applicant confirms that they are 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 to 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 contribution to the research costs (3/4), not exceeding CHF 12'000 annually for both categories. The ETH fellows must be employed at the ETH Zurich, and have a valid working contract with the ETH Zurich during the entire fellowship.

Adjustments of the salary 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 six months after the submission deadline at the latest. If they cannot adhere to this 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-development workshop organized by the ETH Zurich. ETH Fellows are also expected to have the opportunity to take part (to a minor extent) 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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