

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship programme

June 2021

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Before the application

How many ETH Fellowships are available?

Approximately 28 ETH Fellows can be selected each year, i.e. about 14 in each round. About twice as many candidates are invited for the interview.

How much is an ETH Fellowship worth?

As of 2021 an ETH Fellowship covers up to CHF 232'900. This is composed of the gross salary of the fellow (CHF 88'600 in the first year, CHF 93'050 in the second), social security contributions and up to CHF 12'000 per year for research expenses and travel associated with the fellowship project. The budget allocated for travel and research costs may not be used to cover salary costs, and vice versa.

Adjustments of the salary may 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.

How do I apply?

You should apply jointly with your prospective ETH host professor using the online submission platform. Please have a look at the detailed submission instructions and guidelines.

Which subjects are covered by the ETH Fellowships?

The ETH Fellowships are available for researchers in all disciplines represented at ETH Zurich.

Where can I spend the ETH Fellowship?

The ETH Fellowships can only be spent at ETH Zurich. You need to agree on a research project with your prospective host professor.

Can I apply if I am already working at ETH Zurich?

The fellowship is aimed at incoming postdocs. Applicants who earned their PhD from ETH Zurich or the University of Zurich will not be considered. Applicants may not have carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) at either ETH Zurich, a research institute of the ETH domain or the University of Zurich for more than six months in the three years immediately before the submission deadline.

Also, researchers may not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Switzerland for more than twelve months in the three years immediately before the submission deadline.

How long does an ETH Fellowship last? Can it be extended?

The duration of an ETH Fellowship is two years and cannot be extended. Employment after the two years must be financed from other sources.

Which criteria are used to assess applications?

Applications are assessed based on criteria addressing 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 reference letters and the career outline and include research performance, track record relative to opportunities and career stage, competence for the proposed work and compatibility of the ETH Fellowship with the career goals of the applicant. The research itself is evaluated based on the scientific quality of the proposal, the suitability of the proposed procedures, expected difficulties, and chances of success, and the significance and innovativeness of the project. Please also have a look at the guidelines.

In line with DORA,^[1] achievements will be assessed on the base of qualitative evaluations of a diverse range of research outputs and activities.

What is the role of the ETH host professor?

The ETH host professor will act as your main research contact at ETH Zurich, providing research support and guidance, access to necessary facilities and infrastructure (desk, lab and bench space, consumables, equipment), and assistance with practical and research arrangements.

Please note that the fellowships are intended as early support towards academic independence. It is important that applicants come up with their own ideas and prove ownership of their proposals and projects.

Who is entitled to be a host professor?

The host professor must hold a permanent or fixed-term contract (lasting at least for the duration of the ETH Fellowship) at the ETH Zurich. An ETH Zurich Professor co-affiliated with an institution within the ETH Domain (Eawag, WSL, Empa and PSI) can act as a mentor, as long as they have a "Leitzahl" (Responsibility Centre) at ETH Zurich.

Can a professor support more than one candidate?

^[1] The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, <https://sfidora.org/>

A professor may only submit with one candidate in each evaluation round. Members of the ETH Zurich Research Commission may only host one ETH Fellow at a time.

Which information is required from the ETH host professor?

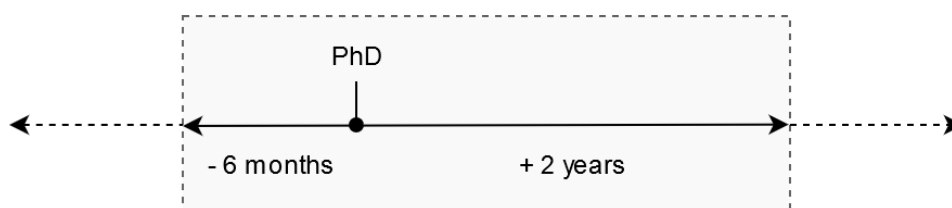
The ETH host professor is required to provide information on their research and to explain the reasons why they would like to collaborate with the candidate in an invitation letter. Further, they need to submit the application if the candidate is not yet employed at ETH Zurich.

Does the Grants Office help to find a suitable host professor at ETH Zurich?

Unfortunately, the Grants Office cannot support candidates in their search for a suitable host professor. The candidates have to identify and contact the preferred host professor on their own. Candidates are asked to check if they fulfill the eligibility requirements before contacting a potential ETH host professor.

Is there a biological age limit? Am I eligible to apply for funding for a second fellowship, if I have already completed / am currently involved in a postdoctoral fellowship?

There is no biological age limit, but an academic age limit. 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 decisive date is the date of the examination or viva voce. Exceptions can be made for researchers whose child was/children were born after the PhD completion and who took parental leave. Please contact the Grants Office for more information.



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.

Submitting your application

Login

An ETH Zurich username and password (**nethz login**) is needed to log in to the online submission tool. If the candidate is not yet an ETH employee, the host professor or one of their staff members have to submit the application on behalf of the candidate.

What is the 'exact' deadline?

The exact submission deadlines are 1 March and 1 September each year at 17:00 Swiss local time. No assistance is provided outside of office hours should problems occur with the electronic submission.

How do I submit my application?

The whole application must be submitted via the web platform provided under the link www.ethfellows.ethz.ch. The only exception is the signed cover sheet. A copy of this page has to be sent electronically to the Grants Office and should arrive at the office seven days after the submission deadline at the latest.

Can the reference letters be submitted together with the application? Can I submit more than two reference letters?

No, the reference letters must be sent electronically **directly** to the Grants Office at the following address for confidentiality reasons: ethfellows@sl.ethz.ch. The reference letters should arrive 10 days before the relevant submission deadline at the latest (Subject of the e-mail: last name candidate_first name candidate_last name reference). Only two reference letters will be accepted. Additional reference letters will not be considered.

What are the structure and the formal requirements for the project description and the CV?

For the project description, the form available on the website must be used. This form lists all the relevant chapters of the project description.

- The **description of the project detail** part is restricted to **five pages**, not including the literature.
- **Other costs:** The explanations of the research costs do not have to be very detailed. Broader categories with **short explanations** (e.g. consumables, travel, conference fees etc.) should be used.
- **Teaching duties** are individual and depend on the agreement with the prospective host.
- The **CV** can be written in any format but should include a list of publications and a **picture** of the candidate. It is important that all dates at least include month and year.

During the evaluation of your application

Can I choose the dates of the interview?

Due to a very tight interview schedule, it is unfortunately not possible to choose an interview date and preferences for a certain day cannot be considered.

Do I have to present my project at the interview?

No. Candidates will be asked questions about their proposed research project, the choice of the host lab, the particular strengths and skills they will bring to the host lab and how their ideas will thrive in collaboration with the ETH group, as well as about their future career plans.

Is it possible to update my application after the submission, e.g. if a paper has been accepted?

No, modifications will not be accepted after the submission deadline.

After the decision

When do you communicate the results?

Candidates are informed within two months after the submission deadline whether they are invited to an interview. Applicants who are interviewed will be informed after approx. four months of the submission deadline whether they will be granted an ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Is it possible to resubmit a grant?

No, a resubmission is not possible.

Can I start the project as soon as I have fulfilled the requirements for the doctoral degree or do I have to wait until the university has actually conferred the degree?

Candidates do not have to wait until the university has conferred the degree but must provide an official document confirming that they have successfully defended their thesis, such as a letter by the department chair or advisor or a provisional statement from their university. The official certificate is necessary to receive the working permit from the cantonal authorities.

Is it possible to start sooner/later than indicated in the application?

Yes, this is possible. In order to receive the awarded funds, an email must be sent to the Grants Office with the start and end date of the fellowship.

The fellowship can be started at the earliest after receipt of the decision letter and the organisation of the formal requirements for employment at ETH and must be started no later than eight months after the submission deadline. A later start must be requested from the Grants Office and can only be accepted in exceptional cases. The ETH fellowship always starts on the first day of a month. **How do I find accommodation in Zurich? Where can I find other practical information regarding life in Switzerland?**

A [welcome center](#) operates at the Hönggerberg campus of the ETH and can help you with practical issues regarding life in Switzerland. For information on accommodation, please check the [Housing Office of the ETH Zurich](#).

Do I have to provide a final report?

Yes, the necessary form will be sent to you shortly before the end of your fellowship by e-mail. You are expected to submit the report six weeks after the end of your fellowship at the latest.