Flexibility grants in NCCRs

Version of 1 October 2026

The following regulations are based on the general SNSF Flexibility grants regulations:

- Leitfaden_Flexibility_Grant_en.pdf (Version: 1.11.2022)
- Annex_IV_Ausfuehrungsreglement_Beitragsreglement_E.pdf (Version: 7.6.2022)

Contact: nccr@snf.ch

1 Principle and objectives

[1] The SNSF awards flexibility grants to help researchers reconcile their research activities and academic career with care duties.

[2] To junior researchers with care duties who have to meet exacting professional demands, the SNSF offers a grant towards the costs of hiring a support person and towards childcare costs (Flexibility Grants) pursuant to the following provisions.

[3] The grants are awarded within the scope of NCCR projects for the benefit of postdocs and doctoral students employed under the funded project.

[4] The two measures "Grant towards hiring a support person" and "Grant towards childcare costs" may be combined.

2 Grant towards hiring a support person

[1] The grant towards hiring a support person allows the recipient to reduce their work-time percentage from 80%-100% to a minimum of 60% and to simultaneously hire a support person (scientific or technical staff member or assistant) for the research project funded by the SNSF.

[2] The SNSF covers part of the support person's salary. Its contribution amounts to a maximum of 20% of the gross salary of the person benefiting from the flexibility grant recalculated to the gross salary of a full-time (100%) position, augmented by the gross salary amount saved thanks to the reduction in work-time percentage (the latter amount must not exceed 40% of the relevant gross salary of the person benefiting from the flexibility grant).

[3] The grant towards hiring a support person may be applied for even if the work-time percentage is not reduced. In such cases, the work-time percentage of the person benefiting from the measure must be 80-100%. The grant towards hiring a support person (scientific or technical staff member or assistant) is limited to 20% of the relevant gross salary of the person benefiting from the flexibility grant.

3 Childcare grant

[1] Grants towards childcare costs allow junior researchers to continue their research activities with the shortest possible delay.

[2] The work-time percentage must correspond to at least 80%. Doctoral students (Clause 4 paragraph 1 letter b below) may apply for grants towards childcare costs irrespective of their work-time percentage.

4 Personal requirements: funding by an NCCR project

[1] The following junior researchers may be awarded flexibility grants:

a. NCCR-funded postdocs (regardless of the funding source), pursuant to Clause 7.4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, who are employed at a Swiss institution;

b. NCCR-funded doctoral students (regardless of the funding source) who are employed at a Swiss institution; doctoral students are only eligible to receive childcare grants.

5 Further personal requirements

[1] Junior researchers must meet the following additional requirements:

a. for both types of grant: the junior researcher needs to provide proof of the days on which childcare is outsourced. To qualify for the grant, persons with care duties must outsource childcare on at least 3 days of every working week for professional reasons, and the care provided by the persons with care duties must not exceed 1 day each.[1] The grant covers children who have not yet finished primary school pursuant to Swiss law.[2] The SNSF may ask for detailed evidence of these circumstances.

b. for a grant towards hiring a support person: a work-time percentage of at least 60% (0.6 FTE) for cases involving a reduction in working hours, or a work-time percentage of at least 80% (0.8 FTE) if a support person is hired without any concomitant reduction in working hours. Proof of the reduction in working hours and the employment of a support person must be provided; and

c. for a grant towards childcare costs: a work-time percentage of at least 80%. Doctoral students are not required to provide such proof. The requirements pursuant to letter a. must also be met by doctoral students.

[1] The SNSF takes into account the actual child care arrangements. The professional reasons necessitating the outsourcing of child care must be explained. As regards the other person with care duties, these reasons may also comprise irregular working hours, continuing education, incapacity to provide care due to illness/accident, or unemployment.
[2] The duration of primary school is defined in accordance with Article 6 of the Intercantonal Agreement on Harmonisation of Compulsory Education (HarmoS Agreement) of 14 June 2007.Canton of Ticino: applications may be submitted up to and including the 6th year.

[2] If the two types of grants are combined, the work quota must correspond to at least 80%.

6 Submission of applications and deadlines

[1] Applications may be submitted at any time within the scope of an ongoing NCCR project, but no later than four months before the end of the project.

[2] The grants start in the month of submission of the application to the SNSF at the earliest.

[3] The junior researchers must submit the applications to the management of their NCCR. This shall also be the case if the grant is requested for the benefit of an employee pursuant to Clause 4 letters a and b.

[4] The application must be submitted in electronic form (pdf file) by using the NCCR Flexibility Grants Application Form and must contain all mandatory information and enclosures mentioned in this form.

7 Assessment procedure and budget

[1] Applications are assessed by the relevant NCCR management. They check if the requirements pursuant to Clauses 4 and 5 are met and whether the measures are warranted. The measures are considered warranted if they enable the researcher to achieve a better balance between their ongoing research activities and childcare duties and if delays can be kept to a minimum.

[2] The NCCR management submits the supported applications to the NCCR unit of the SNSF, which checks if all formal requirements are fulfilled.

[3] The SNSF issues the ruling addressed to the applying junior researcher, with copy to the NCCR management. The SNSF may reject the application or lower the requested amount should the measure be deemed unwarranted or only partially warranted.

[4] The SNSF has reserved special additional funds for the implementation of the two initiatives “Mobility Grants” and “Flexibility Grants” in the NCCRs. This arrangement will apply until these funds have been spent. Subsequently, the two initiatives would be implemented by the NCCRs within the framework of their global budget.

8 Award and transfer of funds, and extensions

[1] In an initial phase, the grants are awarded for a maximum of 24 months.

[2] Through submission of a follow-up application, the flexibility grant can be easily extended, provided the requirements continue to be met.

[3] The awarded grant will be added to the contractually agreed SNSF funding of the NCCR. Funds are transferred to the NCCR management shortly after the approval of the flexibility grant application.

9 Eligible costs

[1] In the case of grants towards hiring a support person, the support person's salary is covered by the grant. The SNSF provisions on the employment of personnel apply. The funds saved due to the reduction in work quota are credited to the grant.

[2] In the case of the grant towards childcare costs, only the actual costs of childcare by third parties, up to a maximum of CHF 1,000 per child/month, are covered by the SNSF grant. Any contributions towards childcare costs which the parents receive from their employers will be deducted.

[3] The SNSF offsets any reductions (Clause 7 paragraph 3) against the duration and/or amount of the requested grant.

[4] The entire grant may not exceed CHF 30,000/year.

10 Use of the grant, modifications

[1] The grant must be drawn during the funding period of the NCCR research project.

[2] Grantees are obliged to inform the SNSF without delay of any circumstances that could change or influence the fulfilment of the grant conditions (Article 39 Funding Regulations). In particular, the SNSF must be informed about any changes to childcare arrangements. The SNSF may modify or terminate the grant should the grant conditions no longer be met.

11 Reporting

[1] A separate scientific report on the flexibility grant is not required. Reporting shall be done within the scope of the NCCR's annual progress report (in the section on equal opportunities).

[2] Financial reporting will take place within the scope of the preparation of the annual NCCR reporting. Costs are recorded and statements are issued in accordance to the general NCCR principles. All costs must be documented by receipts.

[3] In the reporting tool, the approved amount has to be added to the annual tranche of the funding source SNSF. Expenditures for the support person are entered in the individual project in which the postdoc is involved. Expenditures for childcare are added to the salary of the postdoc / doctoral student.

[4] Any unused funds arising from flexibility grants will accrue to the reserves of the NCCR but must in turn be used for Equal Opportunities or Education & Training activities. If the approved grant is not used at all or if a substantial amount remains unused, the SNSF will demand refunding of the remaining amount.

12 Further provisions

Subject to any specific provisions in this Annex, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

Long-term Research
Wildhainweg 3, P.O. Box
3001 Bern
+41 31 308 22 22
www.snsf.ch