

Research Fellowship Program for Women in Science National Center of Competence in Research for Bio-Inspired Materials

Guidelines for applicants

The Research Fellowship Program for Women in Science of the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) Bio-Inspired Materials seeks to support the professional development of outstanding researchers who have already demonstrated excellence at an early stage of their careers and wish to pursue an academic career. The fellowships support the residency of researchers in the laboratory of one of the research groups of the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials. The grant is designed to fund original research ideas of the applicants and to leverage the impact through integration within the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials and its international network. While being fully integrated in the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials, the fellows have the possibility to apply to all other NCCR programs, grants and support actions for NCCR members (such as the NCCR Independence Grant, the Pregnancy Support Grant, and others).

Eligibility criteria

The following eligibility criteria must be fulfilled:

1. The program is open to female applicants of all nationalities who hold, or are about to earn, a doctoral degree in a relevant field of natural or life sciences, such as medicine, biology, biochemistry, chemistry, physics or materials science.
2. Application to the program is only possible within five years after the award of the first doctoral degree from a recognized University (reference dates are the application date and the date of the PhD defense). This timeframe can be extended if the candidate interrupted work due to maternity leave(s) and childcare duties. In this case, the applicant is asked to inform the NCCR Coordinator at nccr-grants@unifr.ch before submitting the application.
3. Applicants who already submitted but did not yet defend their PhD thesis may apply if their defense is scheduled for a date no later than 3 months after the application date. In this case, applicants must submit a certification of the submission of their doctoral thesis and of the planned date of their defense / degree. The award of the fellowship to such applicants is contingent upon successful defense within the timeframe stipulated above and the timely receipt of a copy of the degree certificate.
4. Researchers who are, or who have previously been affiliated with a research group or associated group of the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials are not eligible to apply. The current list of NCCR research groups and associated groups can be found here: <https://www.bioinspired-materials.ch/en/about-us/people/research-groups.html>
5. Applicants must be affiliated with a recognized university, research institution or industry at the time of application, they must have demonstrated excellence and outstanding performance in their previous positions, and express the explicit wish to pursue an academic career.
6. The official language of the program is English; applicants must be fluent in written and spoken English.

Applications not complying with these criteria will automatically be rejected on formal grounds.

Application process

Applications and queries should be submitted in English. The full applications should be submitted electronically in one single message with subject “Application NCCR WINS23 – Your Name” to nccr-grants@unifr.ch. Applications must include the following five documents:

1. **Application form**, downloadable from the NCCR website. The applicant must choose one NCCR research group or associate group in whose laboratories she would like to be integrated, and provide the contact information of two references.
2. **Motivation letter** including statement of career goals (max. two pages).
3. **Complete CV** including list of publications (max four pages).
4. **Copy of certificate of doctoral degree** or **certification of the submission of their doctoral thesis** and of the planned date of their defense / degree (the defense date must not be later than 3 months after the application date).
5. **Project proposal**. The project proposal must be prepared using the template downloadable at the NCCR website.

In addition, **two recommendation letters are required**. These should not be submitted by the applicant together with the application, but must be e-mailed by the letter writers from institutional email accounts to the NCCR Coordinator (nccr-grants@unifr.ch); subject “Reference Your name”). The applicant is responsible for requesting the submission of the recommendation letters to her references.

Application deadline

The application deadline is November 11, 2022. This deadline also applies to the recommendation letters.

Number of fellowships to be awarded

In this call, up to four WINS Fellowship can be awarded.

Evaluation

Fellowships will be offered on a competitive basis. Candidates will be selected based on their track record as a researcher, their potential to grow into academic leaders, the quality and originality of the project proposal, the match of the proposal with the overall theme of the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials, the feasibility of the proposed project in the host laboratory, and the anticipated synergies that arise from the integration into the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials.

All applications will be assessed by an NCCR selection committee. Short listed candidates will then be invited to give a talk which will be followed by an interview with the selection committee.

The selection committee will rank and select the candidates. The selected candidates must accept the fellowship within 5 working days by submitting a signed confirmation of acceptance (including targeted start date) both by postal mail and by e-mail to the NCCR Coordinator at nccr-grants@unifr.ch. In case of a declination or no response, the next-ranked candidate will be offered the fellowship.

Start and duration of grant

The duration of the research grant is 24 months. The grant cannot be extended and follow-up funding through NCCR project funds is not possible.

Start of grant: To be discussed.

Attention: the process for obtaining a visa for Switzerland can take up to 3 months.

The research fellows must submit a final report to the NCCR Coordinator no later than 6 weeks after the end of their grant. The report must follow the guidelines provided by the NCCR coordinator.

Funding

The grant includes a standard researcher salary (100%) following the rules of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) for a period of 24 months. The costs of social charges of the employer are included in the grant. The grant additionally includes funds to cover research expenses up to total of CHF 24'000, and a travel allowance of total CHF 5'000, for the entire funding period. The conditions for the expenditure of research costs follow the SNSF financial rules for NCCRs.

The grantee will be employed as researcher at the respective host institution (University of Fribourg, ETHZ, EPFL, Empa or CSEM), and therefore have a valid work contract during the entire funding period.

All non-expended funds at the end of the project must be reimbursed to the NCCR.

Contact

For questions and any further information concerning the Research Fellowship Program for Women in Science of the NCCR Bio-Inspired Materials, please contact nccr-grants@unifr.ch.