

# Regulations for the USI Doctoral Mobility Programme

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Masculine or feminine terms used in these regulations refer to individuals of any gender.

## Generalities

### Art. 1 – Principle

- The Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) provides financial support to internal PhD candidates enrolled at USI who wish to enhance their scientific training through a research stay abroad during their doctoral studies.
- During the stay abroad, doctoral students are generally expected to devote at least 80% of their time to the proposed research project. A lower percentage may be accepted upon justified request, particularly for candidates with family obligations.

### Art. 2 – Duration and Starting Date

- The support is granted for a minimum period of six (6) months and a maximum of twelve (12) months.
- The stay abroad may be split into two periods of at least three (3) months each within a total duration of eighteen (18) months.
- The earliest possible start date is 3 (3) months after the application deadline
- The research stay must start no later than twelve (12) months after the funding decision. A justified delay beyond this limit may be approved upon request.
- Financial support cannot be granted retroactively.

### Art. 3 – Research Location

- The host institution must be located outside Switzerland.
- The host country should differ from the candidate's country of origin or previous university education. Exceptions may be granted on scientific grounds.
- The host institution may not be the same as that of the candidate's previous academic degrees (particularly Bachelor's or Master's).

## Formal Requirements and Application Procedure

### Art. 4 – Call and Submission Procedure

- The Research Commission launches calls for applications twice per year, which are published online.
- Applications must be submitted electronically in the required format.
- All applications must include the complete set of mandatory documents, including a confirmation letter from the host institution and the required recommendation letters.

- Applications must be written in English or in one of the Swiss national languages.

#### **Art. 5 – Personal Eligibility Criteria**

Applications for financial support may be submitted by USI doctoral candidates from all disciplines meet the following conditions:

- Have been enrolled at USI for at least twelve (12) months at the time of application.
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in PhD programmes of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences must have a thesis supervisor who is directly employed by USI (and not by IOR, IRB, or EOC).
- Hold Swiss nationality, a valid residence or cross-border permit, or be married to / in a registered partnership with a Swiss citizen.
- Are not employed on a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).
- Confirm in their career plan the intention to continue and complete their doctoral studies at USI after the mobility period.
- Hold an active employment contract with USI for the entire duration of the research stay, which must be explicitly guaranteed by the USI supervisor in the reference letter, including confirmation of employment and salary for the full mobility period.

## **Evaluation process**

#### **Art. 7 – Competence**

The scientific evaluation and the decision on the allocation of financial support are made by the USI Research Commission.

#### **Art. 8 – Evaluation Criteria**

Only applications compliant with the provisions of this Regulation are subject to scientific evaluation.

The scientific evaluation is based on the following criteria::

- The expected benefit of the mobility for the candidate's scientific career and the added value to the doctoral thesis;
- The scientific profile of the candidate and the current stage of their doctoral studies;
- The quality of the host institution (working conditions, supervision, and training opportunities);
- Previous mobility experience: candidates who have already benefited from a research mobility period (funded or unfunded) will remain eligible, but their applications will be assessed with greater scrutiny. Given limited resources, the Commission will give preference to candidates who have not yet undertaken a mobility period, or whose proposed stay represents a substantially new and distinct experience;
- Continuity of employment: the Commission will verify that the doctoral contract and funding are maintained throughout the mobility period;
- The candidate's publication record may be considered as part of the scientific profile, with particular attention to the quality and relevance of the publications.

#### **Art. 9 – Evaluation Procedure**

- The Research Commission selects applications based on the above criteria and communicates the decision to applicants in the form of an official decision.

The evaluation procedure follows the internal regulations of the Research Commission.

#### **Art. 10 – Requests for Extension**

Extensions of the grant period or requests for supplementary funding are not foreseen.

#### **Art. 11 – Legal Effects of the Grant**

- After being awarded funding, recipients retain their employment relationship with USI, if existing.
- Beneficiaries shall use the research stay abroad for their scientific advancement.
- The support cannot extend beyond the thesis defense date, and the stay abroad does not prolong the maximum doctoral duration of five (5) years.

## Financial Provisions

### Art. 12 – Eligible Costs

The candidate may request reimbursement for:

- The maximum budget available for a research stay abroad is CHF 20,000. If the applicant is to be accompanied by immediate family, up to CHF 5,000 per additional family member may be awarded.
- Travel expenses to and from the host institution. The most economical means of transport should be chosen. Travel costs for accompanying family members (partner and children) are covered if they accompany the grantee for the entire stay.
- Housing expenses, university fees, and costs for use of host institution infrastructure (e.g. library access).
- Participation fees for scientific conferences relevant to the candidate's research, when not covered by other funding.
- The Research Commission may adjust the duration of the stay and budget as deemed appropriate.
- Actual expenses are reimbursed within the limits of USI's regulations on allowances and up to the approved budget.

### Art. 13 – Additional Funding

- Double funding for the same costs or activities covered by the USI contribution is not permitted.
- Beneficiaries must inform the Research Commission of any external funding relevant to the research stay.

## Rights and Duties of Beneficiaries

### Art. 14 – Activation and Expiration of the Grant

- The doctoral candidate must inform SRI of the start date of the research stay abroad.
- The grant is managed by SRI, and reimbursements are made upon submission of valid receipts.
- The is revoked if the mobility does not begin within the time limits established in Article 2.

### Art. 15 – Change in Research Plan or Host Institution

- After approval, the host institution or research plan may be modified only with prior authorization from the Research Commission, upon a well-justified written request.

### Art. 16 – Withdrawal or Early Termination

- Should the beneficiary withdraw from or prematurely terminate the mobility, they must immediately notify SRI in writing.

### Art. 17 – Reporting

- Upon completion of the mobility, beneficiaries must submit a final activity report to the Research Commission.

## **Final Provisions**

### **Art. 18 – Other Provisions**

In matters not covered by the present regulations, the USI Academic Staff Regulations shall apply.

### **Art. 19 – Entry into Force**

- These regulations enter into force upon approval by the USI Rectorate. Any amendments are subject to the Rectorate's procedural rules.

## **ANNEX: Application Dossier (PDF format)**

- Application form
- Curriculum vitae (maximum 2 pages)
- List of publications
- Scientific description (maximum 5 pages):
  - Summary of the doctoral thesis and current progress (max 2 pages)
  - Motivation for the chosen host institution (max 1 page)
  - Work plan for the research stay abroad (max 2 pages)
  - Invitation letter on official letterhead from the host institution
- Letter of support from the USI thesis supervisor (to be sent directly to the Research Commission), explicitly confirming the candidate's employment and financial coverage throughout the mobility period.