

Guideline of the Faculty Clinical Research Platform to promote academic careers in clinical disciplines of the Vetsuisse Faculty, University of Bern

Faculty Clinical Research Platform, June 6th 2023

1. Goals and Principles

- a. The Faculty Clinical Research Platform (FCRP) of the Vetsuisse faculty, University of Bern, supports clinical research (research dealing with diseases, their pathophysiology, diagnostics and animal health) within the framework of existing resources, especially for careers in clinical specialist areas, in which there is a shortage of young academics.
- b. The aim of the present funding measure is to support promising young clinicians as part of their PhD or habilitation.
- c. The FKFP awards grants to research projects. It supports the researchers with a basic contribution appropriate to the planned research (namely salaries, personnel points [PP]).
- d. The grants are awarded based on the results of a scientific assessment of the submitted applications.
- e. Projects to carry out clinical research within the framework of the FCRP must be applied for or jointly applied for by a clinician from the Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern (member of the DKV). Cooperation within the faculty (DIP, DCR-VPH) is preferred.

2. Duration of Contribution

The FKFP usually awards grants for 3-4 years, with successful acquisition of third-party funds as PI for a maximum of six years.

3. Personal requirements

- a. Persons who meet the requirements for admission according to the project call are entitled to apply.
- b. Applicants or co-applicants from the clinic must have a doctorate and must be boarded or board eligible (European or American College).
- c. Applicants must be able to carry out research projects on their own responsibility and to supervise the staff involved in them in terms of expertise and leadership.

Other personal requirements: Applicants or co-applicants from the clinics must prove that

- d. they carry out their scientific research activities together with any scientific service or teaching activities, usually at least 50 percent of the working time,
- e. they are employed at one of the clinics or clinical departments of the Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern for at least the duration of the research project or they have been guaranteed such employment in writing; and
- f. the necessary research infrastructure (preferably in the DIP or DCR-VPH) is available to them.

4. Formal requirements

- a. Applications must be submitted electronically to the head of the FCRP Steering Board.
- b. Deadlines for submitting applications are specified in the project calls.

5. Project applications and eligible costs

- a. Project proposals
 - i) Applications for project funding must be submitted in accordance with the specifications in the call and must contain all the necessary information and documents.
 - ii) In the research plan, the applicants must describe the research project they plan to conduct.
- b. Eligible research costs
 - i) Eligible costs of funding are the salaries of scientific and technical employees of the research projects within the ranges and rates specified by the Steering Board.
 - ii) The costs must be requested and quantified in the application.
 - iii) The FCRP can set maximum limits for individual cost categories within the available resources.
 - iv) The FCRP contributes towards salary costs for the time in which researchers are relieved of their clinical work and can concentrate on their research projects.

6. Applicants

- a. Applications for project funding are usually submitted by individuals (applicants).
- b. The applicant or co-applicant must be a clinician and member of the DKV of the Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern.

7. Evaluation criteria and submissions

The applications are evaluated according to internationally accepted criteria. The decisive criteria for the award of project funding are the academic quality of the research application and the academic qualifications of the applicant. Approved projects are based on high-quality applications and evidence that the project will add value to an academic clinical career.

- a) Evaluation criteria for applicants/co-applicants from the clinic:
 - i) Previous scientific achievements
 - ii) Education (board exam, or board eligibility)
 - iii) Previous scientific achievements and professional competence in relation to the proposed project
 - iv) Teaching experience
 - v) Suitability for an academic career in clinical disciplines (based on the promotion guidelines)
- b) Evaluation criteria for the proposed projects:

- i) Expertise related to the proposed project
- ii) Scientific relevance, originality, topicality, suitability of the methods and feasibility

8. Evaluation

The selection process for project funding includes internal reviews and may include external reviews.

a) Internal review (by Steering Board members)

Members of the Steering Board handle the internal processing and evaluation of applications and decide whether funding will be granted. They represent neither their institutional nor their own interests. They refrain from processing applications from their own institution, i.e., division or institute. The decision-making committee must consist of at least 2 representatives from DKV and 1 representative each from DIP and DCR-VPH.

b) External assessment (peer review)

Up to two external reviewers with the necessary professional competence can be selected for each application. They must be independent from the applicants and be familiar with the current state of international research in the relevant subject area. The steering board asks the selected external experts for an opinion. If they agree, they get access to the application documents. They submit their report within the period set by the steering board.

The external reviewers assess the applications regarding the criteria formulated by the steering board. They then make an overall assessment of the application (regarding the applicant and the project) and summarize the most important reasons for their assessment.

The external reports on an application are first checked for their suitability and quality by the members of the steering board and are weighted accordingly.

The members of the Steering Board confirm, supplement or comment on the assessments from the reports by submitting their own criteria-based assessment. The selection criteria are transparently defined for each project call based on the text of the advertisement, the funding guidelines and strategic considerations. The steering board reserves the right to invite (co-) applicants to interviews. The applicants receive the decision together with the expert reviews and the reviews from the Steering Board.

9. Reporting

- a) The grantees are obliged to submit annual reports.
- b) A final report must be submitted at the end of the project.
- c) The FCRP must be acknowledged in publications that were developed with funding from the FCRP.