

Sabbatical fellowships for laureates of the MISTRZ (MASTER) Programme *2017 call for proposals*

Description of the program

In 2012 the [Foundation for Polish Science \(FNP\)](#) has launched the Sabbatical fellowships programme. It is a unique founding opportunity offered only to laureates of the [MISTRZ \(MASTER\) programme](#). The holders of the MISTRZ grants are advanced researchers whose attainments so far provide assurance of scientific excellence. Under the MISTRZ programme, those outstanding scholar are provided with a flexible grants designed either to intensify the research they are already conducting or to explore new fields of research. Once the grant is completed, beneficiaries of the programme become eligible to apply for a sabbatical fellowships.

The Sabbatical fellowships for laureates of the MISTRZ (MASTER) programme has been introduced as yet another form of support for the alumni of the programme. However, the most important principle behind such scheme is to provide beneficiaries of the MISTRZ with a possibility of undertaking a sabbatical leave within a best foreign research centers. The reasons for such sabbatical leave may differ from case to case, *i.e.* exploration of new research directions as well as mastering of new technologies, initiation of new international collaborations or eventual continuation of already fruitful international cooperation (assuming it does provide an added value to the existing relationship). Nevertheless, a bottom line always is a scientific excellence according to the motto of the Foundation: *supporting only the best, so that they can become even better.*

The Sabbatical fellowship may be awarded for a period of **3 to 6 months** to visit one foreign research centre chosen by the beneficiary. The fellowship amounts **up to 5,500 € per month**. The beneficiary of the Master programme may receive the Sabbatical fellowship only once. Each year the Foundation's Board may award only **up to three** Sabbatical fellowships.

Procedure of application

The applications are submitted only electronically.

The candidates are obliged to use **an electronic form** to provide a set of information on their:

- academic track record and major achievements in the period of past five years,
- description of the foreign research center and a reference letter by a host scholar,
- appropriate description of the research project which the candidate intends to pursue in case a sabbatical fellowship is granted.

All information in the form should be provided **in English**.

The electronic form has been divided into four main tabs:

1. Basic information,
2. Documents to download,
3. Attachments,
4. Verification and application submission.

1. The **'Basic information'** tab is divided into following three sections:

- a) proposal,
- b) candidate,
- c) host institution.

a) The **'Project'** section includes information on:

- title of the research project that is reported to the Sabbatical fellowship,
- keywords associated with the project,
- the project abstract,
- the date (month and year) and duration (from 3 to 6 months) of Sabbatical fellowship,
- thematic area, the field and specialization assigned to the application (*specialization can be selected from the drop-down list after selection of the field, and the changes can be saved by the "Save / Add the chosen specialization" button*)

- b) The **'Applicant'** section collects information about candidate, *i.e.* contact or current employment details, are collected in. Candidates may use the drop-down list containing a register of institutions to provide the information on their workplace. If their institution is not listed, they are obliged to enter its name to the proper box.
- c) The **'Destination'** section provides information about the foreign research center (host institution) chosen by the candidate for implementation of the project and the person who the potential laureate will cooperate with during the Sabbatical fellowship.
2. The **'Downloads'** tab provides:
- detailed information on the Programme,
 - 'Applicant's statement' form** that should be printed out, signed by the applicant, scanned, and uploaded as one of required attachments listed in the 'Attachments' tab.
3. The **'Attachments'** section enables candidates to upload information about their scientific achievements, in a PDF format:
- Applicant's academic resume** (up to 3 pages A4).
 - Applicant's publications from past 5 years.**
 - Description of the foreign research unit, justification of the choice** (up to 3 pages A4):
 - the characteristics of the research center with emphasis on its position in the scientific community,
 - justification for selection of the fellow institution,
 - the expected benefits, which may be result of cooperation established in the framework of the fellowship.
 - Letter of intent from the chosen foreign research unit** providing information on:
 - the consent for research as a part of Sabbatical fellowship,
 - the duration of research,
 - a brief description of the nature of the proposed cooperation.

This annex should be scanned electronic version (PDF format preferred) of the original letter of intent with the stamp and signature of the authorized person, for example. General Director of the Institute and Dean of the Faculty.
 - Description of a research plan** (up to 5 pages A4) that should be a well-balanced description appropriate to the nature of the programme. In principle, it's advisable to include:
 - a brief state of the art,
 - clear description of the scientific aim(s) of the project,
 - justification for selection of the research direction,
 - expected outcome(s) and the influence of proposed project on the science development.
 - Applicant's statement** provides confirmation that the applicant accepts the Sabbatical fellowship Regulations. The adequate form is available in **'Downloads'** section.

Provided materials will serve as a basis for reviewers in order to assess candidate's research output and achievements in the period of past five years and the potential outcome of proposed cooperation. Provided information will also serve as a basis for reviewers in order to assess scientific excellence of the planned research to be conducted in the foreign research center as well as a scientific potential of the host institution and a scientific collaborator, i.e. project feasibility.

It is advisable for candidates to provide adequate information regarding their scientific excellence as well as contribution to his/her discipline of science. Therefore, candidate shall include within their academic resume a brief information on their scholarly education and academic employment, including the most important fellowships and research grants awarded. The resume shall contain a section devoted to the description of the most important research achievements of the candidate in the past five years, highlighting in particular the scientific originality of obtained results.

After providing changes in each section, the candidate can save them with the 'Save' button.

4. The tab '**Verification and application submission**' enables conducting a simplified formal verification and submission of the electronic application form. The electronic application will be submitted on-line only if it is complete. In the case of obvious irregularities or lack of attachments the system indicates the tab that requires revision. The application is invalid without the registration form submission – please, press 'Submit application' button to finish the submission procedure. Before submitting the application, the candidate can log in repeatedly and change previously entered data. After submission of the form, further changes are not possible.

General information on the evaluation

Each application is evaluated by at least three assessors. The assessor should evaluate the application according to the assessment criteria following the instruction manual. i.e. giving the grade and writing a brief critique pointing out the application's strengths and weaknesses. The assessor's identity is not revealed to the applicant, only the grade and the commentary may be passed on to the applicant.

The Foundation reserves the right to request supplementary information from the assessor. The Foundation may terminate its agreement with the assessor if the work is not performed within the deadline or contains incomplete/ insufficient information.

The Foundation is concerned to receive the reviews within an agreed time and in a form enabling honest evaluation and qualification of the applications submitted for the competition.

The peer-review assessment

Sabbatical fellowships for laureates of the MISTRZ (MASTER) Programme aim to identify the best applications. Each application undergoes the process of evaluation provided by the assessor who prepares an individual merit-based critique of the candidate's application using the evaluation form, and to give an overall **grade** for the application.

Assessment criteria

- Candidate's research output and achievements in the period of past five years, including in particular an assessment of the candidate's contribution to his/her discipline,
- Scientific excellence of the planned research to be conducted at the foreign research center,
- A scientific potential of the host institution and a foreign collaborator shall be taken into account.

Critique - the assessor is asked to write a short commentary based on the scientific excellence of the candidate and a value of the proposed research plan. Typically, such assessment shall be no longer than 3 to 4 pages. We will be grateful if the strong and weak sides of the application are set out based on the assessment criteria.

Grade - the grade is used to assess scientific excellence of the candidate and his/her application. It is awarded on a scale from 1 to 7:

- **7 - Outstanding** (exceptionally strong application of a path-breaking potential which definitely should receive funding; a high-risk project that – if successful – may have outstanding impact),
- **6 - Excellent** (very strong application with just negligible weaknesses which most likely should receive funding; a solid proposal of an excellent scientific value),
- **5 - Very good to excellent** (very strong application with minor weaknesses which may be granted funding),
- **4 - Very good** (strong application with minor weaknesses which may receive funding only if there are sufficient funds),
- **3 - Good** (application with same strengths, but also moderate weaknesses which probably should not receive funding),
- **2 - Weak** (application with a few strengths, but also at least one major weaknesses or several minor weaknesses which most likely should not receive funding),

- **1 - Poor** (application with very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses which definitely should not receive funding).

Ethical rules for assessors

An assessor's consent to review an application submitted for a Foundation for Polish Science competition is equivalent to that assessor agreeing to treat all information received as confidential, including the applicant's name and other data contained in the application. Treating the data as confidential also means that the contents of the application may not be used for any other purpose than their evaluation.

The assessor will evaluate the application impartially and compare it with the highest scientific standards in a given field.

Withdrawal from an evaluation does not free the assessor from the obligation to maintain confidentiality of information.

Meeting the evaluation deadline guarantees proper running of the application selection procedure and ensures equal chances for all applicants. The assessor agrees to inform the Foundation immediately of his/her inability to complete the evaluation on time.

The assessor may not be in any conflict of interest with the applicant which would prevent an impartial evaluation of the application. If in doubt, the assessor should describe the potential conflict of interest to the programme officer in charge.

The assessor's reporting of a conflict of interest does not mean the Foundation will necessarily dispense with their evaluation. The assessor should withdraw from the evaluation if he/she is unable to be impartial.

Potential conflict of interest

Personal relations:

- being related to the applicant,
- being a legal guardian of the applicant or having their power of attorney,
- being in personal conflict with the applicant.

Professional relations:

- being in a subordinate/superior relation with any applicant taking part in a given competition,
- a managerial position (dean, director, manager) or research work (or applying for such work) at the applicant's home institution,
- being the applicant's superior during the past three years.

Research ties:

- scientific supervision over the applicant during the past five years,
- joint publications during the past three years,
- direct scientific competition with the applicant.

Economic ties:

- personal economic interest related to the application under evaluation (competitive or shared interest).