



Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

ETH Zurich MedLab Fellowships

September 2024

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Before the MedLab Fellowship

What are the benefits for the MedLab Fellow?

The MedLab Fellowship provides the opportunity to conduct an independent clinical research project as well as to gain in-depth insights into basic research and research methods. This enables the MedLab Fellow to conduct research that would normally not be possible in a clinical environment and provides the opportunity to produce high-quality publications. At the end of the MedLab Fellowship, the Fellow should be able to design and conduct his or her own clinical research project.

What are the benefits for the ETH host professor?

The ETH host professor and his group are directly confronted with clinical issues and can pursue concrete and application-oriented development. The aim is to attract, educate, and train talents in the medical research field by enhancing their scientific profiles and fostering their scientific independence early in their careers. This involves teaching research methodologies, introducing novel technologies, and providing the resources needed to successfully conduct clinical research. The collaboration between the clinical partner and the researchers at ETH Zurich often continues beyond the MedLab Fellowship period.

Does the MedLab Office help to find a suitable host professor at ETH Zurich?

Usually, the candidates identify and contact the preferred host professor on their own. If you need help finding a host professor, you may contact medlab@ethz.ch. Please inform us about your clinical supervisor, your interest, your research idea and how you would like to organize your clinical and research activities. Candidates are asked to check if they fulfil the eligibility requirements before contacting a potential host professor or the MedLab office.

Can MedLab funds be used for a MD-PhD?

Project funds may not be used to fund doctoral students, secretarial or office expenses, and basic IT or lab infrastructure of the host professor.

What must be considered regarding ethical issues demanding authorization?

Research on humans, on human embryonic stem cells, on animals, on GMO/pathogens, and on research involving developing countries requires authorization. You may use the [website on ethics and animal welfare](#) and the [research ethics self-check](#) to determine if your project at ETH Zurich needs ethics clearance or other kinds of authorisation. The MedLab Committee points out that grants can usually only be transferred if all required authorizations or notifications are available. ETH MedLab Fellowship candidates and their host professors are therefore recommended to submit the requests for these documents to the concerned authorities **parallel** to the evaluation by the MedLab Evaluation Committee. The MedLab Committee points out that authorizations and animal experimentation licenses often take a lot of time, and this must be organized well in advance.

What is the recommended duration for a MedLab Fellowship?

The duration of a MedLab Fellowship is one year full-time to a maximum of three years part-time. You are free to decide on the percentage allocation, but it is advisable to discuss it with the host professor in advance and adjust it if necessary, depending on the project's progress. Based on past experiences and the complexity of clinical research projects, a part-time MedLab Fellowship over two to three years is advisable.

During the MedLab Fellowship**What is the role of the ETH host professor during the MedLab Fellowship?**

The ETH host professor will act as the MedLab Fellow's main research contact at ETH Zurich, providing research support and guidance, access to necessary facilities and infrastructure (desk, lab and bench space, consumables, equipment), and assistance with practical and research arrangements. The host professor fosters a trusting and open dialogue, provides regular feedback and encourages academic independence. The host professor further provides 1/3 of the awarded MedLab Fellowship funds (1/3 of CHF 200'000) and integrates the MedLab Fellow in her or his laboratory at the research institution during the approved funding period.

What is the role of the clinical supervisor during the MedLab Fellowship?

The clinical supervisor guarantees the requested research time will be freed up from clinical activities during the entire granted period. The clinical supervisor supports and provides guidance on the clinical aspects of the project.

Will the MedLab Fellow be employed by the ETH Zurich?

Yes, the MedLab Fellow will be employed full- or part-time at the ETH Zurich. In case of a part-time Fellowship, the MedLab Fellow can remain employed part-time at the hospital.

What is expected of the MedLab Fellow during the Fellowship?

In addition to conducting self-directed research, the MedLab Fellow is expected to integrate into the ETH host group by attending group meetings and participating actively in everyday laboratory duties. The MedLab Fellow should present his or her work at conferences and actively participate in scientific discussions. It is important that the MedLab Fellow comes up with own ideas and proves ownership of the project. It is recommended that general tasks, responsibilities and rights of the MedLab Fellow and the host group are clarified at an early stage.

What is recommended at the start of the MedLab Fellowship?

Experience shows that the start takes some time to settle in. It is a recommended practice to make a timeline for the project. Even if it is not followed exactly, it helps to stay efficient and to think constructively about the future of the project and break down seemingly huge tasks into manageable parts. Setting short-term goals gives better control over the progress of the research project.

At the end of the MedLab Fellowship**Is there a possibility of extending the MedLab Fellowship into a (MD-)PhD if the project runs successful?**

This is theoretically possible, but it depends on the host professor, as this is organised and funded independently of the MedLab Fellowship.

Who can be contacted in the event of changes to the planned schedule, conflicts or questions?

The MedLab office (medlab@ethz.ch) and the Chair of the MedLab Committee (jgoldhahn@ethz.ch) are always willing to support the MedLab Fellow and the host professor and, if necessary, to take further measures or hold discussions to ensure the MedLab Fellowship proceeds smoothly.

Does the MedLab Fellow have to provide a final report?

Yes, a scientific and financial final report is due upon completion of the project, including all relevant outcomes (publications, patents, presentations, etc.). The necessary form will be sent to the MedLab Fellow shortly before the end of the MedLab Fellowship by e-mail.