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Federal project contributions (PgB) pursuant to the Higher Education Act HEEdA

Guidelines for the 2025–2026 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities

Legal notice

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Table of contents	
1. Content and purpose	5
2. Foundational documents	5
2.1. Legal basis	5
2.2. Decisions and agreements	5
3. Higher education institutions and institutions in the higher education sector eligible for federal funding	5
3.1. Participation of non-eligible institutions	5
3.1.1. Participation of non-eligible institutions as project partners	6
3.1.2. Participation of non-eligible institutions as subcontractors	6
4. Deliverables and goals	6
5. Programmes and programme coordinators at swissuniversities	6
6. Structure of the programmes	7
7. Financial	7
7.1. Disbursement of federal grants to eligible institutions via swissuniversities	7
7.2. Use of federal funding	7
7.3. Institutional contributions	8
7.3.1. Scope	8
7.3.2. Types of institutional contributions	8
7.3.3. Legitimate expenses	9
7.4. Reimbursing expenses	9
7.5. Reduction of federal funding	9
8. Communications	9
8.1. Communication modalities at programme level (overall programme)	9
8.1.1. Source	9
8.1.2. Corporate design	10
8.1.3. Responsibilities	10
8.1.4. Media relations	10
8.1.5. Media enquiries	10
8.1.6. Website	10
8.2. Communications at project or subproject level	10
9. Reporting	10
9.1. Reporting	10
9.2. Right of information and inspection	11
9.3. Amendments and clarifications	11

Abbreviations

HEdA	Higher Education Act
O-HEdA	Ordinance on the Higher Education Act
SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
SHK	Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions

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1. Content and purpose

These guidelines have been prepared on the basis of the foundational documents named in section 2. The guidelines provide information on the legal, financial, and organisational requirements for programmes and projects that receive federal funding, as defined in Article 59 HEdA, and that are administered and managed by swissuniversities.

The information is addressed to programme and project leaders as well as to the staff responsible for the annual project reporting at the higher education institutions (HEIs) and other institutions in the higher education sector eligible for federal funding (in the following: eligible institutions). The guidelines are designed to support practical implementation.

2. Foundational documents

2.1. Legal basis

- Higher Education Act (HEdA) of 30 September 2011
- Ordinance on the Higher Education Act (O-HEdA) of 23 November 2016
- Federal project contributions under the HEdA: Higher education institutions and other institutions in the higher education sector eligible for contributions of 9 January 2023, SERI

2.2. Decisions and agreements

- Decision of the SHK (Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions) of 8 November 2024 on federal project contributions
- Federal Council decision of 20 September 2024 on the review of tasks and subsidies
- Performance agreements 2025–2026 for the programmes Sustainability, Equal opportunities, Open Education & Digital Competencies, Open Science and Promotion of Young Talent between SERI and swissuniversities dated 31.01.2025
- Federal project contributions 2025–2028: Allocation concept for the first phase in accordance with the partial mandate dated 1 November 2021
- SHK partial mandate dated 25 November 2021 awarded to swissuniversities for federal project contributions 2025–2028
- Second SHK partial mandate dated 23 November 2023 awarded to swissuniversities for federal project contributions 2025–2028
- Checklist Diversity Mainstreaming of 7 July 2023, swissuniversities

3. Higher education institutions and institutions in the higher education sector eligible for federal funding

All higher education institutions and other institutions in the higher education sector that are eligible to receive federal funding are listed in the SERI document "[Projektgebundene Beiträge nach HFKG](#)" dated 9 January 2023. The higher education institutions listed therein are entitled to apply for federal project contributions and manage projects as a leading house. The swissuniversities General Secretariat is available in case of questions regarding eligibility for funding.

3.1. Participation of non-eligible institutions

Institutions not eligible to receive federal funding are not awarded federal project contributions in accordance with Art. 47 HEdA. However, they may participate in projects as project partners or in the capacity of subcontractors of eligible higher education institutions.

3.1.1. Participation of non-eligible institutions as project partners

Any services provided by non-eligible institutions as project partners must be listed in the project application by the eligible higher education institution concerned. Services provided by non-eligible institutions as project partners are not considered own contributions in accordance with Art. 49 V-HFKG (cf. Section 7.4). The financing of any services provided by non-eligible institutions must be agreed and secured between the eligible higher education institution concerned and the non-eligible institution.

3.1.2. Participation of non-eligible institutions as subcontractors

Any services provided by non-eligible institutions that are commissioned as subcontractors by an eligible higher education institution must be identified in the project application by the eligible higher education institution concerned, provided that the subcontracted service is essential for the project. The financing of any services provided by subcontractors must be agreed and secured between the relevant higher education institution entitled to funding and the subcontractor.

4. Deliverables and goals

The programmes pursue the objectives defined in the 2025 applications for federal project contributions approved by SHK. In addition, the strategic plan of swissuniversities (Coordination of the entire Swiss higher education policy 2025–2028) requires that the issue of diversity be addressed in all programmes and projects. swissuniversities provides its [Diversity Checklist Mainstreaming](#) as a guideline. The checklist serves as a tool for (self-)assessment and reflection on diversity in the context of the individual subject or theme. Depending on the project, different aspects and points of the checklist will have greater relevance. A programme’s success is measured not only in relation to the objectives and indicators set out in the annex to the performance agreements between SERI and swissuniversities, but also with regard to diversity indicators.

5. Programmes and programme coordinators at swissuniversities

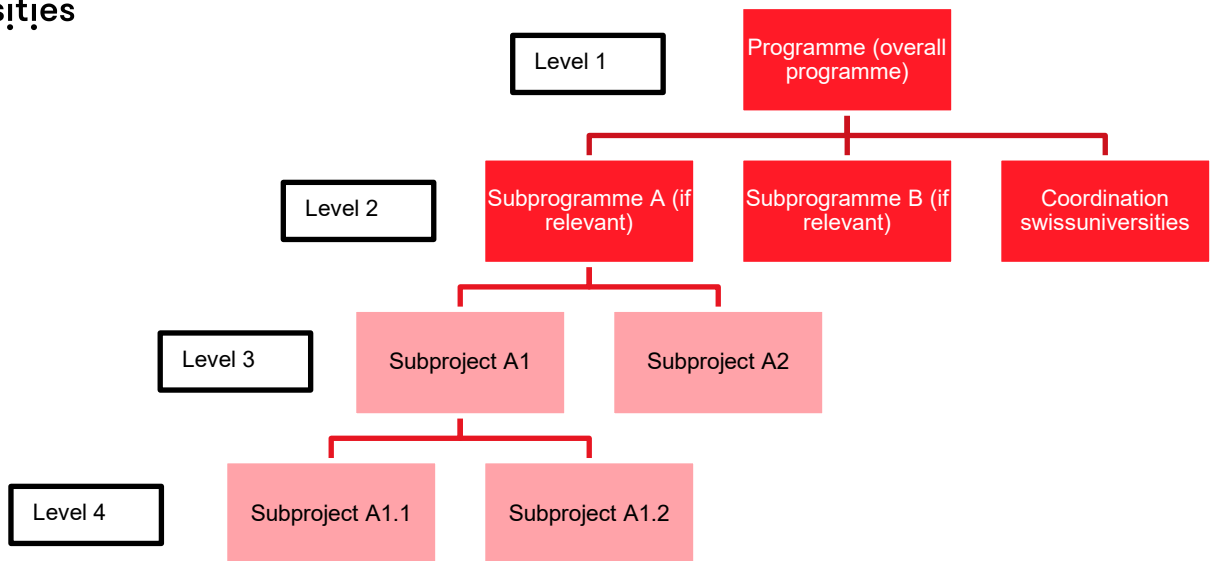
Programme	Programme coordinator
PgB Sustainability: Strengthening a culture of sustainability at Swiss higher education institutions	Antoine Maret
PgB Equal opportunities – Equity: Promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels of higher education institutions	Patricia Schmidiger
PgB Open Education & Digital Competencies	Jonatan Schäfer
PgB Open Science II	Ariane Studer, Thomas Leibundgut
PgB Promotion of young talent	Tristan Robert

6. Structure of the programmes

Because the individual programmes differ in structure, the number of hierarchical levels, roles, and other aspects, an example structure is used in these guidelines. At the top level is the programme name (overall programme), which corresponds to one of the programmes listed in section 5. The example structure is to be adapted to accommodate the actual circumstances of the individual programme.

Figure 1: Example programme structure

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7. Financial

7.1. Disbursement of federal grants to eligible institutions via swissuniversities

swissuniversities pays out in 2025 the federal funds to the eligible institutions in two tranches, generally at the beginning and in the middle of the year, after swissuniversities has received the corresponding tranche payment from SERI. The first tranche generally corresponds to 50% of the planned annual contribution and will be paid at the beginning of 2025. The second tranche will be paid in the second half of 2025.

7.2. Use of federal funding

Use of federal funding is restricted to those activities directly related to meeting the objectives of the programmes and their projects.

Federal contributions may only be used for the duration stipulated in the project contract concluded between swissuniversities and the eligible higher education institution.

Institutions must reimburse unused federal funds to swissuniversities as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days after the end of a project and upon settling accounts.

7.3. Institutional contributions

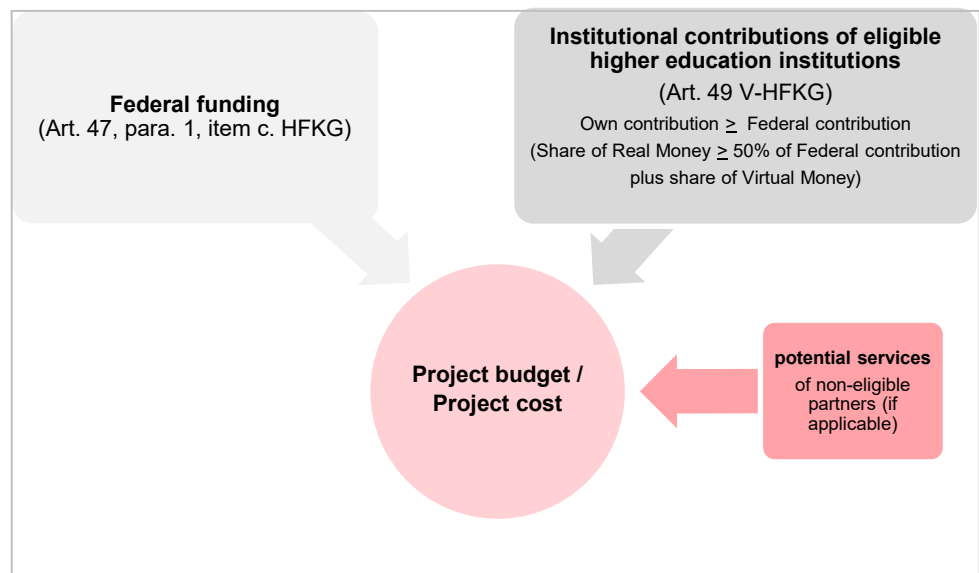
7.3.1. Scope

As a rule, and as stated in Article 49 O-HEdA, the Swiss Confederation pays out federal project contributions only if the eligible HEIs and other institutions in the higher education provide an overall own contribution that is at least equal to the federal contribution. The amount of the own contribution is based on the federal contribution, or on the amount of the federal contribution actually used if not fully spent (cf. Section 7.2, paragraph 2).

7.3.2. Types of institutional contributions

According to Article 49 O-HEdA, contributions from eligible institutions may take the form of cash or in-kind contributions (“real money” or “virtual money”). The amount of real money paid by an eligible institution must be at least equal to 50% of the federal contribution. The share of real money is calculated on the basis of the federal contribution, or the amount of the federal contribution actually used if not fully spent (see section 7.2, paragraph 2).

Figure 3: Composition of the project budget: Federal funding, institutional contributions, and contributions from project partners not eligible for federal funding



According to Article 50 O-HEdA, real money is the financing of project costs incurred by the eligible higher education institutions as a result of project participation in addition to normal current expenses. These include

- Staff costs, including social benefits;
- Material costs for equipment and facilities, operating materials, costs for the rental of purpose-specific premises, conference and travel expenses.

As stated in Article 49 O-HEdA, in-kind contributions (virtual money) may include expenses for existing staff resources, equipment and facilities, and operating materials if they are necessary for the project and if this is clearly documented.

Staff financed via national funding programmes (e.g. the SNSF) are considered in-kind contributions, as defined in the SHK provisions.

Examples of Real money and Virtual money

Real money	Virtual money
<p>Staff costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditures for project staff¹ 	<p>Staff costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditures for existing staff • Services provided by project staff funded via national funding programmes (e.g. the SNSF). • Overhead costs
<p>Material costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditures for external services • Expenditures for rental of external equipment/facilities • Travel costs and other expenses 	<p>Material costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditures for existing resources • Expenditures for existing infrastructure

Decisions on what is real money and what is virtual money are made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion and in the responsibility of the funded projects or their responsible bodies. If necessary, a justification of this assessment of real money and virtual money must be submitted to SERI.

7.3.3. Legitimate expenses

All institutional contributions used to conduct those activities required to achieve the objectives of a programme and its projects are considered as cash or in-kind contributions (cf. section 7.2). However, this applies only to the contributions of the eligible institutions. Any contributions made by project partners or subcontractors who are not eligible for funding must not be included with the institutional contributions.

Expenses for staff may be charged on the basis of the effective cost rates or on the basis of imputed cost rates (according to the cost accounts of the institutions eligible for funding).

7.4. Reimbursing expenses

The relevant federal or cantonal regulations apply when the concerned eligible institutions settle accounts.

7.5. Reduction of federal funding

In the event of a reduction in federal funding, the concerned eligible institutions are entitled to reduce their own contribution by the same amount. In such cases, the project goals must be adjusted, upon consultation with swissuniversities and SERI, if required.

8. Communications

8.1. Communication modalities at programme level (overall programme)

8.1.1. Source

For the programmes listed in section 5 (overall programmes), swissuniversities bears sole responsibility for communications.

¹ Project staff are persons recruited or already employed specifically for project, with a role defined in the project function chart.

8.1.2. Corporate design

The programmes listed under section 5 must use the swissuniversities corporate design at the overall programme level, with no exception; institutions participating in these programmes must not use their own logo/corporate design.

8.1.3. Responsibilities

The programme leader is generally responsible for the content of the information and communication activities, in consultation with the Secretary General of swissuniversities.

Operational support for these communications is offered by the swissuniversities programme coordinators.

If required, the head of communications at swissuniversities provides support in an advisory capacity but must receive advance notice of the activities in all cases.

8.1.4. Media relations

Press releases are generally prepared by the programme leader in consultation with the relevant steering committee. The Secretary General of swissuniversities submits these proposals to the swissuniversities Executive Board for approval, and the head of communications at swissuniversities publishes the information on the standard communication channels.

8.1.5. Media enquiries

Media enquiries are usually received and coordinated by the head of communications at swissuniversities; the programme leader is responsible for content. The swissuniversities Secretary General (operational enquiries) or President (strategic enquiries) respond to enquiries.

8.1.6. Website

The programmes listed in section 5 are published on the swissuniversities website.

8.2. Communications at project or subproject level

In the case of projects or subprojects within a programme (overall programme), the visual identity of the lead institution is generally used. In all communication activities, the role of swissuniversities must be communicated in text (descriptor) and, where appropriate, in images (use of the swissuniversities logo), as set out in the swissuniversities CD guidelines.

9. Reporting

9.1. Reporting

The report must include the following forms, all of which are provided by SERI:

- Intermediary financial report on the state of the project at the end of 2025
- Final content report at the end of the project
- Final financial report at the end of the project

The forms are sent by e-mail from pqb@swissuniversities.ch to the responsible project leaders by the end of 2025. The forms must be completed by the project leaders. The intermediary financial report on the state of the project at the end of 2025 must be submitted, unless otherwise decided, by 15 February 2026 at the latest to pqb@swissuniversities.ch. The final financial and content reports must be submitted, unless otherwise decided, one month after the end of the project mentioned in the contract between swissuniversities and the eligible higher education institution to pqb@swissuniversities.ch.

The reports must be submitted in electronic form (content report format PDF, financial report formats PDF and Excel). The concerned eligible institutions are responsible for the accuracy of the data provided.

On the basis of the reports submitted, the swissuniversities programme coordinators compile the reports at programme level and sign them. swissuniversities is required to submit the reports to SEFRI by 31 March 2026 (intermediary financial report) or, respectively by the end of 2026 at the latest (final content and financial report).

9.2. Right of information and inspection

SERI is entitled to review the accounts of swissuniversities and the accounts of the eligible institutions participating in the programmes. Upon request, swissuniversities and the eligible participating institutions must submit the relevant supporting documents for an audit to SERI or a third party commissioned by SERI.

9.3. Amendments and clarifications

The right to make changes and clarifications is reserved. In the event of any changes or clarifications, the swissuniversities programme coordinator must inform the participating institutions in a timely fashion.