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Minor Field Studies (MFS) Guidelines 2012

Internationella
PROGRAMKONTORET



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A. GENERAL CONDITIONS

1 What is Minor Field Studies (MFS)?

MFS is a scholarship programme² targeting students at the college/university's basic and advanced level with an international interest, who want to gather material for their thesis or equivalent³ in a developing country. The instrument for this is a travel scholarship which is a contribution so a field study can be conducted. The student is given the opportunity for at least two months in the field to study issues related to the global development process, i.e. to illuminate aspects within the essay subject which is of importance for developing countries' economic, social, political, cultural or knowledge development.

These guidelines apply to MFS scholarships awarded in 2012.

2 Aim of the programme

Minor Field Studies (MFS) is a programme designed to broaden and deepen a person's international skills for Sida's key partners within international development cooperation - Swedish universities and colleges - and contribute to broaden the Swedish resource base for international commitment and work.

The overall goal of the programme is primarily to furnish students but also teachers at Swedish universities and colleges with the opportunity to acquire knowledge about developing countries and development issues and forging contacts with institutions, organisations and research institutes for this purpose. The target groups for MFS are thus Swedish students and Swedish universities and colleges, as well as indirectly their partners in the developing countries.

Swedish universities have partnerships with institutions, organisations, companies or research institutes in developing countries with respect to student exchanges, teacher exchanges and courses. An effort should be that the MFS essays should be written within the framework of such partnerships.

3 Organisation and administration

The programme is run by the International Programme Office for Education and Training (IPK) and funded by the Board of International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

IPK formulates guidelines and provides information and administration of the participating institutions. IPK is also responsible for following up, evaluation and development of the programme. Information about the programme is available on the IPK website www.programkontoret.se. IPK is also responsible for cooperation with the selected university institutions, which organise the obligatory preparation training for the outgoing MFS students and the operation of the web portal www.mfs.nu.

The administration of the scholarships is decentralised to the seats of learning's institutions and international entities involved in the program by reviewing the applications and granting scholarships to applying students. Participating institutions/entities shall provide information to the students about MFS Program well before the application date.

² The program was established in 1968 under the name Minor Research Task, MRT.

³ A thesis in most cases implies an essay, therefore the word essay is used henceforth, but the thesis work, which does not result in an essay may also be eligible for MFS provided that the final product is examined according to the same requirements as other thesis projects at the same level.

B. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

4 General principles

4.1 The institution's application and report

The International Programme Office for Education and Training announces MFS scholarships once annually (in the autumn) on the website www.programkontoret.se where application forms and information are found under announcement time. Interested institutions/units at Swedish universities apply for MFS scholarships on a calendar basis (January-December) after the announcement of the IPK. The MFS application shall be signed by the prefect (if the application is submitted by the international entity or its equivalent, the application shall be signed by the president instead of prefect) and the person appointed as MFS supervisor at the institution. The original version of the application for MFS scholarships shall reach IPK or be postmarked no later than **1 November 2011**. Late applications received will not be considered.

The International Programme Office for Education and Training decides on applications from the institutions that shall be granted MFS scholarships and the number of fellowships awarded each institution. Note that the term "institution" applies to seats of learning and that similar entities are able to apply for participation in the programme.

Institutions wishing to administer the MFS must be able to make the selection according to the rules of the programme and give students proper opportunities to execute the essay. This requires the institution to offer students qualified supervisor assistance in Sweden for their studies and relevant contact persons in the host country. At least two supervisors at the institution shall have experience of working in developing countries and a wide international network. Institutions must also be able to describe how they make use of the experience which field studies provide and how they in turn benefit the institution's international work.

The decision on awarding the MFS scholarships is published on the IPK website www.programkontoret.se. Decisions will also be sent by letter to all applying institutions. IPK then pays MFS scholarships to awarded institutions with notification to which institution the payment is made, and the scholarship funds for MFS.

Operations within MFS shall be reported. The report is important for IPK's further development of the programme. The report to the International Programme Office for Education and Training occurs after the year's end in accordance with instructions given by IPK. Funds for scholarships that are not allocated shall be repaid to the IPK. Activities implemented in 2012 shall be reported to the International Programme Office for Education and Training no later than **15 January 2013**.

4.2 MFS scholarship and administration contribution

The MFS scholarship has been set at SEK 25 000 per student and is a contribution that is not intended to cover all expenses during the field period. It normally needs to be supplemented with study allowances. The scholarship may not be shared by several students. Each of the MFS students shall be SEK 25 000 in scholarship.

All institutions have the option of granting scholarships to external students (students from other institutions) who have supervisors and examiners at their own institution. When applying the department will estimate of the number of scholarships they will be able to allocate to internal and external students.

The awarded MFS institution receives an allowance, an administration allowance, based on the number of granted scholarships. The allowance is SEK 3 000 for both internal and external scholarships. The administration allowance is a contribution to the costs the

granting institution has, for example, telephone, postage, etc. The use of the operating grant need not be specified in the report.

MFS funds, as well as administration allowances are tied to the financial year (calendar year).

5 Participating institutions' commitments

Institutions involved in the MFS programme are committed to managing the entire process from application to the IPK to the selection process, payments and monitoring of the scholarship's usage, some form of follow-up with the students who received a scholarship during the year and to annually report on the outcome to IPK and present the usage of allocated funds.

5.1 Before the student's application

The institution is responsible for informing their students about the programme's existence, its objectives and conditions. In addition, the institution shall have access to several supervisors (at least two) who have knowledge of development issues and preferably also their own experience regarding work or research in the field.

The institutions should ideally have more than one selection round per year. This enables applications general perceived as good but which need to be supplemented, the opportunity to be referred to the next selection round.

5.2 Selection and decision

The institution will consider all applications received. Upon the institution's assessment of the received applications the proposed study's quality must be assessed as well as the applicant's suitability. For this, the awarded institutions should have at least two people or a committee responsible for all important aspects to be considered. The committee or the persons awarding the scholarships must have knowledge of and experience working in developing countries as well as familiarity with being a supervisory within the granting institution.

A full list of countries that are valid for an MFS study is published on the IPK's website. The list is based on the OECD's ⁴ development assistance committee (DAC) list of countries defined as developing countries.

The granting institutions should give priority to applications which promote collaboration with institutions, individuals and organisations in developing countries. Institutions should not grant a scholarship for studies involving high risk to the student or concerned persons in the host country's personal safety. MFS may not be awarded for studies in areas where the State Department advises against travel, this also applies to advice against non-essential travel as MFS cannot be regarded as a necessary journey.

The decision on which applicants are granted a scholarship will be posted at the seat of learning. When allocation decisions are made, the institution shall provide the scholarship winner with a personal certificate (*Letter of introduction* or *Certificate*), which announces the scholarship is granted and which can be shown in the host country. This certificate is a supplement to the certificate IPK issues and which the student obtains at the preparation course. IPK certificates are written in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Russian, or Swahili.

⁴ Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

5.2.1 *Academic quality*

The essay's presentation will have a general societal point of application, even in cases individual institutions, organisations, or specific technical/scientific/aesthetic phenomena are studied. This work may not study isolated phenomena, without relevance to developing countries. This means for example that the MFS scholarship may not be used for the study of a Swedish company or organisation's activities in one country but to include its interaction with the host country.

This implies that each subject choice that meets these basic criteria is valid for an MFS, regardless of discipline. It is awarded to institutions responsible for making this assessment.

The starting point of the programme is that it is the granting institution which evaluates the academic quality in the respective thesis proposal. This includes, unlike an ordinary essay at the institution, paying particular attention to the feasibility, methodologically as well as practical (e.g. safety in the field area, there is time available for preparation course, data collection, interview arrangements, language skills, reasonable financial planning) and the conditions that exist for the student to be able to conduct the essay based on field work.

Moreover, there should not be different academic requirements for an MFS thesis in relation to what is generally applicable for essays at the corresponding level at the granting institution.

5.2.2 *Personal assessment*

The applicant's personal suitability and maturity to be able to do a field work in a foreign environment should be assessed by the department. It can be done through a call to the institution's MFS administrators where questions concerning design and implementation are discussed. Such interviews can also give the student the opportunity to develop their applications.

5.2.3 *Supervisor and contact person*

It lies with the institution to assign a supervisor in Sweden and that, within the framework for the contacts the institution has in the host country, in cooperation with the student to ensure that the fellow has a contact person in the field. The supervisor in Sweden shall function as a regular supervisor for an essay at this level, i.e. providing academic support and counseling. The contact person in the field shall be able to assist with practical arrangements in the host country, such as contacts with resource persons. The contact person in the field does not receive compensation from the MFS programme for its efforts and it is therefore important the MFS student reimburses him/her for the agreed costs from his/her MFS scholarship, for example field transport.

A contact person in the field must be present so field work may be considered feasible. The institution should have ongoing cooperation with appropriate universities, organisations or institutions in the host country which can help with contacts in the field.

In addition to the above provisions, the institution also undertakes to ensure that grant applications meet the requirements mentioned in chapter 7.1.

5.3 Before the student's MFS stay

5.3.1 *The obligatory preparation course and MFS portal*

The institutions are responsible for ensuring that students are informed of the compulsory preparatory course. The course is a supplement to the institution's general responsibility to supervise and prepare the fellow on essay work and all those aspects that fall within the academic skills arena. Also read the preparatory course in section 7.2.

At the web address www.mfs.nu there is a portal, where essays and travelogues from former MFS students are saved. The portal is also used for administration of the preparation course. Each student must notify their course participation on the portal and the department is responsible for informing students about the notification requirements and must also approve or reject the notification in the portal at the latest three weeks prior the course. Each MFS supervisor is assigned a username and password to the portal by IPK.

5.3.2 Safety

The institution should ensure that the student is insured. Most Swedish universities insure the outbound students through Kammarkollegiet (the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency), see <http://www.kammarkollegiet.se/>. Institution representatives, together with students shall inform themselves about the foreign ministry's travel recommendations, and ensure that they are followed. Once in the host country fellow is him/herself responsible for safety through their travel insurance.

The institution will also inform the Swedish embassy in the host country that a fellow is arriving. Embassies have no responsibility to facilitate the fellow's work in administrative, technical or other issues.

5.3.3 Interruption

If the MFS study is interrupted or curtailed, the entire or part of the scholarship shall be paid back. The reason for the interruption shall in such cases, in connection with the annual report at the latest, be reported to the IPK, which determines the possible repayment amount. If the fellow, for various reasons does not begin field studies the entire scholarship amount excluding claim preparation costs shall be recovered.

5.4 After the student's return home

Upon return the essay shall be judged according to the criteria of the respective institution. Accepted MFS essays with the student's consent, shall be submitted by MFS supervisor to the essay archives available at MFS' portal www.mfs.nu as well as archived at the home institution in accordance with the rules applicable at the respective place of study.

The MFS student shall be advised of the possibility to write a travelogue for publication in the portal. The MFS supervisor approves travelogues before publication takes place in the portal. Both the essays and travel narratives are valuable for many students before their MFS, IPK therefore highly regard that institutions encourage students to put them on the portal.

6 Information arrangements and contact trips

6.1 Information arrangements

Granted MFS institutions may apply for grants at the IPK for information arrangements for the institution's students. Arrangements may preferably be arranged in cooperation with other MFS institutions. The aim is to create interest in the MFS programme, disseminate results from field work and/or debrief returning MFS-students.

Application for assistance concerning an information arrangement can be done 4 times per year at the IPK website where you also find instructions for application and reporting. A follow-up seminar may be granted a maximum of SEK 20 000.

Last dates to apply during 2012 are:

February 15st

April 15st

September 15st

November 15st

6.2 Contact trips

Awarded MFS institutions have the opportunity to apply for assistance to enable supervisors or administrators of the programme at the institution to visit the developing countries with which the institution has or wishes to have cooperation. The purpose is mainly to create or maintain contacts with institutions, individuals or organisations in developing countries, thereby improving opportunities for fellows' field work, but also to assist fellows and contact persons in the field if problems arise.

Contact trips (formerly known as supervisor trips) may be used to investigate the situation (in terms of study, security, etc.) and make contacts in a country where the institution has not previously sent fellows. Supervisor trips may be utilised by the person(s) at the institutions which supervise fellows or work to develop contacts or subjects for MFS fellows.

Application for assistance concerning a contact trip can be done 4 times per year at the IPK website where you also find instructions for application and reporting. A contact trip may be granted a maximum of SEK 20 000.

Last dates to apply during 2012 are:

February 15st

April 15st

September 15st

November 15st

7 Participating students' commitments

7.1 The student's application to the institution

The student's application for MFS scholarship shall be submitted to MFS supervisor at the respective awarded institution/unit at the seat of learning. It is possible to apply for an MFS scholarship together with one or, in exceptional cases, two other students in accordance with guidelines from the granting institution. A scholarship may not be shared by several students, but each of the granted MFS students must have his/her scholarship. Note that a student can only be granted to MFS scholarship once.

In addition the project descriptions shall fulfil the criteria listed above (sections 5.2 and 5.3), meeting the academic criteria determined by the institution applies and thus does not form an exception in relation to an ordinary essay at the institution. This also applies to the final assessment of the completed essay.

Shown below is what applies so a student's application for MFS scholarship shall be deemed to be complete.

7.1.1 *The following basic requirements shall be fulfilled*

- The student will engage his/her MFS study as an essay at a basic or advanced level and should have had, in principle, 150 college/university credits upon departure. The student must not have commenced postgraduate studies.
- The student must never have been granted MFS scholarship or other IPK or Sida-funded scholarship for the same stay which the application concerns. Other relevant experience, e.g. studies and/or stay in a developing country or volunteer work is not an obstacle to be granted an MFS scholarship.
- The applicant must be a Swedish citizen or have permanent residence in Sweden. In the latter case, the study may not take place in the home country. Please note that EU citizens' permanent right to residence is not tantamount to permanent residence. Students from other Nordic countries who are not Swedish citizens shall have fixed

accommodation (registered) in Sweden for at least a year to be eligible for MFS scholarship.

- The student should be proficient in English and Swedish. Knowledge of the host language is of merit. Assessment of feasibility on the basis of language shall be made. It is the awarded institution's responsibility to make this assessment.

7.1.2 Project description

The student's application must contain an explicitly described and feasible project, and proposing an alternative approach if anything would prevent the implementation of the original plan.

Project description should include:

- Choice of the country (See valid countries on the IPK's website www.programkontoret.se).
- Schedule for field work of at least an eight-week stay in the host country.
- Purpose and description of the subject must have a clear connection to development issues as well as the course(s) applicants have studied/are studying (see sections 1 and 5.2.1).
- Method.
- Draft alternative approach that presents the most critical part of the planned field study and how the applicant intends to handle this.
- Preliminary budget (see point 7.1.3)
- Estimated date for the preparation course. Account must be taken for the registration time. Read more about the preparation course in section 7.2.

7.1.3 Budget

The MFS scholarship has been set at SEK 25 000 per student and is a contribution that is not intended to cover all expenses during the field period. It normally needs to be supplemented with e.g. study allowances.

The student's application shall tabulate a preliminary budget, which may include costs as follows:

- Travel as inexpensively as possible to and from the country where the study will be conducted.
- Part of the living costs (50% of international investment allowance. See: www.skatteverket.se).
- Any necessary travel within the country/region.
- Vaccinations.
- Insurance (See section 5.3.2).
- Any costs for equipment.
- Travel to and from and accommodation where the preparatory course is furnished.
- Printing of the MFS essay (maximum of 10 copies).

Insurance costs during the stay abroad should be included in the scholarship, but should be borne by the institution. The institution determines, in collaboration with the fellow which travel insurance should be taken out. If the student counts on remaining in the country on his/her own after completion of the field period, renewal of insurance coverage during this period should also be agreed.

The fellows themselves will book the trips, arrange vaccinations and visas. Where appropriate, such as in chronic disease or other health reasons, which may be affected by a stay abroad, students should also undergo a medical examination to demonstrate no obstacles exist.

The student should, on request from the department account for costs covered by the scholarship, such as receipts for ticket costs, vaccinations, etc.

7.2 Obligatory preparation course and the MFS portal

All students granted an MFS scholarship shall attend a mandatory preparation course before departure. The course lasts two days and deals with development cooperation, cultural matters, health issues, safety information, certain field methods and specific country information. Participants in this course receive a personal certificate from the IPK to show when necessary in the field.

Current information about the course's content, course dates and the like are listed on the MFS portal on the web www.mfs.nu. The student signs up on the portal and the MFS supervisor approves/rejects the notification in the portal. The student must sign up no later than three weeks before the course starts. Also on the MFS portal are former MFS students' essays and travelogues compiled.

Costs for accommodation and travel to and from the preparatory course will be included in the scholarship.

7.3 The student's MFS stay

Institution representatives should inform themselves about the Foreign Ministry's travel recommendations in conjunction with the MFS student who simultaneously has a personal responsibility before and during their stay to keep informed of the Foreign Ministry's (UD's) travel recommendations regarding travel destination, the country and/or the region where they will reside, see www.regeringen.se. Once in the host country the fellow is personally responsible for safety through travel insurance.

The student should on arrival contact the embassy to communicate his/her address and briefly inform them about the paper. The embassy has no obligations to assist the student in thesis work, either in practical or theoretical issues.

7.3.1 Supervisor in Sweden

The supervisor in Sweden is responsible for that the student is familiar with the method he/she will use and has knowledge of field methodology in general. In addition, the supervisor assists the student in identifying contact persons in the field (see below) and informs what is expected of him/her. During the student's field work the supervisor in Sweden shall remain in contact with the fellow to possibly help through supervision. After returning home, the student shall receive the same supervisor assistance as other thesis students at the institution.

7.3.2 Contact person in the field

The contact person in the field may help students with practical arrangements before and during the field work. The contact person may be reimbursed by the student, from the scholarship, for minor expenses in connection with such help: e.g., local travel, reimbursement for material, etc. In addition to this, the contact person receives no separate compensation from the programme. The contact person may also be an aid in the thesis work. Institutions are encouraged to promote their contacts with institutions in the host country to facilitate the field work and cooperation with the contact person.

7.3.3 Reimbursement

If the fellow, for various reasons does not begin a field study or if an MFS study, is interrupted or curtailed the scholarship shall be recovered. The MFS supervisor at the institution shall always be contacted in these cases. The supervisor shall report the incident to the IPK, which determines the possible amount of reimbursement.

7.4 The student's MFS essay

The essay must be written in English or the host country's official language accepted by the granting institution. Afterwards the completed report shall be assessed in accordance with the criteria applicable at the respective institution. In cases where two students have written an essay together, but do not attend the same institution, the essay will be assessed at both institutions concerned. Those students who have applied for an MFS scholarship at another institution other than their own shall present their essays at the institution which they are enrolled.

The IPK would like to see the essay then be uploaded to the portal at www.mfs.nu.

7.5 The student's travelogue from MFS studies

On www.mfs.nu the student can write a travelogue from his MFS study. On the website there are full instructions on how to do this. Included in these, among other things, the MFS supervisor shall approve the travelogue before it is published in the portal.

7.6 Ambassadorship

After homecoming the student is expected to participate in information sessions and the like at their institution to disseminate their experience in the field study to other students and teachers.

8 Information arrangements

All institutions that grant scholarships also have the possibility to, with support from the IPK, coordinate an information arrangement for their students. MFS students that have returned from their field study are expected to disseminate their experiences to other students and teachers and the participation in an information arrangement can be a part of this. For more information the student is referred to his/her institution.