



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA



**Supporting Talent in ReSearch@University of Padova – STARS Grants
Call for Proposals 2017
Deadline: June 30th, 2017**

CONSIDERING

The University of Padova (UniPD or University) has launched an investment program called "Talent in Research," aimed at supporting excellent research to be conducted on its premises.

In October 2016, the project Talents@UniPD was launched involving a scouting initiative open to all scientists, with no exclusion of citizenship, for those willing to choose UniPD as their Host Institution in their application for European Research Council (ERC) funded research.

Through the initiative “SupportingTalent in ReSearch@University of Padova” (**STARS Grants**), UniPD intends to promote and encourage high quality, innovative and ambitious research in Padova, with the final goal to strengthen the ability to attract external competitive grants. This action intends to stimulate the University's participation in competitive European calls for proposals, in particular those within the ERC framework, and to disseminate a positive and open attitude towards international research funding opportunities.

There are two types of STARS grants designed to fund individual research projects proposed by Principal Investigators (PIs) who are at a "Starting" or "Consolidator" career stage. A third type of funding is reserved for PIs who submitted an ERC application in response to an ERC call for applications in 2014, 2015, or 2016 and indicated the University of Padova as their Host Institution. They must have obtained an "A" mark in the second step of the evaluation process, thus were considered eligible for funding but not funded due to budget limits.

Applicants can submit a project in one of the 25 scientific research areas, as grouped in the three Macro-areas corresponding to the three ERC research domains as described in Annex 1.

Art. 1 – PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

STARS Grants are envisaged to fund research projects for the duration of two years, proposed by researchers holding excellent scientific qualifications willing to launch or consolidate an independent research and a research team at UniPD.

The grants operate on a 'bottom-up' basis, without any predetermined priorities. They are open to PIs of any age and nationality, who wish to pursue research at a UniPD Department and who are able to demonstrate a flair for innovation, ambition and the ability to implement the research proposed.

This selection announcement provides for the following types of grant:

- **STARS Starting Grants (STARS-StG):** designed to fund excellent PIs in their early career stage and who are about to establish their own research team and/or who are starting their own independent research;
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- **STARS Consolidator Grants (STARS-CoG):** designed to fund excellent PIs, who are already conducting research at UniPD and who are in the phase of consolidating their own research team and/or their own independent research.
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- **STARS Wild Card Grants (STARS-WiC):** designed to fund PIs who submitted a project to the 2014, 2015, or 2016 ERC calls for proposals, indicated UniPD as their Host Institution and obtained a final mark of "A", thus qualified for funding but were not funded due to budget limits.

In total UniPD will fund approximately 43 research projects proportionally divided amongst the Macro-areas and the types of grant, based on the eligible applications and Wild Card projects submitted.

Art. 2 – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

For each type of grant, PIs of any nationality meeting the following criteria may apply for this selection announcement:

- ✓ **STARS-StG:** the PI has been awarded his/her first Doctoral degree within a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 7 years prior to 1 January 2018; eligibility extensions are provided for in the 'Specific Eligibility Criteria' contained in Annex 2 - STARS Guide for applicants;
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- ✓ **STARS-CoG:** the PI is a tenured Professor or Researcher at UniPD or a Researcher on a fixed-term contract of type a) or type b) with UniPD and has been awarded his/her first Doctoral degree within a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 years prior to 1 January 2018; eligibility extensions are provided for in the 'Specific Eligibility Criteria' contained in Annex 2 - STARS Guide for applicants;
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- ✓ **STARS-WiC:** the PI is a Professor/Researcher who submitted a proposal in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced ERC Grant calls of 2014, 2015 or 2016, indicating UniPD as the Host Institution, and obtained a final mark of "A" but was not funded for lack of funds.

PIs holding an active ERC research grant on the date of application are not eligible to apply.

Art. 3 - PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

3.1 Submission Process

Every applicant can submit a single research proposal in one of the 25 research areas within the three Marco-areas corresponding to the three ERC research domains as follows:

- ✓ Project proposals must be completed and submitted exclusively online at the web address <https://pica.cineca.it/unipd/>, following the guidelines in Annex 2;
- ✓ The proposal must be submitted by 13:00 (1 pm) CET on June 30th, 2017; late applications will not be considered;
- ✓ The proposal must be completed in its entirety and include all the required documentation;
- ✓ The proposal must be written in English; if the documentation is written in any other language, the application must also include a translation in English;
- ✓ Proposal submitted under STARS-StG type must also include a “*Letter of commitment*” duly signed by the Director of the Department which the applicant chose as the hosting Department. The “*Letter of commitment*” must be prepared according to the guidelines described in Annex 2;
- ✓ Once the online proposal is completed, the applicant must sign the form following the instructions given in the application process and attach a valid identity document.

The system performs a general validation of the application. It checks if the form was completed in its entirety and will report any errors that must be corrected before closing the application. The research proposal will be automatically submitted to UniPD once the 'Submit' button is pressed and the online application is definitively closed. Thus, applicants must not send hard copies to UniPD.

3.2 Content of the Proposal

The application form should include:

- an administrative form containing information about the PI and concise information on the proposal;
- the research proposal, prepared according to the instructions in the STARS Guide for applicants, which needs to be attached to the administrative form in .pdf format. It should consist of:
 - **Part B1**: extended synopsis; the PI's CV and track record (only for StG and CoG);
 - **Part B2**: scientific proposal.

PIs applying for a WiC grant must only submit part B2 of the proposal, extrapolating a research line from the original ERC project so as to make it more consistent with the biennial duration and the maximum contributions granted under the STARS Grants.

Each STARS-StG project may be funded up to a maximum of 140,000 Euros (80,000 Euros in Macro-area SH - Social Sciences and Humanities), for a period of 2 years. If the project includes the cost of a two-year 'Research Fellow' contract for the PI (maximum 80,000 Euros), the maximum contribution amount will be of 100,000 Euros (60,000 Euros in Macro-area SH).

Each STARS-CoG and STARS-WiC project can be funded up to a maximum of 140,000 Euros (80,000 Euros for Macro-area SH - Social Sciences and Humanities) for a period of 2 years.

Therefore, eligible costs include:

Amount in Euros	Research Costs Macro-area PE: Physical Sciences and Engineering	Research Costs Macro-area LS: Life Sciences	Research Costs Macro-area SH: Social Sciences and Humanities	Cost of non- affiliated PIs (Biennial gross amount)
STARS-StG				
Without PI's contract	140	140	80	0
With PI's contract	100	100	60	80
STARS-CoG	140	140	80	0
STARS-WiC	140	140	80	0

The proposal must include the following documents:

- for STARS-StG: the *Letter of Commitment* signed by the Director of the Department chosen as Hosting Department by the candidate. After checking the project's feasibility, the Director commits to provide the necessary support for accessing facilities, tools and useful knowledge for carrying out the project;
- for STARS-WiC: the ERC Evaluation Summary Report of the project submitted to the call for applications in 2014, 2015, or 2016 and which obtained a final mark of "A" but was not funded;
- for all applications: the form related to ethical implications ("Ethical Issues" Table in the STARS Guide for applicants), attesting to the project's compliance to national, European and international legislation on ethical issues.

This call for proposals, the "STARS Guide for applicants," and all documentation related to the submission of the proposal are available at the web address: <http://www.unipd.it/call-2017-talentsunipd>.

Art. 4 - THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

UniPD will appoint an Evaluation Committee to select the winning project proposals. It will be composed of a maximum of 25 external experts, of recognized international prestige, in the 3 ERC Macro-areas:

- PE: Physical Sciences and Engineering;
- LS: Life Sciences;
- SH: Social Sciences and Humanities.

The Committee will work in three sub-committees, one for each Macro-area and each composed of a maximum of 10, 9 and 6 experts (PE=10, LS=9, SH=6). If no projects are submitted within an area, no experts will be appointed in that area. In addition, the sub-committees will also make use of independent reviewers in the particular scientific areas of individual projects.

The Evaluation Committee will be chaired by three coordinators who, in their capacity as Presidents, will coordinate the work of the three sub-committees.

Art. 5 - SELECTION PROCESS

All applications will first be checked for eligibility, then evaluated in two separate evaluation stages for STARS-StG and STARS-CoG applications, and in a single stage for STARS-WiC applications. More information on the duration of the selection process will be provided on receipt of proposals.

5.1 - Eligibility Check

At the close of the call, all proposals will be checked to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements in accordance with Art. 2. Eligibility is checked on the basis of the information the PI provided in the administrative form and the correctness and completeness of the documentation.

The results of the eligibility check will be made public at the web address: <http://www.unipd.it/call-2017-talentsunipd>. PIs excluded from the selection process will be informed via e-mail. If PIs detect an error in the eligibility check, they can notify UniPD using the system indicated in the e-mail. If a notification is not sent within 5 working days of being notified of the proposal's disqualification, the disqualification will become final.

In any event, applicants will be admitted to the selection process with reserve and UniPD can disqualify proposals at any point of the selection process should it find missing admission requirements.

5.2 - Criteria for evaluating StG and CoG proposals

Scientific excellence will be the sole criterion of evaluation (Annex 3 - Evaluation Criteria). Each proposal will be evaluated, at every stage of the selection process, on the following two principles:

- the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the project;
- the intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the PI.

A PI of a STARS-StG project must already have demonstrated the potential to conduct independent research and evidence of scientific maturity. For example, a StG PI must have produced at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of his/her Doctoral supervisor. The PI should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to his/her field of studies and career stage, highlighting:

- significant publications (as main author) in international peer-reviewed scientific journals or in leading journals in his/her field of studies;
- participation in national or international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes and other qualifications useful to the selection process.

A PI of a STARS-CoG project must have already demonstrated research independence and evidence of scientific maturity. For example, a CoG PI must have produced several important publications as main author or which show his/her fundamental scientific contribution. The PI should also be able to demonstrate a consolidated track record of achievements appropriate to his/her field of studies and career stage, highlighting:

- significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed scientific journals or in leading journals in their field of studies;
- participation in established national or international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes and other qualifications useful to the selection process.

5.3 – Pre-selection of the proposals (Step 1)

At step 1, only part B1 of the STARS-StG and STARS-CoG proposals will be assessed. Each proposal will be reviewed by the member of the sub-committee who is expert in the scientific area as indicated by the applicant in the administrative form.

At the end of step 1, every sub-committee will rank the proposals in their relevant Macro-area based on the marks the experts gave them.

At the end of step 1, applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A. is of excellent quality and passes to the next step of the evaluation;
- B. is of high quality, but not sufficient to pass to the next step of the evaluation;
- C. is not of sufficient quality to pass to the next step of the evaluation.

The number of proposals passing to step 2 of the evaluation will be triple the number of projects that can be funded (excluding the Wild Card Grants).

The results will be published on the website: <http://www.unipd.it/call-2017-talentsunipd>.

5.4 - Evaluation of proposals (Step 2)

The complete version (Part B1 and Part B2) of every STARS-StG and STARS-CoG proposal will be assessed by the competent Macro-area sub-committee according to the research field indicated in the administrative form. Each proposal will be evaluated by three reviewers. These will be a member of the sub-committee and two external reviewers.

Only one part of the application is needed for assessment of STARS-WiC proposals (B2 - scientific proposal). This will only be reviewed by the Macro-area sub-committee expert who is competent in the scientific area indicated in the administrative form.

PIs of STARS-StG and STARS-CoG will be invited to an interview conducted by the relevant subcommittee. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. The interview consists of a presentation outlining the research project and a question and answer session related to the research project.

Applicants will be notified of the date and time of the interview by e-mail (at the address indicated in the application form) with a notice of approximately 3-4 weeks. The interviews will be held in English, via Skype or in person at UniPD. No reimbursement is provided for participation at the interview. In compliance with Annex 2, absence or unavailability to attend the interview shall be deemed withdrawal from the selection process and will result in the exclusion of the proposal from financing.

Every Macro-area sub-committee will use the information gathered from the reviewers' evaluations and the interviews to jointly draw the final ranking for StG and CoG proposals. The subcommittees

will propose the budget allocation for proposals deemed fundable. They will also assess WiC proposals and recommend the budget allocation to those deemed worthy of funding.

Art. 6 – ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

In cases where the PI included the cost of his/her own contract in the proposed budget, UniPD will confer a Research Fellow contract ('Assegno di Ricerca Type B'). The contract will be drawn in accordance with Art. 3, paragraph 2, clause b) of the current University Regulations for research grants at UniPD, for the amount provided for in the project budget (gross amount). The hosting Department shall agree with the PI the contract's starting date, under penalty of forfeiture. The date shall, in no case, be later than March 31st, 2018.

Should the agreement not be entered into by this date, the winner shall forfeit the right to the research grant. An extension to the agreed date may be allowed in exceptional cases, for example if a project requires an ethics review, in case of prolonged visa procedures, or in case of justified and documented personal problems.

The signing of the contract shall not imply a subordinate employment relationship or ensure any rights to access to permanent UniPD staff positions.

For STARS-StG projects, UniPD will make available the project's funds to the hosting Department. The project shall start from the date stipulated on the research contract and last two years. The contract cannot be extended.

Funding related to the STARS-CoG and STAR-WiC projects will be made available to the hosting Department within three months from the end of the selection process. Funds are usable for two years, non-extendible.

The research cost contribution will cover cost for additional staff, equipment, travel costs, consumables, publications and other costs necessary for the implementation of the project. Expenses that occur outside the period of the contract are not eligible.

Art. 7 DUTIES OF PIs OF FUNDED PROJECTS

PIs are duty bound to carry out the activities envisaged in the research project they submitted and for which they are being funded, dedicating to the project a percentage of their time as outlined hereunder:

- PIs of STARS-StG project, whose remuneration is charged to the project, must dedicate 100% of their time;
- PIs of STARS-StG projects, who already hold a position at UniPD, must dedicate at least 50% of their time;
- PIs of STARS-CoG projects, already employed by UniPD, must dedicate at least 40% of their time;
- PIs of STARS-WiC projects, must dedicate at least 30%, 40% or 50% of their time depending on the ERC Grant application they submitted.

Within 30 days of the end of the project, the PI must submit a detailed scientific final report describing the implementation of the project, the results obtained, any changes compared to the original proposal. The scientific report, together with the opinion of the Board of the Department hosting the research, must be sent to UniPD, who will, in turn, send this to the Evaluation Committee for the purpose of an *ex post* assessment.

For the purpose of *ex post* verification, in publications resulting from research funded under this selection announcement, PIs should cite the program STARS, the financial support received and the project title.

The PI undertakes to submit a ERC-StG or ERC-CoG or ERC-Adv project proposal that names UniPD as *Host Institution* to the first appropriate call for proposals.

Art. 8 – ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

All the research and innovation activities proposed shall comply with ethical principles and relevant national, EU and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols. Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection. Research and innovation activities proposed under these projects shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Art. 9 – FINAL PROVISIONS

For anything not specified in this selection announcement, see Law no. 240/2010 and the University of Padova's current "Regulations Governing Research Grant Awards" and subsequent amendments and integrations, and current regulations.

The University reserves the right to verify a candidate's self-certifications and statutory declaration, in accordance with Italian Presidential Decree DPR 445/2000, at any stage of the procedure. If the aforementioned statements are found to be false, then the declarer shall forfeit any benefits that he/she may have gained from the false statements, without prejudice to any sanctions envisaged by the Italian criminal code or by special laws shall be governed by Art. 756 of Italian Presidential Decree DPR no. 445/2000.

The person responsible for the selection process is Dr Andrea Berti, Head of Research and Technology Transfer at the University of Padova.

For questions or information about this call for proposals, please email: talent.stars@unipd.it.

The English version of the STARS call has the sole purpose of enabling the applicants to understand the content thereof; only the Italian version of the call is legally binding.

Annex 1: ERC Macro-areas and scientific areas

Macro-area PE: Physical Sciences and Engineering	Macro-area LS: Life Sciences	Macro-area SH: Social Sciences and Humanities
<p>PE1 Mathematics: All areas of mathematics, pure and applied, plus mathematical foundations of computer science, mathematical physics and statistics</p> <p>PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter: Particle, nuclear, plasma, atomic, molecular, gas, and optical physics</p> <p>PE3 Condensed Matter Physics: Structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences, biophysics</p> <p>PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences: Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics</p> <p>PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials: Materials synthesis, structure-properties relations, functional and advanced materials, molecular architecture, organic chemistry</p> <p>PE6 Computer Science and Informatics: Informatics and information systems, computer science, scientific computing, intelligent systems</p> <p>PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering: Electrical, electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering</p> <p>PE8 Products and Processes Engineering: Product design, process design and control, construction methods, civil engineering, energy processes, material engineering</p> <p>PE9 Universe Sciences: Astro-physics/chemistry/biology; solar system; stellar, galactic and extragalactic astronomy, planetary systems, cosmology, space science,</p>	<p>LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry: Molecular synthesis, modification and interaction, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, metabolism, signal transduction</p> <p>LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology: Molecular and population genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, bioinformatics, computational biology, biostatistics, biological modelling and simulation, systems biology, genetic epidemiology</p> <p>LS3 Cellular and Developmental Biology: Cell biology, cell physiology, signal transduction, organogenesis, developmental genetics, pattern formation in plants and animals, stem cell biology</p> <p>LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology: Organ physiology, pathophysiology, endocrinology, metabolism, ageing, tumorigenesis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome</p> <p>LS5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders: Neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimaging, systems neuroscience, neurological and psychiatric disorders</p> <p>LS6 Immunity and Infection: The immune system and related disorders, infectious agents and diseases, prevention and treatment of infection</p> <p>LS7 Diagnostics, Therapies, Applied</p>	<p>SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations: Economics, finance and management</p> <p>SH2 Institutions, Values, Environment and Space: Political science, law, sustainability science, geography, regional studies and planning</p> <p>SH3 The Social World, Diversity, Population: Sociology, social psychology, demography, education, communication</p> <p>SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity: Cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, philosophy of mind</p> <p>SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production: Literature, philology, cultural studies, anthropology, study of the arts, philosophy</p> <p>SH6 The Study of the Human Past: Archaeology and history</p>

<p>instrumentation PE10 Earth System Science: Physical geography, geology, geophysics, atmospheric sciences, oceanography, climatology, cryology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management</p>	<p>Medical Technology and Public Health: Aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of disease, public health, epidemiology, pharmacology, clinical medicine, regenerative medicine, medical ethics LS8 Evolutionary, Population and Environmental Biology: Evolution, ecology, animal behaviour, population biology, biodiversity, biogeography, marine biology, microbial ecology LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology: Applied plant and animal sciences; food sciences; forestry; industrial, environmental and non-medical biotechnologies, nanobiotechnology, bioengineering; synthetic and chemical biology; biomimetics; bioremediation</p>	
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Annex 2: STARS Guide for Applicants

Specific eligibility criteria
Procedure for the Letter of commitment
Forms

Annex 3: Evaluation criteria