



MSCA Seal of Excellence@UniPD
Call 2024

Deadline for the submission of applications:
30 April 2024 - 1 pm, Italian Time Zone

PREAMBLE

Through the investment programme called "Talent in Research", the University of Padua (UNIPD) aims at supporting excellent research to be conducted within its premises. In the framework of such programme, UNIPD has been implementing the MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD initiative, that is intended to attract young researchers carrying out high quality, innovative and ambitious research at the highest international standards, with the final goal of strengthening the University ability to gain external competitive funding.

The action "MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD" is addressed to researchers of all nationalities, who have:

- submitted a project under the **Horizon Europe 2023 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for applications (MSCA-PF)**;
- indicated UNIPD as Beneficiary;
- been awarded by the European Commission the "Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions"¹, scoring 85% or above but not being funded under the call due to budget restraints.

Article 1 - OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME

The "MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD" aims at supporting projects submitted by researchers who have received the "Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions" in the **Horizon Europe 2023 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for proposals** and possess the eligibility requirements listed below, in Article 2 of this call.

For every year of activity, including the placement period(s) (if applicable), as specified in the MSCA-PF project submitted for funding, a financial contribution is foreseen for a maximum of 36 months, as detailed hereby:

1. 40,000.00 Euros/year (gross amount) covering the costs for the researcher's employment contract;
2. 10,000.00 Euros/year for research, training and networking activities;
3. For MSCA PF Global Fellowship projects, an additional "Mobility Allowance" of 500.00 Euros/month (before tax) is foreseen for the outgoing phase to be carried out in a Third Country. The Mobility Allowance will cover a period of max. 24 months, i.e. max 12,000.00 Euros before tax for each project.

Article 2 - ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Researchers taking part in this call are considered eligible for funding if they possess the following **requirements** at the date of application:

¹ The Seal of Excellence is the high-quality label awarded by the European Commission to projects submitted to Horizon Europe, which were deemed to deserve funding, scoring 85% or above and therefore passing the quality threshold, but did not receive it due to budget limits (https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en)

- ✓ they have participated in the 2023 MSCA-PF Call for proposals (European Fellowship or Global Fellowship type), presenting a proposal in collaboration with a Supervisor working at UNIPD and for which UNIPD is indicated as the project Beneficiary;
- ✓ they have received the European Commission “Seal of Excellence - MSC Actions” and have therefore scored 85% or above.

Researchers are **not eligible for funding if:**

- ✓ they have already received the MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD funding, being awarded a grant in any of the previous calls (i.e., 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023);
- ✓ at the time of the project start, they do not have the requisites to be appointed through a “Research grant contract – type b” / “*Contratto di assegno per lo svolgimento di attività di ricerca di tipo b*” under the **Regulation for the awarding of research grants of the University of Padua, in accordance with Article 22 of Legge no. 240/2010 (Law No. 240/2010)**²

Article 3 - APPLICATION PROCEDURE

This call and all documents supporting the application for funding are available at the following pages <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence2024> (in Italian), <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2024> (in English).

Each applicant is invited to submit an online application via [Google Form](#). The application must be duly completed with all relevant requested information, including the following documents³, in pdf format:

1. Copy of valid ID (national ID or passport);
2. Copy of PhD certificate or other equivalent degree. Italian candidates may attest their degree by presenting a self-certification as a “Statutory declaration” (*Dichiarazione sostitutiva* - Annex 1);
3. Letter of commitment of the Researcher (Annex 2);
4. Letter of Commitment signed by the Head of the Host Department at UNIPD. The Host Department must be the same as indicated by the candidate in the MSCA-PF project that was assigned the Seal of Excellence (Annex 3);
5. Copy of the MSCA-PF project submitted to the European Commission under the 2023 call (Part A, B1 and B2);
6. Evaluation Summary Report stating the MSCA-PF project score;
7. Copy of the Seal of Excellence Certificate awarded by the European Commission. UNIPD acknowledges that the Seal of Excellence Certificate may not be available at the time of application submission. Please note that the presentation of the Seal of Excellence Certificate will be eventually mandatory for the validation of funding for all selected MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD 2023 candidates and it shall be sent via email as soon as it becomes available to individual.grants@unipd.it.

Applications for funding shall be submitted exclusively online, via Google Form, by the following deadline

30 April 2024, 1 pm, Italian Time Zone

Incomplete or overdue applications will not be taken into consideration.

² The Regulation is available in Italian and English on the MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD 2024 web pages. For reference, Art. 6 – *Admission Requirements* and Art. 12 – *Conflicts of interest*.

³ The *Letter of Commitment of the Researcher* and the *Letter of Commitment of the Host Institution* document templates are only available in English.

Article 4 - SELECTION PROCEDURE

The International Research Office of the University of Padua is in charge of the selection procedure, which consists in the administrative check for the eligibility of all the applications for funding, followed by a ranking list of eligible projects and the identification, in relation to the available budget, of the fundable projects.

4.1 - Eligibility Check

At the closure of the call, all proposals are subject to the administrative eligibility check in accordance with the requirements listed in Article 2. The applications are assessed to verify the correctness and completeness of the information provided by the candidates.

Ineligible candidates will receive an email including the reasons for the rejection and a reference to the redress procedure. Any request for redress must be filed within 5 working days upon reception of the results of the eligibility check, if the applicant believes that a mistake has been made by UNIPD during the selection process. After this period, in the absence of further communications, the disqualification becomes effective.

In any case, applicants are conditionally admitted to the selection process and UNIPD may disqualify proposals at any stage of the selection process, should it find that any admission requirements are missing.

If additional funds are available, eligible projects from the reserve list may be eventually funded.

4.2 Selection of fundable projects

The University of Padua will produce a ranking list of proposals that are eligible for funding. In accordance with the objectives of the Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions and with the aim of granting funding to the most deserving candidates, the International Research Office will rank the projects based on the difference between the European Commission's score and the actual funding score threshold in the relevant MSCA panel within the scope of the MSCA-PF 2023 call⁴.

Eligible proposals will be funded until the available budget limit for this call is reached. Any *ex-aequo* will be treated following the procedures applied by the European Commission within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions⁵.

The list of eligible and fundable projects, with the related requested funding amount, will be made available on line at <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence2024> (in Italian), <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2024> (in English) and at the International Research Office for the purpose of any requests of access to records.

Art. 5 - ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The list of funded projects, approved by Rector's decree, granting the funding, will be published online at <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence2024> (in Italian), <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2024> (in English).

Once the selection procedures have been completed, the funding assigned to the project is made available by UNIPD to the Department that is indicated in the project proposal. The budget shall include the annual cost covering the research grant awarded to the researcher and the amount covering the research costs.

Applicants who receive funding shall be appointed through a Research contract ('*Assegno di Ricerca* Type B'). The contract will be drawn in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 2, clause b) of the current University Regulations for

⁴ Should the data concerning the funding threshold for each panel not be available when the ranking list is elaborated, the International Research Office will rank eligible proposals in descending order of scores, using the nominal score reported on the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) issued by the European Commission.

⁵ For the MSCA-PF 2023, the evaluation criteria applied are specified in the 2023-24 Work Programme https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf.

the awarding of research grants⁶, for a total amount of 40,000.00 Euros (gross amount) per year, for the period indicated in the proposal (“duration of the project”). An additional “Mobility Allowance” of 500.00 eur/month (before tax), shall be granted for the outgoing phase of MSCA PF Global Fellowship projects that are carried out in a Third Country over a period of max. 24 months (i.e., max 12,000.00 Euros before tax for each project). The Research contract, covering the MSCA Seal of Excellence project (including the placement period, if applicable), must not exceed the duration of 36 months.

The research activity begins at the time the contract is signed and is carried out for the expected duration of the proposed project.

The contribution of 10,000.00 Euros shall cover the researcher’s costs for research, training and networking activities (e.g. minor equipment, travel costs, consumables, publications etc.) necessary for the implementation of the project). Expenses occurring outside the project period are not eligible.

The hosting Department shall agree the contract starting date with the researcher, under penalty of forfeiture. The date shall **not be later than 31 December 2024**.

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, e.g. if a project requires an ethics review, in case of prolonged visa procedures, or in case of justified and documented personal problems. Any request to postpone the project after the ultimate starting date of **31 December 2024**, must be addressed to the International Research Office (individual.grants@unipd.it).

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

The MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD grant shall be suspended in case researchers are awarded a MSCA-Postdoctoral Fellowship or undertake any other contract incompatible with the research grant contract, after they have been funded in the framework of this call.

Article 6 - DUTIES OF RESEARCHERS OF FUNDED PROJECTS

The researchers funded under this call shall carry out the activities envisaged in the research project fully and personally. The research activities must comply with the MSCA-PF 2023 project that obtained the Seal of Excellence, as submitted in the application.

In order to verify that the objectives of the funded project have been fulfilled, at the end of every year of funded research activity, the researcher shall submit to the Head of the Hosting Department a detailed scientific report describing how the funding has been used, the implementation of the project, with reference to ethical issues - if applicable - and the results obtained. Any negative evaluation pertaining to the research activity, will cause the immediate termination of the contract with no further notice by UNIPD. Within 60 days since the end of the project, the researcher shall also submit a detailed scientific final report describing how the funding has been used, the implementation of the project, the results obtained (released or forthcoming publications, databases), any changes compared to the original proposal, and a comment on networks and partnerships that may have been initiated during the implementation of the research work. Researchers are expected to report on any seminars and conferences held through their project and on the possibility of further developing their research through other external funding.

The final scientific report, together with the approval issued by the Board of the Department hosting the research, shall be sent to the UNIPD International Research Office (individual.grants@unipd.it).

All publications resulting from the research funded under this call must display the programme’s name “MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD” and the project acronym.

⁶ The Regulation is available in Italian and English on the MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD 2024 web pages. For reference, Art. 6 – Admission Requirements and Art. 12 – Conflicts of interest

Article 7 - 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.

Article 8 - FINAL PROVISIONS

For anything not specified in this call, see Law no. 240/2010, the University of Padua current **“Regulations Governing Research Grant Awards” and subsequent amendments and integrations, and current regulations.**

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

The person responsible for this procedure is Francesca Mura, Head of the International Research Office at the University of Padua.

For questions or information about this call for proposals, please contact: individual.grants@unipd.it.

This English version of the “MSCA Seal of Excellence @UniPD” call is a courtesy translation and it has the sole purpose of enabling applicants to understand the content thereof; only the Italian version of the call is legally binding.

Padua, date of signature

The Rector

Daniela Mapelli

digitally signed according to legislative decree no. 82/2005

Attachments:

1. Statutory declaration (only for Italian and European candidates who wish to certify the possession of a PhD diploma awarded by an Italian University)
2. Letter of Commitment of the Researcher (mandatory)
3. Letter of Commitment of the Hosting Department, to be signed by the Head of the Hosting Department at UNIPD (mandatory)