

# AXA RESEARCH FUND CHAIRS APPLICATIONS GUIDELINES

**The AXA Research Fund is AXA Group's science philanthropy initiative dedicated to advancing knowledge on global risks for the benefit of society.**

This guide contains all the information you need to apply for a Chair funded by the AXA Research Fund including a general overview of the AXA Research Fund selection process, and information on grant agreement terms and conditions.

**This guide may be used as a reference both by Institutions and candidates. The information presented within overrides any contrary terms that could be found elsewhere.**

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## 1. Introduction

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The mission of the AXA Research Fund is to **fund academic research** dedicated to **bettering our understanding of important hazards, risks and threats and our current global societal challenges** within four clusters: socioeconomic risks, environmental risks, life risks and the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”.

The AXA Chair scheme is intended to **support a significant step change** in the **development of a Research** area within a **host Institution** and to contribute in a **distinctive** way to the **development** of that Research area in line with the Institution's long term strategy. It aims at creating a **full-time academic position in the host Institution and fostering a step-change in the career of the appointed AXA Professor**.

In 2017, the AXA Research Fund dedicates up to **five (5) million euros** to support **four (4) to six (6) Chairs**. An AXA Chair is supported through a **single endowment payment**. The **duration of the scheme** is the prerogative of the Institution and may **range from 5 to 15 years**.

The AXA Research Fund requires a **specific Candidate** (inaugural Candidate for Successional Chairs) to be presented, and the Candidate commits to take up the position, if awarded. Once the Institution enters into an agreement with the AXA Research Fund, **it is expected to invest the lump sum and use the resulting income towards the costs of the Chair**.

The AXA Research Fund partners with the European Science Foundation (ESF) to carry out the **scientific evaluation process**. ESF is an established, **independent and non-governmental organization** dedicated to supporting scientific endeavors. ESF conducts the peer review in accordance with the criteria defined by the AXA Research Fund.

To know more about the AXA Research Fund: <http://axa-research.org/>.

To know more about the European Science Foundation: <http://www.esf.org>.

## 2. Research topics supported

The research project must fall within the **scope** of the mission of the AXA Research Fund, that is, to fund basic science dedicated to developing a better understanding of global **risks**.

The following **list of topics** has been **validated by the AXA Research Fund Advisory Board**. **Only research projects with justified relevance to this list will be considered for funding.**

- **Environmental Risks**

- Climate change.
- Natural hazards & disaster risk reduction.
- Urbanization & Resilience, Transport and Road Safety.
- Sustainable Food and Water Management.

- **Life Risks**

- Ageing, dependency and long-term care.
- Chronic diseases.
- Well-being and prevention.
- Public Health & healthcare systems.

- **Socio-economic Risks**

- Insurance and its influence on the Macroeconomic environment.
- Geopolitics and the dynamics of international relations.
- Sustainability of public & private welfare systems.
- Future of financial markets (low interest rate environment, climate economics...).

- **“The Fourth Industrial Revolution”**

- The technological revolution's Social & economic impact (Medical digitization, Health innovation, Energy transition, Finance, Internet of Things, Social Networks...).
- Tools and novel approaches to scientific modelling (Bioinformatics, Data Science...).
- Data privacy & Cybersecurity, ethics, values & regulation.
- Artificial intelligence & learning.
- Human behaviors and cyber-physical interactions.

## 3. Timeline & Application process

Institutions may apply for either:

- **AXA Permanent Chair position** to be held by an individual Chair holder:
  - The host Institution intends to create a **permanent full-time position** and recruit a **world-class researcher** from another Institution.
  - The Institution may apply for a Chair position to be filled at a level of seniority that satisfies the above requirement and define the duration of the partnership and the level of funding requested accordingly.
- **AXA Successional Chair Programme** where the endowment will serve to support a succession of temporary short-term appointments:
  - The Institution intends to set up a **mid or long-term Research Programme** where **successive world class researchers** will be attracted from other institutions to **fixed term appointments**. In exceptional circumstances, an application to appoint an internal Chair holder might be considered.
  - The Successional Chair Programme may be held at a level of seniority that satisfies the above requirement.
  - The application must identify the proposed inaugural Chair holder, and indicate the procedures that will be followed to secure the succession of Chair holders, following completion of the inaugural appointment.
  - The period of each appointment should **range from two to five years** within the global frame of the expected duration. The Institution may define the duration of the partnership and the level of funding requested accordingly.

Institutions are invited to submit their applications for one of the two campaigns, bearing in mind that an Institution is allowed to submit only one application per year:

- **November 24, 2016 for the first** and;
- **June 20, 2017 for the second**.

### • *First campaign*

Requesting a slot	Oct 7, 2016
<b>Deadline for application submission</b>	<b>Nov 24, 2016</b>
Rebuttal Phase	Feb 1 - 7, 2017
Deadline for Video presentation	Feb 7, 2017
Results announcements	May 12, 2017

**Please note that all deadlines above are 12 p.m. CET time.**

### • *Second campaign*

Requesting a slot	April 28, 2017
<b>Deadline for application submission</b>	<b>June 20, 2017</b>
Rebuttal Phase	Aug 31 - Sep 6, 2017
Deadline for Video presentation	Sep 6, 2017
Results announcements	Nov 30, 2017

**Please note that all deadlines above are 12 p.m. CET time**

## 4. Eligibility criteria

### • *Host Institution*

- The AXA Research Fund partners with **academic institutions only**.
- Host institutions must be **registered** in the AXA Research Fund's **database**.
- Institutions located within the **defined geographical scope** are eligible for funding.

Europe	Central & Latin America	Africa & Middle East	Asia Pacific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Belgium</li> <li>- France</li> <li>- Germany</li> <li>- Greece</li> <li>- Ireland</li> <li>- Italy</li> <li>- Luxembourg</li> <li>- Poland</li> <li>- Spain</li> <li>- United Kingdom</li> <li>- Switzerland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brazil</li> <li>- Columbia</li> <li>- Mexico</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Algeria</li> <li>- Bahrain</li> <li>- Cameroon</li> <li>- Egypt</li> <li>- Gabon</li> <li>- Ivory Coast</li> <li>- Lebanon</li> <li>- Morocco</li> <li>- Nigeria</li> <li>- Oman</li> <li>- Qatar</li> <li>- Saudi Arabia</li> <li>- Senegal</li> <li>- South Africa</li> <li>- Turkey</li> <li>- United Arab Emirates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- China</li> <li>- Hong Kong</li> <li>- India</li> <li>- Indonesia</li> <li>- Japan</li> <li>- Malaysia</li> <li>- Singapore</li> <li>- South Korea</li> <li>- Philippines</li> <li>- Thailand</li> </ul>

### • *Chair holder*

- The Chair holder is expected to be of **the highest caliber**, as evidenced by the **standard indicators for assessing academic excellence** (publications in first-rate journals, international stature and network).
- The profile expected is **higher than PhD+10 years**.
- Other academic affiliations are accepted as long as the **AXA Chair Holder is spending more than half of his/her time in the host institution**, and **his/her publications are issued in the name of the host institution during the whole chair duration**.

### • *Chair research programme*

- The application must be **submitted in English, on time, and complete**. It must **respect the template structure** and **include all the required documents**.
- The **research topic** must fall **in the scope** of the **eligible thematic focus** as listed under section 2.

- It is expected that the **total annual budget** of the AXA Chair is **at least twice the annual financial income** provided by the AXA endowment.
- Proposed programmes must **address academic research** and **not “Research & Development”**. Programmes are considered R&D when they pursue an objective of systematic application of knowledge or understanding, directed towards the production of useful materials, devices, and systems or methods, including design, development, and improvement of prototypes and new processes to meet specific requirements. This includes specific technology development, as well as clinical trials. Please note that translational research is eligible as long as the research work conducted is mainly fundamental.
- Projects must **deal with research that conforms to the AXA Group Compliance and Ethics Guide** (<https://www.axa.com/en/newsroom/publications/compliance-ethics-guide>) which excludes (but is not limited to):
  - Research violating national regulations.
  - Research having direct military use.
  - Research having potentially dangerous environmental impacts.
  - Research relying on the artificial production of highly infectious pathogens with potential for large scale harmful/lethal effects for humans and research involving gain of function.
  - Biomedical research conducted without the fully informed consent of the participant.
  - Research on embryonic stem cells (incl. animal, with inferred subsequent human application).
  - Research processing private personal data without the informed consent of the concerned parties (incl. genetic information).
  - Research activities aiming at human cloning.
- **Cases of scientific misconduct** such as **fabrication, falsification, plagiarism** or **misrepresentation of data** will be considered as breaches of fundamental ethical principles and the **proposals concerned will be excluded**.

## 5. Evaluation criteria

The AXA Research Fund peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to **assess scientific excellence irrespective** of the **gender** and **nationality** of the Chair holder or any **other potential biases**. The evaluations are monitored to **guarantee transparency, fairness** and **impartiality** in the treatment of proposals.

The **evaluation criteria** are at the **core of the scientific assessment** process. When designing and writing their applications, candidates are strongly urged to **keep these criteria in mind** to make sure that their **research proposals** provide all the **information** required to **allow reviewers** to reach an **informed opinion** on each of the criterion.

Applications will be assessed against the **three evaluation criteria** below. Each criterion has **equal weight** and will be **marked on a scale of four** as follows:

Score	Wording	Definition
<b>A</b>	Outstanding	All relevant aspects of the assessment criteria successfully addressed. Any shortcomings are minor
<b>B</b>	Good	All assessment criteria very well addressed but a small number of shortcomings are present
<b>C</b>	Fair	Assessment criteria broadly addressed, however there are significant weaknesses
<b>D</b>	Serious reservations	Assessment criteria addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses

- **Research Environment**

- **Host Institution**

- **General Research environment and working conditions;**
- **Institution's general attractiveness nationally and internationally;**
- Prospection and recruitment processes;
- **National, regional and international reputation for academic excellence;**
- Past, present and future achievements of the Institution;
- **Ambition and overall institutional vision for the duration of the endowment requested;**
- Positioning of the host laboratory in the host institution, and commitment of the Institution to the Chair Programme.

- **Research Laboratory**

- **Research environment and working conditions** within the Laboratory (quality and availability of resources, equipment, expertise, etc...);
- **Academic reach of the Laboratory's Research** (publications in international renowned scientific journals, presence of internationally renowned researchers...);
- **Relationship with the international community** (international impact of the Research carried out, success in attracting top-tier foreign researchers...);
- **Positioning of the Laboratory within the Institution and alignment with the Institution's ambition** and overall vision for the duration of the endowment requested;
- **Positioning of the Laboratory within the broader Research field.**

- **Chair Programme**

- **Potential to make a step change in the considered Research field:** Scientific originality and innovative nature of the Research Programme; Potential to strengthen international academic networks, including planned collaborations on the Research Programme and comparison with existing initiatives in other Research centers.
- **Feasibility of the Research Programme:** Operational strength of the Chair Programme, notably regarding the planned methodologies; Alignment of the Research Programme with the long-term Research strategy of the Institution; Organizational set-up to launch and support this Chair, including the size of the team and its competencies, as well as a realistic and coherent budget.
- **Chair Outreach and engagement activities: potential impact for society and timeliness of the Research Programme,** and potential outreach of Research activities, notably dissemination activities within and beyond the academic community; Engagement with the AXA Research Fund in developing seminars and conferences to disseminate research towards practitioners.

- **Chair holder's profile**

- **Academic excellence and track record;**
- Previous achievements and innovative capabilities;
- **Adequacy between the contemplated Research Programme and the Chair holder's expertise;**
- **International recognition of the Chair holder by his peers;**
- **Leadership skills & ability to implement the Research Programme;**
- **Relevance of the Chair holder mobility,** in particular alignment with the Research strategy of the host Institution and laboratory, adequacy of the move with the track record of the candidate;
- **Personal commitment of the Chair holder** to the aims of the Chair Programme.



## 6. Selection process

### • Application documents

All information listed below is required to be filled by the host institution:

- **General information** (to be completed online)
  - **Personal details of the prospective Chair holder, Chair title, risk cluster;**
  - **Research programme details:** thematic of the research programme, duration and amount proposed, project description (abstract);
  - **Complementary information:** PhD related information & current institution of the Chair holder.
- **Application template** (PDF format)
  - **Complete application form**, strictly respecting the template to be downloaded from the application platform;
  - **Letter of intent** from the **prospective Chair holder**;
  - **Detailed CV** of the prospective Chair holder;
  - **For the Chair holder**, a list of the **top 20 publications** (in terms of **impact**) and the **10 most recent ones**;
  - **For the Host Laboratory**, a list of the **top 20 publications** (in terms of **impact**) and the **10 most recent ones**;
  - One **support letter** by the **president/rector of the Institution**;
  - Two **letters of recommendation**; other letters of recommendation will not be considered.
  - **Additional documents** may include information on host Research department/institute. Additional documents exceeding **20 pages** will not be considered.

### • Detailed step-by-step

#### • Step 1 – Registering and requesting a slot

To apply for our schemes, academic institutions must be preregistered on our platform (<https://institution.axa-research.org/>). Institutions are invited to appoint a single point of contact ("Operational Contact") who will handle relations with the AXA Research Fund.

Host institution has to declare its intent of applying to an AXA Chair by email ([chairs@axa.com](mailto:chairs@axa.com)), at least one month and a half prior to each closing dates.

The institution operational contact will be contacted by a Research Officer of the AXA Research Fund to discuss the Institution's project, the contemplated scheme, and the involvement of the presidency/rectorate (or equivalent) in this initiative. The research theme should also be presented. Upon completion of this stage, an access to the online application platform will be granted.

#### • Step 2 – Application

The Institution's operational contacts download the application form from the AXA Research Fund platform and then submit their Chair application with all necessary documents directly to the Research Officer of the AXA Research Fund.

- **Step 3 – Rebuttal**

Each Chair application will be reviewed by three external reviewers nominated by ESF. Institutions will have the opportunity to respond to the ESF experts' pre-assessment of their applications. The main purpose of the rebuttal is to provide applicants with the possibility to comment on any potential misinterpretations or misunderstandings that may have been made by the experts while initially assessing their proposals. This rebuttal step is strongly recommended.

- **Step 4 – Video presentation**

A video recording of a presentation made by the prospective Chair holder would be greatly appreciated. The Chair holder is invited to present the Research to be carried out in the Chair, in a maximum 3 minute-long recording. Videos can be submitted through any online storage service such as OneDrive, Drop Box... The video will be viewed by panel members during their meeting.

- **Step 5 – Scientific assessment**

The evaluation of the scientific quality of AXA Chair proposals is implemented in a fully independent manner by the European Science Foundation. The ESF will set up Review Panels in charge of assessing all proposals. Review Panels are composed of renowned scientists and scholars from all over the world with a broad view and knowledge across domains covered by their respective panel. Review Panel members are independently identified, invited and appointed by the ESF office to ensure a balanced coverage of disciplines and scientific cultures.

- **Step 6 – Selection & results publication**

The Scientific Board will review the proposals based on the assessment of the Chair application by reviewers, the rebuttal, and the ESF Review Panel's recommendation.

As soon as the Board has taken its decision, the AXA Research Fund informs the Institution through the Institution's representative. A feedback on the rationale of the Scientific Board decision can be provided to the Institution upon request.

## 7. Grant and agreement terms and conditions

Each project selected by the Scientific Board and funded by the AXA Research Fund is a combination of a candidate, a project and a host Institution. Thus, the candidate is expected to carry out the project as described in the proposal, and as acted in the grant agreement.

Should the Institution be selected by the AXA Research Fund Scientific Board, **it will receive an official letter specifying the proposed grant (amount) and the conditions for this grant (e.g. duration).** Upon written acceptance of the grant offer by the selected institution, the AXA Research Fund will liaise with the Operational Contact of the grantee's host institution to set in motion the contracting process. Grantees will be kept updated by their Operational Contacts throughout the contracting process.

### • *Duration of the agreement*

Once the Institution officially accepts the grant and the conditions, the AXA Research Fund and the Institution enter in the process of setting-up the agreement. **The grant offer is effective for a period of 6 months. The AXA Chair could be officially announced only when the agreement is signed and the Chair holder is appointed.**

Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that the Chair holder takes his/her position **no later than 18 months after the grant offer.** The AXA Research Fund reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

The agreement period covers the granted research project period. At the term of the agreement, the Institution may freely use the balance of the capital it has acquired as it deems the most appropriate, in the scientific field covered by the AXA Chair.

Should the Institution fail to recruit the Chair holder proposed in the application, or should the Chair holder leave during the duration of the tenure, the Institution must immediately inform the AXA Research Fund in order to explore alternate options. The new setting of the partnership will be subject to approval by the Scientific Board.

### • *Payment and amount of the grant*

- **Payment of the grant is done in one sole installment.** The transfer of funds depends on the agreement signing and on the Chair holder taking up the AXA Chair. The financial renewal of a Chair agreement is not possible.
- The amount of the grant is based on:
  - The duration of the agreement as proposed in the AXA grant offer;
  - The annual cash flow expected by the Institution from the AXA endowment:
    - For an AXA Chair permanent position, a single endowment payment may result in an annual cash flow of €90.000 to €120.000 (depending on the Chair holder seniority);

- For an AXA Successional Chair Programme, a single endowment payment may result in an annual cash flow of €90.000 to €120.000 (depending on the Chair holder seniority).
- For each of the above funding schemes, an Institution is free to make an appointment at a higher cost level but must support the extra expenditure from its own funds. The host Institution could also request for other funding partners as long as the conditions of the agreement with AXA are still respected, notably regarding the publicity on the grant (see below section "Publicity on grant").

### • ***Use of grant and duration of the agreement***

- The revenues generated by the endowment will ensure a yearly financial income to the AXA Chair. The capital could be used to supplement the yearly income and will be run down gradually over the term of the agreement. In the event that the investment return does not match the annual cash-flow requirement of the Chair, the Institution is expected to make up the shortfall from its own funds. In any event, the endowment should not be fully consumed before the end of the agreement.
- Any budget awarded by the AXA Research Fund is expected to cover primarily the Chair holder's salary and/or the Research environment (e.g.: Research staff salaries), and any expenses directly connected to the Chair Research Programme.
- The AXA Research fund does not cover expenses which are not directly connected to the Chair Research Programme. Therefore, **the AXA funding cannot be used for administrative and infrastructural expenses.**

### **Eligible costs are:**

- AXA Chair holder expenses (incl. annual gross salary, travel & accommodation costs...);
- Post-Doc/PhD expenses (incl. selection process costs, Junior Research Fellows Grants...);
- Acquisition of scientific equipment and resources (databases, survey costs, consumables...);
- Academic and public engagement activities organization costs.

### • ***Chair holder***

It is the remit of the Institution to provide to the Chair holder a Research environment (at minimum) aligned with the conditions described in the Chair application (resources, equipment, budget etc.).

The AXA Research Fund has signed the Charter for European Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and thereby is particularly attentive to Institutions demonstrating their commitment to an attractive, supportive and stimulating environment in which to carry out Research and recognizing the importance of providing its researchers with the training and means to be internationally and inter-sectorally competitive and mobile.

- **Monitoring of grant**

Every year, the Institution will provide a report composed of 2 separated documents:

- **The first document shall describe the activities of the Chair holder of the AXA Chair** (key highlights on the Research progress, achievements and outputs versus objectives);
- **The second report shall describe the financial report on use of the monies provided by the grant.** This financial report must include at least:
  - Most recently available annual accounts of the Institution (balance sheet and income statement);
  - Remaining capital and, for the considered year, the details on generated revenues and capital used according to provisions stated in the Appendix 3;
  - A specific report on how the grant has been allocated to the project (specific accounting category).

- **Intellectual property**

The Chair holder remains fully independent to conduct his/her Research project. Furthermore AXA will not claim any right to the ownership or use of the results coming from the Research Programme, and the Institution and/or the Chair holder and member or her/his team keep full ownership of their results, in accordance with the legal and/or contractual provisions existing between them.

- **Publicity on grant**

The AXA Research Fund is a philanthropic initiative and therefore the publicity on the grant is only designed to enable AXA to promote its general interest role. **The title of the Chair should include the name of “AXA”. The title of the Chair holder should include “AXA Professor”.** When communicating on the AXA Chair, the Institution, the Chair holder and the member of her/his team should mention the support of the AXA Research Fund. Any publication should also include a unique project ID that will be provided upon request by the AXA Research Fund team.

- **Open access policy**

The AXA Research Fund believes that providing free and unrestricted access to the scientific outputs of the research projects it supports should be a fundamental part of its philanthropic mission.

As of July 1, 2016, an Open Access policy is effective for all new agreements and granted funding. In order to build on best existing practices in this area, this policy closely follows the guidelines instituted and recently updated by the European Research Council. According to this new open access policy, the AXA Research Fund:

- **Requests** that an electronic copy of any research article, monograph or other research publication that is supported by the AXA Research Fund be deposited in a suitable repository immediately upon publication. Open access should be provided as soon as possible and in any case no later than six months after the

official publication date. For publications in the Social Sciences and Humanities domain a delay of up to twelve months is acceptable.

- **Strongly encourages** funded researchers to use discipline-specific repositories for their publications. If there is no appropriate discipline specific repository, researchers should make their publications available in institutional repositories or in centralized ones.
- **Reminds** researchers supported by the AXA Research fund that open access fees are eligible costs that can be charged against AXA RF grants, provided they are incurred during the duration of the project.
- **Asks** host Institutions to cover open access fees of any research publications supported in by the AXA Research Fund, arising after the end of the project.

The AXA Research Fund supports the basic principle of Open Access to research data. Nevertheless, taking into account the fast evolution of current debates and the diversity of approaches between disciplines, no binding commitment to open research data will be requested. Nevertheless, the AXA Research Fund recommends and strongly encourages all its funded researchers to follow best practices:

- By retaining files of all the research data they have produced and used during the course of their work, and that they be prepared to share these data with other researchers whenever they are not bound by copyright restrictions, confidentiality requirements, or contractual clauses.
- By seeking to establish and practice good research data management in accordance with the current best practices in their respective fields and to share their data with other researchers in a responsible way.