

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.

Table of content:

- 1. Introduction 2
- 2. Research topics supported 3
- 3. Timeline & Application process 4
 - Fall campaign..... 4
 - Spring campaign..... 4
- 4. Eligibility criteria 4
 - Host Institution 4
 - Chairholder..... 5
 - Chair research programme 5
- 5. Evaluation criteria 6
 - Please find below the information which needs to be completed in the full application form..... 7
 - Research Environment..... 7
 - Chair Research Programme 7
 - Chairholder's profile 8
- 6. Selection process 9
 - Application documents 9
 - Application process step-by-step 9
- 7. Grant and agreement terms and conditions..... 11
 - Payment terms and conditions 11
 - Use of grant 11
 - Chairholder..... 12
 - Monitoring of grant 12
 - Intellectual property..... 12
 - Publicity on grant..... 13
 - Open access policy 13

1. Introduction

The AXA Research Fund was born out of the belief that science plays a crucial role in responding to the most important issues facing our planet. AXA's scientific philanthropy initiative is committed to **supporting science, contributing to societal progress** and encouraging researchers to share their work with the larger public. **The AXA Research Fund supports projects in the areas of Health, Environment, New Technologies and Socio-Economics.**

The AXA Chair scheme is a premium funding scheme which 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.**

The AXA Research Fund requires a **specific Candidate** to be presented, and that the Candidate commits to take up the position, if awarded.

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 AXA Research Fund funds academic projects which contribute to the ability of the Society to better manage global **risks**, in particular in the areas of:

Health

- Demographics, longevity and aging
- Well-being, prevention, personalized health
- Management of chronic & non- communicable diseases

New technologies

- Robotics, automation & autonomous vehicles
- Artificial intelligence, data science & machine learning
- Cyber risk & protection
- Blockchain

Environment

- Urban resilience
- Sustainable resource management
- Biodiversity

Socio-Economics

- Behavioral economics
- Social & Financial inclusion
- Responsible investment strategies & sustainable finance
- Efficiency of healthcare systems

Only research projects with justified relevance to this list will be considered for funding.

3. Timeline & Application process

AXA Chair position to be held by an individual Chairholder:

- 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.

Institutions are invited to submit their applications for one of our two annual calls, bearing in mind that an Institution will be able to submit only one application per year. Unsuccessful Institutions will not be able to re-apply for the same candidate or research program.

- **Fall campaign**

Expression of Interest	Oct 22, 2018
Deadline for application submission	Nov 26, 2018
Rebuttal Phase	Feb 13 - 20, 2019
Deadline for Video presentation	Feb 20, 2019
Results announcements	April 30, 2019

- **Spring campaign**

Expression of Interest	April 22, 2019
Deadline for application submission	June 21, 2019
Rebuttal Phase	Sep 9 - Sep 16, 2019
Deadline for Video presentation	Sep 16, 2019
Results announcements	Nov 30, 2019

4. Eligibility criteria

Host Institution

- The AXA Research Fund partners with **academic institutions only**. Hospitals, foundations, NGOs, governmental bodies and independent research centers are not eligible to AXA funding.
- Host institutions must be registered in the AXA Research Fund's database. To register, please click on the following link and follow the instructions: <https://institution.axa-research.org/>
- Institutions can host several Chairs if they are not carried out by the same department or laboratory within the Institution.
- Institutions located within the following AXA geographical community are eligible for funding:

Europe	Americas	Africa & Middle East	Asia Pacific
Belgium	Brazil	Egypt	China Mainland
France	Colombia	Morocco	Hong-Kong
Germany	Mexico	Nigeria	India
Greece	USA	South Africa	Indonesia
Ireland		Turkey	Japan
Italy		United Arab Emirates	Philippines
Luxembourg			Singapore
Poland			South Korea
Spain			Thailand
Switzerland			
UK			

Chairholder

- The Chairholder 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 will be at least **PhD+10 years** from PhD defense to the time of application.
- The **AXA Chairholder is expected to spend his/her full time in the host institution**, and **his/her publications will be issued in the name of the host institution during the whole chair duration**.
- **Strong preference will be given to Institutions hiring a Chairholder from another Institution.** AXA Chairs are not intended to substitute for an internal promotion.

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.
- Proposed programmes must address academic research and not "Research & Development". R&D is the process by which a company works to obtain new

knowledge that it might use to create new technology, products, services, or systems that it will either use or sell.

- Projects must **deal with research that conforms to the AXA Group Compliance and Ethics Guide** which excludes (but is not limited to):
 - Research violating national regulations.
 - Research supporting any political activity.
 - 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 Chairholder 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 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 criteria.

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

Score	Wording	Definition
A	<i>Outstanding</i>	<i>All relevant aspects of the assessment criteria successfully addressed.</i>
B	<i>Good</i>	<i>All assessment criteria very well addressed but a small number of shortcomings are present</i>
C	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Assessment criteria broadly addressed, however there are significant weaknesses</i>
D	<i>Not to be funded</i>	<i>Assessment criteria addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses</i>

Please find below the information which needs to be completed in the full application form.

Research Environment

Host Institution

- **General Research environment and working conditions;**
- **Institution's general attractiveness nationally and internationally;**
- Prospecting 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 Research 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. The 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").
- **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.

Chairholder's profile

- **Academic excellence and track record;**
- Previous achievements and **innovative capabilities;**
- **Adequacy of fit between the contemplated Research Programme and the Chairholder's expertise;**
- **International recognition of the Chairholder by his peers;**
- **Leadership skills & ability to implement the Research Programme;**
- **Relevance of the Chairholder 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 Chairholder** to the aims of the Chair Programme.

6. Selection process

Application documents

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

- **General information for the Expression of Interest**
 - **Personal details of the prospective Chairholder, Chair title, risk cluster;**
 - **Research programme's details:** theme of the research programme, duration and amount proposed, project's description (one-page);
 - **Complementary information:** PhD related information & current institution of the Chairholder.
- **Application template**
 - **Complete application form**, strictly respecting the template provided by the AXA Research Fund team;
 - **Letter of intent** from the **prospective Chairholder;**
 - **Detailed CV** of the prospective Chairholder;
 - **For the Chairholder**, a list of the **top 10 publications** (in terms of **impact**) and the **10 most recent ones;**
 - **For the Host Laboratory**, a list of the **top 10 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.

Application process step-by-step

- **Step 1 – Registering and Expression of Interest**

To apply for our schemes, academic institutions must be preregistered on our platform (<https://institution.axa-research.org/>). You can check if your Institution is already registered in the database via the above link. If your Institution is already on our database you can omit the registration.

Otherwise, Institutions are invited to appoint a single point of contact ("Operational Contact") who will handle relations with the AXA Research Fund.

The host institution must declare its intent to apply to an AXA Chair. At this stage of the process the following **information are required to be sent to chairs@axa.com** :

- **Personal details of the prospective Chairholder, Chair title, risk cluster;**
- **Research programme's details:** theme of the research programme, duration and amount proposed, project's description (one-page);
- **Complementary information:** PhD related information & current institution of the Chairholder.

- **Step 2 – Application**

The AXA Research Fund team member in charge of the applications will send the full application template to the Institutions' contacts. The AXA Research Fund team will give feedback on applications to make sure they match the AXA Research Fund standards and requirements. Institutions can finetune their applications with the support of the AXA Research Fund team until the final application deadline.

- **Step 3 – Scientific assessment**

Each Chair application will be reviewed by three external reviewers. Our main partner for this step is the European Science Foundation: <http://www.esf.org/> The assessment of AXA Chair proposals is implemented in a fully independent manner. Reviewers are independently identified, invited and appointed by the ESF office to ensure a balanced coverage of disciplines and scientific cultures.

- **Step 4 – Rebuttal**

Candidates will have the opportunity to respond to the scientific experts who assessed 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 5 – Video presentation**

The Chairholder is invited to present the research programme to be carried out in the Chair, in a maximum 3-minute-long recording. Videos can be submitted by email to chairs@axa.com through any online storage service such as OneDrive, Drop Box... The video will be watched by the AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board members during their meeting.

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

The AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board will review the proposals based on the assessment carried out by the reviewers and on the rebuttal.

As soon as the Scientific Board has made its decision, the AXA Research Fund will inform 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.

The selection rate is 20% in 2017 and 2018.

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 & duration) and its conditions. 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 start the contracting process. Grantees will be kept updated by their Operational Contacts throughout the process.

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 1 month. The AXA Chair will be officially announced only when the agreement is signed.**

Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that the Chairholder take his/her position **no later than 9 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.

Should the Institution fail to recruit the Chairholder proposed in the application, the AXA Research Fund will cancel the grant and the agreement process is terminated.

Should the Chairholder leave during the duration of the tenure, the Institution must immediately inform the AXA Research Fund to explore alternate options stipulated in the sponsorship agreement.

Payment terms and conditions

The grant shall be paid in yearly instalments, on the Institution's submission of calls for funds. The payments will be processed in accordance with a schedule stipulated in the agreement.

The transfer of funds hinges on signature of the agreement, the Chairholder's official acceptance of the AXA Chair, and is subject to the receipt of an official email relative to the project start.

The agreement period covers the granted research project period. At the term (or early termination) of the agreement, the remaining obligations to transfer funds will be cancelled and the Institution shall provide AXA with a statement of expenses. AXA will recover said monies received and not spent.

Use of grant

- Any budget awarded by the AXA Research Fund is expected to cover primarily the Chairholder'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 Chairholder 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.

To be eligible, supported Institutions are expected to participate in the Chair's general funding with studentships, post-doctoral support and material resources related to the research program. The Institution shall demonstrate this participation in the application.

Chairholder

It is the remit of the Institution to provide the Chairholder with 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 separate documents:

- **The first document shall describe the activities of the Chairholder of the AXA Chair** (key highlights on the Research progress, achievements and outputs versus objectives, impacts of the AXA Grant, research related activities...). These elements need to be submitted **on our online grantees portal. Chairholder will be provided with a dedicated and secure access when the agreement is signed.**
- **The second report shall describe the financial report on use of the grant.** This financial report must include at least:
 - Most recently available annual accounts of the Institution (balance sheet and income statement);
 - A statement of expenditure explaining how the grant has been allocated.This report will be **sent by email** to axarf.report@axa.com

Intellectual property

The Chairholder 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 Program, and the Institution and/or the Chairholder 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 any publicity on the grant will only aim at enabling AXA to promote its general interest purpose. **The title of the Chair should include “AXA” and the title of the Chairholder should include “AXA Professor”.** When communicating about the AXA Chair, the Institution, the Chairholder and the member of her/his team will **mention the support of the AXA Research Fund.**

• **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.

Since 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, considering 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.