

# AXA RESEARCH FUND CHAIRS APPLICATIONS GUIDELINES

**The AXA Research Fund is AXA Group's science philanthropic initiative dedicated to advancing knowledge on the main issues our society faces today.**

This guide contains the information needed to apply for an AXA Chair and includes a general overview of the AXA Research Fund selection process as well as information on grant agreement terms and conditions.

**This guide may be used as a reference by both 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 AXA Research Fund was launched in 2007 to support science in its crucial role in responding to the most important issues facing our planet. AXA's scientific philanthropic initiative is committed to **supporting science, contributing to societal progress and encouraging researchers to share their work with the larger public to inform public decision-making. The AXA Research Fund supports projects in the areas of Health, Environment, and Socio-Economics.**

The AXA Chair is a highly selective funding scheme 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 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 host Institution must intend to create a **permanent full-time position**.

The AXA Research Fund requires the presentation of a **specific candidate**, who, if awarded, commits to take up the position.

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

## **2. Funded research topics**

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The AXA Research Fund supports academic projects that both contribute to better understanding uncertainty and provide insights into global risks, in particular in the areas of:

### **Health**

- Demographics, longevity and aging
- Well-being, prevention, personalized health
- Management of chronic & non-communicable diseases
- Efficiency of healthcare systems
- Infectious diseases & Epidemics
- Mental Health
- Artificial intelligence, data science & machine learning applied to health
- Robotics & automation applied to health

### **Environment**

- Climate change & Climate migration
- Biodiversity & natural capital
- Sustainable resource management / Sustainable cities
- Responsible investment strategies & sustainable finance
- Natural catastrophes
- Pollution
- Micro and nano plastics & effects on human health
- Artificial intelligence, data science & machine learning applied to Environment
- Robotics, automation applied to Environment

### **Socio-Economics**

- Behavioral economics
- Social & Financial inclusion
- Financial risk modeling
- Geopolitics
- Inclusive finance
- Systemic risk
- The macroeconomic and societal role of insurance
- Artificial intelligence, data science & machine learning applied to socio-economics
- Cyber risk & protection
- Blockchain
- Robotics, automation applied to Socio-Economics

**Only research projects with relevance to the list above will be considered for funding.**

### 3. Key information and Timeline

Institutions can submit only **one candidate**.  
**Unsuccessful Institutions will not be able to re-apply for the same candidate or research program.**



**DURATION**

An AXA Chair is awarded for a period of 5 years



**BUDGET**

200.000€ per year for 5 years maximum



**PROSPECTIVE CHAIRHOLDER**

The prospective Chairholder is expected to be PhD + 10 years minimum

<b>Campaign</b>	<b>Fall 2021</b>
Expression of Interest	<b>September 20 - October 15 (4PM CEST)</b>
Full application submission	<b>October 21 - November 19 (4PM CEST)</b>
Rebuttal	<b>February 14 – 21, 2022</b>
Video presentation deadline – <b><u>when requested</u></b> , for shortlisted candidates only	<b>March 10, 2022</b>
Results	<b>May 30, 2022</b>

## 4. Eligibility criteria

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### **Host Institution**

The AXA Research Fund partners with **academic institutions only**. Hospitals, NGOs, governmental bodies and museums are not eligible for 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.

**Host Institutions will be expected to participate in the Chair's general funding** through studentships, post-doctoral support and material resources related to the research program. The Institution shall demonstrate this participation in the application.

### **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 of the candidate should be **at least PhD+10 years from PhD defense date** to the time of application.

**The AXA Chairholder is expected to spend their full time in the Host Institution**, and their publications will be issued in the name of the Host Institution during the 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 required documents**.

The research topic must lie within the scope of the eligible areas as listed under section 2 (see page 3).

Proposed programmes must address academic research and not Research & Development (R&D). 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**

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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 ensure that their proposal provides the required information for reviewers to reach an informed opinion on each individual criterion.

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:

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

## ***Chair research programme criteria***

- **Criteria 1: 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.
- **Criteria 2: 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”).
- **Criteria 3: Chair outreach and engagement activities**
  - Potential impact for society and timeliness of the Research Programme, and potential outreach of Research activities, in particular 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 profile criteria***

- **Academic excellence and strong 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 their peers.
- **Leadership skills & ability to implement** the Research Programme.
- **Given preference for candidate mobility, relevance of this mobility**, e.g. alignment with the Host Institution's and laboratory research strategy, 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

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### Application documents

All information listed below is required from the Host Institution:

#### Expression of Interest

- *Personal details of the prospective Chairholder and their current institution*
- *Research programme details: title, area (Health, Environment, or Socio-Eco) and project description (3000 characters including spaces)*
- *A short CV (3 pages) of the prospective Chairholder including their h-index and a link to an online detailed CV.*

#### Full application

- *The application form duly completed in English*
- *Requested supporting documents:*
  - *Letter of intent from the prospective Chairholder*
  - *A short CV (3 pages) for the prospective Chairholder including their h-index and a link to an online detailed CV*
  - *For the prospective Chairholder, a list of 20 publications including the top 10 most impactful publications and the 10 most recent ones*
  - *For the Host Laboratory, a list of 20 publications including the top 10 most impactful publications and the 10 most recent ones*
  - *One support letter by the president/rector of the Institution*
  - *Two letters of recommendation from peers.*

### Application process step-by-step

#### Step 1 – Registering

To apply for AXA Research Fund grants, academic institutions must be registered 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 and your institution's operational contact can log in directly using the login details they defined.

Institutions should appoint a single point of contact ("Operational Contact") who will handle relations with the AXA Research Fund.

#### Step 2 – Expression of interest **ON OUR ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM**

To submit an online Expression of Interest, please follow the steps below:

- 1/ **Log onto our online application platform:** <https://institution.axa-research.org/>
- 2/ **Go to the "Application" tab and click the "Chair" link to go to the "Expression of Interest" page**
- 3/ **Click "New" and fill in the online Expression of Interest form. Attach a short CV (3 pages maximum)**
- 4/ **Click Submit.**

You will receive an email confirming that your Expression of Interest has been submitted. If you don't receive the email, please check your spam folder and contact [chairs@axa.com](mailto:chairs@axa.com) if you did not receive the confirmation email.



**As long as you have not clicked on “Submit” you will be able to edit your Expression of Interest. Click on “Submit” for your Expression of Interest to be considered. Once submitted, your Expression of Interest can no longer be edited.**

The Expression of Interest will be reviewed by the AXA Research Fund Team. You will be informed of the decision pertaining to your Expression of Interest by email.

### **Step 3 – Full Application ON OUR ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM**

Candidates who are invited to submit a full application will receive an email to create their own account on the AXA Research Fund application platform.

**Candidates will be able to download the full application template, fill it out and upload it along with other requested supporting documents (see list page 8).**

### **Step 4 – Scientific assessment**

Each application is reviewed by at least three experts who will assess the candidate's excellence and the research programme's scientific quality.

### **Step 5 – Rebuttal**

Candidates will have the opportunity to reply to the peer reviewers who assessed their applications. The main purpose of the rebuttal is to provide applicants with the possibility to comment on any potential misinterpretation or misunderstanding in the assessment of their proposals. This rebuttal step is strongly recommended.

### **Step 6 – Shortlist**

The AXA Research Fund Team and AXA internal experts assess the relevance of the projects based on the existing portfolio and on the scientific peer-review assessment. They define a final shortlist.

The AXA Research Fund Team informs not shortlisted applicants of the shortlist results.

### **Step 7 – Video presentation – when requested- ONLY FOR SHORLISTED PROPOSALS**

Shortlisted candidates are invited to submit a 3-minute (maximum) video to present themselves and their research programme. Candidates should be facing the camera and provide neither fieldwork nor PowerPoint slides.

Videos can be submitted by email to [chairs@axa.com](mailto:chairs@axa.com) through online storage services such as WeTransfer. The video will be viewed by the AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board members to assess the prospective Chairholder's ability to summarize their research programme.

### **Step 8 – Selection & results publication**

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

As soon as the Scientific Board has made its decision, the AXA Research Fund will inform the Institution and the candidate through the Institution's representative.

**The Scientific Board's decision is final and cannot be appealed.** For shortlisted candidates who were not selected, feedback can be provided to the candidate upon request addressed to [chairs@axa.com](mailto:chairs@axa.com)

## **7. Grant and agreement terms and conditions**

Each selected project is a combination of a candidate, a proposal and a Host Institution. Thus, the candidate is expected to carry out the project as described in the proposal, and as describe in the grant agreement.

The Institution hosting the selected Chair will receive an official letter specifying the proposed grant amount & duration and conditions of said grant. Upon written acceptance of the grant offer by the selected Institution and the new Chairholder, the AXA Research Fund will liaise with the Institution to launch the contracting process. Grantees should be kept updated by their Institution throughout the process.

**The grant offer is effective for a period of 1 month. The AXA Chair will be officially announced once the agreement is signed.**

It is expected that the Chairholder take their position **no later than 9 months after the grant offer** reception. 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 will be terminated.

Should the Chairholder leave the Institution during the duration of the tenure, said Institution must immediately inform the AXA Research Fund to explore alternative options as stated in the agreement.

### ***Payment terms and conditions***

The grant shall be paid in **yearly installments**, following the Institution's **submission of calls for funds and an official start email at the beginning of the project**. 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 Institution will need to send the first call for funds to [axarf.agreement@axa.com](mailto:axarf.agreement@axa.com) to start the payment process.

In case of early termination on behalf of the researcher, the Institution shall provide AXA with a statement of expenses. The remaining funds will be retained by the AXA Research Fund.

## ***Use of grant***

Any amount awarded by the AXA Research Fund is expected to cover primarily the Chairholder's salary, 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 that are not directly connected to the Chair Research Programme. Therefore, **the AXA Research grant cannot be used for administrative and infrastructural expenses.**

### **Eligible costs are:**

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

## ***Institution support to the 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.).

**Host Institutions will be 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.**

The AXA Research Fund has signed the Charter for European Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. As such, it is particularly important that Institutions demonstrate their commitment to providing an attractive, supportive and stimulating environment in which the Chairholder will carry out the research programme. The Institution should commit to providing its researchers with the means to be internationally and inter-sectorally competitive and mobile.

## ***Monitoring of grant and obligations of Chairholder/Institution***

Each year, the Institution will provide a report composed of 2 separate documents:

### **Activity report of the AXA Chair:**

- key highlights of the Research Programme, progress, achievements and outputs versus objectives, impacts of the AXA Grant, research related activities....
- These elements will be submitted **on the AXA Research Fund's online grantees portal. Chairholder will be provided with a dedicated and secure access upon signature of the agreement.**

### **Financial report:**

This financial report must include at least:

- Most recent 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](mailto:axarf.report@axa.com).

## ***Intellectual property***

The Chairholder remains fully independent to conduct their 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 Chairholder and member or their team keep full ownership of their results, in accordance with the legal and/or contractual provisions.

## ***Publicity on grant***

The AXA Research Fund is a philanthropic initiative and any publicity or communication on the grant will aim at enabling AXA to promote its general interest purpose. For communication purposes, **the Chair title should include “AXA” and the Chairholder title should include “AXA Professor”**. When communicating about the AXA Chair, the Institution, the Chairholder and the member of their 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 to be a fundamental part of its mission. Since July 1st, 2016, an Open Access policy is effective for all new agreements and granted funding. To build on best existing practices in this area, this policy closely follows the guidelines instituted and recently updated by the European Research Council.

Considering the fast evolution of current debates and the diversity of approaches between disciplines, no binding commitment to this policy will be requested from the Chairholder.

However, AXA strongly encourages 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;



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- research articles supported in whole or in part by the AXA Research Fund include a statement explaining how other researchers can access any data, original software or materials underpinning the research;
- the Principle Investigator uses 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. Open access fees are eligible costs that can be charged against AXA grants, provided they are incurred during the duration of the project;
- the Institution covers open access fees of any research publications supported in by the AXA Research Fund, arising after the end of the project;
- the Principle Investigator retains files of all the research data they have produced and used during their work, and that they be prepared to share with other researchers whenever they are not bound by copyright restrictions, confidentiality requirements, or contractual clauses;
- the Principle Investigator establishes 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.

**Participation in the call for applications implies acceptance of the above-mentioned rules.**