



UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA

MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIFI 2026 – Call for applications

Article 1 – Objectives of the call

The University of Pisa (UNIFI), through "**MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIFI**" call, supports the implementation of excellent research activities by selecting young researchers, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the University's capacity to acquire competitive external funding.

The call aims to support up to a **maximum of 5 awardees of the MSCA Seal of Excellence (SoE)** through:

1. Granting a **two-year research post-doc fellowship** (*incarico post-doc*), with an **annual gross amount of € 40.000,00**. Any increases resulting from applicable legislation or ISTAT updates shall be fully covered.
2. Granting an **additional € 10.000,00** to the UNIFI Department or Center hosting the research activity of the SoE awardee, as a contribution to research activities. The contribution shall be made available to the successful researcher and shall be subject to reporting, in accordance with the procedures and timelines provided by the "*Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze*".

Article 2 – Eligibility requirements

Researchers of any nationality may participate in the selection process if, by the deadline of this call:

- They have submitted a project proposal in response to the Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowships 2025 call - **HORIZON-MSCA-2025-PF-01-01**, with **UNIFI as the beneficiary institution**.
- They have been awarded the "**Seal of Excellence - MSCA**"¹, having obtained a score equal to or higher than 85/100, with the same proposal referred to in the previous point..

Researchers who, by the deadline of this call, do not meet the requirements for the award of a two-year research post-doc fellowship (*incarico post-doc*), as defined by the relevant national legislation and by Articles 16 and 21 of the *Regolamento unico per il conferimento di "contratti di ricerca", di "incarichi post-doc" e di "incarichi di ricerca" ai sensi degli artt. 22, 22-bis e 22-ter della Legge n. 240 del 2010* of the University of Pisa (<https://www.unifi.it/wp-content/uploads/reconferimentocontrattiricerca.pdf>), shall not be eligible to participate in the selection process.

Researchers who have already benefited, even partially, from the funding offered under the previous edition of this call, or who have renounced the funding awarded in previous editions, shall likewise be excluded from the selection.

¹ The *Seal of Excellence* is a recognition awarded by the European Commission to project proposals submitted under the Horizon Europe program, which have received a positive evaluation, exceeding the quality threshold for admission to funding, but cannot be funded due to budget constraints (https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en).

This funding is incompatible with any other form of salaried employment with public or private entities. The regime of compatible and incompatible activities defined by Article 26 of the above-mentioned *Regolamento unico per il conferimento di “contratti di ricerca”, di “incarichi post-doc” e di “incarichi di ricerca” ai sensi degli artt. 22, 22-bis e 22-ter della Legge n. 240 del 2010* shall apply.

Article 3 – Participation procedures

Each participant must submit the application by completing a **Google Forms questionnaire** and attaching the following documents in PDF format:

1. A copy of the doctoral certificate or an equivalent degree. Italian candidates can certify their academic qualifications by submitting a declaration as in Attachment 1.
2. A commitment letter, in English, signed by the candidate (Attachment 2).
3. Copy of valid ID card/passport.
4. The MSCA-PF 2025 proposal, complete of all its parts, as downloaded from the Funding and Tenders Portal.
5. The Evaluation Summary Report of the proposal, indicating the obtained score.
6. A copy of the "Seal of Excellence MSCA" certificate² obtained with the proposal submitted in response to the HORIZON-MSCA-2025-PF-01-01 call.

The link to the Google Form and Attachments 1 and 2 templates are available on the page <https://www.unipi.it/en/research/support-and-incentives/msca-pf/>.

Applications must be submitted exclusively through the **Google Form, complete with all compulsory attachments**, no later than

May 15th, 2026, 11:59 PM (Italian time).

Applications that are incomplete or submitted after the specified deadline will not be considered.

Article 4 – Selection procedure

The selection procedure of the applications, managed by “*Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze*” of the University of Pisa, will consist of:

- 4.1) Eligibility check;
- 4.2) Ranking and identification of the applications selected for funding.

4.1 Eligibility check

The applications are assessed against the participation requirements outlined in Articles 2 and 3 of this call, to verify the accuracy and completeness of the declarations and documentation provided by each candidate.

Those who are excluded from the selection due to the lack of one or more participation requirements will be notified via email. Upon receiving the exclusion notification, the candidate will have 5 working days to report any identified error in the eligibility check conducted by UNIPI. After this deadline, the exclusion will become final.

² MSCA - Seal of Excellence certificates are issued annually around February/March/April.

4.2 Ranking and identification of the applications selected for funding

The University of Pisa will rank the eligible applications calculating the difference between the funding threshold of the relevant MSCA panel and the obtained score, in ascending order based on the distance from the threshold³.

In the event that two or more candidates eligible for funding share the same supervisor, only the candidate with the highest score shall be awarded funding, and the ranking list shall be scrolled until the first candidate with a different supervisor is identified.

In cases of *ex aequo*, the criteria established by the European Commission for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions will be applied⁴.

The ranking of the applications eligible for funding will be published on the page <https://www.unipi.it/en/research/support-and-incentives/msca-pf/> by **May 29th, 2026**.

Article 5 – Awarding of the two-year research post-doc fellowship (“*incarico post-doc*”) and transfer of the research contribution

To the top five candidates of the ranking, UNIFI awards two-year research post-doc fellowships (“*incarico post-doc*”), in accordance with the University *Regolamento unico per il conferimento di “contratti di ricerca”, di “incarichi post-doc” e di “incarichi di ricerca” ai sensi degli artt. 22, 22-bis e 22-ter della Legge n. 240 del 2010*, for an annual gross amount of € 40.000,00. Any increases resulting from applicable legislation or ISTAT updates shall be fully covered.

UNIFI also allocates € 10.000,00 as a contribution for carrying out research activities to the hosting UNIFI Department or Center.

The UNIFI Department or Center hosting the research activity shall agree with the successful candidate on the deadline by which the post-doctoral appointment contract must be executed, under penalty of forfeiture. Such deadline may not be later than **1 November 2026**. Failure to execute the contract within this deadline shall result in the loss of the right to the appointment. An extension of the deadline for the execution of the post-doctoral appointment of up to a maximum of three months may be granted in exceptional cases, such as, by way of example, where documented prolonged visa procedures delay the start of the activities, or where projects have not yet obtained ethical approval, provided that the request for ethical evaluation has been submitted in accordance with the regulations and timelines established by the competent deliberative body.

Requests for postponement of the date of execution of the post-doctoral appointment beyond 1 November 2026, agreed upon with the hosting Department or Center, must also be communicated to the *Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze* (progettazione.ricerca@unipi.it) at least 30 days prior to the final deadline for execution.

Upon expiry of the prescribed deadline, including any granted extension, and in the absence of execution of the post-doctoral appointment, the proposal for appointment to the successful Seal of Excellence@UNIFI candidate shall be deemed withdrawn and shall be automatically extended to the next eligible candidate in the same ranking list.

Should the research contract be terminated for any of the reasons provided for by the University Regulations or by the applicable national legislation, any remaining balance of the contribution

³ If funding thresholds for each panel are not known at the time of the ranking phase, proposals will be ranked in descending order of score, using the total nominal score reported on the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) issued by the European Commission.

⁴ In MSCA-PF-2025 call, *ex aequo* criteria are described at page 133 (criteria 1, 2 and 3) of the MSCA 2023-2025 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

allocated for the research activities must be returned to the “*Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze*”.

Article 6 – Duties of the awardees (research fellows)

The fellows selected under this call will carry out the research activities outlined in the project for which they have been awarded the Seal of Excellence in the HORIZON-MSCA-2025-PF-01-01 call and attached to the application, as stated in Attachment 2 “Letter of commitment”.

The activities will be monitored by the UNIPI hosting Department or Center according to the University *Regolamento unico per il conferimento di “contratti di ricerca”, di “incarichi post-doc” e di “incarichi di ricerca” ai sensi degli artt. 22, 22-bis e 22-ter della Legge n. 240 del 2010*. Within 60 days from the end of the activities, each fellow must submit a final scientific report, which will account for the research activities carried out during the fellowship, the results obtained, the list of research outputs (publications completed or in press, databases, etc.), the potential for further development of the research, and its continuation with other external funding.

The final scientific report must be sent to the “*Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze*” (progettazione.ricerca@unipi.it).

In any publication resulting from the research activities carried out with the contribution of this fellowship, the reference “MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIPI” must be indicated.

Article 7 – Publication of the call

This call and its attachments are published in the Research section of the University of Pisa's website – <https://www.unipi.it/en/research/support-and-incentives/msca-pf/>.

Article 8 – Call Manager

Pursuant to Article 5 of Law No. 241 of August 7, 1990, the call manager is Dr. Mauro Bellandi, *Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze* - Università di Pisa - Lungarno Pacinotti, 44 - Pisa, e-mail progettazione.ricerca@unipi.it.

Article 9 – Processing of personal data

The processing of personal data is governed by Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, "General Data Protection Regulation", published in the Official Journal of 4 July 2016, by Legislative Decree No. 196 of 30 June 2003, "Personal Data Protection Code", published in the Official Journal of 29 July 2003, and by the Regulation for the Protection of Personal Data of the University of Pisa issued with Rectoral Decree No. 866/2019 of 27/05/2019.

The provided personal data will be processed solely for management purposes of this call.

The “*Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze*” commits not to disclose the content of proposals to third parties and to protect the confidentiality of all information provided therein.

Article 10 – Final provisions

For matters not specified in this call, reference is made to the provisions contained in Law No. 240/2010 as amended, in implementing regulations, in the University *Regolamento unico per il conferimento di “contratti di ricerca”, di “incarichi post-doc” e di “incarichi di ricerca” ai sensi degli*

artt. 22, 22-bis e 22-ter della Legge n. 240 del 2010, and in current legislation.

UNIFI reserves the right to verify the truthfulness of self-certifications made by candidates under DPR 445/2000, at any stage of the procedure. If the above-mentioned verification reveals the untruthfulness of the declarations, the declarants forfeit any benefits that may result from the award based on the untruthful declaration, without prejudice to the provisions of Article 76 of DPR 445/2000, regarding the penalties provided for by the criminal code and special laws.

The present English translation of the call is solely for informational purposes; for all legal purposes, only the Italian version is valid.

Attachments

- Attachment 1 – Template of self-certification of the PhD degree award (reserved for Italian and European candidates holding a doctoral degree issued by an Italian University).
- Attachment 2 – Commitment letter template (compulsory)