



UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA

MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIFI 2025 – 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** (*contratto di ricerca*), with an **annual gross amount of € 40.000,00**.
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.

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 2024 call - **HORIZON-MSCA-2024-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.

Researchers who do not meet the requirements for the award of a two-year "*contratto di ricerca*", as defined by national legislation and by the University Regulation on "*contratti di ricerca*"², may not participate in the selection process.

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 ID card/passport.

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).

² At the time of publication of this call, the *Regulation on "contratti di ricerca"* is in an advanced drafting stage but has not yet been adopted.

4. The MSCA-PF 2024 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" certificate³.

The link to the Google Form and Attachments 1 and 2 templates are available on the page <https://www.unipi.it/index.php/unione-europea/item/29648-msca-seal-of-excellence-unipi-2025>.

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

April 30th, 2025, 12:00 AM (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.

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 threshold⁴.

Proposals whose supervisors have already served in this role for projects funded in previous editions of the **MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIPI** call will automatically be placed at the bottom of the ranking list.

In the event of *ex aequo*, if one of the proposals under evaluation involves a supervisor who is already engaged in other applications submitted within the framework of this call, that proposal will be assigned a lower priority.

Should cases of *ex aequo* still remain, the criteria established by the European Commission for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions will be applied⁵.

³ MSCA - Seal of Excellence certificates are issued annually around February/March/April.

⁴ 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.

⁵ In MSCA-PF-2024 call, *ex aequo* criteria are described at page 96 (criteria 1, 2 and 3) of the MSCA 2023-2024 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.

Up to a **maximum of 5 applications will be funded**.

The ranking of the applications eligible for funding will be published on the page <https://www.unipi.it/index.php/unione-europea/item/29648-msca-seal-of-excellence-unipi-2025> by **May 12, 2025**.

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

To the top five candidates of the ranking, UNIPI awards two-year research post-doc fellowships (“*contratto di ricerca*”), in accordance with the University Regulation on “*contratti di ricerca*”⁶, for an annual gross amount of € 40.000,00.

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

The UNIPI Department or Center agrees with the fellow the deadline by which the fellowship must be started, under penalty of forfeiture. This date cannot be later than **December 31st, 2025**. Failure to start the fellowship within this deadline results in the forfeiture of the rights to receive the fellowship. An extension of the deadline for starting the fellowship may be allowed in exceptional cases, such as prolonged visa procedures or projects that have not yet obtained ethical approvals. Requests for postponement of the fellowship start date beyond December 31, 2025, agreed upon with the UNIPI Department or Center, must be communicated by email to the “*Direzione Ricerca e Valorizzazione delle Conoscenze*” (progettazione.ricerca@unipi.it).

The awarding of the fellowship does not constitute an employment relationship and does not give rise to rights regarding access to university tenure-track positions.

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 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-2024-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 Regulation on “*contratti di ricerca*”⁶. 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.

⁶ At the time of publication of this call, the *Regulation on “contratti di ricerca”* is in an advanced drafting stage but has not yet been adopted.

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/index.php/ricerca>.

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 Regulation on "contratti di ricerca", 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)