

2025 Guide for Reviewers

For further information please see the webpage:

[Marie Speyer Excellence Grants - University of Luxembourg | Uni.lu](#)

And/or contact contact the MSE team at:
mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu

Marie Speyer Excellence Grants

gender=
equality
office

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

1 DEC)
3 FEB
2025

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Written evaluations deadline

27 April May 2025 @ 2pm (CET)

1. Description and application guidelines

The Marie Speyer Grants are open to all disciplines and sectors. The scheme is organised by the Gender Equality Office with the collaboration of the Vice-Rector for Research following strict criteria of research excellence.

These grants aim to enhance existing research endeavours or facilitate the inception of innovative research concepts. In the year 2025, up to **four** scholars can be awarded who will receive an allocation of **130.000 Euro each** (total budget).

2. Description of the Marie Speyer Excellence Grants call

The University of Luxembourg (Uni.lu) establishes the Marie Speyer Excellence Grants in 2024. The grants aim to support and empower outstanding female postdocs, research scientists, assistant and associate professors who wish to further develop their research at the University. Driven by excellence, the Excellence Grants are open to all disciplines and sectors. The funding scheme aims to make the University of Luxembourg an attractive workplace for women in academia.

Gender equality and diversity are integral to our institution's success. While internationality is a major strength and key feature of attractiveness, the University recognizes that gender diversity among professorial positions remains to be improved. According to the 2021 [SHE Figures](#) issued by the European Commission around one in four researchers in Luxembourg are female. In addition, over the last 10 years, the percentage of female professors has remained unchanged and close to 25%. This places the Grand Duchy below the EU average (one in three). This program is a key symbol of the University's commitment to gender equality. The Marie Speyer Grants are part of the Gender Equality Policy actions at the University of Luxembourg.

Numerous studies have shown that gender stereotypes affect decisions in recruitment and promotion. In addition, research has found that women are generally less assertive in negotiations, and they agree to lower funding or negotiating packages widening the gender gaps. At the global level, it is harder for female professors to reach the highest academic ranks than it is for their male colleagues, despite being just as productive. The effects of gender biases are accentuated when women hold positions that are not at the top of hierarchy of professorial positions. Finally, the gender audit ran at the University of Luxembourg in 2020 showed that women scientists perceive large gender gaps in academia (see [here](#)).

For the above reasons, the Marie Speyer Grants are **open to female postdocs and research scientists, assistant, and associate professors**.

Call timeline

The key milestones are the following:

- Call opening: **1 December 2024**
- Proposal submission deadline: **3 February 2025 @ 2pm CET**
- Deadline for written evaluations: **27 April 2025 @ 2pm CET**

Eligibility for participation

- Applicants must be researchers with a valid contract at the University of Luxembourg (Uni.lu), the call targets:
 - Postdoctoral fellows.
 - Research Scientists.

- Assistant professors, and associate professors (full professors excluded).
- Applicants are women.
- Scholars from any discipline are encouraged to apply.

Note: *applicants on non-permanent contracts are eligible to apply if they submit a support letter from a researcher (line-manager) at the University of Luxembourg, who commits to host the project in their unit.*

3. Evaluation Procedure

The MSE teams will ensure that strict ethical procedures are upheld and is committed to protect the data of the applicants and reviewers.

The evaluation and selection process consists of several steps:

1. An administrative eligibility check will be performed by the MSE team.
2. Eligible proposals will be sent to a review panel composed of at least 2 reviewers. Reviewers will be identified from research databases based on the abstract and keywords, looking for recognized scholars in the same field of the applicants. The procedure will be as follows:
 - Invitations are sent out together with the abstract and a conflict-of-interest declaration.
 - Once the reviewer accepts our invitation and sends the signed declaration stating they have no conflict the full proposal and a written evaluation form (see annex 1) is sent to the reviewer.
 - The process is iterated until each proposal is sent to two reviewers.
3. The MSE team will ensure all reviews are received on time and if needed call for a 3 review. All the written reviews will be compiled, without disclosing the reviewers identify, and shared with the oversight committee.
4. The Oversight Committee of the scheme ranks the proposals on the basis of the reviews provided by the reviewers and recommends the proposal for funding to the Rector.
5. The decision of the Rector is communicated to the applicants.

Experts of the evaluation panel

Candidates for the MSE call will be evaluated by external reviewers who have a doctoral degree and are active in the field of the project proposal (evidence of recent publications and/or projects). Each reviewer can evaluate one or more projects depending on the number of proposals received and the disciplines chosen.

Conflict of Interest

Upon receipt of the project proposals and after verifying their eligibility, the project proposals will be distributed to the different reviewers following their principal discipline along with the declaration of non-conflict of interest documents and the abstracts of the distributed projects.

A conflict of interest (COI) is a situation in which personal or financial considerations have the potential to compromise or bias professional judgment and objectivity. Any private, personal, or commercial interests relating to an application for funding to MSE projects must be declared in this document.

A conflict of interest exists if a reviewer:

- was involved in the preparation of the proposal,

- is a director or partner or is in any way involved in the management of the candidate,
- is employed or contracted by the candidate,
- is a close relative of the candidate (and any persons living in the same household),
- has been, or is involved, in publications, patents, and projects with the candidate within the last 5 years,
- has or has been a relationship of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with the candidate,
- has or has been a mentor or been in a mentee relationship with the candidate,
- Exceptions may be made if:
 - the reviewer works in a different department/laboratory/institute from the one where the action is to be carried out and
 - the departments//laboratories/institutes within the organisation concerned operate with a high degree of autonomy.

The reviewers are required to use a provided document to declare any potential conflict of interest.

Proposal documents

For each proposal, the following documents will be shared with the reviewers:

1. Application form
2. Letter of motivation
3. A support letter from a line manager at the University of Luxembourg committing to host the project in their unit (only for postdoctoral fellows and research scientists not authorized to lead research projects at the University of Luxembourg).

4. Selection principles

The selection criteria are academic excellence, originality, and research impact of the application submitted.

In the case of project proposals of equal quality and originality, priority will be given to those where the applicants are working in fields where gender equality is skewed, the second criteria (following international guidelines) is the grade for the first criteria “academic excellence”.

The selection criteria are:

- Academic excellence of the candidate (5 points)
 - The phase of the applicant's career, including diverse career paths, as well as possible breaks and the effects of major life events or pandemic restrictions, will be considered.
- Originality of the project proposal (5 points)
 - According to the aim of this scheme how the project proposal will enhance existing research endeavours or facilitate the inception of innovative research concepts.
- Research impact (5 points)
 - The potential impact of the project proposal also including the impact of the project on the applicant's future research endeavours (for example, funding applications).

Each of the criteria will be evaluated on a 5-point rating scale in a written evaluation report:

Score 5	The project proposal is original, and exceptionally strong and the use of the grant will generate forefront knowledge . The research produced will likely have an important and substantial impact on science and research.
Score 4	The project proposal is quite original and expected to support research that will make a significant contribution to science and research .
Score 3	The project proposal contributes to research that is competitive at the national level and will probably make a valuable contribution in the international field.
Score 2	The project proposal is solid and is in principle worthy of support. It is considered of less priority than work in the above categories.
Score 1	The project proposal is weak, and it is associated with work that is neither solid nor exciting, flawed in the scientific and or technical approach, repetitions of other work, etc. not worthy of funding .

5. Contact information

For any questions related to the MSE program, please contact the support team by email: mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu.

Annex 1

Evaluation Report

Academic excellence of the candidate (5 points)	Grade:
Has the applicant demonstrated the ability to conduct excellent research? To what extent is the applicant's existing professional experience appropriate regarding the proposed project proposal?	
Originality of the project proposal (5 points)	Grade:
To what extent are the proposal's objectives pertinent and realistic? To what extent does the project proposed research address important challenges? To what extent does the project proposal go beyond the state-of-the-art? To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the project's objectives? To what extent are the proposed project plan and resources adequate and properly justified?	
Research impact (5 points)	Grade:
To what extent will the proposal create a scientific impact? To what extent will the proposal impact the future research endeavors of the applicant? To what extent will the proposal have a societal and/or technological/economic impact?	