

## 2026 Guide for Applicants

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For further information please visit the webpage:

[Marie Speyer Excellence Grants - University of Luxembourg | Uni.lu](https://mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu)

And/or contact the MSE team at: [mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu](mailto:mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu)

## Marie Speyer Excellence Grants

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## Marie Speyer Excellence Grants Scheme

The Marie Speyer Grants welcome applications from all disciplines and sectors. The scheme is organised by the Gender Equality Office in collaboration with the Vice-Rector for Research, following strict criteria of research excellence.

The grants aim to enhance existing research activities or facilitate the establishment of innovative research concepts. In the year 2026, up to four scholars can be awarded a grant in the amount of 130.000 Euro (total budget for each grant).

### Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee of the Marie Speyer Excellence Grants ensures that all procedures are conducted with fairness and transparency. It is responsible for supervising the program, including the review process and assessing major change requests related to the implementation of the grants.

The Committee is composed of:

- Vice-Rector for Research, Prof. Simone NICLOU
- Gender Equality Delegate, Prof. Skerdilajda ZANAJ
- Strategic Advisor to the Rector, Dr. Philippe DELFOSSE

### MSE Team

The Marie Speyer Excellence grants program is supervised by the Gender Equality Delegate, Prof. Skerdilajda Zanaaj, and managed by Dr. Inês Crisóstomo and Ms. Marie-Laure Glowacki, from the Gender Equality Office. The team is supported by the relevant administrative and technical teams of the University.

### Description of the MSE projects

#### *Principal Investigator*

The Principal Investigator (PI) is a researcher at the University of Luxembourg.

The PI will serve as the primary contact point with the MSE team, and the administrative departments of Uni.lu and:

- will be responsible for using the grant, following standards of ethical principles and research integrity.
- respects the implementation guidelines provided within this Guide, including preparing and submitting the required reports on time.
- acknowledges the financial support from the excellence funding scheme for all publications and/or reports generated with the use of the funding: "Author X acknowledges financial support of the University of Luxembourg through a Marie Speyer Excellence Grant 20XX".
- valorises research results, coming from their scientific work generated from the excellence grant, e.g., if applicable, by declaring it to the central Office of Partnership, Knowledge and Technology Transfer (PaKTTO Office).
- communicates the outputs of the grant (research results) to different audiences by liaising with the communications department.

#### *Duration and grant budget*

An MSE project has a duration of up to 3 years.

In accordance with university law, if an MSE project budget covers the funding for a doctoral fellow, the project duration should be at least 3 years and no more than 4 years. In this case only, the project can be extended to 4 years, but the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the doctoral fellow should be covered by the applicant's own budget.

The scheme will award up to 4 grants of 130,000 € each. An argued adaptation of project duration and cost-neutral budget shifts between budget lines during the project is possible. In such cases, the PI must contact the MSE team as soon as possible and at the latest 3 months before the initial project's end date.

If the project budget exceeds 130,000 €, the difference should be covered by the applicant's own budget.

### *Eligible costs*

Each project will be awarded 130,000 €, this amount can be annually distributed in an ad hoc manner over a maximum of 3 years. The requested project costs should be essential for the project implementation and are detailed in the Project Budget Form (Excel table).

The table below provides an overview of eligible costs (not an exhaustive list), while detailed information relevant to the budget establishment is covered in the "Budget categories" annex.

#	MSE costs	Eligibility	Applicability
A	Personnel costs	YES	Doctoral and post-doctoral fellows, trainees, professional or technical staff.
B	Third party collaborator, experts	YES	Invited experts, expert speakers' fees.
C	Equipment	YES	Including equipment costs, computer, databases, platform costs and licenses.
D	Travel costs	YES	Consult the Uni.lu financial guidelines*.
E	Documentation	YES	Books, journals, subscription to electronic journals or data bases.
F	Other costs	YES	Catering, logistics, room rental. Open Access publications, patents filing costs. Advertising, conference, organisation and registration, publications.
G	Operating expenses	YES	Operational expenses, supplies, consumables, subcontracting (if no other Uni.lu component can do the activity).

\*see Intranet: ULI > The University > SFC > Policies and Procedures

### *Ethical and research integrity principles and processes*

Code of conduct, ethics and personal data

Uni.lu promotes the responsible conduct of research as described in the University of Luxembourg - Code of Conduct, and it respects fundamental ethical principles as listed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Any research involving the participation of human subjects, animals, or the use of biological materials or personal data, or which may represent a risk for the environment or society, may involve an ethical

component. Ethical components should be specifically addressed in the proposal, by fulfilling the ethics principles in force at Uni.lu and in the Luxembourgish law. The following panels and contact points might be of relevance:

- The PI must consult the Ethics Review Panel of the University of Luxembourg (ERP webpage) regarding the general ethical aspects of their projects before beginning their research. The Ethics Review Panel may not intervene after the start of a research project phase that raises ethical questions. The ERP may not approve a research project on an ad hoc basis. If the project takes place in a clinical context in Luxembourg and/or involves patients, additional approval may be required from the Comité National d'Éthique de Recherche (CNER) and/or the Commission Nationale de la Protection des Données (CNPD Commission nationale pour la protection des données - Luxembourg (public.lu)).
- In case the proposal involves animals, the Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee of the University of Luxembourg (AEEC webpage) shall be consulted. This committee examines and delivers an opinion on projects that use animals for scientific purposes.
- For projects handling personal data, the Data Protection Officer at Uni.lu (DPO) provides advice and guidance on data protection to university staff and is the contact person for the National Commission for Data Protection (CNPD).

#### Open Science and DORA

Uni.lu encourages the dissemination of research results towards the scientific community and the greater public, as well as their protection and economic exploitation, along the general principle “as open as possible - as closed as necessary”. To maximize the impact of research outputs on science and society, PIs should consider disseminating the project results broadly through high-quality, scholarly publications with immediate access to the final peer-reviewed contents. Article processing charges (APC) for full Open Access publications or similar fees are eligible for funding within the project budget.

In the spirit of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), Uni.lu also recognizes the value of other research outputs and encourages notably MSE candidates to deposit research data according to the FAIR principles on field-specific or generic repositories.

In the same line, reviewers evaluating applications to the MSE calls are expected to acknowledge all types of research outputs, independent of journal-based metrics.

#### Doctoral education

Doctoral fellows of an MSE project are registered in one of the doctoral programmes of the University of Luxembourg. Further information on doctoral education at Uni.lu can be found under “Doctoral education” (Doctoral Education (uni.lu)) and “Office of doctoral studies – BED” (Office of doctoral studies (uni.lu)).

## 2026 Call

- Call for applications: from 1 December 2025 until 2 February 2026 at 14h (CET)
  - ePAS/CRIS approval and institutional validation submission by 26 January 2026<sup>1</sup>
- Eligibility confirmation: 3-9 February 2026
- External evaluation of proposals: from 9 February until 12 June
- Oversight Committee Meeting: 15 June (indicative date)

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<sup>1</sup> Institutional validation is one week before the deadline. There was a typo in the initial version that is corrected here.

- Funding Recommendations to Rectorate Meeting: 24 June (indicative date)
- Communication of results: 29 June 2025 (indicative date)
- Project start dates:
  - Earliest start date: 1 July 2026
  - Latest start date: 1 December 2026

## Eligibility for participation

- Applicants must hold a valid employment contract with the University of Luxembourg for the entire duration of the process: at the time of application, at the start of the grant, and throughout the requested funding period.

*Applicants on non-permanent contracts whose contract at the application phase is not valid throughout the requested funding period may apply, provided they are eligible for a contract extension. In such cases, they can request funding to cover the extension, ensuring that they meet the eligibility criteria.*

- The call specifically targets:
  - Postdoctoral fellows. - Research Scientists.
  - Assistant professors, and associate professors (full professors excluded).
- Applicants are women.
- Scholars from any discipline should consider applying.
- The application process described below is strictly followed, meaning a full proposal is submitted within the deadlines (institutional validation and final deadline). The proposal strictly adheres to the templates provided, with all required sections completed.

## Application process

The application process consists of 4 main phases.

### *Phase 1: Application Form.*

- Download the application form and the budget template (see [Useful documents on the MSE webpage](#)), Save and standardize the file names: "2026-MSE\_ProjectACRONYM\_PI LastName\_PI FirstName".
- In the application form, fill in the requested information. All sections should be completed, and no section can be removed or altered. Proposals should be written in English. Refer to the application templates and the annex for detailed instructions.
- Complete the provided budget template.

### *Phase 2: Institutional validation*

- At least one week before the call deadline (for 2026, 26.01.2026), the applicant fills out the institutional validation form ([useful documents](#)) and sends it together with their project proposal (including the budget file) for institutional validation by the MSE team. The files need to be submitted by email to: [mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu](mailto:mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu) (for SnT researchers, the institutional validation is performed by the Project coordinators)
- The MSE team will check for completeness and conformity with eligibility requirements (budget, etc.). Please note that the team will not comment on the scientific content of the

project.

- Without institutional validation, the final application will not be accepted.
- Once the applicant has received the feedback from the MSE team, they can make necessary corrections (if applicable) and submit their application.

### *Phase 3: Announce the MSE project*

Announce the project via the online submission platform (ePAS) using the “Marie Speyer Excellence (MSE)” program (Uni.lu internal). The project must be announced before the institutional validation (26.01.2026) and fully approved at the call deadline (02.02.2026).

### *Phase 4: Submission*

Send the complete project proposal (application form, budget file, letter of motivation, and a support letter (if applicable)) to the MSE team using the email address: [mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu](mailto:mariespeyer.grants@uni.lu) for final submission.

The final project proposal must include:

- Application form
- Letter of motivation
- Budget file (note that the budget form is for internal purposes and will not be shared with reviewers).
- If the applicant currently holds a postdoctoral or research scientist position, the project proposal must include a support letter from a line manager at Uni.lu, committing to host the project in their unit. The support letter does not need to be from the line manager at the time of submission.

No modification after the deadline will be accepted. Incomplete proposals and those received after the deadline cannot be considered. Major budgetary errors may result in the rejection of the proposal. Do not hesitate to contact the MSE team if you have any questions.

## **Selection process of MSE projects**

The selection criteria are **academic excellence**, **originality**, and **research impact** (see below). The detailed review guidelines are described in [Guidelines for Reviewers](#).

The evaluation and selection process consists of several steps:

- Administrative Eligibility Check: The MSE team will perform an initial check to ensure that all proposals meet the eligibility criteria.
- External Review: Eligible proposals will be forwarded to the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) for an independent external review, conducted in two steps and in accordance with the official Guidelines for Reviewers:
  - Step 1 - Shortlisting: A multidisciplinary committee will shortlist the top 25%, up to 20 proposals for full review.
  - Step 2 – Expert review: Each of the shortlisted proposals will undergo a full review by two experts.
  - Step 3 - Panel: A multidisciplinary panel will re-examine the shortlisted proposals, considering the reviews of the independent experts, and will give a third independent assessment.

- Ranking by the Oversight Committee: The Oversight Committee will rank the proposals based on the quantitative and qualitative reviews and recommend those selected for funding to the Rectorate.
- Final Decision by the Rectorate: The Rectorate will review the recommendations and decide on the awardees.
- Communication of Results: The decision of the Rector will be communicated to applicants by the Marie Speyer Team.

## Selection Criteria

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 for the written document:

<b>Score 5</b>	The project proposal is original, exceptionally strong and the use of the grant will generate <b>forefront knowledge</b> . <b>The research produced</b> will likely have an <b>important and substantial impact</b> on science and research.
<b>Score 4</b>	The project proposal is quite original and expected to support research that will make a <b>significant contribution to science and research</b> .
<b>Score 3</b>	The project proposal contributes to research that is <b>competitive at the national level</b> and will probably make a <b>valuable contribution</b> in the international field.
<b>Score 2</b>	The project proposal is solid and is, in principle, worthy of support. It is considered <b>of less priority</b> than work in the above categories.
<b>Score 1</b>	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., <b>not worthy of funding</b> .

Each external reviewer is required to provide both a quantitative and a qualitative assessment for each criterion. The average score across the three criteria will form the basis for the overall ranking. Reviewers will also be asked to indicate an approximate ranking of



the proposal within their area of expertise, such as top 5%, top 10%, or top 25%.

In the event of a tie, the excellence criterion will be used to determine the final ranking.

## Notifications

At the end of the evaluation process, the MSE team will notify the successful applicants and inform all other applicants whether their proposal was shortlisted. Qualitative feedback from external reviewers will be provided to shortlisted applicants for learning purposes and to support future grant applications. **No quantitative scores will be disclosed.**

The outcome for successful applicants will also be communicated to the relevant dean or director, as well as to the applicant's research facilitator(s).

## MSE Project Implementation

The MSE awarded projects implementation will be monitored via a dedicated platform in SharePoint [Home](#). This project hub serves as a central space to support PIs and project teams throughout the full lifecycle of your funded initiative, from launch to final reporting.

The project hub compiles all essential resources, shared documents, reporting tools, and forms for submitting change requests.

## Project duration extension request

A cost-neutral extension of the project may be requested up to a maximum of 12 months from the initial end date of the project.

To request such an extension, please submit a change request via the dedicated Project Hub [Home](#), no later than 3 months before the initial project end date. Such a change request needs to be accompanied by a written confirmation from the financial controller.

## Change requests, including budget

Any request for changes to the project proposal, including a financial forecast, must be submitted promptly via the dedicated Project Hub: [Home](#)

Change requests will be reviewed by the MSE team, and in case of major changes, the team will send the request for review to the Oversight Committee.

## Reporting

- All projects must submit a final report within 3 months after completion.
- Projects lasting up to 18 months also require a mid-project financial report.
- Projects lasting for 19 months or more must submit an interim report within 2 months after the project midpoint.

Reports must be submitted via the dedicated Project Hub: [Home](#). The templates and deadlines are available to the PI and project team in the hub.



## ANNEXES

### Instructions and guidelines to complete the application form

Proposals should be written in English with a fixed number of pages as detailed in the sections below. Font Arial, size 11, single line spacing, and 1.5 cm top/bottom/left/right margins should be used throughout the entire document. Proposals that do not follow these instructions will be rejected.

#### *General project information*

Project ACRONYM, project title, starting date, duration (in months), budget (130k€), recruitment (e.g., doctoral, postdoctoral fellows, technical staff on non-permanent contract).

#### *Project description*

##### **Abstract** (max. 0.5 page)

- Describe the main idea of your project.
- The abstract should be concise, clear, informative, and self-contained.

##### **State-of-the-art**, including your own relevant previous work (max. 1 page)

- Describe the current scientific state of the art and ongoing developments in fields relevant to your proposal, including your own previous work.
- Include available theories, concepts, or solutions, as well as conclusions (possibly with literature references).
- Provide an assessment of research needs (the main conclusions leading to the proposal).

##### **Project description and objectives** (max. 2 pages)

- Describe how the grant will help research in the corresponding field.
- If applicable, describe the potential use of the results after the grant.
- Outline your project's contribution to the research needs.
- Clearly define the goal, objectives, focus, and scope of the project in a realistic and as far as possible, measurable form.
- State the main research questions and/or hypotheses to be addressed.

##### **Project plan** (max 2 pages: 1 page of text on the first page and a Gantt chart on a second page)

The project plan is illustrated by a Gantt chart (format of your choice), and describes the work planned in work packages, including, if applicable, the progression of the doctoral fellow(s). It also provides brief argumentation on how the work packages articulate and the structure of the main steps and tasks involved to achieve the project results.

The project plan must include a description and short justification for the requested costs; the detailed budget is an internal document that will not be shared with the evaluators.

##### **Project outcomes and follow-ups** (max. 0.5 page)

- Contribution to the advancement of knowledge and Uni.lu's research community.

Describe the project's contribution to knowledge production and how the results are exploited and disseminated within the research community. That is, how the project outcomes contribute to (1) the promotion of research across Uni.lu, (2) advancement of the state of the art, (3) the development of the scientific community, and the Uni.lu and its entities in terms of capacities, competencies, visibility, and attractiveness.

- If applicable, describe how the research project will contribute to knowledge generation and the future of society. Describe what efforts (publications and other activities) are foreseen to increase public awareness, well-being, and understanding of the research field.
- Future research plans. Indicate how the results of the project can form the basis for future research and what the plans are (depending on the results) for future grant applications to Uni.lu-external funding institutions.
- Exploitation and dissemination of research results. Please explain the measures that will ensure exploitation after the end of the project.

### **References** (max. 0.5 page)

### **Legal and ethical requirements** (max. 0.5 page)

Describe all potential issues regarding data protection, intellectual property rights and ethical issues for the whole project (not only for activities carried out in Luxembourg). Explain how you will address these, e.g., anonymous data processing, consent forms, contracts with companies involved and specify any already existing permission and/or authorisation for the proposed work. Please consult the University of Luxembourg's Policy on Ethics in Research and international codes of conduct.

### **Curriculum vitae of the PI** (max 5 pages)

Please ensure that you complete all sections of the CV according to the template provided at the end of the application form. Note that reviewers are not required to access external links; therefore, the CV must be self-contained and provide all necessary information for reviewers to assess the proposal without referring to additional sources.

### *Support letter for postdoctoral fellows and research scientists.*

- If the applicant currently holds a postdoctoral or research scientist position, the application form must include a support letter from a line manager at Uni.lu, committing to host the project in their unit. The support letter does not need to be from the current line manager at the time of submission.

### *Budget template (see the Excel budget table)*

Complete the budget template.

- All amounts are to be entered in euros (€) without cents.
- For all expenses, the procedures, and limits in force at the time the expenses occur will apply. Please consult the latest financial guidelines in the Intranet.
- Major budget errors may lead to rejection of the proposal.

### **Budget categories:**

Category A1: Uni.lu staff involved, paid by Uni.lu (from internal budget).

- List and enter the personnel category for the PI and any other contributors from Uni.lu staff.
- Enter the period of involvement and the number of hours per week in the project of each contributor. Most contributors will probably be involved for the whole duration of the project.

Category A2: MSE participants to be financed by the project.

- List all participants who are to be financed through the project.
- Salaries of permanent staff of the university are not eligible and should be listed in category A1. Exceptions can exist for the PI salary (for example increase of working time), such cases should be listed in A2 and justified.
- PhD fellows can be funded through MSE projects. They should be involved full-time and work towards their doctoral degree. They should be registered in a doctoral programme at Uni.lu. Their PhD thesis should be a project output.
- The following categories of personnel can be financed by the project under Category A2 (use the current salary grids):
  - Postdoctoral researcher
  - Doctoral researcher
  - Research & development specialist
  - Technical staff on project - (Lab technician or Research support technician)
  - Student assistants (auxiliary staff on a limited contract) may be included within the budget limits. In exceptional cases, several student assistants will be allowed, e.g., if needed for large-scale interviewing. etc.
- Note that the amounts in the tables are the total costs (incl. university charges) of each position for the university. They are NOT the gross (brut) salaries.
- The personnel cost table applies to all researchers to be employed at the Uni.lu when the project starts. When a person is already employed on a fixed-term contract and moves to a new project, please verify that the total duration of the continuous employment of the researcher does not exceed 60 months (Labour law). Renewal/contract prolongation can only be done twice. In case of a potential gap between two contracts, a waiting period ("délai de carence") should be observed. Please contact your HR partner for details as these regulations are part of the national labour law.
- Participants may have a full-time or part-time contract. Working contracts cannot exceed the approved project duration and the salary costs will have to be calculated accordingly. Many projects start later than anticipated and extension of the duration beyond the initially projected end date is possible. However, as salaries increase over time the extension might involve additional salary costs. These additional costs will not be covered by the MSE grants and other sources will have to be found.
- Anyone who already has a contract with the Uni.lu as adjunct teaching staff member (Vacataire) cannot be financed through the project at the same time (Category A2).
- Applicants without an ADR cannot supervise PhD candidates nor Postdocs.

Category B: Third party collaborators, experts.

- Remunerated third party collaborators providing services to the project (invited speakers,

experts, and operational support) are eligible.

#### Category C: Durable equipment.

- For full time researcher(s) paid by the project (Category A2), the project budget can include some IT equipment. If the project requires a higher performance computer or further equipment, please briefly justify. Additional costs (such as consumables) should be specified in the project budget under Category G.

#### Category D: Travel in Luxembourg and journeys abroad.

- Each trip on behalf of the University should be undertaken most cost-effectively.
- For eligible costs and applicable rates, consult the Uni.lu financial guidelines.

#### Category E: Documentation.

- Documentation such as books or subscriptions to journals.

#### Category F: Other costs.

- Costs for open access publishing, article processing charges (APC) for full Open Access publications or similar fees.
- Costs for translating and editing, patent filing, workshops, seminars, and conferences (including registration or organisation costs, room rental, catering) or advertising.

#### Category G: Operating expenses.

- Specify expenses related to operating costs, consumables, supplies and all the expenses not included in the other categories.
- Subcontracting work should be specified (who, what, how long) and justified, notably, why the work cannot be performed with other groups in the university.

#### Category R: Additional income to cover project costs.

- This category refers to income (in kind or in Euros) from internal or external partners and is used to cover some of the costs listed in Categories A-G.
- The approved budget will be the sum of the costs of Categories A-G minus this part of the additional income.
- Provide a short description of the source of the income, i.e., the external partner, as well as country. The following categories are used:
  - o R1: Additional income - from internal sources (directly from faculty, IC, department, other IAS instruments, etc.)
  - o R2: Additional income - from external sources (other state contributions (ministries, FNR, etc), European institutions, other int. organisations, foundations, other third parties (e.g., companies, banks, private persons))