



AXA
Research Fund
Through Research, Protection

Junior Research Fellowship applications Guidelines

2015

The AXA Research Fund is the science philanthropy initiative of the AXA Group that seeks to advance knowledge on global risks for the benefit of society.

This guide contains all the necessary information to apply for a Junior Research Fellowship funded by the AXA Research Fund. You will also find a general overview of our selection process.

This guide may be used as a reference by both Institutions and candidates.

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1. Available Junior Research Fellowship scheme & Budget

a. General principles

The mission of the AXA Research Fund is to **fund basic research** dedicated to a **better understanding of important hazards, risks and threats and current global societal challenges** within three clusters: socioeconomic risks, environmental risks and life risks. The AXA Research Fund seeks to **award thirty Junior Research Fellowships annually to outstanding researchers**. **Once a year**, it operates a **bottom-up call for applications submitted by the research institution** to which the candidate's host laboratory belongs, and where the post-doctoral work is to be carried out.

Institutions are invited to participate in the call and it is **their responsibility to identify and submit the names of the best possible candidates** to participate in the Junior Research Fellowships campaign.

An **International Scientific Board** oversees the applicant selection process in **validating the eligibility and selection criteria** as well as the **tools** used to process the call for applications. The president of the Scientific Board, by delegation of the Board, acts as a jury over and decides upon the recommendations of funding based on:

- **Scientific assessments** of applications ("light proposals" & "full proposals") offered by a network of expert peer reviewers & remote referees;
- **Public engagement interviews** by non-academic AXA experts, interviews being used to make a difference only if it is in favor of the candidate.

The **international peer review evaluation** is carried out by an AXA Research Fund partner, the **European Science Foundation (ESF)**. ESF is an **independent, non-governmental organization** dedicated to pan European Scientific network and collaboration. ESF carries out the review using the AXA Research Fund's criteria.

b. Funding scheme

The AXA Junior Research Fellowships are:

- For a fixed **duration of 24 months**;
- For a **maximum total of €120 000** for the entire duration of the funding.

2. Eligibility criteria

Every application that is submitted must be complete in order to be considered by the AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board.

a. Host institution

The AXA Research Fund partners with academic institutions only. **Host institutions** must be **registered in the AXA Research Fund's database** and **located within the geographical scope** below.

Please note that the AXA Research Fund:

- **does not accept unsolicited applications from individual applicants;**
- **does not place restrictions on the nationality** of the Junior Research Fellow.

The AXA Research Fund's **geographical scope** for Junior Research Fellowship funding includes:

Europe	Central & Latin America	Africa & Middle East	Asia Pacific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member states of the European Union - Iceland - Liechtenstein - Macedonia - Moldova - Monaco - Montenegro - Norway - Russia - Serbia - Switzerland - Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Argentina - Brazil - Colombia - Mexico 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Algeria - Bahrain - Cameroon - Gabon - Israel - Ivory Coast - Lebanon - Morocco - Oman - Qatar - Russia - Saudia Arabia - Senegal - South Africa - Turkey - The United Arab Emirates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Australia - China - Hong Kong - India - Indonesia - Japan - Malaysia - Singapore - South Korea - Taiwan - Philippines - Thailand - Vietnam

NB: Please note that this geographical scope is reviewed on a yearly basis.

b. Research project

The mission of the AXA Research Fund is to fund basic science dedicated to a better understanding of global **risks** within one of the three clusters below:

- **Environmental risks**
 - Climate change, e.g. glacier retreat, sea-level rise.
 - Natural hazards, e.g. earthquake, atmospheric and space-weather phenomena.
 - Human driven environmental changes, e.g. urban pollution, nanotechnologies and pesticide exposure.

- **Life risks**
 - Aging and long term care, e.g. trends in individual longevity, age-related diseases, population demographics.
 - Biomedical risks, e.g. evolution of infectious diseases and pandemics, exposure to new technologies.
 - Addictions and risky behaviors, e.g. psychology, biology, medicine.
- **Socio-economic Risks**
 - Geopolitical risks, e.g. access to natural resources, international and civil conflicts, political upheavals, international security.
 - Macro-economic and financial systemic risks, i.e. all uncertainties pertaining to relationships between economic aggregates (e.g. national income, government expenditure, aggregate demand).
 - Individual and collective behaviors relating to uncertainty.
 - Large corporate risks, e.g. internal corporate governance risks, threats and challenges inherent to the corporate environment.

Please note that the AXA Research Fund does not fund:

- **“Research & Development” programs** when they pursue an objective of systematic application of knowledge or understanding, directed towards the production of useful materials, devices, and systems or methods, including design, development, and improvement of prototypes and new processes to meet specific requirements.
- **Research that would breach the AXA Group ethical guidelines**, which includes (but is not limited to):
 - Research violating national regulations;
 - 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;
 - Research processing private personal data without the informed consent of the concerned parties (incl. genetic information);
 - Research activities aiming at human cloning.

NB: It is the applicants' responsibility to identify any potential ethics issues, to handle the ethics aspects of their proposal, and to detail how they plan to address them. All received proposals undergo an ethics review carried out by the ESF panel experts as part of their evaluation of the applications. Please refer to [this page for more information](http://www.axa.com/en/responsibility/shareholders-esg-risk-management/business-ethics/) on the AXA Group Compliance and Ethics Guide (<http://www.axa.com/en/responsibility/shareholders-esg-risk-management/business-ethics/>).

- **Projects that are already underway** as the AXA Research Fund wishes to finance projects from start to finish.



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.

c. Junior Research Fellow

A Junior Research Fellow can only be presented **through one institution** and must **not be holding his/her permanent academic position**. The candidate must have **been awarded his first PhD** (or equivalent doctoral degree) within the **5 years preceding the submission** of the proposal for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship campaign. **Extensions** to this period may be allowed in case of **documented career breaks**. Examples of eligible career breaks include:

- **Maternity / Paternity leave:** For maternity, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by 18 months for each child born after the PhD award. For paternity, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the actual amount of paternity leave taken for each child born after the PhD award.
- **Long-term illness** (over ninety days), **clinical qualification** or **national service:** the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the documented amount of leave taken for each event which occurred after the PhD award.

*NB: Eligible events that take place within the extension of the eligibility window may lead to **further extensions** (e.g. sabbatical year). The cumulative eligibility period should **not in any case surpass 9 years following the award of the first PhD**. No allowance will be made for part-time working (2 years of half-time working count as 2 full-time years).*

The AXA Research Fund peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to **assess scientific excellence irrespective of the gender and nationality** of the Junior Research Fellow and **other potential biases**. The evaluations are monitored to **guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality** in the treatment of proposals.

3. Selection criteria

The AXA Research Fund selects **thirty Junior Research Fellowship applications** a year. The **Scientific Board** oversees the selection process, basing its decisions on the **scientific assessments offered by 1) remote referees' reviews** supporting discussions of **2) Peer Review Panels** composed of a network of **academic experts** with international reputations in their fields & **3) public engagement interviews** by **non-academic AXA experts**:

- **Remote Referees**

The ESF Office identifies and appoints two external experts per application to hold a targeted expertise relevant to the subject of the application and provide an anonymous assessment of the proposal.

- **Peer Review Panels (PRP)**

Composed of renowned scientists and scholars from all over the world, they have a wide view and their knowledge cuts across the domains covered by their respective PRP. Each cluster has its own PRP members who are independently identified, invited and appointed by the ESF office based on their scientific profile and experience, to ensure a balanced coverage of the disciplines in the PRP's remit.

- **AXA Experts**

AXA employees working on the issues of risk and having expertise on one of the three clusters of risk are asked to assess the candidate's ability to share his/her research project with a non-academic audience.

Only the **most renowned research institutions**, which meet the highest standards of excellence, may apply for a Junior Research Fellowship. The scientific and academic assessment of all applications is based on the stringent selection criteria set forth below:

- **Host Institution**

- **Quality of the research:** publications output, presence of internationally renowned researchers;
- **Relationship to the international community:** international outreach of the research carried out, success in attracting top-tier foreign researchers;
- **Quality of the research environment** and working conditions offered to the prospective Junior Research Fellow;

The AXA Research Fund has signed the **Charter for European Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** and thereby is particularly attentive to Institutions demonstrating their commitment to an attractive, supportive and stimulating environment in which to carry out research and recognizing the importance of providing its researchers with the training and means to be internationally and inter-sectorally competitive and mobile. Institutions having signed the Charter for European Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers will be considered as having a competitive advantage.

- **Research Project**

- **Innovative nature and originality** of the project, progress beyond the state of art:
 - o Commanding knowledge of relevant literature;
 - o Originality both in research hypothesis and methodology used to test it;
 - o Rankings, bibliometrics, peer-reviewed recognition...;

- **Implementation:**
 - o Feasibility of the project;
 - o Quality of the academic environment: Post-doctoral program, supervisor...;
 - o Project framework: macro-planning, budget, quality of the preliminary work and access to needed equipment, field studies, data...;
 - o Appropriateness of the Advisor and the laboratory: global leaders, dynamic growth path...;
 - o Research impact, contribution to a better understanding of important hazards and risks, or current global societal challenges...
 - **Scientific excellence of the previous host institution(s);**
 - **Relevance to risk:** High value is placed on applicants who highlight the contribution of their research to the discipline and, to a larger extent, to the understanding/modeling/ mitigation/prevention of major risks.
- **Junior Research Fellow**
 - **Academic excellence and track record**, and adequacy between the contemplated research program and the Junior Research Fellows expertise;
 - **International reputation;**
 - **Personal commitment** of the Junior Research Fellow to the aims of the Research Project;
 - **Potential for research independence** and evidence of maturity including producing independently at least one important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor;
 - **Promising track record of early achievements** appropriate to their research fields and career stage, including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in leading international peer reviewed journals of their respective field. They may also refer to monographs or demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc...;
 - **Stature and quality of the recommendation** letters;
 - **International mobility.** By international mobility, we mean:
 - o **Current International Mobility:** Change of institution and/or country between current institution of applicant and targeted post-doc position. It is expected that most of the selected candidates move to another country between current and targeted position. Such international mobility is more valued than national mobility. Where a candidate remains in the same institution, a clear justification of such a decision is required.
 - o **Previous International mobility:** Minimum of 1 semester spent abroad since Master's thesis.
 - **Communication skills** as assessed by non-academic AXA experts (only used if it is in favor of the candidate).

4. Application process

a. Key dates

- Institutions are invited to submit their application from October 15, 2014 (noon Paris time) with AXA Scientific Board's decision to be released in June 2015.

b. Step-by-step overview

<p>1. Institutions registration</p> <p><i>Until Oct. 12, 2014</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This first step happens only once. Once an institution has been registered with the AXA Research Fund, it becomes part of our community. Institutions are invited to designate a single point of contact responsible for partnerships (Institution Representative) with the AXA Research Fund, and register prior to applying. • To check whether your institution is already registered, please visit this page (https://secure-researchfund.axa.com/Public/InstitutionSearch.aspx). • For more information on how to register an institution, please visit this page (http://www.axa-research.org/how-to-register-an-institution)
<p>2. Institutions request application slots</p> <p><i>Starts Oct. 15, 2014</i></p> <p><i>Ends Nov. 8, 2014</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only registered institutions may apply for a Junior Research Fellowship (see step 1). • Institutions wishing to present candidates are asked to fill out an online form and select among 12 research fields representative of their strongholds in terms of fundamental research. The point is to highlight their strengths, values and strategy. • Institutions are not limited to these initial choices and are allowed to present candidates in other research fields once they have been informed of the number of applicants they may present (from 0 to 4). <p><i>NB: Neither applicants' names nor specific project descriptions are expected at this stage of the process.</i></p>

<p>3. “Light Proposal step”</p> <p><i>Candidates’ name dropping:</i> Starts: Nov. 17, 2014 Ends: Dec. 8, 2014</p> <p>Light Proposal submissions: Starts: Nov. 17, 2014 Ends: Dec. 15, 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AXA Research Fund relies on Institutions’ operational contact to present candidate(s) on behalf of their Institution by entering her/his name & email address online. Each candidate then receives via email all the necessary information to access the application form. • The Junior Research Fellow is responsible for filling out the application form online. • Please have the following documents ready for your “Light Proposal” application, in PDF format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extended synopsis of the postdoctoral project: 1.5 pages max + references; - Detailed CV: 2 pages max + ½ page of the most relevant publications; - Career statement: 1 page max, detailing link between the PhD thesis and the postdoctoral project, justification of the choice of the host institution, professional objectives of the applicant and how the AXA Research Fund fellowship can contribute to achieving these objectives.
<p>4. “Full Proposal Step”</p> <p><i>Starts:</i> Feb. 20, 2015</p> <p><i>Ends:</i> Mar. 19, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Research Fellows having been successful in the first round of selection are invited to submit a “Full Proposal” application and are responsible for filling out the application form online. • Please have the following documents ready for your “Full Proposal” application, in PDF format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated detailed CV; - Detailed description of the research project: 6 pages max: long term objective and specific aims, rationale, methodology, work plan, budget; - Extended list of the most relevant publications: 2 pages max; - Participation to colloquia: 2 pages max; - Short bio of the future supervisor; - List of 10 most relevant publications of the hosting group in the past 3 years; - Two Reference letters (1page/letter) which must be submitted separately by their authors (incl. referents’ names and institutions). The first letter is written by the applicant’s Post-Doctoral advisor and the second letter is necessarily written by a different referent, preferably by the applicant’s previous advisor.
<p>5. “Public engagement interviews” by non-academic AXA experts</p> <p><i>Starts:</i> Mar. 23, 2015</p> <p><i>Ends:</i> May 5, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates invited to submit the full proposal, will be, in parallel, interviewed by two AXA experts. Their role is to help the AXA Research Fund assess the candidates’ ability to share their research project with a non- academic audience. • The AXA experts will get in contact with the candidate to settle up a 20 min interview, to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential to act as a spokesperson in public debate; - Popularization and pedagogical skills; - Ability to highlight the value of the research project to society.

6. Review and Selection	The Scientific Board will review the proposals and select the awarded candidates based on the ESF recommendations.
7. Results' publication <i>June 10</i>	As soon as the Board has taken its decision, the AXA Research Fund will inform the institution through the Institution's representative. Results of the campaign will also be made available online. (http://www.axa-research.org/publication-of-results).

5. Grant and agreement terms and conditions

The AXA Research Fund will liaise with the Institution representatives of the host institutions of selected applicants to set in motion the contracting process. Grantees will be kept updated by their Institution representative throughout the contracting process.

a. Amount and payment of grant and duration of the agreement

The AXA Research Fund Junior Research Fellowship is awarded for a fixed duration of 24 months and a maximum total of €120 000 for the entire duration of the funding. Payment of the grant is dependent on (i) the agreement signing and (ii) on the Junior Research Fellow taking up the AXA Junior Research Fellowship.

The start of the project normally takes place the **first calendar day of the month following conclusion of the grant agreement**. Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that **all projects start within 12 months** from the invitation to initiate the preparation of the granting process. The AXA Research Fund reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Grants are paid in several installments:

- An **advance payment** (as pre-financing) is made **within a maximum of 45 days** of the date of entry into force of the AXA Research Fund grant agreement,
- **Interim payments** are made on the **basis of actual expenditures** accepted for each financial management reporting period.

The **total amount** of the **pre-financing** and the **interim payments** paid out to the beneficiary are asked to **not exceed 85% of the maximum amount** of the financial contribution attributed to the project. A **final payment** is made corresponding to the **last financial management reporting period plus any adjustment needed**.

b. Use of grant

The AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution remunerates the Postdoctoral Researcher in accordance with the following terms and conditions:

- A **fixed sum of five thousand** (5,000) euros per year exempt from VAT to cover the **costs** incurred by the Junior Research Fellow that are **directly related to the research project**, subject to supporting documents to be provided to the Institution,
- A **minimum of thirty-five thousand** (35,000) euros as an **annual gross salary** exempt from VAT;
- The Institution may use a **maximum of twenty thousand** (20,000) euros per year exempt from VAT to **cover the environmental costs** directly related to the Postdoctoral Researcher's project. Any adjustment on the grantee's salary is deducted from the 20K€ allocated to institutions.

The sole purpose of the financial grant paid by AXA is to support the research project. In this connection, the AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution provide AXA

evidence that the whole of the contribution paid by AXA is paid in accordance with the terms and conditions described herein, for conducting the aforementioned postdoctoral research. All other expenses are eligible as long as they are directly connected to the grantee's research project.

Incidental expenses must be directly related to the research project the AXA Research Fund has selected. All overheads must be motivated.

Eligible costs can in particular include:

- AXA Junior Research Fellow expenses (incl. annual gross salary, travel & accommodation costs...),
- Acquisition of scientific equipment and resources (databases, survey costs, consumables...),
- Academic and public engagement activities organization costs.

The AXA Research fund does not cover expenses which are not directly connected to the Junior Research Fellowship research program, and in particular infrastructure or overhead costs. The application must make clear that the research environment provides full institutional support in this regard.

Non eligible costs include (but are not limited to):

- Costs related to general administration (incl. telecommunication expenses, office supplies, miscellaneous recurring consumables...),
- Costs of office (incl. rent or depreciation of buildings, general equipment's and related expenditure such as water or heating, maintenance, insurance, safety costs...).

c. Employment contracting framework

The AXA Research Fund has signed the Charter for European Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and thereby is particularly attentive to Institutions demonstrating their commitment to an attractive, supportive and stimulating environment in which to carry out research and recognizing the importance of providing its researchers with the training and means to be internationally and inter-sectorally competitive and mobile.

The AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution legally employs the Junior Research Fellow as a postdoctoral researcher in the department or the laboratory, under an employment contract that complies with current national legislation of the Institution. The AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution undertakes to:

- Entrust the Junior Research Fellow with the research for which he/she has been given authorization to work at the host Institution,
- Provide the Junior Research Fellow with the necessary resources to conduct his/her postdoctoral research,
- Agree to the involvement of an AXA Contact person whose role is notably to ensure regular contact between the Junior Research Fellow and the AXA Research Fund with the general aim of helping the young researcher in his/her career,
- Allow the Junior Research Fellow to attend meetings and seminars organized in connection with the AXA Research Fund.

The Junior Research Fellow is placed under the sole responsibility of the Institution which ensures that the postdoctoral research project runs smoothly and is properly conducted.

The AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution appoints a Scientific Officer to manage the Junior Research Fellowship. In the event that he/she is unable to carry out his/her tasks as defined herein, the AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution appoints a new Scientific Officer with the necessary and adequate guarantees to manage the Junior Research Fellow work to completion. The AXA Research Fund requests that the Institution provide the AXA Research Fund with the name of the new Scientific Officer.

d. Monitoring of grant

A progress report is asked to the Institution/Laboratory, one year after the launch of the Junior Research Fellowship project. At the end of the fellowship, the Institution/Laboratory is also requested to fill in an Executive Summary Report to inform the AXA Research Fund of the results of the grantee's research and the financial report showing a statement of expenditure. Specific outputs from the project are asked to be included (e.g. publications).

e. Intellectual property

The AXA Junior Research Fellow remains **fully independent** to conduct his/her research project. Also, AXA will **not claim any right to the ownership or use** of the results coming from the research program, and the Institution and/or the Junior Research Fellow and member or her/his team keep full ownership of their results, in accordance with the legal and/or contractual provisions existing between them.

f. Publicity on grant

The AXA Research Fund is a philanthropic initiative and therefore the publicity on the grant is only designed to enable AXA to promote its general interest role. The AXA Research Fund asks that the title of the fellowship include the name of "AXA". The AXA Research Fund asks that the title of the researcher include "AXA Research Fund". When communicating on the AXA fellowship, the Institution, the researcher, the AXA Research Fund asks that the support of the AXA Research Fund is mentioned.

The AXA Research Fund guarantees the use of the personal data disclosed by the candidates solely for the purpose for which they were provided. Furthermore, the AXA Research Fund does not transfer the personal data outside the European Union without the prior written consent of the candidate and accomplishment of required formalities. All the persons who may be in contact with the private information related to candidates (referees, panel members & chairs), sign upstream and Non-disclosure agreement.

g. Junior Research Fellow leave of absence

Each project selected by the Scientific Board and funded by the AXA Research Fund is a tight combination of a candidate, a project, and a specific research host



Institution. Thus, the candidate is expected to carry out the project as described in the proposal, and as acted in the grant agreement. Only in very exceptional cases, is it possible to adjust the scientific strategy and reallocate expenditure (e.g. regarding staff, equipment, consumables) accordingly, provided the research performed is still in line with the original scientific or scholarly objectives.

Furthermore, it is expected that the candidate establishes and concludes the funded research project in association with the original host institution (applicant legal entity). A progress report is asked to the Institution/Laboratory, one year after the launch of the Post-Doctoral research project. At the end of the fellowship, the Institution/Laboratory is also requested to fill in an Executive Summary Report to inform the AXA Research Fund of the results of the grantee's research and the financial report showing a statement of expenditure. Specific outputs from the project are asked to be included (e.g. publications).