

Call for projects « Excellence Chairs » 2020
4th edition

Framework

2020 « Excellence Chairs » call for projects

Closing date for applications :

2020 June 11th, at noon (Paris time)

Call Publication Address :

<https://www.univ-amu.fr/en/public/attractiveness-talent>

2020 March

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1. Context and objectives of the program

Context

The A*Midex university foundation is the bearer of the Aix-Marseille Initiative of Excellence, winner of the national label obtained within the framework of the PROGRAMME INVESTMENTS D'AVENIR (PIA). The IdEx project presented by Aix-Marseille Université and its partners (CNRS, Inserm, IRD, CEA, AP-HM, Sciences-Po Aix, Centrale Marseille) was selected in February 2012 by an international jury and definitively confirmed in April 2016. Its objective is to enhance and develop the exceptional potential of the Aix-Marseille site, by endowing it with world-class research and higher education. To this end, A*Midex is experimenting new actions and acts as a strategic growth lever for the region. One of A*Midex's challenges is to attract the best external talents to the Aix-Marseille site. Through various programmes, A*Midex is able to offer them a privileged research and teaching environment and thus encourage their incoming mobility and integration into the research units and teaching (or schools) and research components of the Aix-Marseille site.

The A*Midex Foundation is launching its fourth call for projects for the **Excellence Chairs** program in 2020. The ambition of Aix-Marseille Université and its partners, through this programme, is to **attract (and stabilise) exceptional teachers, teacher-researchers and researchers of international standing on the Aix-Marseille site, on structuring projects contributing to the strategy of the Aix-Marseille site**. The A*Midex Foundation regularly launches calls for proposals for this programme, for a limited number of labelled projects per year (1 to 3 new projects per year).

The A*Midex Foundation has carried out an assessment of the Excellence Chairs and Rising Stars projects initiated following the calls for projects in 2014, as well as the call for Excellence Chairs launched in 2016. This assessment had led A*Midex to define a new operating mode in the call for the Excellence Chairs 2018. Since 2018, the Excellence Chairs programme has been focused on two targets: external teachers/teachers/researchers and external ERC laureates with a dedicated mechanism (the "ERC" Excellence Chairs). The Foundation's International Strategic Council (or *International Board*) and the A*Midex Steering Committee recommend that the profiles recruited through this scheme should be highly demanding, in line with the criteria for obtaining *European Research Council (ERC)* grants - for research profiles - and that profiles in the first half of their careers should be targeted more closely.

For teacher-researcher and teacher profiles, the agreement of the component or school of affiliation is key, as well as its commitment to A*Midex and the University to open a position to competition within three years of the Chair, if the project carried out was satisfactory. For researcher profiles, the research unit is encouraged to explain a strategy for stabilization after the term of the Excellence Chairs.

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Key elements of the Excellence Chairs program :

- 1 ambition: to attract and retain new scientific and teaching talent, of exceptional quality.
- 1 program : the **Excellence Chairs program (Chaires d'Excellence)**
- 1 to 3 labelled projects per year
- 3-year projects (and possible renewal for 2 years)

Main objectives of the Excellence Chairs program :

- Enable the Aix-Marseille site to carry out a **strategic recruitment** of external scientific / pedagogical profiles capable of carrying out innovative projects (research, pedagogy), to develop new themes, or to reinforce the excellence of the site on a theme;
- Recruit **excellent / high level researcher / teacher-researchers profiles** on the Aix-Marseille site, with the capacity to obtain an ERC on the Aix-Marseille site in the next 5 years; and attract and recruit ERC holders on the site - the “ ERC ” Excellence Chairs programme being dedicated to this objective in particular;
- Guarantee the return on investment of the program by promoting **subsequent stabilization**. For teacher/teacher-researcher profiles, this requires real integration from the outset, notably through teaching, by ensuring that the project is appropriated by the research component and unit, and by guaranteeing upstream opportunities for stabilisation before or at the end of the project. For research profiles, the research unit must provide support, in particular for EPST (CNRS, INSERM, IRD) competitions.

2. Financial conditions and project format

Duration of the projects: the format of the projects is **36 months**, with an additional 12 months allowing only doctoral contracts to be funded.

Budget per project:

- Environment budget of 200 K € / year maximum (excluding the salary of the holder) possibly including other salary costs (recruitment of a scientific team), an operating and investment budget ;
- And possible support from A*Midex credits for the salary of the holder on a fixed-term contract.

Budget : a maximum of three projects will be funded under this PAA, with a maximum total PAA budget of EUR 2.5 million over 3 years.

Eligible expenditure : Eligible expenditure is defined by the A*Midex Financial Regulation available on the University's Guide to Procedures (<https://procedures.univ-amu.fr/amidex>). Eligible expenditure includes operating, salaries of scientific human resources and investment expenditure.

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3. Eligibility

- **Eligibility criteria for projects :**

- Research and/or teaching projects ;
- In any unit of the site / any component (or school: Centrale Marseille/Sciences Po Aix) ;
- Excellence projects carrying out research activities (teacher-researcher or researcher profiles) must be integrated into a research unit of the site (at a minimum) and be supported by a component or school; projects that are solely pedagogical (teacher profiles) must be integrated into a component or school ;
- Integrating into one of the 5 thematic axes of the Idex, for research: Health and Life Sciences, Advanced Sciences and Technologies, Humanities, Environment, Energy ;
- Opportunity for stabilization already foreseen in the form of a permanent post in a component or school for teacher/teacher-researcher profiles ; and reflection on the stabilization process underway for researcher profiles.

- **Eligibility criteria for profiles :**

- Doctorate, PhD ;
- All nationalities ;
- Last diploma obtained outside the Aix-Marseille site ;
- Minimum 4 years of research experience, after PhD ;
- Experience abroad (research and/or teaching) ;
- Incoming mobility (no internal recruitment at the Aix-Marseille site on Excellence Chairs)
- Teaching experience required ;
- Professional level of French language appreciated ;
- For candidates who have already passed the CNRS or INSERM competitions, only those who have been eligible will be eligible for an A*Midex Excellence Chair.

Eligibility will be verified by A*Midex at each stage of the selection process and will be the subject of specific information communicated to the candidates.

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4. Selection

Project selection criteria (indicative) :

- Strategic nature of the project for the site of Aix-Marseille Université ;
- Innovative/new character of the project, in relation to the ERC evaluation criterion "Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project";
- Integrating well into its environment (unit, component/school, possibly an institutional institute).

Selection criteria for profiles (indicative):

- Scientific production (bibliometrics, quality criteria);
- International recognition or even world leadership in its field ;
- Ability to obtain financing ;
- Prestige of the institutions attended ;
- Candidate with a recent A rating or good ranking at a preferred ERC (for teacher-researcher or researcher profiles).

Selection procedure:

The selection of projects is carried out in several stages:

- A 1st stage of instruction of the projects for Excellence Chairs by the Steering Committee of the A*Midex Foundation composed of representatives of the governance of the University and its 7 partners. A pre-selection of projects will then be carried out on the basis of the project selection criteria. At this stage, the A*Midex Steering Committee reserves the right to constitute a reserve list of projects, in case of abandonment of a pre-selected project within a reasonable period of time.
- 2nd stage: the projects preselected in stage 1 will be subject to international (ad hoc) hearings of applicants in order to verify the quality of the profiles for these projects and the presence of potential eligible applicants (profile selection criteria). Project leaders will be invited to propose to the A*Midex Foundation a list of internal and external participants, with CVs. The Steering Committee of the A*Midex Foundation will decide on the basis of the outcome of these hearings whether the projects can be subject to the opening of a recruitment procedure (for projects involving a fixed-term contract LRU).
- 3rd step: the recruitment competition will be opened for the recruitment of researchers/teacher-researchers on a "CDD LRU" (short-term contracts for researchers/teacher-researchers), on a job description validated by the A*Midex Foundation. The competition will be organized by the research unit and/or the component, with the involvement of A*Midex management. On this occasion the candidates will have developed a research and/or teaching pre-project.

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- 4th step: the candidates selected at the end of the recruitment process will be invited to develop a complete version of their three-year A*Midex Excellence Chair project. This project will be subject to validation by the A*Midex Foundation Steering Committee before any start-up.

The selection will be the subject of an information point after each stage.

5. Calendar

2020 March 9th: Information to unit and component managers at the Aix-Marseille site.

2020 March 17th, noon (Paris) : Opening of the call for projects.

2020 June 11th, noon (Paris) : Closing of the call for projects.

2020 July: Information on the results of the pre-selection (stage 1).

2020 July - October (indicative): Organisation of international hearings of candidates for the pre-selected projects (step 2). The Steering Committee may have recommended an international pre-screening of the call for applications if there is any doubt about the quality of the profiles attached to the file.

2020 November: Validation by the A*Midex steering committee of the opening of positions for the competition (stage 2).

2020 November - 2021 April (indicative): Organisation of recruitment by competitive examination (stage 3).

The research unit and/or the component are particularly mobilized at this stage.

2021 May - 2021 July (indicative): Validation of complete projects by the A*Midex Steering Committee (step 4).

2021 July: Agreement of the projects after validation.

2021 September (indicative): Start of projects.

2021 October (indicative): Meeting to launch the projects.

Please note: the calendar from stage 2 onwards depends on the progress of the projects ("indicative").

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6. Submission of a Excellence Chair project

The application package for Stage 1 includes:

- The application template to be completed, by the research unit and/or component, completed and signed, with its appendices. This template can be downloaded from the dedicated page of the call : <https://www.univ-amu.fr/fr/public/attractivite-talents>
- The mandatory annexes to the file to be completed are :
 - o **Annex 1**, Indicative job description form - developed in English and/or French.
 - o **The CVs of at least three identified candidates.**
 - o For teacher/teacher-researcher profiles, a letter of support from the director of the component or school, clearly indicating a commitment to open a position in the competition for the profile concerned, within 3 to 5 years (maximum).

The file for step 1 is to be sent by email to amidex-direction@univ-amu.fr **before 2020 June 11th at noon (Paris time).**

Any questions related to the content of the dossier to be produced can be asked by contacting Ms Camille Duran, Attractiveness and Internationalisation Project Officer at the A*Midex Foundation : camille.duran@univ-amu.fr.

In case of questions related to the strategy for submitting an Excellence Chair project, questions can be directed to the Vice-Presidents of the University (Research, Training), or to the EPST delegation in the region.

As of stage 1, the pre-selected projects will be in direct contact with A*Midex services for the documents to be produced for the following stages.

7. Commitments related to project funding and project monitoring for Excellence Chairs

Agreement and commitments : selected projects will be the subject of an agreement signed by the project leader, his/her research unit, the component or school, and the University implementing the Excellence Initiative.

The A*Midex implementation agreement details a certain number of commitments of the project leader, his/her research unit and the training component :

- The Chaires d'Excellence project leader will undertake to submit an ERC project within the first three years of the Chaires d'Excellence ;
- The production of an annual report, and a final report following the model provided by A*Midex, and the information of A*Midex indicators related to the project;
- The respect of the Aix-Marseille Université's Charter of Scientific Publications Signatures available on the University's online Procedures Guide, including A*Midex acknowledgements on publications ; as

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well as the display of the A*Midex and Investissements d'Avenir logo on project-related communications ;

- The respect of the commitments of the convention and the A*Midex Financial Regulations during the project.

In addition to these general commitments, the project may be subject to more specific commitments for the project itself, described in the agreement.

Financial and administrative management : the financial and administrative management of projects is handled by the research unit or component, depending on the nature of the project, with the support of the University's services. The research unit or component undertakes, by applying for this call for projects, to provide the resources necessary to ensure the proper implementation of the project.

Project monitoring : project monitoring is carried out by the services of the A*Midex Foundation. The annual project report is reviewed by the A*Midex management who may decide to organise a meeting with the project leader and his/her research unit and/or component. A request for renewal of up to two years can be made before the end of the three years of the Chair (and at the latest at month 30) after prior discussion with the A*Midex management. Project renewal is not automatic and is subject to validation by the A*Midex Steering Committee.

8. Information on the results and the agreement

The results at the end of each selection stage will be communicated by letter from the Deputy Vice-Chairman of the delegated University to A*Midex to the main contact indicated in the Stage 1 application file.

Once the validation of step 4 has been completed by the Steering committee, the agreement procedure will start. This agreement will be carried out in conjunction with the A*Midex operational team responsible for proposing a framework for the agreement.

9. Contact

Questions can be addressed to : Camille Duran, Attractiveness and Internationalisation Project Officer - camille.duran@univ-amu.fr ; 04 86 13 61 45.

10. Useful documents et links

- General information about A*Midex: <https://www.univ-amu.fr/en/public/excellence-initiative>
- Link to A*Midex procedures (Financial Regulation, Finance and HR Vademecum) : <https://www.univ-amu.fr/fr/public/dispositifs-clos-et-laureats-attractivite-talents>
- Link to the AMU Procedures Guide: <https://procedures.univ-amu.fr/>
- Presentation of the selection of previous Excellence Chairs calls : <https://www.univ-amu.fr/fr/public/dispositifs-clos-et-laureats-attractivite-talents>
- Link to current A*Midex calls : <https://www.univ-amu.fr/en/public/calls-projects-progress-amidex>