



*Office of Research and Development*

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2025**

Research stands at the intersection of current knowledge and the potential to shape future practices. The American University of Florence (AUF) is committed to fostering the development of new ideas that have a positive impact on the global landscape. As an academic institution, AUF recognizes the value of research conducted alongside classroom instruction, which generates reciprocal benefits to both the campus community and broader society.

Through its research initiative, AUF invites contributions from both Italian and international academic communities. Submitted proposals are evaluated by the Peer Review Committee (Scientific Commission) based on their relevance and applicability to contemporary and future contexts. Research proposals that receive approval from the Committee are then submitted to the Faculty Senate for final endorsement. Research projects are based at AUF's facilities in the heart of Florence, Italy, and are coordinated by the university's Research and Development department.

## 1. Proposals may be submitted for the following research areas:

### *A. Mental well-being in the post-pandemic and hyper-technological era within international academic communities: relational, communicative, individual, and learning-related issues.*

International institutions now find themselves grappling with a generation of learners who have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in distinct and profound ways. On one hand, students lived through the immediate impacts of the pandemic—lockdowns, remote and asynchronous learning, and a sense of estrangement. On the other hand, the pervasive influence of technology, which was already expanding rapidly prior to the pandemic, was further intensified by the crisis, introducing a host of new challenges and concerns.

In light of these shifts, it is crucial to develop a research methodology capable of addressing the complex issues faced by educational institutions, leaders, faculty, and students in the post-pandemic era. Such research should aim to inform the development of strategies that align with contemporary learning objectives and the evolving demands of society. Key areas of focus for this research will include relational dynamics, interactions among students, faculty, and across categories of the educational community; communication issues, both in-person and online, and individual concerns such as motivation, struggles with engagement, and learning-related difficulties, including divided attention, attentive listening, reading comprehension, and the evaluation of information sources.

### *B. Development of educational programs aimed at the conscious use of new technologies (AI) in academia.*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly integrating into the lives of individuals, advancing at an unprecedented pace. On a constant basis, new AI tools, applications, and platforms offering a wide range of professional and recreational services are introduced to the market and quickly adopted by the public, including the educational sector. In the present and increasingly in the near future, academic communities, faculty, and students will rely more heavily on such technologies.

While concerns about the potential negative implications of this widespread phenomenon have long been raised, it is increasingly important to approach the issue from a practical standpoint: how can advanced AI tools be effectively integrated into learning processes to enhance the circulation of information without undermining critical thinking, replacing writing and creative skills, or perpetuating misinformation? To address these questions, it is essential to develop a research methodology that examines these challenges and assesses the advantages, limitations, and potential risks associated with the use of AI in education. Such research should aim to highlight both the benefits and the drawbacks of relying on these emerging technologies.

### *C. Geopolitics and student mobility.*

Ongoing geopolitical conflicts, including those reignited between the West and the East as well as between political factions and religious groups, raise significant questions about the mobility of students and faculty across regions. The increasing number of nations involved in these disputes exacerbates concerns about the challenges faced by international educational institutions in accommodating a diverse academic community.

In the near future, institutions will need to critically examine geopolitics in terms of their academic populations and potential barriers to access. How will the escalation of global conflict favor or limit the opportunities of student populations? How can institutions foster positive and inclusive learning environments in light of major geopolitical shifts? Furthermore, can future teaching methodologies effectively meet the evolving needs and expectations of faculty and

students who come from increasingly diverse and potentially conflicting geopolitical contexts? Research in this area should aim to identify key challenges and propose viable strategies for addressing them while considering the dynamic nature of global conflicts and their implications for the international education sector.

## **2. Terms and conditions for the grant**

Applications from candidates who do not meet the grant requirements or fail to adhere to the application instructions will not be considered.

### *Who may apply?*

Applicants for AUF grants may be individual researchers or research teams. Candidates must be a Ph.D. candidate, Ph.D. holder, or professional practitioner with proven work experience in a specific field.

## **3. Grant period**

An AUF research grant is awarded for a maximum period of twelve months. The grant period begins on the date the research contract is signed, which will be formalized by the Faculty Senate following the official announcement of the research appointment recipient by the Scientific Commission.

## **4. Costs and grant amount**

The grant may be used to cover a variety of project-related costs, including researcher compensation (commensurate with the level of project activity), travel expenses (such as visits and accommodations at research facilities), and other necessary expenses. However, the grant cannot be used to fund scholarships. If the project involves a doctoral student, the grant may not be used to compensate for the student's salary during their teaching period.

Grant funding is available for a maximum amount of €8,000.00 including indirect costs, for the twelve-month research period. Applications requesting funding exceeding this amount will not be considered.

## **5. Number of grants and applications**

Candidates may submit one grant application for a single area of research.

## **6. Instructions for applying**

### *6a. Application content.*

The application must contain the following:

- Personal data
- Summary
- Popular science description
- Budget proposal
- Research program (Appendix A)
- CV (Appendix B)
- Publication list (Appendix C)
- Budget and research resources (Appendix N)

An application that lacks one or more of the mandatory appendices will not be considered. The application must be signed by the candidate before submission.

#### *6b. Language*

In order to evaluate applications, AUF may engage foreign panel reviewers. All materials must be submitted in the English language. Please note that any documentation produced during the research term, including the final research report, must be produced in English.

#### *6c. Fonts and images*

All application material including appendices is to be submitted in A4 format, 25-mm margin, and a 12-point Arial or Times New Roman font.

If symbols or formulas are utilized, they must be reviewed with a preview function prior to submitting the application.

If the application is submitted as a hard copy, a 200-300 dpi resolution is recommended for images. PDFs are to be submitted without password protection.

The above criteria are also applied to the final research report.

#### *6d. Required personal data:*

- Family name, other names, nationality, identity card or passport number, date of birth, permanent address, phone or mobile number, e-mail, higher education degrees, required appendices (see below), signature.
- E-mail will be the primary form of contact for communication regarding the application.

Each candidate is responsible for ensuring that the application is complete. Incomplete applications may be disregarded for evaluation.

AUF does not accept additional information submitted after the application deadline, with the exception of information expressly requested by the institution.

#### *6e. Summary*

The summary of the research program must contain a short description of:

- The research that the applicant proposes to carry out.
- How the research will be conducted and what scientific methods will be utilized
- Importance and significance of the planned research.

The text should provide a brief description of research purpose and implementation, and employ a writing style that will enable individuals from other research backgrounds to easily comprehend the provided information.

Length: maximum 1/2 page (see point 8).

#### *6f. Popular science description*

A description of the project in a popular science style for audiences unfamiliar with the topic must be included. The description should include what will be addressed in the research and why, and explain how the new knowledge is relevant.

The popular science description is an important tool for informing a broader audience of research sustained by AUF. Once funding is awarded to the selected candidate, AUF reserves the right to use this description for informational purposes.

Length: maximum 1/2 page (see point 8)

#### 6g. Total budget framework

A complete budget framework in Euro currency must be submitted. The budget includes the total sum of project-related costs such as research compensation, travel (including stays at research centers), publication costs, minor equipment, and depreciation. The grant may not be used for scholarships. Both direct and indirect project-related costs are to be included.

The total grant sum may reach a maximum total of 8,000.00 euro including indirect costs. Sums beyond this amount will not be considered.

#### 6h. Research program (Appendix A)

Appendix A should consist of a brief, complete description of the research objective in no more than six A4 pages (see point 8, including references. *Please note that any excess pages will not be considered for evaluation*)

The research program, as well as other appendices, **must be written in English**.

It must include the following information under separate headings:

- **Purpose and aims:** Overall purpose and specific goals of the research project.
- **Survey of the field:** Summary of existing research regarding the chosen field (including the candidate's own research if applicable) with key references.
- **Project description:** Project summary of theories, methods, timetable, implementation, and project organization.
- **Significance:** Project's significance to the research area.
- **Relevance:** Brief description of the project's relevance to the strategic research area.
- **Preliminary results:** List of candidate's own experiments and pre-studies regarding the research area.

The following items can be listed under a separate heading if considered relevant to the candidate's project:

- **Equipment:** Basic equipment for the project at the disposal of the candidate or group of candidates.
- **National and international collaborations:** Any collaboration and/or cooperation with research groups or associations that candidates may establish through the research.
- **Ethical considerations:** Ethical issues that may occur during the project and how they will be addressed by the research.

#### 6i. CV (Appendix B)

No more than two A4 pages per candidate (and per individual in a group). Publications are to be listed separately in Appendix C (see below).

Specify the following (non-applicable items can be left blank):

- **Higher education qualification(s):** year, subject area, university
- **Doctoral Degree:** year, discipline/subject area, university, dissertation title, supervisor
- **Postdoctoral positions:** year and placement
- **Area of professional expertise:** for applicants applying as professional practitioners
- **Teaching positions held:** year and required qualifications per position
- **Present position, period of appointment, percentage of research in the position**
- **Previous positions and periods of appointment:** indicate the type and periods of employment.

#### 6j. *Publication list* (Appendix C)

List of publications covering the last eight years (for group applications, include lists for each group member). The five publications most relevant to the project are to be indicated by an asterisk (\*).

Publications must be categorized in the following order:

1. Peer-reviewed original articles
2. Peer-reviewed conference contributions
3. Review articles
4. Books and book chapters
5. Patents (indicate registration date)
6. Open-access computer programs that you have developed
7. Popular science articles/presentations

*Please note:* Candidates should list only articles (or equivalent work) that have been published or accepted for publication.

#### 6k. *Budget and research resources* (Appendix D)

The following items are to be presented in a maximum of two A4 pages:

- Explanation of the proposed budget
- Brief justification of each item in submitted budget
- Total research resources to be employed

### 7. **Evaluation, selection, duration**

Active researchers (Peer Review Committee) conduct the scientific evaluation of applications. All evaluation of competing applications is conducted according to AUF criteria. The final selection and placement are subject to the approval of the AUF Faculty Senate.

AUF will inform the researcher or group of researchers of admittance and grant approval. The research period commences from the date of the signature of the research contract and will last for a total of twelve months period for completion. Comments and feedback will be sent to all applicants.

### 8. **Research, final results, scientific report**

Appointed researchers will conduct research and draft the final scientific report according to AUF criteria. The results of the research must be included in the scientific report according to the following formatting and deadline requirements:

- 80 pages.
- The submission must be made before midnight (24:00) on the last valid day of the research period. The report will be published by AUF.

### 9. **Funding**

50% of the provided funds (maximum 4.000,00 euro) will be paid within a month from the official selection announcement (see point 7). The remainder of the grant will be fulfilled upon the presentation of the final report and expiration of the research period. Funding complies with the Italian fiscal law.

## 10. Application submission and deadline

All applications must be sent via email to [research@auf-florence.org](mailto:research@auf-florence.org).

The application deadline expires at midnight (24:00) on **June 21st, 2025**.

Each application will receive a receipt to confirm successful submission, however the confirmation does not verify whether the provided contents are properly aligned to the call criteria.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that submissions are correct and complete. An incomplete application will be disregarded for evaluation.

## 11. Contacts

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