Unite! Seed Fund Initiative

Objectives of the initiative

The Unite! Seed fund is envisioned to provide financial support to innovative, co-creative and collaborative ideas in–**Teaching and learning, Scientific research, and Student activities**–across the Unite! alliance. The seed fund intends to support exploration and development of attractive and diverse activities and projects, to help secure either the additional funds for a project or to conduct cooperation on joint, ambitious and innovative ideas within the alliance.

Funding Line: "Unite! Seed fund for Research and PhD"

Funding initiative for promoting innovation and collaboration in Research and PhD within Unite alliance.
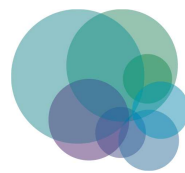
Funding overview

The aim of Unite! is to be an innovative, collaborative, inclusive and sustainable alliance. Through its ambition to realise excellence in education, research, and innovation by creating new opportunities, Unite! University alliance invites **Researchers and Research Units to send proposals** of collaborative projects for its first round of Seed funding. The funding is open to all subjects and topics.

Award information and Timeline: Basic Data

Seed Fund Programme Line:	Research & PhD (see also calls for the Seed Fund Programme Lines "Teaching & Learning" and "Student Activity")
Budget of each proposal in this call:	Programme Option **"Exploring": Up to 10,000€** Programme Option **"Developing": Up to 80,000€**
Deadline for proposals:	**31 May 2023** Next call (for academic year 2024-25) is foreseen to be published early in 2024.
Decision will be taken:	**By 30 June 2023**
Funding period for this call:	**01 September 2023 to 31 December 2024**

Objectives and Purpose

- Activate Unite! members to **jointly seize new opportunities** in research and PhD education
- **Stimulate academic collaboration** from the bottom up (open to all scientific fields)
- Support collaborative initiatives financially for a **fixed time** (from the seed fund)
- Enable Unite! members to develop **collaborative follow-up activities that intend to obtain significant funding from other major sources** (e.g., Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ or other EU and national sources), thus leveraging the seed funding

Essentially, the seed fund intends to –support the formation of **new academic communities** and/or to further develop already active communities–across **Unite! Members**, including Unite! focus areas (Sustainable Energy, Artificial Intelligence, Industry 4.0, Entrepreneurship).

Potential Outputs

Programme Option "Exploring":

- Networking and establishing connections for research collaborations (e.g., joint doctorates, joint doctoral workshops, etc.)
- Well-defined collaboration idea with outline for next steps
- Carry out other supplemental research activities within an existing research project that otherwise could not be realised due to budget limitations.
- Carry out early-stage research or exploratory studies intended to obtain more significant funding from major sources, etc.

Programme Option "Developing":

- Developing joint research proposals (for specific funding schemes (e.g., MSCA doctoral networks, etc.)
- Providing joint/shared offers specifically for PhD candidates or post-Docs (for the purpose of– research, soft skills, career development, etc.)
- Establishing Research or PhD communities with defined structures (such as research clusters or graduate schools)
- Creating comprehensive plan to pursue external funding with identified opportunities
- Engaging synergistic program activities, i.e., the dissemination of research results to broader audiences, organisation/ support of workshops, research meetings.
- Conduct field research (quantitative or qualitative) within the scope of an existing larger research project
- Carry out a small research project within the broader scope of the aforementioned focus areas, etc.

Budgetary guidance

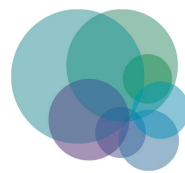Eligible costs that can be funded:

- Personnel costs should be included with clear justification (e.g., conceptualising/preparatory work, accrediting, applying, setting up conditions)
- Travel expenses (sustainable modes of travel preferred; Erasmus+ mobility schemes should be used wherever possible)
- Other costs that can be funded include material resources, research consumables, on-site/blended workshops, external service providers (e.g., moderators, language services).

The seed fund does not cover PhD or Post-doc stipends.

The proposal must make clear in which way the funded activities are additional to ongoing activities and support the Unite! objectives as specified in the Unite! mission statement.

Requirements and Deliverables

- Applications must comprise of academic staff or teachers or teaching units from **at least three full UNITE! member universities.** Partners beyond Unite! can be included, but not as beneficiaries.
- Funds are expected to be managed through local coordinators within the project.

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of the European Union

unite! | University Network for Innovation,
Technology and Engineering

- If beneficial for the project, the Unite! **Metacampus** **should be used as part of the project** and its intended use should be specified in the seed fund proposal. Metacampus (as part of the UNITE! digital campus) is the central learning management platform for all unite! members and can be used e.g. training, workshops, teaching and lectures. For any questions, please contact the metacampus support (metacampus@unite-university.eu).
- A written report to the Unite! secretariat on the progress and results of the project is due two months after the project ends **(28 February 2025 at latest).**
- Only a max. of 50% of the funding can be allocated to one partner in the project.

Evaluation Criteria

The review quality criteria are:

- Expected added value for and impact on scientific research and PhD education
- Adequate inclusion of pertinent academic expertise of the Unite! alliance (at least three full Unite! Member universities involved)
- Expectation value (likelihood and potential benefit) of successful follow-up funding proposals and other joint activities (also "high risk-high gain" proposals possible)
- Credible commitment to the sustained collaborative activity within Unite!
- If applicable: Potential for outreach and external dissemination of Unite!
- Realistic work plan and clear deliverables
- Adequacy of the funding requested

Application Procedure

- Applications can be submitted **until 31 May 2023** via email to: seedfund@unite-university.eu or can be uploaded on the Metacampus.
- Kindly contact your university's Key Liaison Officer for Unite! alliance for application guidance. Inquiries can also be emailed to: seedfund@unite-university.eu
- **Eligible to apply:**
    - **Doctoral Researchers** (may need local coordinator who can receive funds)
    - **Early-career Researchers** (e.g., Post-docs, Ad-hoc lecturer/professor etc.)
    - **Research Units** (i.e., Doctoral Schools/programmes, Research centres, PhD communities etc.)
    - **Tenured Researchers** (e.g., Professors, Associate Professors etc.)
- The evaluation of applications will be made by the Unite! Academic Forum (UAF) and selection decisions will be confirmed by the Unite! Steering Committee. Results are **expected by 30 June 2023.**
- **Complete Application form** including project outline (max. 3 A4 pages, signatures can be additional sheet) to be submitted as PDF, which also shows how the proposed objectives will be achieved and the funding criteria fulfilled. The budget allocation excel sheet should be filled out and submitted together with the form.
- Supporting documents by the dean of studies of the participating departments of the universities.
- For the establishment of new study programs: Distinction from existing study programs, presentation of the complementary added value as well as a declaration that sufficient personnel and material resources are available for the implementation and execution of the new study program.
- It is strongly recommended that applications be coordinated in advance with the central administration units of the respective universities.