



STARS@UNIPD

Supporting Talent in ReSearch@University of Padua University Programme for individual research – STARS Grants Applications open from 20 December 2024 to 21 March 2025

STARS@UNIPD reaches in 2025 its fifth edition, it is launched by the University of Padua (UNIPD, Italy) and aims at funding 30-month individual research projects. It operates on a “bottom-up” basis and applications can be submitted in any field of research. Candidates can submit a proposal in one of the 28 ERC scientific research areas within the three ERC domains - Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE); Life Sciences (LS); Social Sciences and Humanities (SH).

Aims of the programme

The main goal is to increase the participation of the University in international competitive calls, specifically the ERC ones. Successful PIs, once enrolled in the STARS@UNIPD 2025 programme, are committed to submitting an ERC application. Alternatively, they may apply to a different funding programme, as long as it features a structure equivalent to the ERC schemes. Scientific excellence will be the sole criterion for the evaluation of STARS projects.

Who can apply?

The call is open to *Principal Investigators* (PIs) of any age and nationality, who wish to pursue research in one of the 32 Departments of the University of Padua and who are able to demonstrate the innovative nature, the ambition and the feasibility of their proposed research.

This call for proposals includes the following types of grant:

- **STARS Starting Grants (STARS-StGs):** designed to fund PIs with an excellent track record, also external to UNIPD, who have defended their first Doctoral degree within a maximum of 5 years prior to 1 January 2025.
- **STARS Consolidator Grants (STARS-CoGs):** designed to fund PIs with an excellent track record, who are already conducting research at UNIPD and are consolidating their own research team and/or their own independent research who have defended their first Doctoral degree within a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 years prior to 1 January 2025.
- **STARS Wild Card Grants (STARS-WiCs):** designed to fund PIs who submitted a proposal in the ERC *Starting* or *Consolidator* or *Advanced* Grant, 2023 and 2024 calls for proposals, indicated UNIPD as *Host Institution* and obtained a final mark “A”, but were not funded due to budget limits.

Evaluation criteria

The selection process is inspired by the ERC and the eligibility check of all applications will be followed by two different evaluation steps for the STARS-StG and STARS-CoG grants:

- **Step 1** - Evaluation of Part B1 of the research proposal (extended synopsis, the PI's CV and track record – max. 10 pages). Each proposal will be reviewed by the member of the Macro-area sub-committee who is expert in the specific scientific area.
- **Step 2** - Evaluation of the complete proposal, Part B1 and Part B2 (Research proposal – max. 15 pages) + Interview (approximately 30 minutes), for all candidates admitted to Step 2.



STARS-WiC proposals will be evaluated only for Part B2 - *Research Proposal*.

The **Evaluation Committee** comprises a maximum of 28 external experts of recognized international prestige, selected among the panel members of the competitive European projects funded by the ERC, who will be assigned to 3 sub-committees matching the three ERC Domains: PE (max. 11 experts); LS (max. 9 experts); SH (max. 8 experts). Three Chairs will be appointed by the UNIPD Rector. Sub-committees will employ independent anonymous reviewers who are expert in the scientific areas of the projects admitted to the peer-review process (Step 2).

The selection process will be carried out according to the following indicative timetable:

Opening of the call for proposals	20 December 2024
Deadline for proposals submission	21 March 2025 h.1 p.m.
Eligibility check	23 April 2025
Pre-selection (Step 1 for StG and CoG) and evaluation (single step for WiC)	31 July 2025
Evaluation of proposals (Step 2)	31 October 2025
Interview	November 2025
Evaluation results	December 2025
Approval of the ranking list of projects selected for funding	December 2025
Projects' starting date	1 February 2026
Latest deadline for projects' starting date	31 March 2026

Budget

The budget of STARS projects comprises an amount covering **research costs**, which depends on the scientific domain of the proposal (amount for 30 months max.: 100.000€ for SH; 175.000€ for PE/LS¹). For STARS-StGs, the budget also features an amount covering a **contract for the recruitment of the PI**² (max. 42.000€ gross per year), when they do not hold a permanent position at UNIPD. **Mobility allowance** (MA), may be added to the salary of the STARS-StG PIs in case they move to Italy from abroad (max. 15.000€ for 30 months).

How and when to apply

- **Save the date** - STARS GRANTS 2025 call for proposals opens on 20 December 2024 and closes on 21 March 2025, hrs 1 p.m. (Italy time zone).
- **Electronic submission system** - Candidates must exclusively follow the online procedure available at this link: <https://pica.cineca.it/unipd/>. They must first register to the application platform.
- **Application package** – The call for proposals, its attachments, the submission procedure, and any document relevant to the submission process will be available on the web page dedicated to the programme: <https://www.unipd.it/stars2025> (In Italian) and <https://www.unipd.it/en/stars2025> (in English).

¹ Pursuant to article 3 of the STARS@UNIPD call for proposals: amounts cover research costs in projects with no research grant for the PI.

² Pursuant to article 3, paragraph 2, letter b) of UNIPD regulation on research grant contracts, PIs will be recruited through as Assegno di ricerca di tipo b). See also Art. 7 - *Allocation of funding* of the STARS@UNIPD call for proposals. UNIPD will reserve the right, at its sole discretion, to replace the type B research grant (*assegno di ricerca di tipo B*) with another contract type, economically equivalent, which should be made available by amendments introduced to Law No 240/2010.