



UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECTS (PRA) – 2026
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE FUNDING OF COMPETITIVE RESEARCH
PROJECTS (PRC)

THE DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH AND THIRD MISSION DIRECTORATE

HAVING REGARD TO the resolution of the Board of Directors of 23 December 2025 approving, within the 2026 forecast budget, the allocation of €3,300,000 as research funding under the University Research Support Fund – Internal Funding Management;

WHEREAS part of these resources is to be allocated to those research areas identified by the University's governing bodies as strategic and fundamental for research activities, in line with the 2025–2031 Six-Year Strategic Plan;

WHEREAS the University is registered in the National Register of Research Institutions under the permanent code 000274_UNIV;

HAVING REGARD TO Rector's Decree No. 208/2026 appointing the University Research Committee, coordinated by Professor Fabio Pellacini and composed of Professors Marco Govoni, Davide Barater, Jessica Mandrioli, Andrea Mariuzzo, Francesca Fanelli and Valentina Taddei, together with Dr Barbara Rebecchi;

WHEREAS the Fondazione di Modena identifies scientific and technological research as one of its key areas of intervention, as set out in its 2024–2027 Strategic Policy Document, which includes the challenges relating to the three strategic areas of People, Culture and Planet;

TAKING NOTE OF the agreement between the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and the Fondazione di Modena concerning the funding of scientific research projects (UNIMORE Rep. No. 203/2024, Prot. No. 127559 of 23 May 2024);

HAVING REGARD TO Note Prot. No. 268.26.8A of 18 June 2026 (UNIMORE Prot. No. 154896 of 24 June 2026), by which the Fondazione di Modena informed the University that its Board of Directors had approved the allocation of €680,000 for the launch of a joint call with the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia;

HAVING REGARD TO the policy guidelines proposed by the University Research Committee at its online meeting of 8 June 2026;

HAVING REGARD TO the resolution of the Academic Senate of 23 June 2026 approving the policy guidelines proposed by the University Research Committee;

WHEREAS the activities eligible for funding under the PRA include measures supporting Competitive Research Projects (PRC), with the aim of encouraging greater participation in competitive research programmes;

WHEREAS, on the basis of the above-mentioned resolutions, it is appropriate to issue the 2026 Call for Competitive Research Projects (PRC);

HEREBY DECREES

ART. 1 - PURPOSE

This Decree governs the procedures for the funding, by the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, of research projects submitted by its Full and Associate Professors, permanent Researchers, fixed-term Researchers appointed pursuant to Article 24, paragraph 3(b), of Law No. 240/2010, and Tenure Track Researchers, through the use of a portion of the funds allocated to scientific research in the University's 2026 budget, together with the funding made available by the Fondazione di Modena.

The programme aims to fund innovative research projects coordinated by a Principal Investigator (PI), with the optional participation of up to three Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs). Full and Associate Professors, permanent Researchers, fixed-term Researchers appointed pursuant to Article 24, paragraph 3(b), of Law No. 240/2010, and Tenure Track Researchers may participate in the research team as Co-PIs.

The programme is organised into two funding lines, each with a dedicated budget:

- UNIMORE Line;
- Fondazione di Modena (FOMO) Line.

ART. 2 – ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Each Professor or Researcher may participate, in any capacity, in only one project and under only one of the two funding lines (UNIMORE or FOMO). Failure to comply with this requirement shall render all projects in which the individual is involved ineligible.

Principal Investigators (PIs) who were awarded funding under the FAR Interdisciplinary Projects Call 2024 or 2025 are not eligible to participate in this Call in any capacity.

No PI whose project is funded under this Call may submit a new proposal under the Competitive Research Projects Calls financed through the PRA 2027 and PRA 2028 funding programmes, nor may they participate in such calls in any capacity.

PIs of projects funded under this Call undertake to submit, as Principal Investigator, an ERC, FIS or FISA project, or, as coordinator, a PRIN project or a European research project, within two years from the starting date of the PRC 2026 project. Failure to comply with this requirement shall result in ineligibility to participate in the PRA – Competitive Research Projects calls for one additional funding cycle. The University Research Committee may grant duly justified exceptions concerning the type of project to be submitted.

With regard to the FOMO Line, participation is restricted to PIs affiliated with Departments whose administrative headquarters are located in Modena. Furthermore, neither the PI nor the Co-PIs may be subject to any of the incompatibility conditions applicable to the governing bodies and employees of the Fondazione di Modena under its governing documents and regulations (Articles of Association, General Regulations, Model 231, Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy), available in the "Documentation" section of the Foundation's website www.fondazionedimodena.it.

Members of the University Research Committee are not eligible to participate in this Call in any capacity.

ART. 3 – PROJECT DURATION AND START DATE

All projects shall have a duration of 24 months, with no possibility of extension, and shall commence on 1 February 2027.

ART. 4 – PROJECT FEATURES

The submitted projects may address research topics in any field falling within the three ERC main research domains (Life Sciences – LS; Physical Sciences and Engineering – PE; Social Sciences and Humanities – SH).

Failure to comply with this requirement shall result in the PI's and Co-PIs' ineligibility to participate in future PRC – Competitive Research Projects procedures for one additional funding cycle. It is mandatory to submit, by the end of the project period, at least one publication in a Q1 journal, based on the journal's ranking indicator (Scopus CiteScore or the most recent Journal Impact Factor reported in the Journal Citation Reports) for bibliometric research areas, or in a Class A journal for non-bibliometric research areas. Research outputs shall include an explicit acknowledgement of the funding received; failure to do so shall result in the expenditure being considered ineligible during the project's financial reporting

process. For example, the following wording may be used: “This work was supported by the Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia – Fondazione di Modena Project ‘ _____ ’ (insert project title) funded by University Research Projects PRC 2026 – Call for Applications for the Funding of Competitive Research Projects.”

For guidance on open access publishing procedures, please consult the following website: <https://www.pop.unimore.it/open-access/>

The total budgets made available by UNIMORE and FOMO are:

- €1,900,000 (including €30,000 for proposal evaluation) for the UNIMORE Line,
- €680,000 (including €20,000 for proposal evaluation) for the FOMO Line.

The UNIMORE and FOMO budgets are allocated among the three ERC main research domains according to the number of Professors and Researchers in each domain, as follows:

ERC macro-sector	UNIMORE Line	FOMO Line	Total
PE	€660,000	€275,000	€935,000
LS	€660,000	€220,000	€880,000
SH	€550,000	€165,000	€715,000
Total	€1,870,000	€660,000	€2,530,000

Projects shall receive funding of up to €55,000 per project.

Within the overall budget allocation of the Call, for all funding lines (UNIMORE and FOMO) and for each ERC main research domain (PE, LS, SH), at least 50% of the available budget shall be allocated to projects coordinated by PIs who obtained their PhD or medical specialisation qualification no more than 15 years prior to the publication date of this Call. For the purpose of calculating this period, the date of the PhD thesis defence or medical specialisation examination shall be taken into account. Where a researcher has obtained more than one doctoral qualification, the date of the first qualification obtained shall be considered. In the event of a tie, priority shall be given to the project whose PI obtained the PhD or medical specialisation qualification more recently.

The following circumstances constitute exceptions allowing access to the quota reserved for projects coordinated by PIs who obtained their PhD or medical specialisation qualification no more than 15 years

prior to the publication date of this Call: maternity leave (18 months per child), parental leave (e.g. paternity leave), and other documented reasons (such as long-term illness of the PI exceeding 90 days). These circumstances cannot be combined.

The contribution allocated to the projects deemed worthy of funding shall be entirely managed by the Department to which the PI belongs.

In order to maximise the use of the available budget under the UNIMORE Line and the FOMO Line, any remaining funds shall be pooled and used to finance eligible projects ranked in a position allowing funding in the three ERC ranking lists.

ART. 5 – EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

Regardless of the selected funding line, projects shall be assessed by anonymous reviewers. Each project shall be evaluated by a Panel composed of three nationally and/or internationally recognised experts, selected from those included in the MUR REPRISÉ database through an automated matching procedure. The procedure will first match the relevant ERC sub-domains and subsequently the CUN keywords (see Article 9 of this Call) indicated at the time of submission of the proposal. The Research Committee will compare the scores assigned by the three reviewers: the final score will correspond to the arithmetic mean of the two scores that are least different from each other; if the three scores expressed by the reviewers are equidistant from each other, the lowest one will be excluded.

Projects obtaining a score of at least **17/20** shall be considered eligible for funding.

Eligible projects shall be included in three separate ranking lists, one for each ERC main research domain. Within each ERC main research domain, priority shall be given to projects submitted by PIs who obtained their PhD or medical specialisation qualification no more than 15 years prior to the publication date of this Call, in order to achieve the 50% reserved quota referred to in Article 4.

Projects with the highest scores shall be funded until the available budget under each funding line is exhausted. Any unallocated budget within an ERC macro-sector will be used to fund the best remaining projects in the ranking list of another ERC macro-sector.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1) Quality of the research project, up to 10 points

Quality of the research project – scientific merit and innovative nature of the project – with particular regard to:

- a) clarity and relevance of the project objectives;
- b) relevance and originality of the proposed project in the specific scientific area; and
- c) adequacy of the proposed methodologies and of the available instrumentation (where relevant), project consistency;
- d) project positioning in relation to the state of the art in the specific scientific area.

2) Curriculum, feasibility and adequacy of the project – up to 6 points

The curriculum, feasibility and adequacy of the project, the scientific merit of the PI, the feasibility of the work plan and the reasonableness of the funding request, with particular reference to:

- a) CV of the Principal Investigator;
- b) the ability to carry out the proposed project (qualifications and preliminary data, where relevant);
- c) project organisation with regard to the proposed objectives, the timeframe considered necessary for completion of the project and the resources required (equipment, personnel, etc.)
- d) consistency and relevance of the expenditure plan with the objectives and the activity breakdown.

3) Project impact - up to 4 points

UNIMORE Line: The impact of the project, with particular reference, depending on its disciplinary area, to the challenges addressed by the research in terms of its contribution to theoretical and/or methodological advancement within the relevant scientific field, as well as to technological innovation, industrial applications, economic growth, the solution of social challenges, and the protection of cultural heritage or the environment.

FOMO Line The impact of the project, with particular reference, depending on its disciplinary area, to the potential impact on the local area, also understood as the application, enhancement and use of the knowledge generated to contribute to the social, environmental, health, cultural and economic development of the local community.

Funded projects shall be required to submit a final scientific report on the results achieved.

ART. 6 – PROJECT SUBMISSION

PIs shall submit a research project, written in English and prepared using exclusively the templates provided by the University, no later than **5p.m. on 15 September 2026**. The proposal shall be submitted exclusively by the PI through the online platform that will be made available for this purpose. The PI may access the platform using their University credentials **from 30 June 2026 onwards**. The date and time of submission of the proposal shall be those recorded upon validation and finalisation of the application by the PI on the platform. By validating and finalising the application, the PI consents to the proposal being made available to external evaluators, as well as to the proposal and the related assessments provided by the external evaluators being made available to the members of the University Research Committee and to the Fondazione di Modena.

The PI shall submit to the National Research Office, **by the same deadline and under penalty of the proposal being deemed inadmissible**, the Department resolution approving the proposal or a letter of approval issued by the Department Director, to be ratified at the first available meeting of the Department Council.

Projects that, at the time of submission, do not comply with the required templates (in particular, the instructions concerning the minimum and maximum number of characters, the criteria set out in the operational guidelines for the management and financial reporting of PRC-funded projects, and the rules governing the participation of teaching and research staff) and/or that are received by the Office after the deadline shall be excluded from the evaluation procedure ex officio. **In any case, funding applications received by email or through channels other than the one indicated above will not be considered.**

The applicants shall declare, under their own responsibility and under penalty of exclusion from the Call, whether or not their project requires approval by the Ethics Committee. Depending on the characteristics of the project, the proposal shall be submitted either to the Emilia Nord Wide Area Ethics Committee or to the University Research Ethics Committee. Should a project requiring approval by the Ethics Committee be awarded funding, the start date of the project activities requiring such approval shall be set as the day following the date on which the Ethics Committee approval is obtained.

ART. 7 - PROJECT APPROVAL AND FUNDING AMOUNT

The University Research Committee reserves the right to fund individual eligible projects with an amount lower than the amount requested, where deemed appropriate. For the FOMO Line, based on the outcomes of the external review transmitted by the University, the Board of Directors of the Foundation shall decide which projects shall be admitted for funding, also with an amount lower than the amount requested, where deemed appropriate.

The lists of funded projects will be approved and disclosed by a specific Rectoral Decree.

ART. 8 - PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The PI is scientifically responsible for the project and guarantees the implementation of the project within the timeframe and in the manner indicated in the application.

For the UniMORE Line, all expenditure items may be reallocated among one another during project implementation without the need for prior authorisation by the University Research Committee, provided that the objectives identified at the time of project submission are maintained.

For the FOMO Line, all expenditure items may be reallocated among one another during project implementation up to a maximum variation of €2,000 or 20% of the initial amount indicated at the time of application, without the need for prior authorisation by the University Research Committee and the Fondazione di Modena, provided that the objectives identified at the time of project submission are maintained. Requests for reallocations exceeding the maximum amounts and/or percentages of variation indicated above shall be submitted by email to ricercanazionale@unimore.it and shall be assessed and approved by the Board of Directors of the Fondazione di Modena.

Requests for exceptions shall not be accepted.

Within three months from the end date of the project, the PI shall submit a scientific report complying with the requirements set out in the relevant templates provided, describing the results achieved, the scientific communications carried out and, where applicable and permitted by the applicable legislation, the personnel recruited using project funds.

Together with the scientific report, the PI shall submit the financial report, including copies of the relevant supporting documents duly receipted. Expenses must have been incurred within the project duration period and paid by the deadline for submission of the financial report.

Following the checks carried out on the submitted scientific report and financial report, any unspent budget amounts or any amounts deemed ineligible shall be reimbursed.

Pursuant to the Modena Foundation's Regulations and in line with its general guidelines on evaluation, the grant is awarded subject to the correct completion and submission of the end-of-project report form.

Both the scientific report and the accounting report shall be sent in electronic format to the National Research Office: ricercanazionale@unimore.it.

The project design, management, and reporting shall be carried out in accordance with the operational guidelines provided for projects using PRA funds of the University published at the following link <https://www.ricerca.unimore.it/site/home/ricerca-nazionale/unimore/prc-progetti-di-ricerca->

[competitiva.html](#). For any doubts regarding the management of certain expenses, please send a request for clarification to ricercanazionale@unimore.it.

ART. 9 - REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Clarifications and information may be requested from the Research and Third Mission Directorate - National Research Office

Tel.: 059 205 7031- 6553 - 6675 - 6570

e-mail: ricercanazionale@unimore.it.

This decree is published on the website: <https://www.ricerca.unimore.it/site/home/ricercanazionale/unimore/prc-progetti-di-ricerca-competitiva.html>.

Useful links:

- [ERC Sectors](#)
- [CUN keywords](#)
- [FOMO Strategic Steering Document 2024-2027](#)

ART.10 - PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE PROCEDURE

In accordance with the provisions of art. 5 of law no. 241 of 7 August 1990, the person responsible for the procedure of this call is Dr. Barbara Rebecchi, National Research Office - Research and Third Mission Directorate - University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Via Università, 4 - Modena, email: ricercanazionale@unimore.it

The Director

Research and Third Mission Directorate

Dr. Barbara Rebecchi

Annex 1 – FOMO Strategic Challenges

PERSON AREA	INCLUSIVE WELFARE	The Fondazione di Modena supports innovation and the strengthening of territorial welfare through the co-programming approach, promoting collaboration among public entities, third-sector organisations and private stakeholders, in order to ensure more effective support for people experiencing vulnerability, marginalisation and disadvantage. It promotes the fight against inequalities by facilitating access to opportunities and rights through innovative, inclusive and personalised interventions, including low-threshold services, with the aim of empowering users and encouraging their full involvement in inclusion pathways. It fosters citizens' active participation, promotes volunteering and civic associations, and encourages the active involvement of the community, from the perspective of social and economic sustainability and greater social cohesion, with attention to solidarity among territories at regional, national and international level.
	EDUCATING COMMUNITY	The Fondazione di Modena, with a view to the future of people and the territory, promotes educational intervention models aimed at enriching and making the local educational offer more effective, while fostering a large-scale impact on social cohesion. It promotes initiatives based on respect for diversity and aimed at combating inequalities and educational poverty. It promotes opportunities for growth and access to knowledge for all individuals, from childhood to adolescence, through to entry into the labour market and throughout life, both through learning and participation pathways and through support for parenting and families.
	SOCIAL HOUSING	The Fondazione di Modena promotes and supports responses to the needs of people experiencing vulnerability and housing hardship through diverse and integrated approaches involving housing, economic, social and healthcare dimensions, aimed at ensuring the full implementation of individual and collective rights. It encourages the development of projects in which housing is conceived as an opportunity for transformation for the entire territory, based on principles of social and environmental sustainability and a community-based and proximity-oriented approach.
	DECENT WORK	The Fondazione di Modena promotes inclusive life opportunities both for people experiencing disadvantage and for all citizens, placing decent, fair, safe, free and rights-based work at the centre of its initiatives. It develops and promotes actions in close cooperation with all public and private stakeholders

		and civil society actors, through dedicated pathways and projects capable of removing barriers, improving the quality of employment, enhancing and developing personal and professional resources, in order to support effective life projects for individuals and revitalise the social fabric of the territory.
CULTURE AREA	DYNAMIC HERITAGE	The Fondazione di Modena supports a dynamic and innovative conception of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, of the landscape and of the synergy between the evidence of the past and the values of communities, with a view to awareness and social growth. It promotes conservation initiatives, tourism and the enhancement of the territory, consistently adopting and applying new technologies. It supports an innovative approach to the regeneration, management and use of heritage through long-term actions capable of protecting cultural assets and enhancing the active role of the community.
	CREATIVE CULTURE	The Fondazione di Modena promotes the dissemination of creativity and artistic practices in and throughout the territory, supporting and highlighting the artistic and performing arts productions of the local organisations most deeply rooted in the area. It enhances art as a language enabling young people to understand the world and play an active role in it, also through skills incubators where new generations can cultivate and develop their talents. It supports the growth and consolidation of local cultural and creative enterprises as drivers of the evolution and dissemination of knowledge, economic and social development, and professional training, including with a view to developing new digital skills. It encourages cross-fertilisation and networking among cultural stakeholders and territorial actors, transforming them into strategic partnerships.
	CULTURE AND SOCIAL WELL- BEING	The Fondazione di Modena supports culture as a fundamental tool for improving the quality of life of all citizens, as a resource capable of fostering social cohesion, encouraging encounters among different cultures, and generating rights and individual and collective well-being. It promotes and enhances the role of culture as a factor for the development of the entire community, an essential driver for building a new active citizenship and overcoming inequalities. It supports cultural projects capable of moving beyond traditional venues of representation and opening up to the territory, thereby reducing the distance between cultural spaces and citizens, including those experiencing greater disadvantage, and contributing to broadening audiences through the involvement of all social and cultural energies.
PLANET AREA	SUSTAINABLE CITIES	The Fondazione di Modena contributes to the sustainability of the urban environment by promoting actions that ensure environmental and quality-of-life standards, the sustainable use of resources and energy, and the enhancement of people's well-being. It works to make urban spaces more liveable through a stronger sustainability-oriented approach, facilitating the introduction of innovative technologies and new skills aimed at mitigating and

		adapting to the impacts of climate change. It promotes and encourages the conscious adoption of responsible lifestyles and works to improve access to essential services for citizens, thereby creating new opportunities for economic, social and environmental well-being.
	PROMOTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH	The Fondazione di Modena supports innovative, preferably interdisciplinary research projects aimed at advancing scientific knowledge, with particular attention to their tangible impact on the territory in environmental, social, health and employment terms. It contributes to scientific and technological progress, focusing on European and international challenges, and promotes the entry of young people into research and the attraction of talent, fostering interaction between the research community and the world of work.
	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	The Fondazione di Modena promotes a paradigm shift aimed at identifying environmental protection and enhancement as an opportunity for a renewed concept of growth. It promotes the development of active environmental awareness, investing in young people as drivers of change. It supports the ecological transition and the emergence of new green and circular economy practices by encouraging the dissemination of new skills and professional profiles. It promotes ideas and actions aimed at reducing the gap between the local and international dimensions and, in line with European policies, at facilitating access to new environmentally responsible professions capable of generating the necessary and positive changes required to address the complex challenges facing society.