

## EXCELLENCE IN AFRICA JUNIOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS – SUBMISSION DEADLINE 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (17:00 CET)  
(extended from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020)**

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### Introduction

Africa's growth has been accelerating in recent years, creating an ever-increasing need for highly educated researchers in science and technology across the African continent.

[Mohammed VI Polytechnic University \(UM6P\)](#) in Morocco and the [École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne \(EPFL\)](#) in Switzerland have decided to launch the [Excellence in Africa initiative](#) with the aim of supporting the training of professors and doctoral students in Africa. This pathbreaking initiative is intended to hone the research skills of early-stage researchers through collaboration with EPFL professors. It is based on the premise that this will help build their career as researchers and professors and thereby enable them to have a significant economic and societal impact in Africa.

### About Mohammed VI Polytechnic University

Mohammed VI Polytechnic University is a hub of education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, aspiring to become a solid bridge of science and knowledge between Morocco, Africa, and the world. UM6P has implemented an innovative teaching and research model focusing on experimentation. The university sites are equipped with "Living Labs." Those are full-scale work platforms, such as experimental farms, mines, factories, and cities, allowing researchers to use their utmost research potential.

### About EPFL

EPFL is one of the world's top institutes of technology and Europe's most cosmopolitan technical university. It welcomes students, professors, and collaborators from more than 120 countries. EPFL is a public institution endowed with three missions: teaching, research, and innovation. EPFL collaborates with an important network of partners, including other universities, secondary schools and high schools, industry and the economy, political actors, and the general public, with the aim of having a real impact on society on both a national and a global level.

## Mission

The Junior Faculty Development program is the cornerstone of the Excellence in Africa initiative. It is designed to bring together talented and highly educated early-stage professors in Africa with professors at EPFL striving for common goals: scientific excellence, the promotion of knowledge, and the wish to have a positive societal impact in Africa.

The program is based on the creation of tandems, each composed of an early-stage professor already employed, or tangibly due to be hired by an African higher education or research institution (host institution), and an EPFL professor working with them for a period of 4 to 5 years. Africa-based early-stage professors will complete a secondment in the laboratory of the EPFL professor. This secondment will involve several stays of up to 12 months in total. Africa-based early-stage professors will implement the research project funded by this program at their host institution in Africa, working closely with their EPFL co-applicant for the full duration of the project. The Junior Faculty Development program will thus lay the ground for the launch of the scientific career of young promising professors in Africa, in a potentially lasting scientific collaboration with EPFL.

## Call for proposals

A first call for proposals is now open for projects within all current [domains of scientific or technological research activity at EPFL](#) to be submitted by early-stage researchers currently or soon to be working as professors at a higher education or research institution in Africa. Applications must be received before the deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (17:00 CET) (extended from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020). Female applicants are particularly encouraged to apply.

## Eligibility and requirements

1. Citizens of any nationality may apply to the Junior Faculty Development program; they may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application but must be employed during the project by a higher education or research institution in Africa.
2. Applicants must hold a doctorate (PhD) from a recognized higher education institution, and the PhD must have been awarded between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 (inclusive).<sup>1</sup>
3. Applicants must have an outstanding and proven track record of activity and publication in their research field and be qualified to independently conduct the proposed research project and supervise doctoral theses.

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<sup>1</sup> The reference date for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the actual award according to the national rules of the country in which the degree was awarded (generally, the date of the successful defence/viva).

4. Applicants must already be employed or due to be hired by a higher education or research institution (host institution) in an African country before the start of the project.
5. The African host institution must provide appropriate conditions for granted applicants to independently conduct research and manage funding.
6. During the project, granted applicants must remain employed by the African host institution at a 100% rate for the full duration of the program (4 to 5 years).
7. Successful applicants must spend at least 60% of their working time on research.

Proposals that contravene the rules of research integrity and ethics or of good scientific practice will not be considered.

### Eligible costs

The Junior Faculty Development program awards funding to outstanding researchers looking to set up or consolidate their own independent research team, laboratory, or project.

The program awards funding for a period of a minimum of 48 months to a maximum of 60 months. The maximum total amount that can be granted to each project across all beneficiaries is 720'000 Swiss Francs (approximately 650'000 Euro).

Eligible costs include and are limited to:

#### Personnel costs

- Personnel costs at the host institution of the applicant, including the funding of PhD students, postdocs, and other employees (e.g. technical assistants) employed to work on the research project under the supervision of the Junior Faculty grantee at the African host institution (but not the salary of the Junior Faculty grantee, who must be employed by the African host institution)
- Personnel costs for a maximum of CHF 200'000 for the full duration of the project for personnel employed on the research project in the laboratory of the EPFL professor

#### Travel and conference costs

- Travel and conference costs for the Junior Faculty grantee, the professor at EPFL, and/or personnel at the host institution or EPFL involved in the project – including participation in conferences and workshops and travel linked to the collaboration

#### Equipment and research funds

- Scientific equipment(s) and other infrastructure of durable value
- Research funds, including consumables, direct costs of infrastructure use, computing time and data access, publication costs, and justified expenses of third parties (subcontracting)

### Living allowance for secondment at EPFL

- A living allowance (including a family allowance if the Junior Faculty grantee is accompanied by his/her family) for the stay(s) at EPFL in the framework of the program may be approved if there is a written official confirmation from the host institution in Africa that a living allowance for secondment at EPFL cannot be covered by the host institution. If approved, this allowance will be paid directly to the Junior Faculty grantee. All charges incurred during the stay in Switzerland, including local health insurance costs, must be paid out of this living allowance

### Institutional contribution

- No overheads are allowed for this program; instead, an amount of maximum CHF 20'000 per year can be dedicated to a defined project aimed at the betterment of the Junior Faculty grantee's host institution. The institutional project is to be described at Stage 2 of the application procedure. It must involve well-defined auditable and tangible expenses linked to the project and dedicated to the betterment of the institution. The project and its cost-efficiency will be part of the selection criteria.

### **Non-eligible costs**

- Currency fluctuations: host institutions will bear the cost of currency fluctuations for all amounts transferred to them.
- The salary of the Junior Faculty grantee: his/her salary must be covered by his/her host institution according to its standard conditions.

### **How to apply**

The application and evaluation process includes two stages.

Stage 1 consists of a preselection of Junior Faculty applicants, based on an application prepared by them with the support of their host institution. Once applicants are shortlisted, the EPFL office will look for a match with an EPFL professor. If a match is found, candidates will be admitted to Stage 2. Please note that candidates are not to contact EPFL professors before or during this stage of the process: identification of, and any discussion with, EPFL professors is to be done only by the EPFL office before the start of Stage 2 in the application process.

Stage 2 consists of the submission of a full research proposal describing the collaborative project and authored by the shortlisted Junior Faculty applicant and an EPFL professor identified at the end of Stage 1.

Applicants must submit their initial application (Stage 1) via the [on-line submission platform](#) before the submission deadline of **15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (17:00 CET)** (extended from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020).

The following documents are required as part of the initial application (Stage 1):

Research proposal	<p>Please describe in your research proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state of your own research</li> <li>• The research project you would like to conduct through the Junior Faculty Development program</li> <li>• How you think the collaboration with EPFL will contribute to the success of your project and the betterment of your host institution</li> </ul> <p>This research proposal must not exceed 4 pages, excluding potential references (A4, Arial 11-point font, single line-spacing, 2-centimeter margins)</p>
Career plan	Please describe your medium- and long-term career plan. Your career plan must not exceed 1 page (A4, Arial 11-point font, single line-spacing, 2-centimeter margins)
CV	Please use <a href="#">these guidelines</a> for your CV (excluding your list of publications)
Publication list	Please use <a href="#">these guidelines</a> for your publication list
Copy of all higher education grade transcripts and diplomas	Please provide a copy of all your higher education grade transcripts and diplomas (Bachelor, Master, and PhD)
Reference letters	You will be required to provide on the online submission platform the contact details of two people willing to write a recommendation letter on your behalf. Do not request these letters yourself. All referee letters will be requested by the EPFL office; however, please contact your referees before submitting your application to ensure that they are willing to write a recommendation letter <u>within one week of the submission deadline</u> . If they fail to do so, your application will be deemed incomplete and hence ineligible.
Host institution endorsement letter	Please use <a href="#">this template</a> for your host institution endorsement letter
Copy of passport	Please provide a copy of your passport

Shortlisted applicants who are successfully matched with an EPFL professor will be notified by the end of May 2020 and invited to submit a full proposal for Stage 2.

These applicants will be requested to submit, in collaboration with the EPFL professor, the following documents on the [on-line submission platform](#) by **10th August 2020 (17:00 CET)** (Stage 2):

Detailed research proposal	Please use <a href="#">this template</a> for your detailed research proposal
Cover letter (optional)	If you wish to include a cover letter to provide further information, this can be attached here
Host institution commitment letter	Please use <a href="#">this template</a> for your host institution commitment letter
Budget	Please use <a href="#">this template</a> for your budget
EPFL professor endorsement letter	Please provide an endorsement letter from the EPFL professor willing to collaborate with you
Data management plan	You will be required to provide a detailed data management plan (DMP) on the online platform. Please consult <a href="#">these guidelines</a> to answer the questions on your DMP on the online submission platform Please note that Junior Faculty grantees can update their DMP during the entire funding period of the project. A final version of the DMP will be requested at the end of the project.
Ethical issues form	You will be required to fill out an ethical issues form on the online submission platform

### Evaluation and selection criteria

At both Stages 1 and 2, applications will be evaluated and selected by the Joint Steering Committee of the Excellence in Africa initiative, composed of UM6P and EPFL representatives. At Stage 1, the Joint Steering Committee will seek evaluations from a scientific committee comprising EPFL professors and/or external experts. At Stage 2, the Joint Steering Committee will seek evaluations from anonymous external referees (i.e. referees who are not employed by EPFL, UM6P or the host institution). In submitting his/her application to the Junior Faculty Development program, the applicant acknowledges and accepts the fact that the identity of referees will not be disclosed unless required by the laws of Switzerland.

No additional documents can be submitted other than those listed above in the required format, unless specifically requested by the EPFL office. No applications will be considered if received after the submission deadline or if they do not strictly meet the guidelines, notably as concerns length and format.

At **Stage 1**, applicants will be graded on an A-B-C scale, A being the highest grade. Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The applicant's academic track record, scientific excellence, and research objectives
- The applicant's motivation, the value added by the program to his/her career, the applicant's potential contribution to the education of the next generation of researchers in Africa and, more broadly, to the social and economic development of Africa
- The quality and relevance of the outlined research project
- The commitment and motivation of the host institution

The EPFL office will look for a match with an EPFL professor for A-graded applicants only.

B- and C-graded applicants will be eligible to resubmit an application for a subsequent call of the Junior Faculty Development program at the earliest:

- 2 years after the first submission deadline for B-graded applicants
- 4 years after the first submission deadline for C-graded applicants

A-graded applicants who do not receive a matching proposal with an EPFL professor are eligible to apply for the next call for proposals.

A-graded applicants for whom an EPFL co-applicant has been identified by the EPFL office will be invited to apply for Stage 2. It must be stressed that there is no guarantee that A-graded applicants will be admitted to Stage 2. This will not happen if the EPFL office has not identified a suitable EPFL co-applicant.

The applications submitted for **Stage 2** will be evaluated on a 0-5 scale, 5 being the highest grade based on the following criteria:

- The applicant's academic track record and scientific excellence
- The value-added of the program to the applicant's career and his/her potential contribution to the education of the next generation of researchers in Africa and, more broadly, to the social and economic development of Africa
- The quality of the detailed research proposal, which will be assessed in terms of:
  - The scientific relevance and originality of the project as well as the value added of the collaboration with an EPFL professor
  - Implementation, i.e., the feasibility of the project, including anticipated success and risk indicators
  - Impact, i.e., the impact of the project on the designated research field and on society
- The level of engagement of the host institution and of the EPFL professor
- The potential benefits of the submitted proposal for the host institution

A formal check of the eligibility of all applications will be conducted at each stage of the process. Applications are considered to be eligible only if they are submitted before the deadline, include all



the required documents and comply with all the eligibility and formatting requirements. Non-eligible applicants will be informed in writing by e-mail.

The application documents must consist of original text. A limited amount of material (text, graph, etc.) published by third parties or by the applicant himself/herself is permissible but must clearly be identified as such, with the source(s) quoted and listed in the references. A software to detect plagiarism will be used in the selection process.

A maximum of one-third of successful applicants may be hosted by the same higher education or research institution in Africa.

### **Decision and start of the project**

Final decisions will be announced by October 2020. In the event of a large number of applications, the decision date may be postponed and applicants will be informed of the new decision date.

Successful applicants may begin their project once the project agreement has been signed by EPFL and the host institution, no later than 8 months after the notice of the award. The starting date must fall on the first day of a month. The earliest starting date is November 2020, provided the project agreement has been signed.

### **Project agreements**

For each project, EPFL will enter into a specific project agreement with the respective host institution. The agreement will set forth financial and payment details, provisions on background and foreground intellectual property (IP), scientific publications and audits as well as provisions on legal compliance and ethics.

### **Reporting and assessments**

Annual scientific and financial reports must be provided by the applicant and the host institution, respectively, to the EPFL office; failing this the project will be terminated and the sums disbursed may have to be returned. The reports will be reviewed by the EPFL office and the Joint Steering Committee. Payment of subsequent instalments will be subject to the submission and approval of the annual scientific and financial reports.

#### Scientific reports and assessments

The Junior Faculty grantee, together with the EPFL professor, must submit to the EPFL office yearly scientific reports. Scientific reports must cover the progress made during the period, the activities



planned for the following period (if applicable) and any changes or deviation from the initial project plan.

### Financial reports

The host institution will be required to maintain a proper and separate project account and to produce, upon request and at least once a year, financial reports in local currency converted into Swiss Francs at the currency exchange rate applied when receiving the funds. Host institutions will be required to keep all documents justifying each accounting transaction. Detailed instructions and guidelines will be defined in each project agreement.

Yearly financial reports will also be required within EPFL for the funds spent in the laboratory of the EPFL professor.

The EPFL office will review the scientific and financial reports and will report to the Joint Steering Committee any problems or issues identified during the review, providing recommendations to the Committee regarding the continuation or termination of the project.

The Joint Steering Committee will decide on the continuation or termination of the project based on the recommendations of the EPFL office.

### **Open access**

Junior Faculty grantees must ensure open access to all scientific publications relating to their project results (self-archiving or open access publishing).

### **Early termination**

The Joint Steering Committee can decide to terminate the funding should the results or the implementation of the project be deemed unsatisfactory. The Junior Faculty grantee, the EPFL professor and the host institution will be notified in writing by e-mail.

In the event that a Junior Faculty grantee decides not to pursue his/her project or has to terminate his/her project prematurely, s/he must immediately notify the EPFL Office in writing, stating his/her reasons for doing so.

All funds, if already transferred, must be refunded insofar as the corresponding costs have not already been incurred.

## Responsibility

Applicants bear the principal responsibility for the proposed research project. In particular, they take into account all ethical, legal, and societal aspects of the proposed research and comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including those of their host institution and of EPFL.

The research project must comply with the applicable ethics regulations and adhere to the principles of research integrity valid at both EPFL and at the host institution in Africa. Relevant ethical considerations must be included in the application, and EPFL may submit projects for further ethical approval to its institutional review boards.

## Questions

For any questions, please contact [exaf@epfl.ch](mailto:exaf@epfl.ch). The answer to questions may be published on the [Excellence in Africa website](#).