**Application Guidelines of "Seed Projects for Interdisciplinary Research"
within the Strategic Areas of the University of Coimbra supported by Santander**

The University of Coimbra (UC), with the support of Santander Universidades Programme of Santander Totta Bank, promotes interdisciplinary research activities, developed by multidisciplinary teams, responding to complex scientific issues and societal challenges. The call "Seed Projects for Interdisciplinary Research" aims to support early-career researchers (PhD holders) to develop their research at the UC, to create or strengthen collaborative, relevant and/or emerging research lines.

Article 1
Overview and Objectives

1. The call "Seed Projects for Interdisciplinary Research" is promoted by the Strategic Areas Unit of the UC (hereafter NAE), in collaboration with the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research (hereafter IIIUC), responding to complex scientific issues and societal challenges, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Agenda 2030.
2. This call for proposals aims to fund interdisciplinary projects that may generate relevant knowledge within the scope of the UC strategic areas[1], developed by multidisciplinary teams of researchers integrated into the R&D Units or other structures of the UC, and who carry out research at the UC.
3. For the present call, "Seed Projects for Interdisciplinary Research" are research proposals aimed at the initial development of original and interdisciplinary scientific ideas, the results of which will lead to the future development of broader and more ambitious research projects that may be part of applications for other national and/or international R&D funding and which, thus, contribute to strengthening the UC's Strategic Areas.[2]

Article 2
Beneficiaries and Eligibility

1. Research teams that are composed of researchers from R&D Units or from other structures carrying out research at the UC can apply for funding.
2. Researchers who have already been Principal Investigators (hereafter, PIs) of awarded projects in previous editions of this call cannot apply as PIs.
3. A researcher can only participate in a maximum of two proposals, and only once as Principal Investigator (hereafter, PI) of a project.
4. The application can include the involvement of a maximum of two entities outside the UC as collaborating entities in the project, not being conferred the quality of funding beneficiary.

Article 3
Eligibility Conditions for the Principal Investigator and Project Team

1. The PI, to be eligible for the call, must hold a doctoral degree for a maximum of ten years counting from the date of the defence of the thesis until the beginning of the month in which this call for applications is launched. For this purpose of evaluating the scientific career, maternity, paternity and sick leave after obtaining the doctoral degree are taken into account, for the period legally in force and taken by the PIs. Supporting documents attesting to these situations must be attached.
2. The project team must be made up entirely of UC members.

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[1] https://www.uc.pt/en/iii/aeuc/

[2] Proposals for projects that continue broader projects and/or are already funded nationally or internationally, or are only focussed on the dissemination or communication of science, are not considered for this source of funding.

3. The project team must include up to six researchers, including the PI, from at least two R&D Units of the UC in different scientific areas. The classification of UC R&D Units by scientific area can be consulted here.
4. Notwithstanding the provisions in the previous subsections, the project team can be joined by members from two institutions outside the UC, as project collaborators.
5. The project team cannot include members of the advisory/supervision team of the PI's PhD thesis.
6. The project team's composition is subject to compliance with the gender equality principles explained in the UC Plan for Equality, Equity and Diversity 2019-2023.

Article 4
Project Funding

1. This call is sponsored by the Santander Universities Programme, with a total funding of 100,000€ (one hundred thousand euros), to be awarded to five projects, one in each of the UC's Strategic Areas.
2. The maximum funding limit for each project is 20,000€ (twenty thousand euros).
3. The financial implementation of the research projects in the competition must be carried out by 31 December 2024.
4. The jury has the right not to award any funding if none of the applications submitted is of good quality or meets the objectives of the call.
5. In addition to the funding foreseen in the previous subsections, up to a maximum amount of 20,000€ (twenty thousand euros), UC will provide support and capacity building to the teams in the process of preparation and submission of applications, namely:
   5.1. Mapping of researchers in order to promote the interdisciplinarity of the project, via NAE;
   5.2. Support for the communication and dissemination of the funded project, via IIIUC;
   5.3. Support for the protection of intellectual property rights and commercial valorization, via UC Business.

Article 5
Submission of Applications

1. The application to this call is submitted by filling in the appropriate form, available on the call page, and contains the technical and scientific description of the proposal.
   1.1. The application form will be available on the call page when it is launched;
   1.2. The template for the technical and scientific description of the research proposal includes four sections for the narrative presentation:
      1.2.1. The Project, including the description of the objectives, expected impacts and implementation plan;
      1.2.2. The background and main contributions of the PI;
      1.2.3. The team and the project collaborators, if applicable;
      1.2.4. The budgetary needs of the project.
   1.3. The template for the technical and scientific description is submitted in Digital Portable Document Format (PDF), through the application form.

2. The applications must be submitted in English. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the call and the composition of the jury, the use of scientific language that is not specific to a single disciplinary area is recommended.

3. The PIs and the other members of the project team are responsible for the originality of the proposal submitted, guarantee its authorship, and assume all responsibility arising from possible claims by third parties regarding copyright and related rights, industrial property rights or personality rights. They must also declare under their honour that the project proposal does not benefit from any other source of funding.

Article 6

Ethics and Scientific Integrity

The project proposal must ensure the principles and procedures of ethics and integrity of the research activities.

Article 7
Non-discrimination Policy and Equal Access

UC promotes a policy of non-discrimination, diversity and equal access, whereby no candidate may be privileged, benefited, prejudiced or deprived of any right.

Article 8
Jury and Evaluation

1. The evaluation of the applications will be carried out by a Jury, appointed by the Vice-Rector of the UC in charge of Research, who will be the Chairperson. The list of those appointed will be made available on the call page when the call is launched.
2. The jury members are divided into five evaluation panels, each ensuring disciplinary representation of the scientific areas of each Strategic Area.
3. The initial allocation of a proposal to a Strategic Area will be based on the preference expressed by the candidate. However, when necessary due to the expertise required for the evaluation, the proposal may be reallocated to a different Strategic Area with the agreement of the president of the jury. In such cases, applicants will be informed of this reallocation.
4. The Jury is composed of a variable number of members.
5. The selection and ranking of applications are carried out according to the following methodology:
    5.1. <u>Evaluation Phase of the Written Proposal of the Project:</u> The evaluation process focuses on the Quality of the Proposal (QP), based on the following criteria:
        5.1.1. Criterion A. Interdisciplinary quality of the project and the team, taking into account:
            5.1.1.1. Contribution to build scientific knowledge that integrates relationships between various disciplines;
            5.1.1.2. The potential of the seed project to significantly advance scientific knowledge;
            5.1.1.3. The interdisciplinary nature of the research team and its scientific quality.
        5.1.2. Criterion B. Scientific quality and impact of the project, taking into account:
            5.1.2.1. The development of a project of high relevance and scientific impact, namely in the Strategic Area of the UC considered;
            5.1.2.2. The adequacy of the approach to the following cross-cutting aspects of research: integration of the gender dimension and other aspects of diversity; open science practices; and sustainable development goals (SDGs);
            5.1.2.3. The coherence and feasibility of the work plan and the budget presented.
        5.1.3. Criterion C. Scientific quality and potential of the PI, considering their career stage and based on their narrative curriculum vitae, taking into account:
            5.1.3.1. The contributions of the PI to their scientific field, to the research community and, if applicable, to society, from an overall perspective of the PI's career;
            5.1.3.2. Relevance of the PI's experience to the implementation of the project;
            5.1.3.3. The potential of the PI for creative and independent thinking.

        5.1.4. The classification of the applications is obtained through the following weighting factors: QP = 0,3 * A + 0,5 * B + 0,2 * C.
        5.1.5. The criteria are evaluated on a scale from 1 to 10 (whole numbers), with the QP result rounded to the nearest tenth.
        5.1.6. Projects with scores equal to or higher than seven, up to a maximum of three per Strategic Area, will move on to the project presentation and discussion phase by the PI.

5.1.7. The Jury has the right not to select any application for the next stage if the jury considers that none of the applications submitted meet the requirements of quality and recognised scientific merit.

5.1.8. The jury's evaluation includes the identification of two strengths and two weaknesses per proposal evaluated.

5.2. <u>Project Presentation and Discussion Phase by the PI:</u> The jury conducts an evaluation interview, which includes a short presentation of the proposal (up to 5 minutes) by the PI to obtain additional and more detailed information about the project, the vision of the PI and the evaluation of the competencies considered essential for the implementation of the project.

6. Following the conclusion of the interview phase, the jury convened to hear the presentation and discuss the projects will decide on the winning proposal among those presented, discussed according to subsection 5.2.

Article 9
Impediments and Conflict of Interests of the Jury Members

1. Members of the jury:
    1.1. May not participate in the project teams in the competition.
    1.2. Must refuse to participate in the evaluation of projects in which they are or will foreseeably be in a conflict of interest, namely by:
        1.2.1. Having published scientific work with the PI in the three years prior to the opening date of the application period;
        1.2.2. Having a family relationship with the PI;
        1.2.3. Having a scientific or personal conflict with the PI;
        1.2.4. Being in any other situation that may raise doubts, to them or a third party, either to the PI or to an external entity, about the capacity of the jury member to evaluate the application impartially.

Article 10
Final Report

The PI of projects approved under the terms of Article 8 shall submit, up to three months after the end of the project's execution, a final report containing the most relevant results and the actions to disseminate them to the non-scientific public, according to a model to be made available.

Article 11
Eligibility and Expenditures

1. For the purposes of determining the total eligible cost of an application, within the scope of research and development operations, the following costs are eligible:
    1.1. Purchase of goods and services;
    1.2. Purchase of equipment and software;
    1.3. Missions.

Article 12
Application Deadlines and Implementation

1. Applications are accepted from 18 December 2023 until 15 February 2024 at 17:00h WET.
2. The first phase of the evaluation of applications by the jury takes place until the 6th of March 2024, and the candidates are notified of the results on the same day.
3. The interviews take place from the 11th to the 15th of March 2024.
4. A public award ceremony will be organized and will be announced in due time.