MISSION NEPTUNE

Open call for expression of interest

Co-designing the Global Network of Neptune Academic Chairs

Mission Neptune invites leading universities, academies and research institutions worldwide to express their interest in co-designing and hosting a Neptune Academic Chair.

Launched at the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, Mission Neptune is building an international scientific ecosystem dedicated to Ocean exploration, knowledge and understanding, and to translating science into action, public policy and international Ocean governance.

Neptune Academic Chairs are intended to form the academic backbone of this global network: a constellation of leading institutions and researchers connected across disciplines, geographies and generations. Each Chair will be jointly developed by Mission Neptune and its host institution, aligning Mission Neptune's priorities with the institution's own scientific, intellectual and geographical strengths. Neptune Chairs are conceived as active positions embedded in Mission Neptune's international scientific ecosystem, not as honorary affiliations.

An open co-design process

This call deliberately prescribes neither a single model nor a mandatory theme.

Each Neptune Chair will be co-designed around a distinctive scientific, intellectual and/or geographical focus. It may address one or more of Mission Neptune's eight Scientific Challenges (https://mission-neptune.com/fr/the-mission) — habitat mapping; Ocean abundance and biodiversity; seamount biodiversity; polar oceans; hydrothermal systems and bio-inspiration; blue carbon sinks; paleogenomic archives; marine genetic resources — or be anchored in an ocean basin, regional sea, strait or archipelago.

Proposals may also draw on or combine Mission Neptune's cross-cutting enablers and priority areas: ocean technologies and exploration platforms; observing systems; data, digital ocean, modelling and artificial intelligence; open science; the science-policy interface and Ocean governance; capacity development and new generations of researchers; humanities and social sciences, arts and culture; ocean literacy and public engagement. Mission Neptune particularly encourages interdisciplinary approaches

connecting natural sciences, technology, public policy, economics, humanities and social sciences, and culture.

A global network across ocean bassins

Neptune Academic Chairs are designed as a global network reflecting not only the diversity of disciplines and approaches but also the geography of the Ocean itself.

Mission Neptune therefore places particular importance on developing Chairs rooted in the world's major ocean basins, regional seas, straits and ocean interfaces: from the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans to the Southern and Arctic Oceans; from the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas to the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Guinea and South China Sea, as well as the strategic straits and passages connecting ocean basins.

This geographical dimension is central. Knowledge gaps, ecosystems, climate processes, biodiversity, human uses and governance challenges vary profoundly from one basin to another. A Chair based in Polynesia, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean or the Arctic therefore brings not only academic excellence but also place-based knowledge, connections with regional scientific communities and a specific understanding of its ocean basin.

What a Neptune chair offers

Selected institutions will work with Mission Neptune to define the Chair's thematic and geographical scope, scientific leadership, programme and international partnerships. The Neptune designation will connect each Chair to Mission Neptune's wider ecosystem: Scientific Council, Neptune Fellows, Neptune Expeditions, annual Neptune Forum, international scientific partners and science outreach activities. It will provide international visibility, scientific networking, opportunities for collaborative research and support in translating knowledge into outcomes relevant to public policy and international governance processes.

Funding and co-funding

The establishment and primary funding of a Neptune Academic Chair — including the academic position, research programme and institutional infrastructure — are principally the responsibility of the university, academy or research institution proposing to establish the Chair.

Mission Neptune may, however, actively support the pursuit of additional public and private funding and the development of co-funding arrangements by connecting selected Chairs with its international network of public institutions, foundations, philanthropists, companies and strategic partners, and, where appropriate, supporting joint fundraising efforts. In certain cases, Mission Neptune may also contribute to or facilitate funding for specific activities: research and expeditions, Neptune Fellows, technology and data, capacity development, science-to-policy initiatives or public engagement activities.

The aim is to develop a shared funding approach, combining the host university's or academy's long-term institutional commitment with complementary public, philanthropic and private resources mobilised through the Mission Neptune ecosystem.

Expression of interest

At this initial stage, no full application is required. Universities, academies and research institutions are invited to submit a brief expression of interest outlining:

1. the proposed thematic and/or geographical focus of the Chair, specifying, where relevant, the ocean basin, regional sea, strait, archipelago or ocean region concerned;

2. its alignment with one or more of Mission Neptune's Scientific Challenges, cross-cutting enablers or priority areas;

3. the institution's relevant scientific, academic or intellectual strengths;

4. the prospective Chair holder or academic leadership, where already identified;

5. the contribution the institution could make to the international Neptune network; and

6. prospects for international cooperation, capacity development, science-to-policy impact and complementary funding.

Expressions of interest will initiate a dialogue and co-design process with Mission Neptune. Shortlisted institutions will be invited to jointly define the scientific and/or geographical scope, partnership model, funding strategy and implementation framework for their Neptune Chair.

The ambition is not to replicate the same Chair around the world, but to build a global, complementary constellation of excellence — each Chair rooted in its institution, its region and, where applicable, its ocean basin, all united by one mission: to explore, understand and protect the Ocean.

Expression of interest contacts

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