

**Call for applications to identify projects to host  
researchers and assistant-professors in Nantes  
NExT Junior Talent attractiveness scheme 2026**

**Terms of reference**

Call for application opening : 01/06/2026

Contact : [aap-next@univ-nantes.fr](mailto:aap-next@univ-nantes.fr)  
[Web site](#)

## 1- Context, objectives and call for application description

The I-SITE (Initiative - Science, Innovation, Territories, Economy) NExT supports the development of a world-class university in Nantes by fostering collaboration among stakeholders and implementing an innovative trajectory in research, education, innovation, and international attractiveness. Following a four-year probationary period, its label was definitively confirmed on March 22, 2022, by decision of the Prime Minister.

The I-SITE brings together 10 members<sup>1</sup>: the four academic divisions of the university (Health; Science & Technology; Humanities; and Social Sciences), a university hospital (CHU Centre Hospitalier Universitaire), a technological research institute (IRT Jules Verne), a national research organization (Inserm), and several grandes écoles (Centrale Nantes, the Nantes Saint-Nazaire School of Fine Arts, and the National School of Architecture of Nantes). It also includes six partners<sup>2</sup> : CNRS, INRAE, ONIRIS, ICO, IFREMER, and L'École de Design Nantes Atlantique.

Within the framework of NExT, the Initiative has set itself the strategic objective of identifying, attracting, and fostering the development of new talent in Nantes, with a particular focus on strengthening its capacity to recruit internationally recognized profiles.

To further this momentum, the NExT Initiative is relaunching the NExT Junior Talents call for applications for the 2026-2027 period, aiming at identifying researchers and associate professors wishing to join one of its member or partner institutions to carry out their research and teaching activities.

The NExT Junior Talent scheme is designed to support the recruitment of high-potential scientific profiles to Nantes, with a view to securing a permanent position within one of NExT's member or partner institutions. It provides early-career researchers with the means to develop their own research project with a dedicated team and to enhance their international visibility.

The expected profiles are those of early-career researchers with a strong research track record and a demonstrated international dimension. Candidates should show a dynamic early career, including a strong ability to work in teams, supervise students (PhD candidates and interns), coordinate and lead research groups, and be actively involved in research projects, editorial boards, and related activities.

### Proposed projects must:

- **contribute to the excellence of Nantes in line with NExT's two main disciplinary priorities—Industry of the Future and Health of the Future—and in connection with the new scientific roadmap<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> [www.univ-nantes.fr](http://www.univ-nantes.fr) ; [www.chu-nantes.fr](http://www.chu-nantes.fr) ; [www.ec-nantes.fr](http://www.ec-nantes.fr) ; [www.inserm.fr](http://www.inserm.fr) ; <https://beauxartsnantes.fr> ; [www.nantes.archi.fr](http://www.nantes.archi.fr) ; [www.irt-jules-verne.fr](http://www.irt-jules-verne.fr) ;

<sup>2</sup> [www.cnrs.fr](http://www.cnrs.fr) ; [www.inrae.fr](http://www.inrae.fr) ; [www.oniris-nantes.fr](http://www.oniris-nantes.fr) ; [www.institut-cancerologie-ouest.com](http://www.institut-cancerologie-ouest.com) ; [www.ifremer.fr](http://www.ifremer.fr) ; <https://lecolededesign.com/fr>

<sup>3</sup> [Feuille de route scientifique Industrie & Santé](#) - Septembre 2024

- or demonstrate the ambition to enhance the visibility and reputation of Nantes Université, particularly at the international level, notably through its academic focus in the humanities and social sciences, "Building Society: Questioning Identity(ies)." <sup>1</sup>.

The candidate undertakes to comply with the institution's rules on ethics, integrity, and professional conduct, and to follow the recommendations of CEDIS (Committee on Ethics, Professional Conduct and Research Integrity) in this regard. They also commit to aligning with the institution's strategy in support of open science, in accordance with national, European, and international guidelines. This strategy is based in particular on encouraging the deposit of publications in the open-access repository HAL, with the aim of increasing the visibility of research outputs, promoting their dissemination and reuse, ensuring their long-term preservation, and enabling authors to retain the rights to distribute their publications.

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Eligibility criteria:
  - Candidates must not already hold a position at the Nantes Université at the time of submission of the complete application.
  - At the time of the letter of intent submission (the deadline), the candidate must have defended their doctoral thesis between 2 and 10 years prior (for female candidates, the eligibility period may be extended by 18 months for each child born after the doctorate).
  - Candidates must have undertaken a research stay abroad equivalent to at least one academic year or demonstrate strong international research activity (recommended but not mandatory for the humanities and social sciences).
  - The doctoral thesis should preferably have been completed outside of Nantes.
- Evaluation criteria :
  - Quality of the CV: research excellence, citations, international recognition, collaborations, awards, and overall potential.
  - Ability to lead/coordinate a team: involvement in projects, mentoring experience, teaching, participation in editorial boards, etc.
  - Quality of the proposed scientific and educational project: clarity of objectives, ambition, methods proposed to address the research question, interdisciplinarity, etc.
  - Contribution of the research and training topic to NExT's priority areas and/or to the visibility of Nantes Université, particularly internationally, including through its academic focus in the humanities and social sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> Axe académique SHS de Nantes Université : <https://u-news.univ-nantes.fr/sciences-humaines-et-sociales-nantes-universite-definit-un-axe-academique-fort-autour-des-identites>

- Potential for integration of the candidate within the host institution (faculty and research laboratory).
- Specific considerations for candidates in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS):
- *Mandatory alignment of the application with NExT's scientific themes in Health and Industry of the Future, or with Nantes Université's HSS axis "Building Society: Questioning Identity(ies)."*
- *International research experience is recommended but not mandatory.*

**Resources allocated to the project:**

- up to €225,000<sup>1</sup> in salary for the early-career researcher over a maximum period of 36 months
- €150,000 for the research team (PhD student, postdoctoral researcher, etc.)
- €25,000 for equipment and research-related costs

## 2- Selection process

### 2.1 Submission of a letter of intent

**Project leaders are invited to submit a letter of intent**, endorsed by the management of the prospective host laboratory and in coordination with the research offices of the relevant institutions.

The document template can be downloaded at the following address: [NExT Junior Talent Call for Applications](#).

Letters of intent must be submitted electronically only to the following address: [aap-next@univ-nantes.fr](mailto:aap-next@univ-nantes.fr) (email subject: NExT\_AAC-Attractivite\_LOI...).

They will be reviewed on the submission deadline indicated in the provisional schedule below.

#### **Admissibility**

The NExT operational team will verify all application materials. If any document is missing, the candidate will be contacted and given 3 working days to complete the application. After this period, incomplete applications will be deemed inadmissible and will not proceed in the selection process.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding to a gross annual salary of up to €75,000, determined based on the host institution's pay scales. If the chairholder obtains a tenured position (through a competitive exam, etc.), their salary will no longer be funded by NExT grants, and in this case, only the budgets dedicated to the team and the project's operations will be funded.

### Eligibility

The Research Thematic Committee of Nantes Université will assess the eligibility of applications based on the aforementioned criteria.

**Applications deemed eligible will be invited to submit a full proposal.** They will be supported by the prospective host institution in preparing this application for the final selection.

## 2.2 Submission of the full application and selection of awardees

The selection of awardees will be based on the review of the complete application, according to the criteria mentioned above and international standards of scientific excellence.

Applications will undergo a scientific evaluation by experts external to the Pays de la Loire region and of international standing, as well as an oral presentation before the bodies of Nantes Université, the details of which will be communicated to the candidates.

The application materials will be provided to eligible candidates.

## 3- Timeline

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS OPENS : 01/06/2026	
LOI Submission	18/09/2026
Complete application submission	23/11/2026
Selection phase (external scientific review and candidate interviews)	February – April 2027
Approval by the Nantes Université executive board for funding	May – June 2027
Project launch	Between September and December 2027

The project must begin between September and December of the selection year (approval will be required if a later start date is planned). The project is funded for a maximum of 5 years, with a salary for the Principal Investigator (PI) for a maximum of 36 months.

## 4- Contacts

Applicants are invited to contact the Research Department of the proposed host institution for any questions regarding the hosting conditions related to this Call for Applications.