


# CZS endowed professorships Universities



Call for proposals for universities  
in the CZS focus topics of artificial intelligence,  
resource efficiency and life science technologies

Version from: 3 December 2024

Application deadlines: 30 May and 30 November every year  
Letter of intent deadlines 20 April and 20 October every year

## 1 Thematic focus and target setting

The Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung (CZS) has a long tradition of funding endowed professorships. In doing so, the foundation strives to strengthen the knowledge centres in the three funding states of Thuringia, Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate.

Applications for endowed professorships must be in one of the three focus topics for the Carl Zeiss Stiftung:

The focus topic of **Artificial intelligence** addresses one of the most important and promising technologies of the future. In this area, the focus of the funding is in these four sectors: Fundamental aspects of artificial intelligence, enabling and supporting technologies, application and didactics for computer science.

In the focus topic of **Resource efficiency**, funding is provided in the area of the comprehensive closed-loop economy. In this area, the CZS focuses its funding on four sectors: Energy systems of the future, sustainable material innovations, fair raw materials for new technologies and resource-saving digitalisation.

**Life science technologies** covers interdisciplinary challenges at the interfaces of life sciences and engineering with the motivation of innovating in personalised medicine. For this reason, the CZS funds research into sensors, surfaces, data and synthetics with the shared goal of achieving a better understanding of biological processes and developing new technologies.

You can find out more about the focus topics on the CZS [website](http://www.carl-zeiss-stiftung.de) (www.carl-zeiss-stiftung.de).

The *CZS endowed professorships at universities* programme enables universities to recruit outstanding STEM scientists for their research location. The application is submitted by the

university in partnership with an excellent candidate for the professorship. The candidate must not have accepted an offer at the time at which the application is submitted. The professorship must fit in with the current profile of the university in a convincing manner and must also offer added value to existing professorships in terms of interdisciplinary collaboration. The individual should have an outstanding international reputation in their research field and fall within one of the focus topics above in terms of content. Another key feature is a clear focus on practical application, which must be identifiable in the individual's profile and their research topics. The professorships should strategically complement the practical nature of the universities' research profiles.

## **2 Scope and object of funding**

Funding can be requested for up to a total of

**EUR 5,000,000.**

The project funding can be applied for a total funding period of ten years.

The following are eligible for funding as part of the programme:

- Funds for scientific, technical and administrative staff
- Material and investment funds
- Funds for scientific communication and outreach.

The universities are free to divide up the funding for which the application is submitted. A maximum of 20 per cent of the project funding sum may be used for investments. The requested funding must be justified accordingly.

In addition to the project funding applied for, the Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung will pay an overhead lump sum amounting to 20 per cent of the project funding sum. The university is

responsible for deciding on the use of the overhead lump sum in accordance with the legal requirements. Please note the information on this in the application guidelines.

The Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung (CZS) expects the university to make an independent contribution for the entire funding period, amounting to at least one full-time role for a scientific staff member.

When calculating staff funding, the legal requirements of state university laws with regard to pension provision and other benefits must be observed in addition to any rate increases and increases in line with inflation. The CZS will not retrospectively provide any additional funds to finance cost increases. The amount of the eligible remuneration of the W3 professorship is not limited by CZS.

The CZS expects the number of employed doctoral candidates to match the amount of work associated with the project. The CZS welcomes applications from full-time doctoral candidates. Furthermore, it expects that the employment contracts of scientific employees are concluded for the entire period of the respective qualification phase regardless of the duration of the funding.

The funding period is up to ten years from the point in time at which the professor starts in their role. The professors must start within two years of the funding being approved by the CZS. Furthermore, the professorship must be continued by the university after the funding expires.

Only applications from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields will receive funding.

### **3 Eligibility to apply**

The CZS funds CZS-endowed professorships in the federal states of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia. The following state universities are eligible to submit applications:

**Baden-Württemberg:** Freiburg, Heidelberg, Hohenheim, Karlsruhe, Konstanz, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Tübingen, Ulm

**Thuringia:** Erfurt, Ilmenau, Jena, Weimar

**Rhineland-Palatinate:** Kaiserslautern-Landau, Koblenz, Mainz, Trier

The candidate for the endowed professorship may not be employed at a research institution in the federal states of Rhineland-Palatinate, Thuringia or Baden-Württemberg at the point in time at which the application is submitted.

A university submitting an application can also submit a joint application with other non-university research institutions. The applying university must take the lead in this undertaking. This means that the organisational processing, including funding allocation, must exclusively be carried out via the university that submits the application. The CZS expects that the majority of the funds will remain with the university.

## 4 Selection procedure and criteria

Independent scientists will scrutinise all submitted applications in a written expert opinion. The applicants will be invited to present their project to a scientific selection committee and answer questions from the committee members (representatives of university management, representatives of departmental management, candidate, for joint appointments: representative of the non-university research institution).

Universities intending to apply must first submit a letter of intent to the Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung. Letters of intent must be submitted by April 20 or October 20 at the latest. Applications can be submitted to the CZS by 30 May and 30 November every year. The selection committee meets each year in the following November and May. The CZS will make the final funding decision based on the recommendations by the selection committee. There is no entitlement to funding. No justification will be provided for rejection decisions; in particular, no information will be given about the assessors' evaluations.

Important selection criteria in the review process include:

- Topic:
  - Innovative and pioneering topic in the area of artificial intelligence, resource efficiency or life science technologies
- Person:
  - Research and teaching profile and international reputation of the candidate (previous scientific work, publications, etc.)
  - fit of the person for the strategic orientation of the department and the overall research profile of the nominating university
  - Role and potential of the candidate in existing and planned partnerships within the university and with external partners, e.g. research organisations, companies or in networks/associations

- Application relevance:
  - Practical application of the candidate's previous and planned research profile (e.g. industry cooperations, patent registrations)
- Location:
  - Strategic importance of the endowed professorship to strengthening an existing subject/research area or establishing a new research area for the structural development of the university
  - Contribution of the endowed professorship to strengthening teaching (adding to the curriculum, interdisciplinarity of teaching)
  - Support of the university and, if applicable, the non-university research institution for the establishment of the endowed professorship

## 5 Application

Both the letter of intent and the application must be submitted exclusively digitally to the following address. The first step is to register. The application portal can be accessed via the following link: <https://portal.carl-zeiss-stiftung.de/authentication/login>

Applications may only be submitted via university management.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Gärtig ([phil-alan.gaertig@carl-zeiss-stiftung.de](mailto:phil-alan.gaertig@carl-zeiss-stiftung.de), Tel. +49 711 162 213 – 10).

## Application guidelines

### 1 General formal requirements

- The application must be submitted in English.
- Arial font, size 12 and single line spacing with side margins of 2.5 cm must be used for the applications.
- Applications, including all the necessary documents, must be submitted to the Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung exclusively electronically: The two files (a PDF with application and attachments and the financing plan as an Excel file) must be available as documents without password protection or access restrictions regarding reading, copying and printing. The PDF must be made available to the Foundation by email to [foerderantrag@carl-zeiss-stiftung.de](mailto:foerderantrag@carl-zeiss-stiftung.de) (as an attachment or link). **All files must be uploaded via the CZS online portal.** The online portal for this call will be activated 2 February 2025.

### 2 Documents to be submitted

The universities are asked to provide the following documents, and the completeness of these documents is a prerequisite for receiving funding:

#### 2.1 Letter of intent

Submitting an application is not possible if no letter of intent has been submitted. The letter of intent enables the CZS to prepare the evaluation process for the application.

The letter of intent must include the following details:

1. Cover sheet (one page)
  - a) Applicant university (for joint applications, name of the non-university research organisation)
  - b) Managing department for the application and preliminary contact
  - c) Professorship subject area (the denomination may be modified in the final application, but the fundamental content area of the project must remain the same)
  - d) Name of the CZS focus topic including area that the application relates to
  - e) Name of the candidate and subject area
  - f) Status of discussions and/or the process



- g) Potentially suggestions, justified in bullet points, of up to three assessors who the university believes would be suitable to assess the application in a professional and impartial manner according to the DFG criteria. Please provide contact details.
2. Content-related description of the professorship's research profile (one page)  
Introduction of the candidate, their research focus and basic orientation of the professorship

## 2.2 Application

The written application from the university (max. 15 A4 pages excluding annexes) must contain the following details in this order:

1. Cover sheet with master data
  - a. Applicant university (for joint applications, name of the non-university research organisation)
  - b. Application coordinator (name, work address, telephone and email address, web link)
  - c. Title of the professorship
  - d. Institute/department where the professorship will be based
  - e. Name of the CZS focus topic including area that the application relates to
  - f. Financial details: funding requested from the CZS (personnel, material costs and investments), independent contribution by the university
  - g. Funding period requested (start and end date)
2. Abstract  
Clear summary of the professorship's orientation in German and English (maximum half a DIN A4 page each, together on a separate page).
3. Content-related and strategic goals
  - a. Motivation, scientific goals and scientific innovation potential: What are the (up to four) most important research questions? What are the unique selling points of the professorship?
  - b. Structural and strategic goals, alignment of the professorship with the strategic orientation, further development and profile of the university and department
  - c. Integration of the professorship into existing (university) structures
4. Candidate's profile
  - a. Scientific excellence and international visibility
  - b. Candidate's subject area and description of how this will add to the university's profile
  - c. Planned networking of the professorship with external partners (e.g. research organisations or companies)

5. Research status
  - a. Significant national and international developments in the relevant research area
  - b. Current relevant research focus topics at the university
  - c. Important and/or competing research groups/professorships that are active in Germany and abroad in the relevant research field
  - d. Expected further development of the research at the university by the professorship
6. Transfer and practical application
  - a. Practical application of the planned research within the framework of the professorship
  - b. Previous practical activities by the candidate
7. Teaching
  - a. Previous teaching at the university in the professorship's field
  - b. Expected further development of teaching by the professorship incl. planned teaching duties of the professorship
  - c. Candidate's teaching experience
8. Organisation and management
  - a. Current status of the application process and negotiations
  - b. Measures taken by the university to promote scientific talent and the candidate's previous activities in this area
  - c. Measures taken by the university to actively promote diversity and the candidate's previous activities in this area
9. Sustainability and permanence

Content and organisational/structural plans to make the professorship permanent and potentially also additional roles at the university and in the department (and, for a joint project, at the non-university research organisation)
10. Financial details

Please provide a brief explanation of your financial plans and point out any specific details where necessary, e.g. planned roles, important investments, independent contribution, reallocation of funding. This section should give the reviewers an overview of your financial plans.

Please detail which basic facilities (staff, laboratory space, large equipment, etc.) will be provided by the university and when. For joint applications, please detail how and to what extent funds will be forwarded to the non-university research organisation. In order to clarify the project budget, please enclose the financial plan from Annex 1 in the annex to the application (see 2.3 Annex to the application, Point 2). It is not necessary to include the financial plan in the main part of the application.

## 2.3 Annex to application

Please attach the following documents to your application:

1. Schedule for the rest of the application process
2. Financing plan in accordance with Annex 1

Please enclose a financing plan with the application as an annex, which should be created as an Excel table using the template and submitted as an xlsx file. The individual cost items should be rounded to the nearest 1,000 euros. The current DFG personnel average rates should be used as the basis for calculating staff costs. Expected rate increases/inflation adjustments during the funding period should be taken into consideration for calculating the requested funding amount.

The following details must be included:

- a. Independent contribution by the university  
The independent contribution should demonstrate the university's dedication. The independent contribution can take the form of additional staff positions, material resources and similar (at least one full-time role for scientific staff [E13]).
- b. Overhead lump sum  
The overhead lump sum depends on the amount of approved project funding and is added to the total funding amount. The Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung considers the following costs to be covered by the overhead lump sum and they can therefore not be applied for as part of the project funding:
  - costs in the business management sense due to internal cost allocation, insofar as they are not based on project-specific expenses (such as computer centers or other scientific services),
  - expenditure for construction and furnishing measures and rents,
  - expenditure on general institute equipment (e.g. IT infrastructure, office furniture, tools, protective clothing), office supplies, postage and telecommunication charges or internet access,
  - expenditure on equipment that is not directly related to project activities,
  - operating and maintenance costs (e.g. electricity, gas, water, coolant), maintenance contracts,
  - contributions to property insurance, expenses for letters of protection, memberships,
  - expenses for the completion or repair of equipment that are not directly related to the project activity,
  - fees charged by authorities in connection with the implementation of the project,
  - VAT amounts, insofar as they can be deducted as input tax.

3. Independent contribution  
Separate binding declaration from university management concerning the nature and amount of the independent contribution and permanence of the professorship
4. Candidate's CV  
including publication list, third-party funding list, previous teaching activities and further qualification proof (research prizes, patents, roles, etc.)
5. Organisations  
List of organisations involved in the application project with the associated addresses and web links (institutes and organisations of the university and, where applicable, other external organisations)
6. Cooperation partners  
Planned cooperation partners in the university and outside the university (e.g. other universities, research organisations, companies, museums, etc.) with the associated addresses and web links. If transfer measures are chosen as a structural approach, the willingness of the cooperation partner to participate in the project must be demonstrated in the form of an LOI.
7. Research data concept  
Concept for handling research data (with regard to data protection, open source, open access, shared databases, reproducibility).

These guidelines on submitting applications, including annexes and the call for proposals, can be accessed at <https://www.carl-zeiss-stiftung.de/en/programme/czs-endowed-professorships-at-universities/call-for-application>.