

## BUA-NUS Strategic Research Partnership Call for Joint Research Proposals

### ***BUA-NUS Global Health Exploration Project***

Call opens:	19 May 2022, 2 pm	Call closes:	9 August 2022, 2pm
Letter of Intent to be submitted by	30 June 2022		
Earliest start of funding:	1 January 2023	Duration:	3 years
Award limitation per project:	From BUA: up to € 225.000 per annum From NUS: up to SGD 200.000 per annum		

After a successful seed funding call for joint research proposals on the topic of Global Health, the National University of Singapore and the Berlin University Alliance (BUA) constituted by Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin and the Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin are pleased to intensify their collaboration by funding one three-year *BUA-NUS Global Health Exploration Project*. The call goes along with the Berlin University Alliance's second "Grand Challenge Initiative" addressing the field of Global Health as an emerging discipline, emphasizing on both global needs for new holistic health concepts and valuable scientific contributions. Being strategic partners, BUA and NUS recognize an emergent need for pooling their research expertise and resources in order to jointly contribute to the global Grand Challenges.

With the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the relevance, scope and complexity of Global Health has become strikingly clear, as have the many opportunities in Global Health for inter- and transdisciplinary research and intervention. As an emerging discipline, Global Health addresses human health and One Health issues in a transnational and global perspective, and focuses particularly on the interdependencies between globalization, health and health determinants, with a special emphasis on and commitment to the reduction of health disparities.<sup>1</sup> It also acknowledges that global health research and interventions often take place in postcolonial settings and in contexts of high social and institutional inequality. As such, Global Health requires multinational and multidisciplinary collaboration in order to understand – and act upon – the inseparable interconnections between the medical, biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental determinants of human health and wellbeing.

The call aims to strengthen an integral understanding of health by fostering joint research approaches between Berlin and Singapore in highly relevant areas of health research such as:

- Barriers to health protection: e.g. antimicrobial and vaccine resistance
- Emerging health threats: e.g. pandemic preparedness and response
- Urban Physical and Mental Health: e.g. urbanization, migration, culture, societal transformation
- Planetary health challenges: e.g. health effects of climate and biodiversity changes

---

<sup>1</sup> Koplan, J. P., Bond, T. C., Merson, M. H., Reddy, K. S., Rodriguez, M. H., Sewankambo, N. K., & Wasserheit, J. N. (2009). Towards a common definition of Global Health. *Lancet*, 373(9679), 1993–1995. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(09\)60332-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60332-9); p. 1993

- Managing Global Health: e.g. governance, economy, health systems, community
- Digital Health and AI

The call aims to stimulate innovative research and to foster co-operation in the field of **Global Health** in all disciplines between the BUA members and NUS. This funding scheme intends to support **one BUA-NUS Global Health Exploration Project for three years** that analyzes current relevant questions and influencing factors for human health from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective and has a clear potential for further development. Funding is targeted towards projects aiming to implement interdisciplinary approaches, transcending the borders between disciplines and their different methodological and conceptual frameworks. Each proposal should describe prospects for sustainability beyond the funding period (e.g. by generating third-party funding, integrating the projects into other topic-related research projects in Berlin and Singapore or establishing long-term cooperation with industry).

### Funding Purpose

This funding scheme intends **to support one excellent flagship project**, that will work at the interface between the different perspectives of medicine, natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, technical, and environmental sciences. This will help to create a broader understanding of the current challenges in Global Health determinants and provide the basis for networking activities needed to adequately address current major questions. Funding is targeted towards projects aiming to implement interdisciplinary approaches, transcending the borders between disciplines and their different methodological and conceptual frameworks. **Interdisciplinarity is a necessary funding criterion.**

Proposals within this funding program must state clearly how their approach addresses at least two of the following challenges that have been highlighted by the Rockefeller Lancet Commission for Planetary Health<sup>2</sup>:

1. Imagination challenges (relating to new ways of thinking, conceptualizing and addressing complex, multi-disciplinary problems);
2. Knowledge challenges (relating to better understanding the shaping of human health through social and environmental processes, their implications for health risks and planetary futures);
3. Implementation challenges (relating to solutions and strategies for socially and environmentally sustainable lifestyles, the ability to account for uncertainty in policy and decision-making frameworks, sustainable management of common goods, time lags between action and effect).

In terms of diversity and gender equality, projects must examine the relevance of social inequality and discrimination for Global Health, taking into account an intersectional approach that considers the intertwining of diversity dimensions. Projects should also state their commitment to a research culture which strives for diversity in the research team as well as values diversity of opinions, perspectives, and experiences. The BUA-NUS Exploration Project should aim for advancing an integrative academic community in which all members are equally valued and integrated, and able to pursue their intellectual goals.

---

<sup>2</sup> Whitmee et al. 2015; *Lancet*, 386(10007):1973-2028); doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)60901-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60901-1)

## Funding and eligible costs

Projects qualify for approval if the applicants convincingly demonstrate that they will address issues by developing perspectives, networks and ideas for application, creating a new and sustainable area of research. Funding of an Exploration Project allows exploring the long-term sustainability and impact of an idea. The BUA-NUS Exploration Project is based on a three-year funding period. The funding period may not be extended except in the event of absenteeism due to sickness or family matters (pregnancy, parental leave, etc.). No additional funding will be made available, however, for any such extensions.

A maximum of 352,000 euros per annum is available for one Exploration Project i.e., **a total of 1.05 million euros** for the three-year funding period. Funding will be made available to the member institutions of the Berlin University Alliance and the NUS for this purpose as budget resources. While funds cannot be transferred to other international partners, there is the possibility of including them by several means e.g., through workshops, visiting fellowships or by connecting them to existing projects/partnerships.

Eligible costs are:

- Travel, accommodation and other associated costs for joint workshops and/or academic researcher exchanges in line with existing standards and regulations in all partner institutions;
- Digital activities such as online workshops, marketing and/or website to support joint activities, establishing, testing and applying digital products;
- Fellowships for doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows to conduct research at a partner institution;
- Costs associated with the preparation of joint grant proposals to respective national and international funding agencies, philanthropic sponsors or foundations;
- Material costs of the collaborative research (as contribution towards laboratory or field costs for participating academics);
- Costs associated with joint publications;
- Only BUA: personnel costs for academic staff subject to an adjustment of the currently applicable Berlin Higher Education Act, § 110<sup>3</sup>.
- Only NUS: Personnel costs for non-academic staff (e.g. research assistants, research associates, research fellows, administrators and executives) can be considered. Academic staff are not eligible.

PIs should be aware of possible travel restrictions and, therefore, consider alternative activities such as additional online workshops and meetings.

Applicants are expected to meet established national standards and requirements for funding (like [Good Research Practice](#)), and to follow the general policies and guidelines of their respective institution.

## General Eligibility Criteria

---

<sup>3</sup> Hiring of new postdoctoral researchers and the extension of postdoctoral researchers' employment contracts are currently suspended at Berlin's universities. However, we expect the Berlin Higher Education Act to be adapted by the end of the year. Therefore, please budget the personnel resources necessary for the implementation of the project. If required, we will help you to find adequate solutions once the funding has been approved.

The Call for Joint Research Proposals is open to researchers from the NUS and all BUA partners, from any discipline. The group application must consist of at least 6 and no more than 12 researchers (PIs). The consortium must include applicants from one NUS faculty and at least two Alliance institutions. In the interests of sustainability, it is important that applicants are available to participate in the long-term realization of the project. Consortia must aim toward a gender balanced and diverse composition of the research team. Faculty members of the participating partner institutions have to be involved and function as principal investigators.

External researchers from Germany, Singapore and abroad as well as partners from industry and non-university research institutions can participate in projects as co-applicants but are not eligible for funding.

#### BUA requirements

Professors and postdoctoral researchers working at Alliance institutions (Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin) are eligible to apply. Financing of all members of the applying consortium must be ensured for the entire duration of the project (by means of a work contract of at least 50% FTE). Confirmation that positions are guaranteed until the end of the project must be appended to the proposal (please use provided document (“Anzegebögen”), signed by the corresponding dean, president or chair of a board).

Applying postdoctoral researchers in the early phases of their careers are required to provide proof of academic independence according to the criteria of their discipline (e.g., junior research group leader, Emmy Noether Groups etc.). It is also possible for applicants at this stage of their careers to obtain financing for their position if they make a strong enough case.

Affiliated institutes (German ‘An-Institute’) are not per se eligible to apply. Individual people e.g., professors at an ‘An-Institut’ affiliated with an Alliance institution are, however, eligible to apply. Doctoral candidates and individuals who have completed their doctorates but are still awaiting doctoral certificates (Dr. Designatus) may only apply in the case they have defended their thesis and have received a grade. Proof of this must be appended to the application.

#### NUS requirements

Full-time NUS faculties are eligible to apply. NUS applicants should have a contract end date which exceeds the project end date. PIs, co-PIs and collaborators should also not be salaried by this research project, if awarded.

BUA-NUS consortia who were successful in the BUA-NUS seed funding call “Global Health Initiative – Call for Joint Research Proposals” are eligible to apply. BUA academics who were successful in the BUA call “*Determinants of Global Health: Exploring Biological, Human-made & Environmental Factors*” are not eligible to apply.

Applications that do not meet these criteria will **not be eligible** for funding.

#### Application procedure

If you intend to submit a proposal, we request you to inform us of this in sufficient time (by 30 June 2022) through the submission of a Letter of Intent so that we can arrange suitable external reviewers for your proposal. Please write an e-mail to [aleksandra.laski@berlin-university-alliance.de](mailto:aleksandra.laski@berlin-university-alliance.de) and provide the following information:

- a provisional list of PIs
- a preliminary project title, including an acronym (if applicable)
- the topic of your proposal (Please include 5 major 'keywords' in order for us to classify your research topic).

A single, jointly prepared application must be submitted in English through the application portal (<https://portal.bihealth.de/portal/>) to the BUA, by 2 pm on 9 August 2022 (Berlin local time).

The proposal must include:

### **1. Proposal**

- Presentation of the question and objectives of the Exploration Project as it relates to the topic of Global Health determinants.
- Presentation of thematic, conceptual and methodological research gap, project design and rationale
- Presentation of the main interdisciplinary perspectives to be pursued i.e., a demonstration of how the following criteria are reflected in the research design:
  - Please outline how the various scientific disciplines will collaborate in the different project phases and how you manage the process to integrate disciplinary knowledge into interdisciplinary knowledge.
- Presentation of the planned procedure, including schedule and work packages/contributions of each applicant
- Details regarding quality assurance, including criteria for monitoring quality assurance
- Details of diversity strategies and measures
- Details of open access strategies and measures
- Presentation of how the project will contribute to fostering the strategic partnership between BUA and NUS within the scope of a joint Exploration Project
- Output and sustainability strategy or perspectives for anchoring the project (e.g., long-term research strategy or plans for anchoring the project and obtaining subsequent third-party funding)

### **2. Further documents to be submitted**

- Short applicant CVs focusing on their five most important publications on the topic to be addressed by the project
- **Cost projection including an explanation and justification of costs** as well as details of co-financing by the participating institutions or third-party funding (additional to the budget sheet)
- List of external cooperation partners (including Letters of Commitment, if applicable)
- Index of cited literature

- Statement provided by the relevant dean's office or equivalent institute concerning basic equipment (rooms etc.); only for applicants affiliated with Humboldt-Universität, Freie Universität, Technische Universität: "Anzeigebögen" signed by the respective faculty.

### Selection Criteria and Evaluation Process

Projects are assessed in a multi-stage process including an initial check for completeness of submitted documents and formal fulfillment of eligibility criteria (carried out by the strategic partnership offices of BUA and NUS) and a written review by international experts. The review is based on scores and explanations of the eligibility criteria as well as an overall numerical rating of the application. Based on scores received in the written review an internal committee (consisting of the BUA's steering committees for the Grand Challenge Initiative and Internationalization) will discuss the applications and make a final funding recommendation to the NUS' and BUA's leadership. The final funding decision is made by the leadership of both partners.

The evaluation will take into account

- Effective communication and cooperation between the faculty in each location and added value of the collaboration in terms of building research capacity in Berlin and Singapore;
- Quality and innovativeness of the research project (scientific relevance of the topic, topicality, originality, long-term perspective, preliminary results, and/or previous work);
- Objectives and coherence of the work program, conclusiveness of the project structure, cooperation between the disciplines, added value of the cooperation;
- Interdisciplinarity of the project (composition of the team and cooperation of the subprojects throughout the institutions, methods and formats of knowledge integration, and synthesis of results);
- Competence and expertise of the team of faculty members involved;
- Feasibility of the project plan;
- Cost-effectiveness of the budget;
- Plans on how to obtain external funding in the future and prospects for sustainability beyond the original term of the grant;
- Reflection of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion priorities in the composition of the research team, including gender balance of named investigators and the involvement of graduate-, early- and mid- career researchers;
- Quality Assurance: Adequacy of data collection and access; if applicable: quality of data management plan; realistic planning of work, of time and of milestones; realistic planning of dissemination of research results.
- **Project timeline:** Grant funding will be available from 1 January 2023 and is allocated to last until 31 December 2025. All expenses and activities should be incurred within the funding period.
- **Progress reports:** NUS and BUA recipients must report briefly after six months from the start of the award on the activities to which the grant is being applied, and annually thereafter until project completion.
- **Acknowledgement:** Recipients are expected to acknowledge the support of the NUS-BUA Partnership in any publications or presentations, which should be listed in the progress reports.
- **Payment of the grant:** The payment and post-award financial management will be administered through the respective institution of any lead applicant.

BUA submission and contact details:

Aleksandra Laski  
Strategic Partnership Manager  
Berlin University Alliance  
aleksandra.laski@berlin-university-alliance.de  
+49 (0) 30 2093 20084

For Global Health related requests:

Dr. Julia Wolanski  
Project manager "Global Health"  
Stabsstelle Berlin University Alliance  
Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin  
julia.wolanski@charite.de  
+49 (0) 39 450 572114

For NUS applicants please direct any additional questions to:

Ms Chan Ching Ting  
Assistant Manager, Research Administration  
Office of the Deputy President (Research & Technology)  
dprcct@nus.edu.sg  
+65 6601 2780  
National University of Singapore