



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY

**UNU-IAS**

Institute for the Advanced Study  
of Sustainability



# Application Submission Guidelines for ProSPER.Net Joint Research Project 2023-2024

## I. Background and Objectives

The 2021 synthesis report by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) identified the urgent need to enhance the capacities of State Parties, particularly developing countries, in the areas of methodology and tools, data and information and institutional arrangements related to the measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) and transparency responses to climate change<sup>1</sup>. To address such capacity gaps, State Parties emphasized the pivotal role of climate education measures, among others, such as updating formal, informal and non-formal education curricula and programmes in accordance with the Action for Climate Empowerment denoted in the Paris Agreement<sup>2</sup>. Further elaborated was the importance of capacity-building, including technical capacity, as a prerequisite for the implementation of each State Party's Nationally Determined Contribution.

As COP26 brought world leaders to agree on a new 10-year Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment to promote climate education, youth engagement and public participation<sup>3</sup>, concrete mechanisms and their implementation must be accelerated to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. In response to the strong need to develop higher education mechanisms in addressing the global climate crisis, UNU-IAS is establishing a new postgraduate programme on the Specialisation on the Paris Agreement (SPA). The SPA course, which is planned to be launched in September 2023 as part of the master's or doctoral degree programme in UNU-IAS, aims to hone future leaders of practitioners and government officials with institutional and technical capacities to implement and accelerate climate action in their home countries and beyond.

Underlining the critical role of higher education and research institutions in advancing climate change education, UNU-IAS also intends to utilize its existing research and educational networks and programmes including engaging ProSPER.Net members to produce joint research collaborations to contribute to climate action. In particular, member institutions are encouraged to develop courses anchored in the implementation of the Paris Agreement through ProSPER.Net's Joint Research Project platform.

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Capitalizing on the synergies and successful partnerships in the ProSPER.Net, the Joint Research Project in 2023-2024 is aimed at developing postgraduate-level courses that are aligned with the key competencies for the implementation and reinforcement of the Paris Agreement. Its objectives are the following:

1. To identify key competencies for the effective implementation and reinforcement of the Paris Agreement based on research and scientific literature; and
2. To design postgraduate-level courses based on these identified competencies for co-implementation within (and beyond) the member institutions of the project proponent team.

## II. Course Design Expectations

Course topics of the submitted proposals are not specified by the ProSPER.Net Secretariat but must adhere to the objectives of the Joint Research Project. No limitations are set as to the number of courses in the submission, and regular courses and/or practicums for either master or doctoral degree level may be proposed.

The subject and learning objectives of each proposed course must be research-supported and oriented towards developing specific competencies for the implementation and reinforcement of the Paris Agreement. Course topics may include, but are not limited to, *Climate change and SDGs synergy, Food system, biodiversity and nature-based solutions for climate change, Governance for climate policy, and Enhancing MRV and transparency system*. No requirement is specified as to the methods of teaching, class offering and learning assessment tools. Each course may also be designed in a modular fashion with several shorter and focused components (modular courses).

The project proponents are encouraged to design courses suitable for co-implementation among the partner universities involved and adopt an appropriate course modality for a wider reach of students. Pilot implementation within the partner institutions and evaluation of the courses are recommended.

## III. Outcome

The built courses with topics specialised on the critical aspects laid out in the Paris Agreement are expected to provide students with climate-informed knowledge and practices necessary for the implementation and achievement of Nationally Determined Contributions including climate data collection and management, climate data interpretation, analysis and translation, and sustaining and improvement of MRV and transparency mechanisms (SDG 13 Target 13.3, 13.b). In addition, the course development based on the Paris Agreement implementation will advance the contribution of

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educational institutions for climate action and emphasize the importance of climate change education as an integral part of education for sustainable development (SDG 4 Target 4.7). Attaining the network's commitment to promote sustainability in postgraduate education, the joint research proposals will further contribute to the strengthening of alliance within the ProSPER.Net in catalyzing climate action for its broader role in achieving the sustainable development agenda (SDG 17 Target 17.16).

#### IV. Selection Process

1. Proposals shall comply with the submission guidelines specified herewith by the ProSPER.Net Secretariat and shall follow the format in **Annex 1: Application Template**.
2. Each proposal shall be prepared by a project proponent team with at least three ProSPER.Net member institutions. Each team shall designate a Leading Institution where the project Principal Investigator is affiliated.
3. Applications shall be submitted to the ProSPER.Net Secretariat responsible for screening and submitting the applications to the ProSPER.Net Expert Advisory Panels which will examine and evaluate the received proposals according to the criteria described in **V. Evaluation Criteria**. A representative from a member institution of the shortlisted proposals will be required to make a short presentation at the Board Meeting for final evaluation in October 2022.
4. The Expert Advisory Panels shall make recommendations to the Director of UNU-IAS through the Secretariat regarding all aspects of the project, based on the evaluation criteria and approval conditions.

*Successful proposals are expected to commence their research activities in January 2023 and be completed within one year in accordance with the contract to be prepared. The funding amount per approved project will be up to 25,000 USD.*

#### V. Evaluation Criteria

- a) **Project rationale** – Background and objectives of the proposed courses shall be based on identified needs related to the implementation and reinforcement of the Paris Agreement such as technical, policy and institutional capacity gaps justified through review of research and scientific literature.
- b) **Strength of methodology** – Logic of the research outputs and activities, and approaches to carry out each research activity such as course design, pilot testing and course evaluation considering the roles of the project members and the relationships with other stakeholders shall be described justly and thoroughly.

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- c) **Transdisciplinarity** – Contents of the developed courses shall cross many disciplinary boundaries to synergize and create a holistic outcome.
  - d) **Extent of participation** – A minimum of three ProSPER.Net members is required to participate in the development and implementation stages of the project.
  - e) **Project sustainability** – Joint Research Project fundings are seed funds that shall help institutions initiate a project and therefore, sustainability of the project in the long term shall be demonstrated, in a way that continuity of activities and adoptability of the developed courses to benefit all ProSPER.Net members and beyond are ensured.
  - f) **Innovation and agility** – Given the increasing uncertainties and challenges in conducting and disseminating research activities and outputs under the COVID-19 pandemic, the proposed research shall demonstrate innovative and agile approaches to identifying research topics of emerging needs and facilitating the timely delivery of the research outputs.

## VI. Other Considerations

### 1. For proponents

- Proponents of completed ProSPER.Net joint research projects in the previous years are encouraged to submit new applications based on the outcomes of their completed joint research.
- The course topics in the proposal covering the intersecting aspects of the Paris Agreement may be designed based on the combination of the three ProSPER.Net thematic areas: Planet: Climate change; Prosperity: Circular economy; and People: Equity and inclusivity.

### 2. For successful applications

- The disbursement of the funding amount shall be divided into three stages: initial, mid-term, and final. The project team shall advance their own funding and reimbursement of funds shall take place only after formal conditions are met, according to the agreed terms and requirements stipulated in the contract to be prepared. Please note that UNU-IAS can only pay for expenditures occurred during the contract period. The Leading Institution of the project shall be responsible for project fund management.
- For projects that receive or require additional funding external to the amount provided by ProSPER.Net, the funding amount shall be reported in the Budget Sheet (**See 8. Finance and Cost Estimates**) and the interests of external donors shall be considered accordingly by the Secretariat.
- Approved joint projects must also author three brief articles for the ProSPER.Net bulletin, 1) to introduce the research project to the network, 2) to give a mid-term update on the project and what has been found, and 3) at the end of the project briefly communicating the results to the

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network and announcing other outputs.

- Mid-term and final reports are obligatory for ProSPER.Net joint projects, and both the mid-term and final reports are separate documents than the other required outputs. The templates for reporting can be found on the [ProSPER.Net website](#).
- If successful proposals are deemed apt for integration into the SPA curriculum, attractive mechanisms enabling the partner universities to confer joint diploma, recognize credit transfer system or develop co-teaching procedures, among others, will be considered upon deliberation of academic rules and regulations of the involved institutions.

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**References:**

- 1) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. September 2021. Problems, constraints, lessons learned and capacity-building needs in preparing national communications and biennial update reports. Retrieved from: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/tp2021\\_02.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/tp2021_02.pdf)
- 2) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. September 2021. Nationally determined contributions under the Paris – Synthesis Report by the Secretariat. Retrieved from: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021\\_08\\_adv\\_1.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_08_adv_1.pdf)
- 3) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. November 2021. COP26 The Glasgow Climate Pact. Retrieved from: <https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/COP26-Presidency-Outcomes-The-Climate-Pact.pdf>