

**Decree of the Rector n. 1179 of 17/11/2023**  
Competition for awarding 1 research grant at the University of Udine

**DISCLAIMER:**

The official and legally binding call for applications is in Italian only.  
This document cannot be used for legal purposes and is only meant to provide information in English on the call for applications (Decree of the Rector n. 1179 of 17/11/2023). Please refer to the official call published on: <https://www.uniud.it/it/albo-ufficiale>

Any change and integration will be made available on the above mentioned web page. Therefore, no personal written communication regarding the examination date and/or competition results shall be provided to applicants.

**Annex 1**

Competition Notice for the award of 1 research grant for carrying out research activities at the University of Udine on the following subject: “Identification of HERVs with prognostic and diagnostic value for preeclampsia” SSD: BIO/10 (principal investigator, Eros Di Giorgio).

Research fellowship financed with the resources of the research project PRIN 2022 PNRR, Prot. n. P2022THRT3, titled “Identification of HERVs with prognostic and diagnostic value for preeclampsia”. Public call No. 1409 of 14/09/2022 – PRIN 2022 PNRR M4C2 Inv. 1.1. CUP G53D23007630001.

**Art. 1**

A selection procedure is hereby announced for the award of 1 research grant at the University of Udine, as identified in Attachment A which constitutes an integral and substantial part of this call. The research grant is linked to the research project and is subject and conditioned upon the relative funding.

Specifically, the project is placed within the context of the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (i.e., PNRR) – Mission 4: Education and research, Component 2: From research to business, Investment 1.1: Fund for the National Research Programme (PNR) and Research Projects of Significant National Interest (PRIN), funded by the EU-Next GenerationEU. Project PRIN 2022 PNRR, Prot. n. P2022THRT3, titled “Identification of HERVs with prognostic and diagnostic value for preeclampsia”. CUP G53D23007630001.

The fellowship may be renewed, in compliance with Art. 22, Law No. 240 of 30 December 2010 (as in the text in force before the implementation of the Conversion Law of the D.L. 36/2022, L. 79/2022), Law No. 11 of 27 February 2015, and the current regulations of the University of Udine for awarding research grants, issued with the Rector’s Decree No. 182 of 31 March 2021. The renewal is subject to the scientific coordinator’s positive assessment of the researcher’s activities, an adequate scientific rationale, and a corresponding financial covering.

The activities pertaining to this research fellowship will be monitored for compliance with the PNRR’s Do No Significant Harm principle (hereinafter DNSH), that is, they will not cause significant harm to the environment.

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This call guarantees equal generational, gender and territorial opportunities.

The research findings resulting from the fellowship, as well as the related data, will be published in compliance with the Open Science and FAIR Data principles.

The research fellowship does not give rise to any right with regards to accessing University posts.

Any personal communication to candidates related to this selection will be sent exclusively to the email address indicated when registering for the selection, as mentioned in Art. 5.

### Art. 2

The research grant described in this competition announcement and the required qualifications to apply for the position are identified in Attachment A. The lack of the admission requirements leads to the automatic exclusion from the competition procedure.

Possession of a PhD or equivalent degree obtained abroad or, only for the interested areas, of a medical specialization accompanied by an adequate scientific production, constitutes a preferential qualification for awarding the research fellowship of this selection, if it has not been provided as a mandatory requirement.

For the only purpose of the admission to the competition, the Examining Board (Art. 7) shall assess the equivalence of the qualification obtained abroad, except for the evaluation of the medical specialization qualification to which Article 38 of the Legislative Decree 165/2001 and subsequent modifications and additions, and EU regulations on the matter, shall be applied.

The Examining Board will proceed to the evaluation of the qualification obtained abroad according to the documentation attached to the application form. The Examining Board may exclude the candidate if the submitted documentation does not provide sufficient information for the assessment. Therefore, applicants must enclose all the documentation in their possession relating to their qualification in order to provide the Examining Board with sufficient information for assessment.

Candidates holding a qualification issued by a **European Research Area country**, if successful, must submit, if not already attached to the application form one of the following options:

- Supplement Diploma in English issued by the competent University.
- CIMEA Certificate of comparability of the foreign qualification, issued by CIMEA (Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence) via the "diplome" service at <https://cimea.diplo-me.eu/udine/#/auth/login>

Candidates holding a qualification issued by a **non-European Research Area country**, if successful, must submit, if not already attached to the application form one of the following options:

- Declaration of the on-site value of the qualification and the certificate relating to the degree with examinations and grades. A certificate in a language other than Italian or English must be accompanied by an official translation into one of these languages (certified by the competent diplomatic-consular authority or certified by a court in Italy).
- CIMEA Certificate of comparability of the foreign qualification, issued by CIMEA (Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence) via the "diplome" service at <https://cimea.diplo-me.eu/udine/#/auth/login>

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If the Supplement Diploma or the statement/attestation of comparability are not available when signing the contract, the applicant must demonstrate that he/she has requested the documentation and submit it as soon as possible.

Any exclusion from the selection procedure due to lack of eligibility requirements, absence of required documents, failure to sign the selection application or submission of the selection application in a manner different from what is provided for in this call for applications will be communicated to applicants exclusively at the email address indicated in the application form.

### Art. 3

**The research grant referred to in this call for applications cannot be awarded:**

- a. to employees of Universities and the entities referred to in Article 22, section 1, of Italian Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010 (in the text prior to the reform introduced by Law no. 79 of 29 June 2022);
- b. to those who have already been awarded research grants pursuant to Italian Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010 (prior to the reform introduced by Law no. 79 of 29 June 2022) for the maximum period provided by law, even if not continuously, excluding the period in which the grant was used in conjunction with the doctorate, up to the legal term of the relative course;
- c. to those who have already benefited from research grants and fixed-term researcher contracts provided for, respectively, in Articles 22 and 24 of Italian Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010 (in the text prior to the reform introduced by Law no. 79 of 29 June 2022), for a total of 12 years, even if not consecutive;
- d. to anyone who has a degree of kinship or affinity, up to and including the fourth degree, with:
  - the Rector, the Director General or a member of the Board of Directors of the University of Udine;
  - the scientific supervisor or a professor/researcher belonging to the department or organisation hosting the research grant in question.

The research grant provided for in this call for applications cannot be combined:

- a) with scholarships of any kind, except for those granted by Italian or foreign institutions to supplement, by means of stays abroad, the fellow's training or research activities;
- b) with other research grants;
- c) with an employment relationship, even if part-time, without prejudice to the relevant provisions for employees of public administrations.

The grant awarded under this call for applications is also incompatible with simultaneous attendance at university degree courses, either Bachelors, specialistic or Masters, research Doctorates with scholarships and medical specializations, in Italy or abroad.

### Art. 4

Applicants must enclose with their application, under penalty of exclusion, the following documents:

- a) their professional scientific CV, highlighting the candidate's aptitude for carrying out and implementing the research project (Attachment A);
- b) their identity card, their passport or any other identification document<sup>1</sup>;
- c) (for candidates with a foreign qualification only) certification or self-certification of both the academic qualification required for the admission to the selection, and of the exams (with

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<sup>1</sup> Please be aware that the residence permit is not an identification document.

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evaluation) took during the period of study abroad, and of any other document that can be useful to the evaluation of the degree by the Examining Board.

Applicants can attach to the application, publications and any other certification considered useful to demonstrate the qualification based on the research program (Attachment A) and to certify any research activity accomplished at public or private institutes (indicating the starting and ending date and the duration).

The documents and qualifications mentioned above must be submitted in Italian or English. Those that are not as requested will not be evaluated. Documents originally written in a language other than Italian or English must come with a translation in Italian or English, that the candidate will do on its own responsibility. The translation can be an abstract concerning the thesis.

Italian and Community candidates wishing to submit qualifications referring to conditions and facts attested by Public Administrations must proceed exclusively with self-certification.

Non-EU citizens legally residing in Italy may self-certify only data that can be verified or certified by Italian public bodies. They may also use declarations in lieu when provided for by an international convention between Italy and the declarant's country of origin.

Non-EU citizens not residing in Italy cannot self-certify.

Only the qualifications possessed by the candidate on the date the application form is submitted and submitted in accordance with the procedures set out in Article 5 will be assessed.

Failure to submit mandatory documents provided for in this article will constitute grounds for exclusion from the selection.

### Art. 5

The submission of the applications for the present call starts on November 30, 2023 at 2:00 pm (Italian time) and ends on December 20, 2023 at 2:00 pm (Italian time).

The application to take part in the selection must be completed, under penalty of exclusion, using the appropriate online procedure, available at the link <https://pica.cineca.it/>

The procedure involves an applicant registration step, for those who do not already have an account, and then an application completion step.

Once completed, the online application must be signed in the manner described in the online procedure (manual signature with attached identity document or digital signature), under penalty of exclusion from selection. The application does not have to be signed if you access the above-mentioned online procedure using your SPID ID.

The qualifications referred to in Article 4 must be attached to the application in .pdf format. Individual .pdf files may not exceed 30MB.

The application for participation in the selection is automatically sent to the University of Udine with the definitive closing of the online procedure.

The University Administration:

- is not responsible if it is impossible to read the submitted documentation in electronic format due to damaged files;

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- shall not accept or take into consideration qualifications or documents received in paper form or by any means other than what is specified in this article.

Reference to documents or publications already submitted in connection with other competitions is not allowed.

The Administration is not responsible for any missing document or communication because of inaccurate indication of residence and/or address submitted by the candidate during the application. Also, the Administration is not responsible if the candidate has not communicated changes in this information, or has communicated them too late. The Administration is also not responsible for any postal or telegraphic problems not attributable to the Administration itself.

Applicants are advised not to wait until the last few days before the closing date to submit their application. The University accepts no responsibility for any malfunctions due to technical problems and/or overloading of the communication line and/or application systems.

### Art. 6

The selection procedure is held in accordance with the modality indicated in Attachment A.

The test will aim to assess the general preparation, experience and aptitude for research of the candidate. It will consist in the evaluation of the professional scientific curriculum, of the publications and qualifications presented, and of the interview, where foreseen.

### Art. 7

The Examining board for the competition is identified in Attachment A of the present competition announcement, of which it is an integral part.

At its first meeting, the Examining board shall appoint its President and Secretary, and establish the criteria and methods for evaluating the qualifications and the interview, where foreseen.

The results of the qualifications assessment must be disclosed to applicants during the interview, where foreseen.

The Examining board can award a maximum of 100 points (one hundred out of one hundred) to the selection.

At the end of the evaluation procedure, the Examining board shall formulate the general merit list based on the overall score of each candidate, and draw up the minutes of the whole competition procedure.

Based on the ranking list, the assignment is awarded to candidates who have obtained a minimum overall score of 70/100 (seventy out of one hundred).

The Examining board's judgement is final.

The ranking list will be made public exclusively through publication on the University's official website.

Applicants will not be notified of the outcome of the evaluation.

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Those who do not declare their acceptance of the research grant and do not present themselves at the research centre within the deadline communicated by the latter, even if not formally, shall lose the right to receive it. Exceptions to this term will only be granted in cases of documented force majeure.

### Art. 8

The research activity cannot be started before signing the contract defining the terms and conditions of the collaboration.

The activity covered by the research grant must have the following characteristics:

- a) it must be carried out as part of the research programme covered by the grant and not be a merely technical support to it;
- b) it must have a close connection with the realization of the research program for which the winner of the grant has been awarded the contract;
- c) it must be continuous and, in any case, temporally defined, not merely occasional, and in coordination with the overall activity of the University;
- d) it must be carried out autonomously, solely within the limits of the programme prepared by the programme supervisor, without predetermined working hours.

The researcher is required to submit a detailed written report on the work carried out and the results achieved, accompanied by the opinion of the scientific supervisor, to the reference organisation at the intervals set out in the contract. The researcher must also submit interim reports and timesheets, if requested by the reference organisation.

Either the fellow or the reference organisation may withdraw from the contract.

The reference organisation may terminate the contract not only in the cases referred to in Article 9, sections 2 and 3, of the "Internal rules for awarding research grants pursuant to law 240 of 30 December 2010" of the University of Udine, but also in the event the research project and therefore the financial coverage on which the research grant is based cease to exist.

### Art. 9

The following legal dispositions shall apply to the grant referred to in this call for applications:

- for tax matters, the provisions of Article 4 of Italian Law no. 476 of 13 August 1984, as subsequently amended and supplemented;
- for social security matters, the provisions of Article 2(26) *et seq.* of Italian Law no. 335 of 8 August 1995, as subsequently amended and supplemented;
- for mandatory maternity leave, the provisions of the Italian Ministerial Decree of 12 July 2007;
- with regard to sick leave, the provisions of Article 1(788) of Italian Law no. 296 of 27 December 2006 and subsequent amendments.

During the period of mandatory maternity leave, the allowance paid by INPS according to Art. 5 of the Italian Ministerial Decree of 12 July 2007 is supplemented by the University up to the full amount of the research grant.

The grant will be paid in monthly instalments.

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### Art. 10

The data collected as part of the procedure referred to in Art. 5 are necessary to properly manage the selection procedure, for any subsequent management of the research grant and for purposes related to managing services provided by the University. The University of Udine is the Data Controller. At any time, the data subject may request access, rectification and, depending on the University's institutional purposes, cancellation and restriction of processing or oppose the processing of their data. The data subject can always lodge a complaint with the Italian Data Protection Authority. The complete disclosure is available on the University of Udine website in the "Privacy" section, accessible from the home page [www.uniud.it](http://www.uniud.it) Direct Link: <https://www.uniud.it/it/it/pagine-speciali/guida/privacy>

### Art. 11

For all matters not expressly mentioned in this call for applications, refer to the regulations in force on the subject cited in the introduction and to the "Internal rules for awarding research grants pursuant to Italian Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010" of the University of Udine, issued by Rector's Decree no. 182 of 31 March 2021.

### Art. 12

The procedure supervisor is Dr Sandra Salvador, Head of the Research Services Area of the University of Udine.

The Responsible office at the University of Udine is "Area Servizi per la Ricerca - Ufficio Formazione per la Ricerca", via Mantica n. 31 - 33100 Udine, Italia.

To request information about the call for applications, please complete the following form available on the University of Udine website:

[https://helpdesk.uniud.it/SubmitSR.jsp?type=req&accountId=universityofudine&populateSR\\_id=42105](https://helpdesk.uniud.it/SubmitSR.jsp?type=req&accountId=universityofudine&populateSR_id=42105)

## Attachment A

### Responsabile scientifico della ricerca / Principal investigator:

Nome e cognome / Name and surname: Eros Di Giorgio  
Qualifica / Position: Ricercatore a tempo determinato / Researcher  
Dipartimento / Department: Area Medica (DAME) / Medicine  
Area MIUR / Research field: 05 - Scienze Biologiche  
Settore concorsuale e Settore scientifico disciplinare / Scientific sector: 05/E1 – BIO/10 (Biochimica)

### Titolo dell'assegno di ricerca / Topic of the research fellowship "assegno di ricerca":

*I bandi sono consultabili dal sito dell'Ateneo, del MUR e di Euraxess / The calls are available on the University, MUR and Euraxess websites*

#### Testo in italiano:

Identificazione di HERVs con valore diagnostico e prognostico di preeclampsia.

#### Text in English:

Identification of HERVs with prognostic and diagnostic value for preeclampsia.

### Obiettivi previsti e risultati attesi del programma di ricerca in cui si colloca l'attività dell'assegnista di ricerca / Foreseen objectives and results of the research programme performed by the research fellow "assegnista di ricerca":

*I bandi sono consultabili dal sito dell'Ateneo, del MUR e di Euraxess / The calls are available on the University, MUR and Euraxess websites*

#### Testo in italiano:

La preeclampsia (PE) è una delle principali cause di morbidità materna e perinatale in tutto il mondo e può portare a complicazioni che vanno dall'ictus materno alla limitazione della crescita fetale, alla prematurità e alla nascita di feti morti. L'ampia ricerca su questo argomento negli ultimi decenni ha dimostrato che la PE è una sindrome con notevole eterogeneità nei suoi fenotipi. Ecco perché gli approcci terapeutici globali non funzionano e le linee guida internazionali sostengono vi sia la necessità di terapie su misura per i singoli fenotipi. L'ischemia utero-placentare è uno dei principali meccanismi coinvolti nella patogenesi di questa sindrome. Tuttavia, ciò che determina tale placentazione difettosa non è attualmente completamente compreso. Pertanto, l'obiettivo principale di questo progetto è quello di approfondire l'eziologia dell'ischemia utero-placentare alla base della PE.

Due eventi chiave controllano la placentazione emcoriale: la fusione dei citotrofoblasti (CTB) nei sinciziotrofoblasti (STB) e l'infiltrazione della decidua, dell'endometrio e del miometrio materni da parte dei trofoblasti extravillosi (EVT). È interessante notare che la sincitizzazione è controllata dalla de-repressione della sincitina-1 (ERV-W1) e della sincitina-2 (ERV-FRDE1), due geni dell'involucro di origine retrovirale che sono stati cooptati per la placentazione e sono repressi nelle placente PE. Meccanismi epigenetici simili a quelli che controllano il differenziamento delle cellule somatiche controllano l'espressione di diverse classi di retrovirus endogeni umani (HERV). Gli ERVs sono sequenze provirali acquisite dalla linea germinale dei primati durante l'evoluzione, che rappresentano l'8% del nostro DNA. In particolare, ipotizziamo che la disregolazione di un pannello di HERV caratterizzi la PE. Pertanto, qui miriamo a identificare questo pannello di HERV con valore prognostico e diagnostico per la PE.

Per raggiungere questo obiettivo intendiamo: a) rianalizzare il dataset POP (Rosie Hospital, Cambridge) di placente normali e PE e identificare gli ERV più deregolati nei campioni patologici; b)



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rializzare il set di dati del Lucile Packard Children's Hospital (Stanford) di Stanford di RNA liberi circolanti (cfRNA) ottenuti dal sangue di madri normotese e preeclampliche per ripescare i trascritti di HERV deregolati in campioni patologici e che possono costituire la base per esecuzione di un test diagnostico di biopsia liquida; c) confermare i risultati identificati con presunto valore prognostico e diagnostico in una corte di pazienti italiani reclutati ad hoc per questo progetto mediante analisi di RNA-seq e cfRNA; d) mettere in coltura organoidi placentari umani da placentate sane e PE per valutare in esperimenti di perdita di funzione e guadagno di funzione le proprietà fusogeniche e non fusogeniche degli ERV selezionati; e) preparare un test diagnostico e prognostico per la PE basato sulla valutazione mediante qPCR di un pannello consolidato di trascritti ERV.

Pertanto, questo progetto mira a studiare l'eziopatogenesi della PE e a trovare nuovi metodi per la diagnosi e la prevenzione della PE, al fine di progettare e testare interventi fenotipo-specifici.

L'assegnista sarà coinvolto/a in:

- generazione e caratterizzazione di organoidi placentari;
- utilizzo e messa a punto della tecnologia CRISPR/Cas13 per il rilevamento degli ERV;
- valutazione dello stato metabolico del tessuto placentare caratterizzato da FGR o PE;
- redazione di un manoscritto.

Verranno valutati i titoli (diplomi di laurea con votazione finale, pubblicazioni scientifiche, attività di ricerca su temi analoghi a quelli proposti).

### Text in English:

Preeclampsia (PE) is a major cause of maternal and perinatal morbidity worldwide, potentially leading to complications ranging from maternal stroke to fetal growth restriction, prematurity, and stillbirth. The extensive research on this topic over the last decades has shown that PE is a syndrome with considerable heterogeneity in its phenotypes. That's why global therapeutic approaches do not work and experts now advocate for therapies tailored for the individual phenotypes. Utero-placental ischemia is one of the principal mechanisms involved in the pathogenesis of this syndrome. However, what determines such defective placentation is currently not completely understood. Therefore, the main objective of this project is to get insight into the etiology of utero-placental ischemia in PE.

Two key events control hemochorial placentation: the fusion of cytotrophoblasts (CTBs) into syncytiotrophoblasts (STBs) and the infiltration of the decidua and maternal endometrium and myometrium by extravillous trophoblasts (EVTs). Interestingly, syncytization is controlled by the de-repression of syncytin-1 (ERV-W1) and syncytin-2 (ERV-FRDE1), two envelope genes of retroviral origin that have been coopted for placentation, and are repressed in PE placentas. As similar epigenetic mechanisms control the expression of different classes of Human Endogenous Retroviruses (HERVs), proviral sequences acquired by the primate germ line along evolution, which accounts for the 8% of our DNA. Particularly, we hypothesize that the dysregulation of a panel of HERVs characterizes PE. Therefore, here we aim to identify this panel of HERVs with prognostic and diagnostic value for PE.

To achieve this goal we plan to: a) re-analyze POP dataset (Rosie Hospital, Cambridge) of normal and PE placentas and identify the most de-regulated ERV hits in pathological samples; b) re-analyze Stanford's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital (Stanford) dataset of circulating cell-free RNAs (cfRNAs) obtained from the blood of normotensive and preeclamptic mothers to fish out HERV transcripts de-regulated in pathological samples and which can form the basis for performing a liquid biopsy diagnostic test; c) confirm the hits identified with putative prognostic and diagnostic value in an Italian patient cohort recruited ad hoc for this grant by means of RNA-seq and cfRNAs analysis; d) establish human placental organoids from healthy and PE placentas to evaluate in loss-of-function and gain-of-function experiments the fusogenic and non-fusogenic properties of the selected ERV candidates; e)

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prepare a PE diagnostic and prognostic test based on the evaluation by means of qPCR of a well-established panel of ERV transcripts.

Hence, this project aims to investigate the etiopathogenesis of PE and to find new methods for diagnosis and prediction of PE, in order to design and test phenotype-specific interventions.

The research fellow will be involved in:

- a) generation and characterization of placental organoids;
- b) establishment of CRISPR/Cas13 technology for the detection of ERVs;
- c) evaluation of the metabolic status of Placental tissue characterized by FGR or PE;
- d) drafting a manuscript.

Qualifications will be evaluated (degree diplomas with final grade, scientific publications, research activities on topics similar to those proposed).

**Struttura dell'Università di Udine presso la quale verrà sviluppata l'attività di ricerca / Department or other structure of the University of Udine where research activities will be carried out:**

Dipartimento di Area Medica (DAME) / Department of Medicine

**Importo dell'assegno di ricerca (al lordo oneri carico assegnista) / Total grant gross for the research fellowship:**

€ 35.669,89

**Durata dell'assegno di ricerca / Duration of the research fellowship "assegno di ricerca":**

21 mesi / months

**Finanziamento / Financed by:**

La copertura finanziaria graverà sul progetto PRIN 2022 PNRR - "Identification of HERVs with prognostic and diagnostic value for preeclampsia"; Prot. n. P2022THRT3. Avviso pubblico n. 1409 del 14/09/2022. Decreto di finanziamento n. 1369 del 01/09/2023 - Settore LS7. Codice CUP G53D23007630001. Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca (Finanziato dall'Unione Europea, NextGenerationEU).

**Requisiti di ammissione / Minimum qualifications necessary:**

- Possesso di un diploma di laurea vecchio ordinamento (ante decreto 3 novembre 1999 n. 509) o di laurea specialistica/magistrale (ex decreto 3 novembre 1999 n. 509 e decreto 22 ottobre 2004 n. 270) o titolo equivalente conseguito all'estero;
- possesso di un curriculum scientifico professionale idoneo allo svolgimento dell'attività di ricerca contemplata.
- University degree obtained before Decree n. 509 of 3 November 1999 or specialistic/Master's degree (post decree n. 509 of 3 November 1999 and decree n. 270 of 22 October 2004) or equivalent degree obtained abroad;
- professional scientific curriculum suitable for the research activity above mentioned.

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### Procedura selettiva / Competition procedure:

Valutazione per soli titoli / Assessment of qualifications only

### Commissione giudicatrice / Examining Board:

Nome e Cognome	Qualifica	SSD	Università
<b>Membri Effettivi / Permanent members</b>			
Eros Di Giorgio	RTD	BIO/10	Università degli Studi di Udine
Valentina Rapozzi	PA	BIO/10	Università degli Studi di Udine
Giovanna Lippe	PO	BIO/10	Università degli Studi di Udine
<b>Membri Supplenti / Temporary members</b>			
Marina Comelli	RU	BIO/10	Università degli Studi di Udine
Barbara Skerlavaj	RU	BIO/10	Università degli Studi di Udine