

Notice of the Call¹

PhD Studentships - BIODIV_2023_03 (New Deadline)

The Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources - Network in Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology (CIBIO-InBIO) is opening a Call for 3 (three) PhD studentship grant in Biological Sciences, complying with the provisions of the FCT Regulation for Studentships and Fellowships (RBI) and the Research Fellowship Holder Statute (EBI).

The scholarship will be funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT) under the Financing Collaboration Protocol of the Multiannual Plan for Research Scholarships for PhD Students, signed between FCT and the R&D Unit, Network in Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology (InBIO), No. 50027

1. APPLICATION

The Call is open from July 7, 2023 until 05:00pm of August 13, 2023.

Applications, and all the supporting documents described in this Notice, must be submitted online using the application form available at <https://www.biodiv.pt/en/events/call-for-phd-studentships-biodiv-2023-03/>

Each applicant can only submit one application; submission of more than one application will result in the rejection of all applications.

False declarations or acts of plagiarism by applicants will lead to the exclusion of the application without prejudice of other corrective and punitive disciplinary measures.

2. TYPE AND DURATION OF STUDENTSHIPS

Aiming to support advanced training, PhD studentships will be granted to applicants fulfilling all the requirements necessary to integrate a study cycle that allows to obtain a PhD degree in Portugal, and that wish to develop research work that allows obtaining that degree. The research activities will be developed in CIBIO-InBIO, which will be the host institutions of the grantee, without prejudice to the work that may be carried out in collaboration with other institutions.

The research activities leading to obtaining the doctoral academic degree will be conducted within the scope of the Doctoral Programme in Biodiversity, Genetics and Evolution of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto.

The work plan will be partially developed in a Portuguese national institution (mixed grant). Being a mixed grant, the period spent in the foreign institution cannot exceed 24 months.

As a rule, the duration of PhD studentships is annual, renewable up to 48 months.

3. RECIPIENTS

PhD studentships are aimed at applicants enrolled or that comply with the requirements to enroll at the Doctoral Programme in Biodiversity, Genetics and Evolution of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto and who wish to carry out research at Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources - Network in Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology (CIBIO-InBIO) or others associated institutions.

¹ Please note that the English translations of the Call do not override the original Portuguese version (Aviso de Abertura do Concurso para Atribuição de Bolsa de Investigação para Doutoramento – BIODIV_2023_03)

4. ADMISSIBILITY

4.1 Applicants' admissibility requirements

The following citizens may apply to this call:

- National citizens or citizens from other member-states of the European Union;
- Third-party states citizens;
- Stateless individuals;
- Citizens holding a political refugee status.

To apply for the PhD studentship it is necessary:

- To hold a Bachelor or Master degree in Biological Sciences or related areas;
- To be resident in Portugal at the start of the work plan, if the proposed work plan for the scholarship includes a period in foreign institutions (mixed grant), which is mandatory for Portuguese national citizens and for foreign citizens.
- Not to have benefited from a PhD or a PhD in industry studentship directly funded by FCT, regardless of its duration.
- Not to hold a PhD degree.

4.2 Application's admissibility requirements

It is mandatory, under penalty of non-admissibility, to include the following in the application:

1. Information about ID card/ passport;
2. Curriculum Vitae (CV);
3. Academic degree certificates, indicating the final grade and, if possible, the final classification of the disciplines completed or, alternatively, a declaration of honour from the candidate stating that concludes the degree of bachelor or master by the end of the application deadline;
4. For foreign academic degrees it is mandatory to submit the recognition of such degrees and the conversion of the respective final grade to the Portuguese grading scale, or, alternatively, a declaration of honour from the candidate stating that concludes the degree recognition by the end of the application deadline;
5. Recommendation letters (two);
6. Motivation letter (maximum one page, including a brief description of a potential project);
7. To present/prepare and submit the application and all related documents, including the recommendation letters and the most representative document of the applicant's scientific/professional path, in Portuguese or in English.

Regarding the admissibility criteria described above, note that:

- In the case of academic degrees awarded by foreign higher education institutions, and in order to guarantee the application of the principle of equal treatment to applicants holding foreign and national academic degrees, it is mandatory to recognize those degrees and to convert the respective final classification into the Portuguese classification scale.

The recognition of foreign degrees and diplomas as well as the conversion of the final classification into the Portuguese classification scale may be requested at any public higher education institution, or at the Direção Geral do Ensino superior (DGES, only in the case of automatic recognition). Regarding this matter, we suggest that you consult the DGES portal at the following address: <http://www.dges.gov.pt>.

- Only candidates who have completed the cycle of studies leading to a bachelor's or master's degree

by the application deadline will be admitted. In case candidates do not yet have the certificate of degree completion, a declaration of honor from the candidates that they have completed the necessary qualifications for the competition by the application deadline will be accepted. The awarding of the scholarship is subject to the presentation, at the contracting stage, of the proof of academic qualifications.

5. WORK PLAN AND SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISION

The fellows will work under the umbrella of Biopolis' Gulf of Guinea Research Program (GGRP), a broad initiative designed to advance ecology, evolutionary biology, and conservation in the region from 2023-2030. The geographic scope of the GGRP includes island and land systems in the Gulf of Guinea region, including: Mt. Cameroon & region; Bioko, Equatorial Guinea (EG); Príncipe Island; São Tomé Island; Annobón, EG; Loango National Park, Gabon; Mainland EG; and Cabinda, Angola

The following objectives, among others, are central to the GGRP:

- Catalogue the ecological and genetic biodiversity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems in the Gulf of Guinea
- Develop a Marine & terrestrial DNA barcode library for the Gulf of Guinea
- Design and perform biodiversity surveys throughout the Gulf of Guinea
- Contribute to the global initiative of 30% of marine and land area protected by 2030 (AKA 30x30).
- Understand long-term patterns in biotic and abiotic processes that affect biodiversity in the Gulf of Guinea
- Understand the critical ecological and evolutionary processes that shape biodiversity in the Gulf of Guinea
- Understand the ecology and distribution of elephants, chimpanzees, gorillas, island endemics and charismatic species.
- Understand the services that nature provides in agricultural systems and beyond
- Understand the effect of invasive species on Gulf of Guinea Ecosystems
- Contribute to the long-term sustainability of biological conservation through education and incorporation of local knowledge.

Student research projects will ideally be synergistic with the areas of expertise of BIOPOLI-CIBIO/InBIO researchers as well as with species and systems on which the GGRP's biodiversity surveys will focus; examples include (but are not limited to): seabirds, manatees, sea turtles, seagrass meadows, marine forests of macroalgae, elephants, chimps, gorillas, vulnerable primates, invasive plants in island systems, invertebrates, landbirds (including bird ringing), bats and freshwater turtles.

Research topics outlined in the motivation letter will be considered (i.e., that the prospective student is thinking/writing critically) but are not binding.

The work plan for this project will be highly dependent on the thesis topic chosen from under the umbrella of the GGRP; this will include:

- Extensive fieldwork at one or more of the GGRP's focal locations;
- Data analysis;

- Writing scientific articles.

The PhD studentship will be supervised or co-supervised by researchers from BIOPOLIS-CIBIO/InBIO, with co-supervision from other top-level foreign universities or other research institutions encouraged.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The assessment takes into account the candidate's merit and motivation. Applications considered admissible will be evaluated following a two-step process. First, all the candidates will be scored on a scale of zero (0 minimum rating) to one hundred (100 maximum rating) in each of the following evaluation criteria:

- **Criterion A1** - Relevance of previous experience, including proven field work experience, particularly in the tropics, on any of the main topics covered by GGRP, as well as experience in data analysis and scientific writing, among others. Proven experience in laboratory work in the field of molecular biology will also be positively evaluated, with a weight of 50%;
- **Criterion B1** - Professional career (CV analysis, which reflects the scientific career, research activities, publications, and relevant experience in activities covered by the thesis topic), with a weight of 25%;
- **Criterion C1** - Letter of motivation (1 pg max), including a brief description of the intended project (non-binding), with a weight of 25%.

For decision on moving on to the 2nd evaluation phase, candidates will be ranked according to the weighted average of the classification obtained in each of the three criteria, translated by the following formula:

$$\text{Classification} = (0.5 \times A1) + (0.25 \times B1) + (0.25 \times C1)$$

For the purposes of breaking the tie, candidates will be ranked based on the classifications given to each of the evaluation criteria in the following order of precedence: criterion A1, criterion C1 and criterion B1.

The second step will involve a scoring process for candidates with a score above 80, considering the following evaluation criteria:

- **Criterion A2** - Relevance of previous experience, including proven field work experience, particularly in the tropics, on any of the main topics covered by GGRP, as well as experience in data analysis and scientific writing, among others. Proven experience in laboratory work in the field of molecular biology will also be positively evaluated, with a weight of 50%;
- **Criterion B2** - Letter of motivation (1 pg max), including a brief description of the intended project (non-binding), with a weight of 30%.
- **Criterion C2** – Interview, involving questions related to the following topics: motivation, scientific reasoning, soft skills and communication ability, with a weight of 20%.

For the purposes of deciding on conceding the scholarship, candidates will be ranked according to the weighted average of the classification obtained in each of the three criteria, translated by the following formula:

$$\text{Final Classification} = (0.5 \times A2) + (0.3 \times B2) + (0.2 \times C2)$$

For the purposes of breaking the tie, candidates will be ranked based on the classifications given to each of the evaluation criteria in the following order of precedence: criterion C2, criterion B2 and criterion A2.

Important warning for candidates with degrees issued by foreign higher education institutions:

- Candidates with diplomas issued by foreign higher education institutions may apply and will be evaluated using the same criteria as candidates with diplomas issued by Portuguese institutions, provided that they present, in their application, proof of recognition of academic degrees and conversion of final classification for the Portuguese classification scale under the terms of the applicable legislation.
- In any case, scholarship agreements with candidates with diplomas issued by foreign institutions will only be concluded upon presentation of proof of recognition of academic degrees and conversion of the final classification, as indicated above.

Applicants whose application is graded with a final grade of less than 70 are not eligible for a scholarship.

7. EVALUATION

Composition of the Evaluation Panel:

- Coordinator: Nuno Ferrand, President of the Board of Associação BIOPOLIS and Director Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos da Universidade do Porto (CIBIO-InBIO);
- 1st Member: Pedro Beja, Executive Vice-President of Associação BIOPOLIS and researcher of Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos da Universidade do Porto (CIBIO-InBIO);
- 2nd Member: Luke L. Powell, Principal Researcher no Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos da Universidade do Porto (CIBIO-InBIO);
- 1st Substitute Member Martim Melo, researcher of Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos da Universidade do Porto (CIBIO-InBIO);
- 2nd Substitute Member: Fernando Sequeira, researcher of Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos da Universidade do Porto (CIBIO-InBIO)

The evaluation panel will analyse applications considering the evaluation criteria disclosed in the Notice of the Call, considering all the appreciation elements. All panel members, including the coordinator, make a commitment to respect a set of responsibilities essential to the evaluation process, such as the duties of impartiality, declaration of any potential conflict of interest, and confidentiality.

During all moments of the evaluation process, confidentiality is fully protected and ensured in order to guarantee the independence of all statements. Panel members, including the coordinator, cannot be supervisor or co-supervisors of candidates with applications submitted to the call. For each application, a final evaluation form will be produced by the panel, in which the arguments that led to the ratings attributed to each of the evaluation criteria will be present in a clear, coherent and

consistent manner. The minutes of the meeting are the responsibility of all evaluation panel and must include the following information:

- Name and affiliation of all members of the evaluation panel;
- Identification of all excluded applications and respective grounds, if applicable;
- Methodology adopted by the panel for each particular cases, if applicable;
- Final Evaluation Sheets for each candidate;
- Provisional list of classification and ranking of candidates, in descending order of the final classification, of all applications evaluated by the panel;
- Conflict of interest statements by all panel members
- Possible delegations of votes and powers due to justified absence, if applicable.

8. RESULTS DISCLOSURE

The results of the evaluation are communicated via e-mail to the e-mail address indicated in the application form.

9. DEADLINES AND PROCEDURES FOR PRELIMINARY HEARING, CLAIMS AND APPEALS

Once the provisional ranked list of the evaluation results has been communicated, applicants who have an unfavorable provisional decision may use their rights to dispute it during the preliminary hearing phase, which takes place within 10 working days, according to Articles no. 121 and following of the Administrative Procedure Code (CPA). The final decision will be disclosed after the analysis of applicants' arguments presented in the preliminary hearing. Final decision can be claimed within 15 working days or, alternatively, appealed within 30 working days, after the communication of the final results, respectively.

10. REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTSHIP GRANTING

Os contratos de bolsa de investigação são celebrados diretamente com a FCT.

Os seguintes documentos terão de ser obrigatoriamente remetidos, aquando da eventual concessão da bolsa, para efeitos da sua contratualização:

- a) Copy of the documents of personal identification, tax number and, if applicable, social security;
- b) Copy of the academic degree certificates;
- c) In case of foreign academic degree it is mandatory to submit the recognition of master degree and the conversion of the respective final grade to the Portuguese grading scale;
- d) Work plan;
- e) Document proving the acceptance and registration in the PhD programme in Biodiversity, Genetics
- f) Supervisor(s) statement declaring willing to coordinate the work plan, as established in Article no. 5-A of the Statute for Research Fellowships (template will be made available by FCT);
- g) Institutional document supporting the applicant, issued by the institution(s) where the work plan will be carried out, guaranteeing the necessary conditions to its successful development, as well as the fulfilment of the duties established in Article no. 13 of the Research Fellowship Holder Statute (template will be made available by FCT);
- h) Updated document proving compliance with the regime of exclusive dedication (draft of declaration to be made available by FCT)

Documento atualizado comprovativo do cumprimento do regime de dedicação exclusiva (minuta da declaração a disponibilizar pela FCT);

The studentship granting is still dependent on:

- The fulfilment of all the requirements listed in this Notice of the Call;
- The results of scientific evaluation;
- The absence of unjustified non-compliance of the fellowship holder during previous directly or indirectly FCT funded fellowships;
- FCT available budget.

The lack of any of the necessary documents to complete the contracting procedure implies the expiration of the studentship granting and conclusion of the process; applicants have up to 6 months after the disclosure of the provisional granting to present all of the listed documents.

11. FUNDING

Studentships payment will start after returning the signed contract to FCT, which should happen within the 15 working days after its delivery. The studentships granted in this call will be financed by FCT using the State Budget fund and, whenever eligible, using the European Social Fund (ESF), under the programme “Programa Demografia, Qualificações e Inclusão (PDQI)”, according to the respective requirements.

12. STUDENTSHIP ALLOWANCE

A monthly maintenance allowance is granted, in accordance with the table in Annex I of the RBI https://www.fct.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Tabela-de-Valores-SMM_2023.pdf).

The studentship may also include additional allowances, according to RBI’s Article no. 18 and the values indicated in its Annex II.

All the studentship holders have a personal accident insurance related to the research activities, which FCT will support.

All studentship holders who are not beneficiaries of any social protection regime can use the right to social security through the voluntary social insurance regime, under the terms of the Contributory Scheme of the Social Security System. FCT will ensure the charges resulting from contributions under the terms and with the limits provided in Article no. 10 of the EBI.

13. PAYMENT OF STUDENTSHIP ALLOWANCE

Payments due to the studentship holder are made by bank transfer to the respective indicated account. The monthly maintenance allowance is paid on the first working day of each month. Registration, enrolment or tuition fees components are pay by FCT directly to the institution.

14. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PHD STUDENTSHIP RENEWAL

The renewal of the studentship always depends on applicant’s submission, within 60 working days prior to the renewal start date, of the following documents:

- a) Declaration issued by the supervisor(s) and by the host institution(s) attesting the work plan development and the evaluation of the respective activities;
- b) Document proving compliance with the exclusive dedication regime;

c) Declaration demonstrating the enrolment renewal in the study cycle leading to the doctoral degree.

15. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY OF THE GRANTED FUNDING

All the R&D activities carried out by the grantee, directly or indirectly financed by the studentship, namely communications, publications and scientific creations, as well as thesis, must include the reference to FCT and European Social Fund (ESF) financing by the operational programme: “*Programa Demografia, Qualificações e Inclusão*” (PDQI).

Insignia of FCT, MCTES, ESF and EU must therefore be included in the documents referring to these actions, according to the graphic rules of each operational programme. The disclosure of research results funded according to the RBI provisions must comply with the open access guidelines, publications and other research results in accordance with FCT rules. For all the studentships, in particular in case of European funded actions, namely the ESF, may be performed monitoring and controlling actions by national or European entities according to the applicable legislation. Grantees must therefore collaborate and provide all the required information, including answering to surveys and evaluation studies in this area, even though the studentship might have already ceased.

16. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL ACCESS POLICY

FCT promotes a policy of non-discrimination and equal access, thus no applicant may be privileged, benefited, damaged, or deprived of any right or exempted from any duty. This includes ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family situation, economic situation, education, origin or social condition, genetic heritage, reduced work capacity, disability, chronic disease, nationality, ethnicity or race, land of origin, language, religion, political or ideological beliefs or trade union affiliation.

17. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

The present call is governed by this Notice of the Call, the FCT Regulation of Research Fellowships, approved by the Regulation no. 950/2019, published in the Series II of the DR, of 16th December, by the Research Fellowship Holder Statute, approved by the Law no. 40/2004, of 18th of August, in its current version, and by other applicable national and European legislation.