

Notice of the Call for PhD Studentships EBM-FCT-2026-02

The **Mértola Biological Station Association (EBM)** is opening a **Call for 2 (two) research grants**, hereinafter referred to as PhD Studentships, in the areas of Biological Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Agronomy, Forestry Engineering, Environment, Social Sciences, Archaeology, or in related areas, 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 Collaboration Protocol for Financing the Multiannual Plan for Research Scholarships for PhD Students, signed between FCT and the R&D Unit, Mértola Biological Station Association, N° 14442.

1. APPLICATION

The Call is open **from October 1 (01-10-2026) to November 16 (16-11-2026), 2026, until 23:59 (Lisbon time)**. Applications, and all the supporting documents described in this Notice of the Call, must be submitted online using the application form available at: <https://forms.gle/NFm73JR535QPzcVz8>

Each candidate may submit only one application, otherwise all applications submitted will be cancelled. False declarations or acts of plagiarism by applicants will lead to the cancellation of the application without prejudice of other corrective and punitive disciplinary measures.

2. TYPE AND DURATION OF STUDENTSHIPS

The PhD studentships aim to fund research activities carried out by the grantee leading to the award of a doctoral degree by Portuguese universities.

The research activities leading to a doctoral degree will be developed at the Mértola Biological Station Association, which will be the host institution of the grantees, without prejudice to the work that may be carried out in collaboration with other national and international institutions. The research activities leading to a doctoral degree for the selected scholarship holders must be properly framed within the activity plan and strategy of EBM - Mértola Biological Station Association (<https://ebmertola.pt/>) and must be developed under the scope of Doctoral Programmes in Portuguese Universities.

The working plan can take place in full or in part at a national institution (studentship in the country or mixed studentship, respectively).

As a rule, the duration of the studentships is annual, renewable up to a maximum of four years (48 months), and no studentship can be awarded for a period of less than 3 consecutive months. In the case of a mixed studentship, the period of the work plan that takes place in a foreign institution cannot exceed 24 months.

3. RECIPIENTS OF THE STUDENTSHIPS

PhD Studentships are intended for candidates enrolled or those who meet the necessary conditions to enroll in a Doctoral Programme at a Portuguese University and who intend to carry out research activities leading to a PhD degree at the Mértola Biological Station Association, or at associated host institutions, including international ones in the case of a mixed studentship.

4. ADMISSIBILITY

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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 state citizens;
- Stateless individuals;
- Citizens holding a political refugee status.

To apply for the PhD studentship it is necessary:

- To hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Biological Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Agronomy, Forestry Engineering, Environment, Social Sciences, Landscape Architecture, Archaeology, or in related areas. Alternatively, to have a curriculum vitae of recognised merit in one of the mentioned areas.
- To reside in Portugal permanently and habitually at the start date of the work plan period abroad, if the proposed work plan associated with the studentship is partially carried out in foreign institutions (mixed studentships); this requirement applies to both national and foreign citizens.
- Not have benefited from a PhD or a PhD in industry studentship directly funded by FCT, regardless of its duration.
- Not holding a PhD degree

4.2 Application's admissibility requirements

4.2.1 Under penalty of non-admissibility to the Call, it is mandatory to attach the following documents to the application:

- Applicant's Curriculum Vitae**, including explicit information on the academic, scientific, and professional background properly structured and tailored to sub-criteria A and B of the evaluation criteria in section 6.1;
- Project/work proposal**, with a maximum of three pages and up to 2000 words, containing the following information: brief background, research hypotheses, objectives, tasks, timeline, doctoral programme where the degree will be obtained, partner institutions, potential supervisory team, type of studentship (in the country or mixed), and potential funding sources for the execution of the works;
- Support/reference letter**, at least one dated and signed letter. The document must be issued specifically for the present application and contain the complete identification of the subscriber (names, positions, and institutional affiliations), and may declare availability to supervise the candidate;
- Motivation letter**, justifying the indicated doctoral programme and explaining the interest in developing the presented working plan within the domains of EBM - Mértola Biological Station, as well as evidencing the interest in the region;
- Identification document elements** (ID Card/Citizen Card/Passport);
- Degree certificates for the academic degrees held**, mandatorily specifying the final classification and, if possible, the classifications obtained in all subjects completed, or, alternatively, a declaration of honour from the candidate stating they have concluded the Bachelor's or Master's degree by the end of the application deadline;

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G. Record of recognition of academic degrees awarded by foreign higher education institutions and record of the conversion of the respective final classification to the Portuguese grading scale, or, alternatively, a declaration of honour from the candidate stating they have obtained the recognition of the foreign degree equivalent to a Bachelor's or Master's by the end of the application deadline:

4.2.2 Write the application and all associated documents, namely those required in the previous point (4.2.1) from A to D, **in English or Portuguese**. Failure to comply with this condition will lead to the exclusion of the application.

4.2.3 Regarding the admissibility requirements mentioned above, the following should be noted:

- 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, it is suggested to 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 honour from the candidates stating that they have completed the necessary qualifications for the call by the application deadline will be accepted. The granting of the studentship is subject to the presentation, at the contracting stage, of proof of academic qualifications.

5. WORK PLAN AND SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISION

The detailed doctoral project, with working plan, supervisory team, host institutions and doctoral degree awarding institution, will be defined later with the Board of the Mértola Biological Station and will begin in the first quarter of 2027.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND BONUSES

6.1 Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation considers the candidate's merit and their scientific career. Applications considered admissible will be scored on a scale of 0 to 100 for each of the following evaluation criteria:

- **Criterion A - Academic Background** (reflecting the grades of the academic degrees and the overall academic curriculum), with a weight of **30%**;
- **Criterion B - Scientific and Professional Career** (reflecting scientific production, professional experience, participation in research projects, and communications in the thematic area of application), with a weight of **30%**;
- **Criterion C - Project/work proposal** (with a special focus on the analysis of the alignment with the theme, objectives, main tasks, and scientific support), with a weight of **25%**;
- **Criterion D – Motivation Letter** (based on clarity, reasoning, and interest in carrying out their research proposal at EBM), with a weight of **15%**;

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To proceed to the second evaluation phase, candidates will be ranked based on the weighted average of the scores obtained in each of the criteria according to the following formula:

$$\text{1st Phase Classification} = (0,3 \times A) + (0,3 \times B) + (0,25 \times C) + (0,15 \times D)$$

Candidates with a classification equal to or higher than 70% (seventy), up to a limit of 10 candidates, will advance to the second evaluation phase. For tie-breaking purposes, the ranking of candidates will be based on the scores assigned to each evaluation criterion in the following order of precedence: Criterion C, Criterion D, Criterion A, Criterion B.

In the second evaluation phase, candidates will be assessed considering the following evaluation criteria:

- **Criterion E - Interview**, involving questions related to the following topics: motivation, scientific reasoning, demonstration of knowledge regarding the presented work proposal, soft skills, and communication capacity, with a weight of **30%**
- **Criterion F - Classification obtained in the 1st evaluation phase**, with a weight of **70%**

For the decision on granting the studentship, candidates will be ranked according to the weighted average of the classification obtained, per theme, as expressed by the following formula:

$$\text{Final Classification (FC)} = (0,3 \times E) + (0,7 \times F)$$

For tie-breaking purposes, the final ranking of candidates will be based on the scores assigned to each of the evaluation criteria in the following order of precedence: Criterion E and Criterion F.

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 the final classification to the Portuguese classification scale under the terms of the applicable legislation.
- Candidates with recognized foreign diplomas who do not present proof of conversion of the final classification to the Portuguese classification scale will be evaluated with the minimum classification (50 out of 100 points) in criterion (A).
- In any case, scholarship contracts 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.

Candidates whose application is evaluated with a final score of **less than 70 are not eligible for a scholarship.**

7. EVALUATION PANEL

The evaluation panel is composed of the following members:

- Panel Coordinator: Professor Paulo Célio Alves, Full Professor at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto and President of EBM - Mértola Biological Station Association;
- 1st Member: Professor Helena Margarida Nunes Pereira, Emeritus Full Professor at the School of

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- Agriculture (ISA), University of Lisbon;
- 2nd Member: Professor António Mira, Full Professor at the Department of Biology of the University of Évora;
 - 1st Alternate Member: Professor Cristina Maria Branquinho Fernandes, Full Professor at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon.
 - 2nd Alternate Member: Professor Jeremy Searle, Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, Cornell University, USA.

The evaluation panel will analyse the applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the present 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. In all moments of the evaluation process, confidentiality is fully protected and ensured in order to guarantee the independence of all statements produced. For each application, a final evaluation sheet will be produced by the panel in which the arguments that led to the ratings attributed to each of the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria will be presented in a clear, coherent and consistent manner.

Minutes of the evaluation panel meetings shall be the responsibility of all its members. The minutes and their annexes must mandatorily include the following information:

- Nome Name and affiliation of all members of the evaluation panel;
- Identification of all excluded applications and respective grounds;
- Methodology adopted by the panel for particular cases;
- 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 (CDI) by all panel members;
- Possible delegations of votes and powers due to justified absence.

8. RESULTS DISCLOSURE

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

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

After the communication of the provisional list of the evaluation results, candidates have a period of 10 working days to, if they so wish, comment during the preliminary hearing phase, under the terms of Articles no. 121 and following of the Administrative Procedure Code. The final decision will be issued after the analysis of the statements presented during the preliminary hearing. The final decision can be claimed within 15 working days, or, alternatively, appealed within 30 working days, both counted from the respective notification. Candidates who choose to submit a claim must address their statement to the member of the FCT Board of Directors with delegated competence. Candidates who choose to submit an appeal must address it to the FCT Board of Directors.

10. REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTSHIP GRANTING

Research grant contracts are signed directly with the FCT.

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The following documents must mandatorily be submitted upon the eventual granting of the studentship, for the purposes of contracting:

- a) Copy of the civil identification document(s), tax number and, when applicable, social security;
- b) Copy of the academic degree certificates held;
- c) Presentation of the record of recognition of foreign academic degrees and conversion of the respective final classifications to the Portuguese classification scale, if applicable;
- d) Work plan;
- e) Document proving enrolment and registration in a Doctoral Programme at a Portuguese University;
- f) Statement from the supervisor(s) declaring responsibility for the supervision of the work plan, pursuant to Article no. 5-A of the Research Fellowship Holder Statute (draft of the declaration to be made available by FCT);
- g) Document proving the acceptance of the candidate by the institution where the research activities will take place, guaranteeing the necessary conditions for its successful development, as well as the fulfilment of the duties established in Article no. 13 of the Research Fellowship Holder Statute (draft of the declaration to be made available by FCT);
- h) Updated document proving compliance with the exclusive dedication regime (draft of the declaration to be made available by FCT)

The studentship granting is still dependent on:

- The fulfilment of the requirements listed in this Notice of the Call;
- The result of scientific evaluation;
- The absence of unjustified non-compliance with the duties of the fellowship holder under a previous grant contract funded, directly or indirectly, by FCT;
- FCT's available budget.

The failure to submit any of the necessary documents to complete the studentship contracting procedure within 6 months from the date of communication of the conditional granting decision implies the expiration of the said grant and the closing of the process.

11. FUNDING

The studentship payment will start after the candidates return the duly signed grant contract, which must happen within a maximum period of 15 working days from the date of its receipt. The scholarships awarded under this call will be financed by the FCT with funds from the State Budget and, when eligible, with funds from the European Social Fund, through the Demography, Qualifications and Inclusion Programme (PDQI), in accordance with the regulations established for this purpose.

12. STUDENTSHIP ALLOWANCE

The studentship holders are granted a monthly maintenance allowance in accordance with the table in Annex I of the FCT, I.P. [Regulation of Research Fellowships](#). The studentship may also include other components, under the terms of Article no. 18 of the RBI and for the values indicated in its Annex II. All studentship holders benefit from personal accident insurance for research activities, supported by FCT. All studentship holders who are not covered by any social protection regime can ensure the exercise of their

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right to social security by joining the voluntary social insurance regime, under the terms of the Contributory Scheme of the Social Security System, with FCT covering the costs resulting from contributions under the terms and with the limits provided for in Article no. 10 of the EBI.

13. PAYMENT OF STUDENTSHIP ALLOWANCE

Payments due to the studentship holder are made via bank transfer to the account identified by them. The payment of the monthly maintenance allowance is made on the first working day of each month. Payments for the registration, enrolment or tuition fees components are made by FCT directly to the national institution where the studentship holder is enrolled or registered for the PhD.

14. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PHD STUDENTSHIP RENEWAL

The renewal of the studentship always depends on a request submitted by the studentship holder, within 60 working days prior to the renewal start date, accompanied by the following documents:

- a) Statement issued by the supervisor(s) and by the host entity(ies) on the monitoring of the studentship holder's work and the evaluation of their activities;
- b) Updated document proving compliance with the exclusive dedication regime;;
- c) Document proving the renewal of enrolment in the cycle of studies leading to the doctoral degree.

15. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY OF THE GRANTED FUNDING

In all R&D activities directly or indirectly financed by the studentship, namely, in all communications, publications and scientific creations, as well as theses, carried out with the support provided for in the studentship, mention must be made of the financial support from FCT and the European Social Fund (ESF), namely through the Demography, Qualifications and Inclusion Programme (PDQI). For this purpose, the insignias of FCT, MECI, ESF and EU must be included in the documents referring to these actions, in accordance with the graphic standards of the community support programme. The disclosure of research results funded under the RBI must comply with the open access guidelines for data, publications and other research results in force at FCT. For all studentships, and particularly in the case of actions supported by community funding, specifically the ESF, monitoring and control actions may be carried out by national and community bodies in accordance with the applicable legislation in this matter, with the supported studentship holders being obliged to collaborate and provide the requested information, which includes participating in surveys and evaluation studies in this area, even if the studentship has already ended.

16. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL ACCESS POLICY

FCT promotes a policy of non-discrimination and equal access, whereby no candidate may be privileged, benefited, prejudiced or deprived of any right or exempted from any duty on the grounds of, namely, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family situation, economic situation, education, origin or social condition, genetic heritage, reduced working capacity, disability, chronic illness, nationality, ethnic origin or race, territory of origin, language, religion, political or ideological convictions and trade union affiliation.

17. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

The Call is governed by this Notice of the Call, by the FCT, I.P. [Regulation of Research Fellowships](#), approved by Regulation no. 950/2019, of December 16, as amended by Regulation no. 62/2026, of January 20, by the [Research Fellowship Holder Statute](#) approved by Law no. 40/2004, of August 18, in its current wording, and by other applicable national and community legislation.

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