

Regulations on the awarding of individual doctoral grants through Fundació La Pedrera - VHIO MD-PhD fellowships program

Principle and aims

The long-term goal of the Fundació La Pedrera - VHIO MD PhD fellowships programme is to train the next generation of physician scientists who will drive research and accomplish greater impact on patients through a research career informed by medical insight. In this framework, we are looking for highly talented and motivated candidates with outstanding qualifications to carry out a PhD research project in biomedicine right after their medical specialization.

Awardees will benefit from an exciting scientific environment and an integrated training programme, including lectures and seminars, specialized scientific and technological courses, complementary skills training and career development activities as well as social activities. Awardees will also have the opportunity to have some reserved time for shifts at the hospital to allow continuous contacts with the patients and the clinical work.

The VHIO MD PhD fellowships programme is open to graduates in human medicine who want to become experts in translational medicine and to contribute to evidence-based medicine. Successful candidates will carry out a project focusing on fundamental biology at VHIO by combining basic research (80%) and clinical research (20%).

Grant duration and amount

VHIO MD PhD fellowships are awarded for a minimum of two to a maximum of three years. During the support period, grantees must devote at least 80% of a full-time employment to their doctoral project. No prolongation of the grant is possible. The grant is awarded ad-personam and covers the gross salary of the grantee as well as the social security contributions to be paid by the employer. Registration fees to the PhD Programme of his/her choice will be covered by VHIO.

Grantees will be employed by VHIO during the support period and the grant will be administered by the VHIO administration office:

Living allowance*	Physician Scientist
Additional funds**	2500 EUR

* Corresponding to a gross salary of 45.442,38 EUR/year + a total gross of 21.000 EUR in concept of salary incentives for the 3-year period. Incentives will gradually raise and are subject to the accomplishment of specific objectives (Annex A):

- ✓ Year 1: Maximum 5000 EUR
- ✓ Year 2: Maximum 7000 EUR
- ✓ Year 3: Maximum 9000 EUR

** Administered by VHIO for the 3-year period.

Additional funds include:

- Doctorate registration fees
- Thesis dissertation deposit, printed copies of the thesis

Submission of applications

There is one annual call for applications for VHIO MD PhD fellowships programme. Detailed information about the program and requirements for proposals submission are available on the VHIO Academy website at <https://vhio.net/vhio-fellowships/>. The yearly call for proposals can include specific information complementing the present regulations. Applications will only be

accepted online through our [online application platform](#) and should be submitted according to the requirements defined by the VHIO Academy. **The deadline for submission of applications is 14th May 2026.** This date is relevant for assessing the personal and formal eligibility of the applicant.

After the deadline, submitted proposals will be checked for eligibility by the VHIO Academy and those proposals that do not meet the criteria will not undergo evaluation and will be rejected. All eligible applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee formed by VHIO Clinical Experts based on the candidate's academic record, scientific potential and interests, merits and reference letters.

Interviews will be conducted at VHIO Barcelona. Full details regarding the interview process will be sent to short-listed candidates short after the application deadline.

Eligibility criteria

Candidates should fulfil the following eligibility criteria at the time of the call deadline. If one or more of the eligibility criteria are not fulfilled, the proposal will be declared ineligible and will be withdrawn from any further consideration:

- Candidates must have obtained a Medical Degree and the Spanish FSE (MIR - Medical Internship or residency) or an officially accredited as equivalent obtained in any EU country between 30th September 2021 and the contract starting date, which should be 1st October 2026 at the latest.

Only MDs (MIR) are eligible. FIR, BIR candidates will not be considered. For calculating the term, the following periods will be excluded:

- a) Maternity or paternity leave, according to the Social Security General Regime regulations. An extension of 1 year for each daughter/son will be applied.
 - b) Illness or serious accident leading to medical leave: if such leave lasted more than 3 months.
 - c) Care of dependents according to Law 39/2006, if such a care period lasted more than 3 months
- Candidates who have already been granted a similar PhD contract (such as "Río Hortega" Contracts) are not eligible.
 - Candidates should have previous research experience and a strong commitment to scientific research.
 - Candidates must have a solid knowledge of English.

Evaluation criteria

Applications that meet the formal requirements are evaluated scientifically according to the following evaluation criteria:

- The applicant's qualification (including her or his examination scores during medical studies).
- The applicant's scientific knowledge and demonstrated interest for research.
- The scientific relevance and the feasibility of the proposed doctoral project.
- The likelihood of the MD-PhD being successfully completed, and the quality of support offered by the thesis supervisor.
- The applicant's aptitude for an academic-clinical career and her or his career plan.

- The applicant's performance during the interview with the Clinical Expert committee.

Fellows duties

Selected fellows will be required to comply with the provisions of the VHIO regulations, in particular:

a) Academic

Upon award of the fellowship all grantees will need to be enrolled as MD-PhD students and comply with the requirements of the local doctoral program in which they are enrolled for the entire duration of the grant as well as comply with the requirements of the VHIO PhD Programme that includes mandatory training.

After the second year of PhD, grantees will have to present his/her work in an international meeting. Funds to cover the attendance of the grantee to the meeting of his/her choice will be provided by VHIO.

Grantees will have to participate in, at least, one outreach activity organized by VHIO and/or Fundació La Pedrera.

b) Ethics and scientific practise

Fellows will respect the fundamental ethical principles, scientific practise and national and international regulations concerning ethical issues in research. For further advice, please see the [CORDIS website on ethics](#), or contact the VHIO Academy. As VHIO employees' fellows are also bound by CERCA Code of Good Scientific Practices.

c) Dissemination and publicity

Fellows will acknowledge the support of Fundació La Pedrera and VHIO in any related publication or other media.

d) IPR

Fellows will adhere to the VHIO Intellectual Property Rights Policy.

e) Reporting

Beneficiaries are required to submit annual reports as requested by the Funding Body (Fundació La Pedrera) and the VHIO Academy.