

International Programme PHD

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: NOVEMBER 29, 2024



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Candidates should fulfil the following eligibility criteria at the time of the call deadline. If it becomes clear before, during or after the evaluation phase that one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal will be declared ineligible and withdrawn from any further examination.

- The call is open to candidates of any nationality.
- Candidates must have obtained a University Degree and a Masters Degree in biomedical/medical sciences within the European Higher Education System (minimum 300 ECTS) or an equivalent University Degree that allows to start a PhD thesis in Spain. Candidates who expect to be awarded with such degree by September 2025 are eligible to apply.
- Candidates must have an excellent academic record, previous research experience and a strong commitment for scientific research.
- Candidates must have a high working knowledge of English
- Candidates invited to previous VHIO PhD call interviews will not be considered eligible
- Candidates performing their Masters at VHIO will not be considered eligible
- Candidates may not have worked at VHIO for more than 3 months before the call deadline

If you have doubts about the eligibility criteria, applicants should contact the VHIO Academy (academy@vhio.net) prior to submitting the application.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications for the VHIO International PhD Fellowship Programme 2025 are accepted exclusively online through our online application system. **The deadline for the receipt of complete applications (including reference letters) is November 29, 2025 at 23:59pm (local time).** Proposals must be written in English.

Applicants will be asked to complete the following information on the application form:

- The online application form requests all of the necessary information for the initial stages of the selection process (**General information, Education, Coursework, Honours, scholarships, prizes and awards, research experience, scientific interests and the details of two referees**)
- If the academic transcripts are not in Catalan, Spanish, French, Italian or English applicants should also attach a translation in one of the above-mentioned languages.
- Details on the referees that will provide two letters of reference. Referees will send their confidential letters directly to VHIO using the online application.
- Research groups to carry out the PhD project. The list of the research groups that have agreed to participate in the Programme is available on the website. **Applicants should select a maximum of 2 labs in which they would like to work.** More information on the research activities of each group can be found on the VHIO PhD Call web page.

Candidates should ensure that all information, including reference letters, is submitted by the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be eligible.

Applicants are advised to read the **FAQs** when preparing their applications. For any additional information or questions, please contact the VHIO Academy at academy@vhio.net

All personal data requested by VHIO from applicants will be treated in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (15/13 December 1999).

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SELECTION PROCESS

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 external members on the basis of the candidate's academic record, scientific potential and interests and reference letters.

The evaluation is organised in three steps:

- 1. Pre-selection:** The pre-selection will be based on the candidate's CV, reference letters and research interests for the oral interviews. Eligible applicants are informed about the outcome of the pre-selection via email approximately 1 week after the application deadline. No individual feedback will be provided at this stage
- 2. Oral interviews:** We will conduct interviews at VHIO Barcelona. Full details regarding the interview process will be sent to short-listed candidates short after the application deadline. Full details regarding the interview process will be sent to invited candidates 3 weeks after the application deadline.
- 3. Notification to candidates:** Applicants pre-selected for the interviews will be notified of the final selection decision by email within 10 days after the interviews. Successful candidates will be asked to accept or decline the offer within two weeks after the notification. Fellowships should start between September - December 2025. Exceptions for later start dates might be considered, if duly justified.

Applicants who receive a positive evaluation but could not be funded will be included on a reserve list to cover future positions and might be contacted at a later stage. Individual feedback will be provided for short-listed candidates.

REDRESS PROCEDURE

Upon reception of the information letter to the candidates with the outcome of the selection process, fellows may request a redress procedure, if there is any indication that there has been a shortcoming in the evaluation process or eligibility check. Any requests for redress must be related to the evaluation process, or eligibility check. The procedure will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts. Information on the redress procedure will be outlined in the information letter sent to applicants.

APPOINTMENT CONDITIONS

Selected PhD students will receive an annual work contract with a competitive salary that will be renewed after positive annual evaluation and until the completion of the PhD (4 years). All PhD students will receive full health and occupational insurance coverage and will be included in the Spanish Social Security System.

All PhD students will receive additional funding to cover for expenses related to PhD tuition fees, participation in conferences, training sessions or any other activity related to the scientific or academic activity of the PhD students.

Upon acceptance of the fellowship, fellows sign a Work Contract with the VHIO, which will contain the appointment conditions following the VHIO regulations, in particular:

- The PhD thesis has to be completed within a maximum of 3 + 1 years.
- PhD students will work full-time at the VHIO and may not receive any other fellowship, or regular income.

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- Students will have to enroll in a university of their choice, normally the University of Barcelona, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) or the University Pompeu Fabra (UPF). The university, not the VHIO, is the degree-granting body.
- Support by this Programme will be duly acknowledged in any scientific or communication authored by the PhD students.
- Students will submit an annual report to the VHIO Academy detailing the scientific progress, and productivity and any other activities related to the PhD thesis carried out during the year.

PhD TRAINING PROGRAMME

The PhD Programme **curriculum** consists of the research project/thesis work and a structured training programme combined with scientific and community activities:

Research project/thesis work: Each PhD student is expected to work full time for their PhD thesis in the research group of the PhD Supervisor. Short visits/secondments are encouraged during the PhD. Participation in international conferences is part of the PhD Programme (students should have participated at least in one international meeting by the defence of the PhD). The student's progress will be closely monitored by a thesis advisory committee (TAC) with the aim to improve the quality of research and research training, reporting annually to the VHIO Academy. It is mandatory to organize and pass one thesis committee/year until the defence of the thesis.

Structured Training Programme

- **Subject-related course work:** First year students participate in an introductory course that aims to introduce PhD students to both theoretical and practical sessions. A good knowledge of research integrity issues as well as logical reasoning in life science research form the basis of the curriculum. In addition, each student is expected to acquire a strong basic knowledge in a wide range of research topics represented by the PIs.

Depending on the topic of the thesis work, the students can choose additional relevant courses from a wide range portfolio of courses offered by the VHIO Academy and covering from practical scientific to technological courses, as well as seminar series offered regularly in-house and in other relevant research institutes.

- **Transferable skills and career development:** In addition to subject-related course work, students can participate in transferable skills and career development courses offered by the VHIO Academy that includes courses that are necessary to carry out experimental work in academic research, as well training in transferable skills and career development in a range of skills to enhance future career progress and improve future employability. Fellows will also acquire transferable skills by participating in the scientific/community activities, including Benchmarking Seminars, involvement in outreach activities and managing the research project. Language courses (English, Spanish) are also offered by the VHIO.

HELPDESK

A document containing the Frequently Asked Questions about the Programme can be consulted on the call page. Please contact the VHIO Academy at academy@vhio.net for any queries or assistance.

VHIO obtained the "HR Excellence in Research" accreditation from the European Commission in 2018 and is committed with the principles of the European Charter and Code, in particular with non-discriminatory, transparent and merit-based recruitment and selection procedures.