

PHD FELLOWSHIPS WITH BIOPOLIS/ CIBIO AS HOST INSTITUTION

This document is intended to guide prospective PhD students through the rather complicated process of applying to a PhD fellowship with BIOPOLIS/CIBIO as the host institution. Cibio is a biodiversity and genetics research institute in Varão, Portugal, which is part of the University of Porto System. It specializes in biodiversity and genetic resource research, contributing to the understanding and conservation of the Earth's biodiversity. CIBIO's multidisciplinary approach and collaboration with national and international partners make it a vital hub for biodiversity research. Associação BIOPOLIS is the (financial) managing entity for CIBIO. *Note: this document was compiled by Luke L. Powell and its views do not necessarily conform to those of CIBIO (the institute) / BIOPOLIS (the managing entity of CIBIO)*

Normal, annual call for FCT's PhD fellowships:

Typical timeline (most years are similar):



- PhD fellowships earn 1199,60 euros per month as of 2023
- The degree is earned through University of Porto
- For a “mixed grant”, where students spend time abroad, FCT pay is about 2009 euros per month while abroad
- Fellows typically have about 900 euros per year available for research, conferences, travel etc. Additional funding must be arranged through the students' advisor or through student fundraising.
- July-Aug: “Candidatura” – apply for BIODIV PhD program (this dates are for BIODIV)
 - Students with PhD fellowships must still apply to the PhD program, but once the fellowship is granted, this part is a slam-dunk

Other important information about the annual call

- In 2022, **79%** of *eligible* applicants that applied through BIOPOLIS/ to the FCT fellowship program were accepted
 - The key word here is *eligible*: a large proportion of students are deemed ineligible – typically these are foreign students whose degrees and/or grades haven't transferred to the Portuguese system (more on this below)
 - PhD courses and related activities are typically undertaken in English
 - [Evaluation criteria of FCT call](#) are available for prospective PhD Fellows
 - As an example, in 2022, all students with a score over 3.93 were admitted to the Fellowship in Biological Science
 - Students can more-or-less evaluate themselves and give themselves a score before the application to know whether it is worth applying – grades really matter in this general FCT fellowship call
 - As a rule of thumb, if you think your final score is below 3.6, it is probably not worth applying as it is unlikely you will receive funding even in a less competitive year
 - If one or more degrees is not authenticated by the Portuguese system successfully, those incur a considerable score penalty (see criteria), so it is typically not worth it to apply if one of your degrees hasn't been authenticated
 - The score can be boosted by a strong CV such as having a first authored publication or two, and evidence of a meaningful contribution to your field (conferences, presentations, grants, awards etc).
 - The FCT and perhaps other applications do not accept ready-made CVs. There is a portal called CIENCIAVITAE where prospective candidates must sign in and create their CV. Any other than a *cienciavitae* CV is not considered valid.
 - The fellowship doesn't include research funding per se, but students are typically entitled to about 900 euros per year to use on conferences, travel and research if necessary. Students are encouraged to apply for external funding to support research.
- Special PALOP PhD Fellowship
 - The Portuguese government has a special fellowship program for prospective PhD students from PALOP Countries.
 - In 2022, 100% of the students that applied were accepted.
 - Students need not use English in their application (Portuguese is fine), but the program will be taught primarily in English.
 - More information is available [here](#)

- The main challenge of this fellowship is that there are very few Master's programs in Biodiversity or related fields in Lusophone Africa, so there are few qualified candidates
 - Another serious impediment is that many Lusophone Africans don't have the high level English skills required in CIBIO's PhD program
 - Students typically apply to these through the general FCT call for fellowships, indicating that they are from a PALOP country

- Degree authentication (AKA "legalization of the document")
 - This is the process by which the degree is authenticated by the foreign country that issued the degree. This must happen before the degree recognition in Portugal (more on that below).
 - Authentication in the UK or Europe
 - This could be done by:
 - Parish Councils;
 - CTT - Correios de Portugal, S.A. - Open Society;
 - Chambers of Commerce and Industry;
 - Lawyers and Solicitors.
 - Apostille of the Hague Convention
 - The amount of time varies, but in the UK, for example, this takes about a week and costs about 80 pounds per document
 - Degree authentication for degrees from outside Europe
 - These degrees must be authenticated by either:
 - Portuguese Embassy or Consulate in the country of origin or the nearest country with a Portuguese embassy/consulate. For example, Cameroonians must use the Portuguese embassy in Nigeria.
 - Apostille of the Hague Convention
 - More information is available [here](#)
 - Amount of time to authenticate and the cost varies enormously by country.

- Degree and diploma recognition in Portugal
 - This process is mandatory for any PhD fellowship and must include the transfer of both the students' diploma(s) (both a bachelors and masters if applicable) as well as transcript(s) including grades/marks
 - More information is available [here](#)
 - It is essential for either the diploma(s) or the academic transcript(s) to contain the final numeric grade and to be authenticated more information below.

- Recognition can be a very challenging process that can take up to four months (90 working days) and it varies enormously by the country issuing the degree. In a few extreme cases it has been up to six months.
- If you do have any foreign degrees, it is best to contact your prospective supervisor at least six months before applications are due to begin this process.
- The process of degree recognition from countries in Europe (UK included) and North America is typically much faster – typically less than 6 weeks.
- Fees for degree recognition are quite variable both within Portugal and in the students' country, but a typical charge is between 30 and 100 euros *per degree*. These fees are non-refundable, so please take care to submit the correct degree. Please see her for more information: [Table of Fees of the University of Porto](#).
- In special cases, students from developing nations (esp. Lusophone Africa), may arrange for their prospective CIBIO supervisor to sponsor their diploma recognition process—this would have to be an exceptionally well qualified student that requires financial assistance.
- Transfer of foreign degrees are often country and program specific as well, so advice on how to transfer degrees is not generalizable and must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Often the prospective advisor at cibio can identify a cibio student who has already transferred their degree from the same country as the prospective students' degree—these students offer the most helpful advice.

Other, “special” calls for PhD fellowships (“studentships”)

- These are listed on the [CIBIO Jobs website](#) as well as on the websites of other Portuguese institutions. These can be at any time of year and are not part of the annual general FCT call described above. The criteria for evaluating candidates on these other calls are often different from those in the general FCT calls for fellowships: they are more specifically catered to the particular research they are advertising—experience typically matters more and grades less (or none). Nonsensically, even if grades aren't part of the evaluation criteria for one of these special calls, if the call is funded by FCT and the prospective student has foreign degrees, the student still needs to have their degrees authenticated to the Portuguese system for the student to be eligible.

Pre-calls

- PIs may advertise a “pre-call” for students in a given subject area, for example, for studying primates in Equatorial Guinea. Here the intention is to recruit a student for a particular topic or program, and then at some point months later, to assist them with their application to a PhD studentship. A PI may, for example, put out a pre-call announcement in October, identify a well qualified student that they want to push forward for a studentship during the fall, and then have that student apply in the general

call that is due in March. This would allow time for student recruitment and for the student to transfer their degrees to the Portuguese system if necessary.