

Edital Ref.<sup>a</sup> 01/BD-OpenEU

## Notice of Open Call for the Attribution of “in country” or “mixed-type” PhD Research Fellowships within OpenEU

A call is open for the attribution of seven (7) PhD Research Fellowships (Bolsas de Investigação para Doutoramento), under the Regulamento de Bolsas de Investigação da FCT (RBI) and the Estatuto do Bolseiro de Investigação (EBI), for the research areas of distance learning, digital transformation, climate change and sustainability, or European values and democracy. The grants should fund research work for the purpose of obtaining a doctorate degree, attributed by Universidade Aberta (UAb), within OpenEU, an alliance which brings together the main open and distance learning universities in Europe. The doctoral programme promotes interdisciplinary research, open science practices and research focused on societal challenges and aligned with European research priorities.

These PhD Research Fellowships may be either “in country” (taking place exclusively in Portugal) or “mixed-type” (with a period spent abroad), and they are funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT), within a multi-year PhD Research Fellowship Programme across R&D fields that have potential for synergy with the strategy of the OpenEU alliance, following a protocol established with UAb. The PhD research fellowships are intended for candidates who are already registered or who have all the conditions to register in a PhD programme at UAb.

The PhD Research Fellowships are intended to fund the grantee’s research activities with the goal of obtaining the academic degree of Doctor at UAb.

The research activities leading to this doctorate will take place at Universidade Aberta in Lisbon, Porto or Coimbra, which will be the host institution for the grantees, their ability to perform their work in collaboration with other institutions notwithstanding.

### **1. Candidate admission requirements:**

The following people are eligible to apply for these grants:

- National (Portuguese) citizens or citizens of other Member States of the European Union;
- Citizens of other (non-EU) states;
- People with no nationality;
- Citizens who have political refugee status.

In order to apply to the PhD Research Fellowship, the candidate must:

- Be the holder of a Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree (see Table 1 in Annex I);
- Not have been a grantee before for any other PhD fellowship or corporate-partnership PhD fellowship that was directly funded by FCT, regardless of its duration;
- Not already have the degree of Doctor;
- Have permanent and usual residence in Portugal by the foreseen date for the start of any work to be performed abroad, in case the proposed work plan includes a period abroad (“mixed-type”), a requirement which applies both to Portuguese citizens and foreign nationals;

- Be proficient in English.

#### Application Admission Requirements:

It is indispensable, under penalty of non-eligibility for this contest, to submit the application via email to the address [rh@uab.pt](mailto:rh@uab.pt) and attach:

- The form which is available at [Bolsheiros – Portal da Universidade Aberta](#), filled in with the candidate's personal details;
- Elements of their national ID or passport;
- The candidate's Curriculum Vitae (CV);
- Certificates for any degrees that the candidate holds, which must specify the final grade and, if possible, the individual grades for each of the subjects in the degree, or, alternatively, a declaration of honour from the candidate that they will have concluded their Bachelor's or Master's Degree before the end of the application period;
- Official acknowledgement of any academic degrees that were obtained at non-Portuguese Higher Education Institutions, and the statement converting the final grade to the Portuguese classification scale, or, alternatively, a declaration of honour from the candidate stating that they will have obtained an official acknowledgement of their degree, equivalent to a Bachelor's or Master's Degree, before the end of the application period;
- Cover/motivation letter;
- Workplan proposal, with a maximum length of 7 pages, including sections for literature review, objectives, description, methodology, implementation, timeline and citations;
- Acceptance from the advisor(s) and the identification of the Ciência ID of the advisor's CV (and co-advisors', when applicable), or alternatively a CV with a maximum of 5 pages for each advisor, if they do not have one available in Ciencia Vitae;
- Two references and their contact information;
- A commitment statement from the institution(s) outside of Portugal for a period of study abroad that should not be shorter than 12 months (sequential or not), when applicable in the case of a mixed-type fellowship;
- Indication of which UAb doctoral programme they intend to register for or have already registered for. If the candidate is already doing a PhD degree from UAb, only students who are registered at UAb are eligible. If the candidate is not yet registered in any PhD programme at UAb, they must select one of the listed PhD programmes:
  - Language Didactics
  - E-Learning and Distance Education
  - Global Studies
  - Portuguese Studies
  - Intercultural Relations
  - Sustainability and Development

The application and all associated documents must be written **in English (preferential) or Portuguese**. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate familiarity with the principles of research integrity and commitment to open science practices, including data sharing and research dissemination, when applicable.

Regarding the above mentioned eligibility requirements, the following notes are in order:

- In the case of academic degrees attributed by non-Portuguese higher education institutions, and in order to safeguard the equality between candidates with foreign and national academic degrees, it is mandatory

to have those degrees acknowledged and their final grade converted into the Portuguese classification scale. The acknowledgement of foreign academic degrees and diplomas as well as the conversion of the final grade into the Portuguese classification scale can be requested at any public high education institution in Portugal, or at Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior (DGES), in the case of automatic acknowledgement. Regarding this matter, it is suggested to visit the DGES website, at the address: <http://www.dges.gov.pt>.

- Only candidates who will have concluded their studies towards a Bachelor's or Master's Degree (see Table 1 of Annex I) by the end of the application period will be admitted into the contest. If the certificate for their degree is not yet available, a declaration of honour by the candidate will stand, stating that they will have completed the necessary studies for this call by the end of the application period. The awarding of the fellowship will be conditional on the presentation, at the contract signing stage, of the certificates for the candidate's academic degrees.
- Any workplan that takes place partly at one or more foreign institutions that are members or associated members of the [OpenEU consortium](#) must include a period abroad that is not lesser than 12 months (which can be consecutive or not).

## **2. Duration of the Grant, and Place and Regime of Work**

The duration of the fellowships is, as a rule, annual, renewable to a maximum of four years (48 months), and it cannot be for a period shorter than 3 consecutive months.

In the case of a mixed-type fellowship, the planned period at an institution abroad cannot be longer than 24 months.

The work activities will take place at Universidade Aberta in Lisbon, Porto or Coimbra. Research activity will take place under exclusivity.

## **3. Value of the monthly maintenance subsidy and other financial components:**

Grantees will be attributed a monthly maintenance subsidy in the terms of the table in Annex I of the RBI.

The grant may also include other components, in the terms of article 18º of the RBI and the values foreseen in its Annex II.

All grantees are entitled to a personal accident insurance policy in regard to their research activity, which is paid by the FCT.

All grantees who are not already registered under any other social protection regime may ensure their right to social security by joining Seguro Social Voluntário (voluntary social security), in the terms of the Código dos Regimes Contributivos do Sistema Previdencial de Segurança Social, with the resulting financial charges from contributions being reimbursed by the FCT, with the limitations foreseen in article 10º of the EBI.

Payment due to the grantee is done through bank transfer to the account number they provide. The monthly maintenance subsidy is paid on the first business day of the month.

Payment of registration fees or tuition is done by the FCT directly to the national institution where the grantee is registered for their PhD degree.

## **4. Application deadline and form of submission:**

The call is open from April 15<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> 2026, closing at 23:59 (Lisbon time). Applications and supporting documents requested in this notice must be submitted by email to the address [rh@uab.pt](mailto:rh@uab.pt).

Each candidate can submit a single application, under penalty of cancellation of all of their applications should they submit more than one.

The application may be cancelled if the candidate makes false declarations or is found to be plagiarizing; other sanctions for these behaviours may also be due.

## **5. Workplan and objectives:**

The grantee's workplan will consist of the development of a research project towards the attribution of a doctoral degree, under the scientific coordination of the advisor, and co-advisor(s), if applicable. The grantee's research activities towards their doctoral degrees must be framed under the activities plan and strategy of Universidade Aberta, feeding synergies between the members of the OpenEU consortium, and promoting shared research environments between the institutions of the consortium. The proposed research plan must demonstrate scientific originality, methodological rigueur, and the potential contributions towards advancing knowledge in the relevant field.

## **6. Evaluation and selection criteria:**

The evaluation of applications will take into account the candidate's personal merit and the workplan they intend to develop, according to Annex I of this Notice.

- Candidates will be sorted according to the resulting average score from each of the two criteria, according to the following weights: 50% candidate merit (A); 50% merit of the workplan (B); translated in the following formula:
  - $\text{Classificação Final} = (0,50 * A) + (0,50 * B)$
- In the case of a draw in final scores by the candidates, sorting will be done based on the grades attributed to each of the evaluation criteria by the following order of precedence: 1<sup>st</sup> criterion A (candidate merit) and 2<sup>nd</sup> criterion B (workplan merit).
- Candidates whose application receives a final score of less than 3 out of 5 are not eligible for the grant.

Important notice for candidates who hold degrees with foreign higher education institutions:

- Candidates with diplomas issued by foreign higher education degrees may apply and they will be evaluated according to the same criteria as candidates with diplomas from Portuguese institutions, as long as they submit, in the application process, evidence of acknowledgement of the academic degrees, and the conversion of their final grade to the Portuguese classification system, according to applicable legislation.
- Candidates with acknowledged foreign degrees who cannot show evidence of conversion of their final grade to the Portuguese classification scale will be evaluated with the minimum score (according to the note to Table 1 – Table of reference for score attribution in the subcriterion, in Annex I, criterion A).
- In any case, grant contracts with candidates holding degrees from foreign institutions will only be celebrated once the candidate presents the formal acknowledgement of their degrees and the conversion of the final score, as stated above.

## **7. Preferencial factors:**

The evaluation will favour applications which, in their workplan (component B of the classification mentioned in item 6) explicitly align with the fields of OpenEU, the activity of their partners, and the strategic goals of Universidade Aberta (which are laid out in UAb's Plano Estratégico 2023-2027).

## **8. Composition of the selection jury panel:**

The composition of the evaluation panel is intended to reflect a diversity of scientific competence and institutional representation, in order to ensure a fair and balanced evaluation of the applications.

The panel is made up of the following full members:

President: Sandra Caeiro (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Vice-President: Paulo Osório (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Panel members:

Angeles Sanchez-Elvira Paniagua (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia - UNED, Espanha)

António Carrizo Moreira (Universidade Aberta -UAb)

Carmen Pagès Serra (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya - UOC, Espanha)

Cristina Vieira (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Diogo Casa Nova (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Fátima Alves (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Frederico Branco (Universidade de Trás os Montes e Alto Douro - UTAD)

Inés Gil Jaurena (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia - UNED, Espanha)

Isabel Barros Dias (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

João Relvão Caetano (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

José António Moreira (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

José Cravino (Universidade de Trás os Montes e Alto Douro - UTAD)

José Eduardo Franco (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Marcus Specht (FernUniserititat in Hagen, Alemanha)

Maria Adelina Castelo (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Mario Bessa (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Paulo Nunes da Silva (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Petra C. de Weerd-Nederhof (Open Universiteit – OU, Países Baixos)

Petru Curseu (Open Universiteit - OU, Países Baixos)

Susana Henriques (Universidade Aberta - UAb)

Vítor Rocio (Universidade Aberta- UAb)

Alternate members:

Isabel Huet e Silva (Universidade Aberta- UAb)

João Simão (Universidade Aberta- UAb)

The evaluation panel will grade the applications according to the evaluation criteria in this Notice of Open Call, through the weighing of the referred elements. All members of the jury, including the president, are committed to respecting a set of responsibilities which are essential to the evaluation process, such as the duties of impartiality, the prior statement of any conflict of interest, and confidentiality. At every step of the evaluation process, confidentiality is fully ensured and protected, in order to guarantee the independence of all judgements. Panel members, including the president, may not be advisors or co-advisors of applicants in this contest. For each application, the panel will produce a final evaluation sheet where they clearly, coherently and consistently present the arguments that led to the attribution of the classifications for each of the criteria and subcriteria. From the meetings of the evaluation panel, minutes will be produced, that each member must be responsible for. The minutes and their attachments must include the following information:

- Name and affiliation of every member of the panel;
- Identification of every excluded application, and the grounds for exclusion;
- Final evaluation sheets for each candidate;
- Temporary list of the candidates, classified and sorted, by order of decreasing final score, regarding every application that was evaluated by the jury;
- Conflict of interest declarations for every member of the panel;
- Any delegation of voting and judgement due to a justified absence (if applicable).

## **9. Results notification and dissemination process:**

The results of the panel's evaluation will be communicated via email, sent to the email address that was supplied by the candidate during the application process.

## **10. Deadlines and procedures for complaints or appeal:**

Once the provisional listing of the evaluation results has been communicated, candidates have 10 business days to make, if they so wish, a statement in the prior hearing of interested parties, in the terms of articles 121<sup>o</sup> and following of the Código do Procedimento Administrativo. The final decision will be announced after the analysis of the statements made in the prior hearing of interested parties. It is possible to submit a complaint regarding the final decision within 15 business days or, alternatively, to appeal the results within 30 business days, both counted from the moment of notification of the final decision. Candidates that wish to complain should direct their statement to the member of the FCT's Conselho Diretivo who is competent to receive it. Candidates who wish to appeal should direct their appeal to the Conselho Diretivo of FCT.

## **11. Requirements for awarding of the fellowship:**

Research fellowship contracts are made directly with the FCT.

The following documents must be submitted, once the grant is attributed, in order to sign the contract:

- a) Copy of the document(s) containing civil identification, fiscal identification and, when applicable, social security identification<sup>2</sup>;
- b) Copy of certificates of academic degrees;
- c) Registration of acknowledgement of any academic degrees granted by foreign higher education institution and the conversion of their classifications to the Portuguese scale, if applicable;
- d) Workplan;
- e) Document to prove registration in one of the PhD programmes listed in this Notice (if applicable);
- f) Statement from the advisor and co-advisor(s) (if applicable) taking responsibility for the supervision of the workplan, according to article 5.º-A of the Estatuto do Bolseiro de Investigação (statement model will be provided by the FCT);
- g) Document to prove that the candidate has been accepted to the institution where research activities will take place, ensuring the necessary conditions to their development, and that the institution will keep its duties as inscribed in article 13.º do Estatuto do Bolseiro de Investigação (statement model will be provided by the FCT);
- h) Up to date document to prove exclusive dedication (statement model will be provided by the FCT).

The awarding of the grant is also dependent on:

- the keeping of all requirements listed in this Notice of Open Call;
- the result of evaluation by the panel;
- the proven non-existence of any unjustified cases of unfulfilled duties by the grantee in any previous fellowship funded, directly or indirectly, by the FCT;
- the FCT's available budget.

Failing to submit any of the necessary document before 6 months have passed from the date when the conditional grant decision was communicated means the expiration of that attribution and the closure of the process.<sup>1</sup>

## **12. Funding sources:**

Payment of the grants will begin once the candidates have return the signed fellowship contract, which should take place within 15 business days of when they received it.

Fellowships attributed as a result of this Call will be funded by the FCT with State Funds and, when eligible, funds from the European Social Fund, through the Programa Demografia, Qualificações e Inclusão (PQDI), following the applicable regulations.

## **13. Terms and conditions for fellowship renewal:**

The renewal of the fellowship is always conditional on a request that should be presented by the grantee, within the 60 business days prior to the date when the renewal would begin, accompanied by the following documents:

- a) a signed statement by the advisor and co-advisor(s) and by the host institution about the progress of the grantee's workplan and the evaluation of their activities;
- b) an up to date document proving they continue to keep their obligation of working in an exclusivity regime;
- c) a document to prove they have renewed their registration in the programme that will lead to their doctoral degree.

## **14. Information and publicity of the awarded funding:**

In every R&D activity which is directly or indirectly funded by this grant, namely, in every public presentation, publication and scientific creation, as well as the thesis, that are performed using the support foreseen in the grant, this financial support must be acknowledged, naming FCT and Fundo Social Europeu, and specifying the Programa Demografia, Qualificações e Inclusão (PDQI). In order to do so, all related documents must include the logos for FCT, MCTES, FSE and the EU, according to the graphic stipulations of the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> These documents may be made available, if the candidate wishes, by presenting them in person at the funding institution, which will save the elements of these which are pertinent to the validity and execution of the contract, including civil identification, fiscal identification and social security identification numbers, as well as the expiration date of these documents.

The dissemination of results of the research that was funded under the RBI should follow the FCT's open access rules, for data, publications, and other results.

In all fellowships, and specifically in actions supported by EU funding, namely FSE, control and verification actions may take place, performed by national and European structures according to the applicable legislation, and the grantees are obliged to cooperate and supply any requested information, even when the fellowship period has ended.

### **15. Non-discrimination and equality policy:**

The FCT has a policy of non-discrimination and equality of access, therefore no applicants can be privileged, favoured, hindered or deprived of any right or exempt from any duty on account of their ascendance, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family situation, economic situation, education level, social origin or condition, genetic heritage, reduced working ability, disability, chronic illness, nationality, ethnic origin or race, territory of origin, language, religion, political or ideological views or union membership.

### **16. Applicable legislation and regulations:**

The Open Call is run according to this Notice, to the FCT's Regulamento de Bolsas de Investigação, approved by Regulamento n.º 950/2019, published in II Série do DR on December 16th 2019, according to the Estatuto do Bolseiro de Investigação, approved by Lei n.º 40/2004, August 18th, in its current wording, and by all other relevant national and European legislation.

## Annex I: EVALUATION CRITERIA

All applications that are found admissible should be attributed a score from 1.000 (minimum) to 5.000 (maximum) in each of the two evaluation criteria:

- A. Merit of the candidate;
- B. Merit of the workplan.

Candidates will be sorted according to the average of the classification obtained for each of the two criteria, according to the following weight: 50% merit of the candidate (A); 50% merit of the workplan (B), which can be calculated through the following formula:

$$\text{Final Classification} = (0,50 * A) + (0,50 * B)$$

In the case of a draw, sorting will be made according to the classification attributed to each of the evaluation criteria, in the following order of precedence: 1<sup>st</sup> criterion A (merit of the candidate) and 2<sup>nd</sup> criterion B (merit of the workplan).

In each of the evaluation criteria, the classifications will be attributed with three decimal points. The resulting values from the application of any formulas that are specified in this Annex will be rounded up to the third decimal, by resorting to the following rule: when the fourth decimal point is equal or superior to 5 (five), the third decimal point will be rounded up by excess; when the fourth decimal point is inferior to 5 (five), the third decimal point will be rounded down to its same value.

Candidates whose application is evaluated with a final score of fewer than 3,000 points will not be eligible for the grant.

### Criterion A – Merit of the Candidate

The merit of the candidate, criterion A, with the weight of 50%, is evaluated through two subcriteria:

- A1. Academic track record, with a weight of 50% on the merit of the candidate;
- A2. Personal CV (reflecting scientific and professional track record), with a weight of 50% on the merit of the candidate.

The classification of criterion A – Merit of the Candidate will be obtained by applying the following formula:

Criterion *A* =  $(A1 \times 0,5) + (A2 \times 0,5)$ .

**Subcriterion A1 – Academic track record**

The candidate’s score in this subcriterion results from the final scores of the candidate’s degrees, according to the following table of reference (Table 1):

**Table 1 – Reference table for scoring subcriterion A1**

A1 – Academic Track Record Bachelors’ Degree + Master’s Degree (pre- or post- Bologna Process) or Integrated Master’s Degree (300-360 credits)		Bachelor’s Degree (180 credits) (pre- or post- Bologna Process)		Master’s Degree (90-129 credits) (pre- or post- Bologna Process)	
Grade	A1 Score	Grade	A1 Score	Grade	A1 Score
≥ 18	5,0	≥ 17	3,5	≥ 17	3,0
17	4,5	16	3,0	16	2,5
16	4,0	15	2,5	15	2,0
15	3,5	14	2,0	14	1,5
14	3,0	<14	1,5	<14	1,0
<14	2,5				

NOTE: The classification that should be considered when calculating subcriterion A1 is whichever grade is on the certificates for the degrees that were submitted in the moment of application. In the case of certificates where the final score is presented with decimal points, the score will be rounded to the next unit following this rule: when the decimal point is equal or higher than 5, the score will be rounded up by excess; when the decimal point is inferior to 5, the score will be rounded down and remain the same. In the case of the arithmetic average of the final scores of a Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees, the grades on the certificates will be considered, even if they have decimal points, and the rounding will be done once the average is obtained. If the presented certificate shows, simultaneously, the rounded up score and the score with decimal points, the rounded score will be used. In the case of students who present a foreign certificate without a converted grade to the Portuguese classification, the candidates will be evaluated with a minimum score of:

A1 – Academic track record Bachelor’s + Master’s Degrees (pre- or post- Bologna Process) Integrated Master’s Degree (300-360 credits)	Bachelor’s Degree (180 credits) (pre- or post- Bologna Process)	Master’s Degree (90-120 credits) (pre- or post- Bologna Process)
A1 Score	A1 Score	A1 Score
4,0	2,5	2,0

**In the application of Table 1, the following parameters should be considered:**

a) The final average “Bachelor’s + Master’s” (first column of Table 1), in pre- or post- Bologna Process, results from the weighted average of the final grade obtained in the Bachelor’s Degree and of the final grade obtained in the Master’s Degree, through the following formula:

$$\text{Final average (Bachelor’s + Master’s)} = \text{final grade Bachelor’s} (0.60) + 2/5 \text{ final grade Master’s} (0.40)$$

b) In the case of Integrated Master's Degrees granted by institutions which do not include a separate grade for the first and second parts of the Degree, the final score in the certificate for the entire degree will be considered (300 to 360 ECTS credits).

### Subcriterion A2 Personal CV

The candidate's CV will be analysed and pondered in an integrated fashion, drawing from a global vision of the merit of their scientific and professional track record. In this analysis, academic results which were not considered for the calculation of Subcriterion A1 can be included. The different dimensions of the CV which may demonstrate a relevant scientific and professional history will also be taken into account, namely:

- Published articles in scientific journals belonging to indexed publishers (ISI Web of Knowledge/Scimago/Scopus), taking into account the quality, type, impact, amount, order or authorship (according to the common practice of each scientific field), and whether they are already published or only accepted for publication (in this case, with the proof of acceptance). Any publications that are not accepted at the closing date of the Open Call or which are wrongly cited will not be taken into account. 0.4 points per article.
- Oral presentations and poster presentations in scientific events, duly published in Minutes. Institutional meetings and student meetings are not considered. 0.2 points for each presentation.
- Other relevant elements of the CV, such as: additional academic degrees, internships, awards, training programmes, event organization. 0.1 points for each of these elements.
- Professional experience, including participation as a team member in research projects with competitive funding (with the reference of the project), any fellowships granted (outside of a project), authorship of patents. 0.4 points for each.

The evaluation will take into account disciplinary diversity and the stage of the candidate's career, ensuring a fair appreciation of candidates from different academic tracks.

### Criterion B – Merit of the Workplan

The merit of the workplan, criterion with the weight of 50%, is evaluated across three parameters:

**B1 – Justified relevance of the object of research;** clear definition of objectives and research questions, potential for contribution for advancement of knowledge and science and technology, and its alignment with the fields of Open EU (distance education, digital transformation, climate change and sustainability, and European values and democracy) and with the strategic plan 2024-27 of Universidade Aberta – these factors will be classified with up to 2 points.

**B2 – Scientific quality** (literature review, methodology); presentation of the current literature and of the research methodology will be classified with up to 1.5 points, depending on its clarity, consistency and coherence, according to internationally accepted standards.

**B3 – Feasibility of the workplan;** the adequacy of the methodologies and of the advisor(s) to the tasks and objectives foreseen in the workplan and their deadlines will be assessed and classified with up to 1.5 points. The panel will also evaluate the risks to the different stages of the workplan, and the contingency measures that are proposed for cases where they are needed. An internationalization component, namely with part of the workplan performed at higher education institutions that are members of OpenEU, is also valued. The **timeline**, which is mandatory, should be detailed enough so that the panel may assess the sequence of the tasks across the dates, and evaluate the feasibility of the proposed workplan.