

VHIR PhD CALL 2023

Institutional call for the incorporation of early-stage researchers at Vall d'Hebron Research Institute

Internal Scientific Committee agreement on July 18th 2023

The Vall d'Hebron University Hospital Foundation – Research Institute (“VHIR” or “the Foundation”) is a leading biomedical research centre in Barcelona that promotes, develops and transfers research of the Vall d'Hebron University Hospital. Through international leadership and excellence in our research, we improve people’s health and quality of life by means of the more than 1,000 investigators who carry out their research, and which are also supported by scientific services.

1. OBJECTIVE

The Vall d'Hebron University Hospital Foundation – Research Institute (“VHIR” or “the Foundation”) makes its own and open call for a doctoral fellowship programme devoted to attracting early-stage researchers with a special interest in biomedical research who wish to carry out doctoral studies at VHIR.

The aim of these grants is to train research staff in the research groups within the environment of the Vall d'Hebron Barcelona Hospital Campus.

The conditions of the call are established in compliance with the European Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), which establishes the implementation of open, gender equality, transparent and merit-based recruitment measures, to contribute to the promotion of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI).

2. CANDIDATE PROFILE AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The requirements are:

- a. Candidates should not have a PhD.
- b. Candidates **must be in possession of a university degree and a master’s degree** (in the fields of biomedical research, clinical research, epidemiology, management and evaluation of health services and technologies) with a minimum of 300 ECTS of official university studies **at the time of applying to the grant** (or must hold an official university qualification from a country of the European Higher Education Area with a minimum of **300 ECTS of official university studies**).
- c. Candidates acceding to a PhD programme after the medical specialization (*Formació Sanitària Especialitzada, FSE*) will not be eligible.

- d. Candidates must have finished the Master's degree between 1st January 2022 and the closing date of application submission. Exceptionally, this term will be extended if applicants can provide proof of having been in one of the following situations:
- a. *Maternity*: 18 months extension for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their Master degree. If the applicant can document a longer total maternity leave, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave(s) for all children taken before the call deadline. - *Paternity*: extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken before the call deadline for each child.
 - b. They have been taking care of children under six years of age or people with physical, mental or sensory disabilities who depend on the beneficiary and require special dedication (1 year).
 - c. They have suffered an illness or accident with a medical leave equal to or longer than six months (1 year).
- e. Candidates must have obtained a minimum average grade of the academic record of the studies of degree **equal to or higher than 7** (calculated in accordance with the criteria specified in the Royal Decree 1125/2013, of 5th September). In the event that the qualification of the academic record of studies studied in Spain uses the scale of 0 to 4, the average grade must be converted using [this link](#).
- f. In the case of international studies, the grade of the academic record must be calculated by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA). It is the applicant's responsibility to ask ANECA for the aforementioned equivalence. More information can be found [here](#).
- g. Candidates must have the pre-admission to a doctoral studies programme at the time of starting the grant. Candidates must enrol on the doctoral studies programme in the first official enrolment period, no later than September 2024.
- h. Candidates must not have held a PhD contract exceeding twelve months in any research institution previous to this application.

3. HOST PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S (PI) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following requirements apply to the host PI:

- a) PIs should have a PhD.
- b) PI should have an active competitive project at the time of application. The project must be managed by VHIR and funded with $\geq 20.000\text{€}$.
- c) PIs will not be able to present a candidature if they are hosting a PhD researcher from a current VHIR institutional PhD fellowship (unless being in the last year).

Research groups may only be awarded with an institutional PhD fellowship per year. As long as they meet the requirements, IPs from the awardee groups will be able to apply for the following call.

4. EVALUATION PROCESS

In April 2015, VHIR was recognised with the accreditation “HR Excellence in Research” of the European Commission (also known as “HRS4R”). In 2021 the HR Excellence in Research seal was renewed. This accreditation is based on the “European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code)” and obtaining the seal of HR Excellence in Research ensures that VHIR integrates into its human resources policies the 40 principles of the Charter & Code, based on a customized action plan/HR Strategy.

Our Recruitment and Selection Policy is based on the OTM Strategy (Open, Transparent and Merit-based recruitment) and in line with the principles defined in the OTM-R procedure ([VHIR Recruitment Policy for an Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers](#)).

The evaluation process is divided in two phases. **Phase 1 consists of evaluating the candidate’s merits, representing the 70% of the final score;** Top 10 candidates will be invited to **Phase 2, consisting on an oral interview that will account for the remaining 30% of the score.**

Phase 1: Candidate’s assessment (70%):

VHIR Internal Evaluation Committee (*Comisió d’Avaluació Interna, CAI*) will **evaluate and prioritize the candidates’ applications** based on the following selection criteria (100 points maximum):

1. Best profile will receive a maximum of 80 points. Average grade of the bachelor’s degree will weigh 80% of the total score for this section, and average grade of the master’s degree will weight 20%. Candidates applying to the grant with 300 ECTS of bachelor degree studies can only obtain the 80% of the maximum score.
2. Up to 20 points: Other merits, including publications, extracurricular internships, Erasmus+, dissemination activities, within others.

To know more information, please review Annex 1 "Phase 1 Evaluation Criteria".

The members of the VHIR Internal Evaluation Committee will provide a provisional list of 10 candidates that will be invited for an oral interview. When possible, at least, a minimum of 3 of the selected candidates will be female.

A period of 2 working days will be opened for allegations. Those candidates who wish to formulate an allegation should send it to ajuts@vhir.org. Claims will only be considered valid when sent through this channel and within the established deadline.

The Evaluation Commission and the Legal Directorate will resolve the allegations based on reasoned criteria, within a maximum of 2 working days from the end of the period to receive allegations.

Once the allegations have been resolved, the final resolution will be published, and a 2 working days period will be opened for appeal to the VHIR Internal Scientific Committee (CCI).

The CCI will be responsible for resolving the appeal against the final list based on its own regulations. The CCI resolution will not be susceptible to any other appeal.

Phase 2: Oral Interview (30%)

The Selection Committee will bring together diverse expertise and competences and gender balanced, and will consist of VHIR internal and external professionals.

During the interview, the Evaluation Committee will consider, within other aspects:

- Candidate background
- Research project
- Interpersonal skills

To know more information, please review Annex 2 "Phase 2 Evaluation Criteria".

Candidates will be provided by the responsible office with a guide of the topics that need to be covered during the presentation.

All interviews will be governed by the OMT-R (Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment) principles of the Foundation's Recruitment and Selection policy established by the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code), following equal opportunities policies.

Once the interview process is finished, the Selection Committee will make a prioritized list and top 4 candidates will be recommended for funding.

If two or more candidates have the same score, the tie will be resolved using the following criteria:

1. Candidates with the best score in the Phase 1: Candidate's assessment.
2. Candidates with the best score in the university studies' section.

5. APPLICATION AND DOCUMENTATION TO SUBMIT

Applications must be formalised by the applicant in his/her own name and interest and must be submitted by email to ajuts@vhir.org, within the period established in Clause 6 of the present call.

The candidate's application must be accompanied by the following documentation:

1. Excel Template attached to the dissemination email. The name of this document must be: "1.PhD Call_Excel Template_Surname".
2. Detailed curriculum vitae of the candidate in normalised format (i.e CVN). Candidates may use the [VHIR application](#) or the [FECYT application](#) for creating the document. The name of this document must be: "2.PhD Call_CVN_Surname".
3. Bachelor's degree diploma or proof of payment fee. The name of this document must be: "3.PhD Call_Bachelor diploma _Surname".

4. Academic certificate with the average grade of the bachelor's degree and the termination date. In the case of studies carried out abroad, ANECA certification as specified in Clause 2.f. The name of this document must be: "4.PhD Call_Bachelor grades _Surname".
5. Master's degree diploma or proof of payment fee. The name of this document must be: "5.PhD Call_Master diploma _Surname".
6. Academic certificate/record of master's degree studies, including average grade and termination date. The name of this document must be: "6.PhD Call_Master grades _Surname".
7. First page of the publications (and/or page(s) where the authors contribution appears). The name of this document must be: "7.PhD Call_Publications _Surname".
8. PDF document that accredits the candidate's non-academic internship periods, including start and end dates, and hours. The research institute should be identified, including Letterhead and/or Stamp of the institution and signature of the tutor/supervisor. The name of this document must be: "8.PhD Call_Interships _Surname".
9. PDF document that accredits the candidate's Erasmus+ internships, including start and end dates. The university should be identified, including Letterhead and/or Stamp of the institution and signature of the tutor/supervisor. The name of this document must be: "9.PhD Call_Erasmus _Surname".
10. PDF document that accredits other merits: dissemination activities, prizes, grants, certificate of languages, attendance to seminars or scientific congresses, including poster presentation in VHIR, etc.). The name of this document must be: "10.PhD Call_Other Merits_Surname".
11. If applicable, accreditation for the exceptional extension of the evaluable period for one of the reasons mentioned in Clause 2.d. of the Eligibility Criteria. The name of this document must be: "11.PhD Call_Extension _Surname".

Documentation must be sent numbered and named as indicated.

For the evaluation of the candidacies and for the resolution of the claims against the provisional and final lists of candidates, **it will be considered solely and exclusively those documents provided by the candidates together with their application.** The responsible unit will review the documentation to identify possible errors in proposals. **Amendments required by the responsible unit can be submitted during the first 48 hours after the deadline** for submitting the documentation. After the 48 hours-period, amendment of errors and/or omissions in the submission of documentation will not be admissible.

Each candidate will only be able to submit one application. The submission of more than one application will mean the rejection of all of them.

The submission of the application implies full acceptance of these terms and conditions.

6. DEADLINE TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS

Those candidates may submit their applications until October 2nd 2023 at 14h via email to ajuts@vhir.org with the following subject: **“VHIR PhD Call 2023 – Name of candidate”**.

Once received, an email will be sent to candidates confirming reception. The responsible unit will screen applicants against the requirements of the call to identify those applicants who do not meet the requirements, as well as suitability of the documents provided for the application.

7. FORMALISATION AND GRANT DURATION

The maximum period of acceptance of the grant may not exceed 10 calendar days from the date of publication of the final list.

The grant will have a duration of 4 years. Acceptance of the grant will be formalised by the signature of the corresponding employment contract (pre-doctoral modality) and will have a maximum duration of 4 years that cannot be extended within the framework of these grants, starting from the date of signing this contract between the beneficiary and VHIR.

The incorporation of the candidate will be between January 1st 2024 and April 1st 2024 (except for non EU-people that period could be extended until July 1st 2024).

The resignation from the PhD programme will entail the termination of the contract and the loss of the grant.

If the thesis is defended before the three-year period, the contract will be terminated.

8. ECONOMIC AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The VHIR PhD programme offers 4 fellowships for a 4-year pre-doctoral contract with the following contract expenses: 22.834,00 € for the first two years, 24.208,12 € for the third year, and 32.943,94 € for the fourth year, including gross annual salary, employer's cost of Social Security taxes, and termination of contract compensation.

Gross salaries provide full social security coverage, pension and unemployment benefits, and working conditions at VHIR also include:

- 23 working days of paid holidays per year plus 9 leave days for personal matters.
- Measures to reconcile work and family life, such as: Maternity and Paternity leave, leave for breastfeeding and flexible schedule working hours.

The beneficiaries of this program will have the right to receive the enrolment amount of the doctorate and of the thesis tutorial for the corresponding course, provided that this enrolment fee is from a public university.

9. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Rights and obligations of the beneficiary of the contract are:

- a. Guarantee the truthfulness of the data provided in their application and accept that any negligent or guilty falseness in them will lead to the exclusion of the candidacy from the selection process.
- b. In the event that the candidate is finally chosen, he or she can accept or reject the grant within the period established in the call.

If the person accepts the given grant and joins VHIR:

- c. Sign the pre-doctoral contract previously indicated and receive the applicable gross annual salary.
- d. To be considered VHIR's employee and researcher for all intents and purposes.
- e. To use the services offered by the VHIR and to participate in all its activities in accordance with its internal regulations, as a result of his/her researcher condition.
- f. The ownership of those patents and utility models and any other industrial and/or intellectual property rights obtained through the research work carried out by the beneficiary will correspond to VHIR. Nevertheless, the researcher may enjoy the copyright and property rights derived from his/her research activity as established by both the VHIR in force regulations and current legislation.
- g. The beneficiary of the contract will specifically agree to comply with VHIR regulations, in particular with those matters regarding data protection, professional ethics, public procurement and, in general, on any other relevant aspect related to the Foundation.
- i. Candidates must have the pre-admission to a doctoral studies programme at the time of starting the grant. Candidates must enrol on the doctoral studies programme in the first official enrolment, no later than September 2024.
- h. To acknowledge the present PhD fellowship funding in publications and thesis.
- i. The host PI and the candidate commit to involve the candidate in institutional activities if the VHIR's Direction requires so, including, but not limited to, participation in the VHIR Scientific Day, outreach activities and participation of the PhD student in VHIR committees and commissions that may require the presence of the predoctoral researchers.

VHIR's rights and obligations are:

- a. To comply with the rules of the present call.
- b. To provide an employment contract to the beneficiary of this call, using the contractual form determined by the VHIR HR Management, in accordance with its internal regulations applicable.
- c. To comply with the corresponding legal obligations regarding Social Security and Occupational Risk Prevention.
- d. To offer the researcher those VHIR's own services, according to the Foundation's internal regulations.
- e. To inform the researcher of all applicable regulations.

10. GRANT INCOMPATIBILITIES

These grants will be incompatible with any other employment contract.

11. GRANT ASSIGNMENT

The acceptance of the grant will be formalised by the signature of the corresponding employment contract (pre-doctoral modality) between VHIR and the candidate, according to Clauses 7 and 8 of this document.

12. PERSONAL DATA

By submitting their application, candidates agree to become part of the VHIR's record and files with the aim to manage and process the assessment, granting, awarding, payment and monitoring of the grant, according to the present call.

Applicants may exercise their rights of access, rectification, cancellation or opposition of their data by writing to the VHIR Management (Passeig Vall d'Hebron, 119-129, Edifici Mediterrània, 2a planta, 08035 Barcelona) together with a copy of their ID.

13. RESIGNATIONS AND REPLACEMENTS

In the event that the candidate is a beneficiary of any other type of similar scholarship in the period between the VHIR grant deadline and the six months after the grant is awarded, he/she must resign from the VHIR scholarship, which will be awarded to the first reserve candidate.

The beneficiary of the grant must give written notice to the address ajuts@vhir.org in order to interrupt the VHIR grant. Same procedure must be followed in case of voluntary resignation for any other matter. Failure to comply with this obligation will result in the loss of the grant and the inherent benefits, and will generate the right of VHIR to require the candidate to refund the inappropriately paid amounts.

If the resignation occurs within 6 months from the start of the pre-doctoral contract, the Evaluation Committee may agree to substitute the candidate in accordance with the order of the final list.

14. GRANTS MONITORING

For the annual and final monitoring of the grants, the beneficiary research staff must submit the following documents to the Teaching Unit according to the scheduled calendar:

Annual report: a scientific report on the activities carried out by the beneficiary research staff and their results, as well as the work plan for the next year, duly approved by the responsible PI should be presented a year after starting the contract and annually.

Non-presenting or getting an unfavourable evaluation of the annual report will mean the interruption of the grant and may mean the loss of it and its benefits if it is not duly amended at the request of VHIR.

Final report: No later than 3 months after the end of the PhD programme, the beneficiary research staff will present a final report which will include all the work carried out and its results, with a special reference to the results of the doctoral thesis and the objectives achieved by means of the training programme. In addition, a copy of all publications, articles and works that may derive from this work and the results obtained will be also given to VHIR.

Beneficiary also undertakes to provide VHIR with all the information that this may require about the thesis development, relevant accomplishments and merits achieved due to the fellow granted.

Failure to comply with this obligation may result in the loss of the rights to obtain any future grant called by the Foundation.

Begoña Benito

Director

Vall d'Hebron University Hospital Foundation – Research Institute

Barcelona, July 27th, 2023

Annex 1: Phase 1 evaluation criteria

Candidate's assessment (70%)														
Description		Points												
1. University studies' grades (80 points)	Bachelor's degree average grade: 80% of 80 points Master's degree average grade: 20% of 80 points	80												
2. Other merits (20 points)	Publications Up to a maximum of 8 points will be appointed for indexed publications (original articles and reviews). A maximum of 1 review is accepted. Only publications indexed in the JCR of 2022 will be accepted. The JCR that will be used for these calculations will be from 2022. Publications will be scored as follows: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>First author</th> <th>Second or subsequent author</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>First Decile</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Quartile</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Second Quartile</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Other publications: Non-indexed publications, including book chapters, letters, opinion articles or consortiums' articles will account for 0,5 points per publication.		First author	Second or subsequent author	First Decile	8	2	First Quartile			Second Quartile	4	2	8
		First author	Second or subsequent author											
First Decile	8	2												
First Quartile														
Second Quartile	4	2												
Non-academic internships	Up to 5 points will be scored for extra-curricular internships outside the academic record. International internships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • < 375 h (from 1 to 3 months) = 1 • 375-750 h (> 3 to 6 months) = 2 • 750 -1500 h (>6 to 12 months) = 4 • >1500 h (>12 months) = 5 	5												

		<p>National internships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 160-480 h (from 1 to 3 months) = 0.5 • 480-960 h (> 3 to 6 months) = 1 • 960-1920 h (>6 to 12 months) = 2 • >1920 h (>12 months) = 2.5 	
	Erasmus+ Programme	<p>Up to 4 points will be scored for Erasmus+ internships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 1 point for Erasmus+ students that only take theoretical subjects • Up to 3 points for Erasmus+ students that develop their bachelor/master thesis in a laboratory • Up to 4 points for Erasmus+ students that attend to theoretical subjects and develop laboratory work during the internship 	4
	Other merits	<p>Dissemination activities (broadcast via social media, newspapers, participation in Research Night, scientific workshops, round tables, educational scientific talks in schools, patients' associations, etc...), prizes, grants, certificate of languages, attendance to seminars or scientific congresses, including poster presentation in VHIR scientific day, etc.</p>	3

Annex 2: Phase 2 Evaluation Criteria

Candidate's assessment (30%)			
		Description	Points
Background		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the candidate: university studies, mobility, scientific divulgation activities, etc. 	10
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation statement to undertake a PhD 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career expectations of the candidate 	
Project	State of the art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are well identified, classified and linked with appropriate criteria. 	10
	Hypothesis and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main goal of the research project is exposed clearly, is relevant and is based on evidence. • Objectives are unambiguously expressed and presented in a proper order. 	
	Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology is well described and argued. 	
General aspects and communication skills	Formal aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation includes clear and useful graphic elements, such as graphics and infographics. 	10
	Organization and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical and cohesive structure of the explanation. Speaker begins the speech presenting itself. Good use of connectors to organize the speech and ensure it is perceived as a whole. Slides and complementary material are well organized and useful to support the speech and help the comprehension. 	
	Discussion and dealing with questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is able to answer accurately and successfully the questions proposed. 	
	Non-verbal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication, dissemination and discussion skills. Confident and effective body language. The speaker makes eye contact with the audience to hold their attention. Use an adequate rhythm and projection of voice. Good intonation and emphasis that reinforce the message and help the audience to capture important ideas. Good use of laser pointer. 	
	Use of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of time. Very good distribution of time within different parts of the speech 	