

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A RESEARCH INITIATION FELLOWSHIP

Title: Research Initiation Fellowship; 1 vacancy

Reference: BII/miPEP2Protect-CBMA/2026

A call for applications is open for 1 research initiation grant, within the scope of the I&D project “miPEP2Protect – Exploring a non-mature miRNA-encoded peptide (miPEP) as a bio-based strategy to protect grapevine against the devastating trunk disease «Esca»”, ref. COMPETE2030-FEDER-00756300, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), through the Competitiveness and Internationalisation Operational Programme (POCI) - COMPETE 2030, Portugal 2030, and by national funds through *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* – FCT I.P under the following conditions:

Scientific Area: Biological Sciences

Recipient category: students who are enrolled in a Master’s or Bachelor’s degree programme or, alternatively, graduates enrolled in a non-degree course integrated into the educational project of a higher education institution.

- a) Research initiation grants (BII) are intended for initial I&D activities by students enrolled in a higher vocational technical course, a bachelor's degree, an integrated master's degree or a master's degree, with the aim of starting their scientific training by taking part in I&D projects to be developed in national institutions.
- b) Research initiation scholarships (BII) can also be used to carry out initial I&D activities by graduates enrolled in non-academic degree courses as part of the educational project of a higher education institution.

Requirement for granting the fellowship:

- Candidates may apply without prior enrollment in the course for which the scholarship is open. The requirement to be enrolled on a degree or non-degree course will be verified on the date the scholarship is awarded.
- Scholarships will only be contracted if the successful candidates present valid proof of enrolment on a degree or non-degree course, depending on the type of scholarship being applied for, issued by a Higher Education Institution, respectively indicating the academic year in progress or its duration (start and end).

Applicants’ eligibility:

Applicants must meet the eligibility conditions set out in Article 9º of the FCT I.P. Research Grant Regulations (2019), nº 950/2019, of 16-12-2019, of FCT I.P.

Nationals or citizens of other European Union member states, third-country nationals, stateless persons, and citizens with political refugee status are eligible to apply for this competition.

Candidate eligibility requirements:

a) mandatory requirements: To be attending or to have attended a Bachelor's/Master's degree in Biology, Biochemistry or related fields;

b) preferential factors: Preference will be given to candidates who can demonstrate knowledge and/or experience in biology, biochemistry or plant physiology acquired through their academic background, or possibly in related subfields, such as genetics or microbiology. Excellent command of spoken and written English, initiative, ability to carry out rigorous work, and a strong aptitude for teamwork will be valued. Candidates must be available to travel in order to carry out field activities, if required.

Workplan and objectives to be achieved:

The selected candidate will carry out R&D activities within the scope of the “miPEP2Protect” project, in Activity 3, “Metagenomics and characteristic visual symptoms analyses to assess the anti-Esca effect of exogenously applied miPEP-WRKY8 in controlled conditions”, with the aim of consolidating their scientific training and contributing to the advancement of the project objectives.

The work plan will explore the potential of miPEP-WRKY8 as an innovative strategy to reduce the progression of Esca disease in grapevine, combining trials with grapevine cuttings with *ex vivo* approaches and *in vitro* models. The fellowship holder will participate in the establishment and monitoring of assays with grapevine plant material treated with the micropeptide and inoculated with fungi associated with Esca, including the assessment of symptoms, plant tissue responses and infection progression. The work will also include co-culture assays between fungi and grapevine cells *in vitro*, enabling the plant-pathogen interaction and the antifungal effect of miPEP-WRKY8 to be studied under controlled conditions. Microbiology techniques, such as fungal isolation and characterisation, and molecular biology approaches, including DNA/RNA extraction, PCR, qPCR and fungal identification by ITS barcoding, will be applied. This task will provide the student with hands-on contact with current methodologies in plant microbiology, plant biology, cell culture, plant-microorganism interaction and sustainable grapevine protection.

The work plan will contribute to consolidating the fellow's scientific training within the framework of the degree-conferring course or academic diploma, as well as to the development of transferable skills relevant to academic and professional careers.

Applicable legislation and regulations: Research Fellow Statute (EBI), approved by Law n°. 40/2004 of August 18, in its current wording and FCT Research Fellowship Regulation, approved by Regulation n° 950/2019, published in the Diário da República, 2nd series, of December 16, 2019, in its current wording, and Scientific Research Fellowship Regulation (RBIC) of the University of Minho, approved by order n° 4998/2025, published in the Diário da República, 2nd series, n° 81, of April 28, 2025 Amended and republished through amendment statement no. 634/2025/2, published in the Official Gazette, 2nd series, no. 132, of July 11.

Host/Contracting institution and scientific supervision: The work plan will be developed at the Centre of Molecular and Environmental Biology (CBMA) of the School of Sciences of the University of Minho (CBMA), located at the Gualtar Campus, Braga, under the scientific supervision of Doctor Artur Jorge da Silva Conde, Assistant Researcher at the Centre of Molecular and Environmental Biology of the School of Sciences of the University of Minho (CBMA), and under the coordination of Professor Maria Cláudia Gonçalves da Cunha Pascoal, director of the host institution.

Fellowship duration: The grant will take place for a period of 12 months, with a provisional starting date in September 2026, and is non-renewable.

Amount of the research grant: The amount of the grant corresponds to 701.12€/month, according to the FCT fellowship value table in the country (<https://www.fct.pt/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Tabela-de-Valores-SMM-2026.pdf>) and to the table of values of the Research Grants of the University of Minho, updated annually by decision of the Management Board.

Payment is made until the 23rd of each month, through bank transfer to the fellowship holder's NIB indicated in the contracting process.

Other benefits: Reimbursement of Voluntary Social Insurance, if the candidate chooses to receive it, corresponding to the 1st level of discounts (for research grants with a total duration 6 months or higher) and personal accident insurance.

Exclusivity regime: The grantee will perform the activities under exclusivity, as foreseen in article 5° of the Research Fellow Statutes and applicable regulations.

Selection panel:

President: Artur Jorge da Silva Conde, Assistant Researcher at the Centre of Molecular and Environmental Biology (CBMA) of the School of Sciences of the University of Minho;

Effective members:

Hernâni Varanda Gerós, Associate Professor with Aggregation, Department of Biology, School of Sciences, University of Minho;

Richard Maykel Gonçalves Breia, Junior Researcher at the Centre of Molecular and Environmental Biology (CBMA) of the School of Sciences of the University of Minho.

Substitute members:

Rui Pedro Soares de Oliveira, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, School of Sciences, University of Minho;

Ana Cristina Gomes Cunha, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, School of Sciences, University of Minho;

The first effective member will substitute the President of the selection panel in case of impediment, being nominate the first substitute member in the place of the first effective member.

Criteria and procedures for applications assessment and selection: The applications assessment will focus on the candidate's Merit, following evaluation criteria, valued on a scale of 0 to 5 values:

Applicant Merit - AM (100%):

A1 - Academic path (considering the classifications of academic degrees), with a weighting of 40%;

A2 - Personal curriculum (considering professional and scientific background), with a weighting of 40%;

A3 - Motivation letter, with a weighting of 20%.

The final classification of the applicant's merit with the achieved through the following formula:

$$AM=(A1*0.4) + (A2*0.4) + (A3*0.2)$$

Note: Applicants with degrees obtained abroad must present proof of recognition of qualifications in Portugal and conversion of the final classification obtained in them to the Portuguese classification scale or declaration under the terms indicated in the following point. Candidates who do not comply with one of these provisions, the selection panel will assign "0" in the grade of the graduation and/or master course. Candidates will be evaluated on the remaining parameters.

Application deadline and submission: The call for applications is open for a period of 10 working days from the date of publication on the Euraxess portal.

Applications must be submitted by email to bolsas@ecum.uminho.pt, indicating the reference number of the competition in the subject line: **BII/miPEP2Protect-CBMA/2026**. Only applications submitted within the established deadline and accompanied by the following documents will be accepted:

- a) Candidate's updated curriculum vitae, including the candidate's electronic contacts;

- b) **If applicable**, certificates of the academic degrees obtained or the candidate's declaration of honor that he/she has completed the degrees required in the notice by the application deadline.

For degrees obtained abroad, the record of recognition of the academic degrees and record of the conversion of the respective final classification to the Portuguese classification scale must be presented, or, alternatively, a declaration of honor from the candidate.

This declaration must attest to facts that occurred prior to the application. In the event of a discrepancy between the information contained in the declaration and the documentation submitted for the purposes of contracting the scholarship, only the information contained in the latter will be considered. If it is found that the documents proving the academic degree and diploma, or their recognition under the terms of Decree-Law n. ° 66/2018, of August 16, do not correspond to the classifications awarded in the assessment of the academic career and may consequently alter the candidate's ranking, the scholarship will not be contracted;

- c) Detailed list of grades obtained in the curricular units attended (in PDF format);
d) Letter of motivation;
e) Other documents that the candidate considers relevant to the evaluation process.

Form of publication/notification of results: The results of the evaluation are published in a single list by final score obtained, posted in a visible and public place in the host unit, as well as by email to all candidates, attaching, for this purpose, the minutes of the jury's deliberations, within a maximum period of 90 working days from the deadline for submission of applications.

Candidates are informed, at a preliminary hearing, in accordance with Articles 121 and 122 of the Administrative Procedure Code, of the likely outcome of the final decision, and may comment within 10 working days of this notification.

An appeal may be lodged against the final decision within 15 working days, or an appeal may be lodged with the highest executive body of the funding entity within 30 days, both after the respective notification (Article 12(n°6) of the FCT Research Grant Regulations).

Within 10 working days of notification of the grant award, the applicant must declare their acceptance in writing. In case of non-acceptance, the next highest ranked applicant will be notified immediately.

Fellowship contractualization: The scholarship is awarded through the signing of a contract between the University of Minho and the scholarship recipient, in accordance with point 2.4 of the Rules for the Award and Management of Scholarships

https://www.fct.pt/wpcontent/uploads/2022/03/Normas_de_Atribuicao_de_Bolsas_2021.pdf and the draft contract in Annex II of the University of Minho's Scientific Research Scholarship Regulations.

The contract can only be signed after receipt of all the documentation required for the type of scholarship, which must occur within a maximum period of 6 months, including proof of academic degrees or diplomas, as well as enrollment in non-degree study cycles or courses, as applicable.

Once all the documentation has been received, the contracting entity has 60 working days to sign the scholarship contract. Once received by the scholarship holder, the contract must be returned, duly signed, within 15 working days.

Term and cancellation of fellowship contracts: Without prejudice to the other causes provided for in the FCT I.P. Research Grant Regulations and the Research Grant Holder's Statute, the grant will cease on completion of the contracted work plan, as well as on expiry of the period for which it was granted or renewed.

The **final report** must be submitted to the scientific advisor, in accordance with the defined objectives and evaluation criteria, no later than 60 working days after the end of the scholarship and must be drawn up in accordance with Annex I of the Regulations of the University of Minho.

Non-discrimination and equal access policy: Universidade do Minho actively promotes a policy of non-discrimination and equal access, so that no candidate may be privileged, benefited, harmed or deprived of any right or exempt from any duty due, namely, to ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, economic situation, education, social origin or condition, genetic heritage, reduced working capacity, disability, chronic illness, nationality, ethnic origin or race, territory of origin, language, religion, political or ideological convictions and trade union membership.

Declaration of Honor

Academic qualifications

I, (full name), candidate for the vacancy for the award of a (type of scholarship), within the scope of the project (name or reference of the project), published on the Euraxess portal, with the reference (ref. notice), declare on my honor that I have completed the academic degree of (academic degree), qualifying for the type of scholarship in the competition, namely the course (designation), by the (University conferring the degree), on the date XX/XX/XXXX, with a final average of XXXXX values on the YY scale.

As it is not possible for me to present proof of qualifications until the end of the competition, I declare that I undertake to present the aforementioned certificate at the moment of the scholarship contract, in the event that I am selected for the vacancy in the competition.

As this is true, I hereby date and sign this declaration.

(Place), (date).

(full name)

NOTE: The declaration may only attest to facts that occurred prior to the application.

In the event of a discrepancy between the information contained in the declaration and the documentation submitted for the purpose of contracting the scholarship, only the information contained in the latter will be taken into account.

Declaration of Honor

I, (full name), bearer of identification document number (XXXX), candidate for a research grant (type of grant), within the scope of the project (name or reference of the project), published on the Euraxess portal, with the reference (ref. call for proposals), declare on my honor that (I have not received any research grants to date / I have received the following research grants) under the Research Grant Holder Statute.

University	Financing Entity	Project	Type of grant	Duration	Start	End

As this is true, I hereby date and sign this declaration.

(Place), (date).

(full name)