

Retaining

Doctoral INPhINIT Fellowships at research centres and universities in Spain and Portugal

2025 Call for applications

Rules for *participation*



Introduction

The "la Caixa" Foundation, which firmly believes that scientific progress, research, mobility and professional qualification are key to the development of society, is launching a doctoral fellowships programme for young researchers of any nationality **at any university or research centre in Spain or Portugal**.

Furthermore, these fellowships are intended to provide researchers with additional training skills that will expand their possibilities for development in their professional careers, not only in the academia, but also in industry and entrepreneurship.



1. Call for applications

- 1.1. The "la Caixa" Foundation is offering **30 fellowships** to take up official doctoral studies at any university or research centre in Spain or Portugal.
- 1.2. The call for applications is intended for **the pursuit of a doctoral degree in all areas of knowledge**. Applicants must meet the admission requirements for a doctoral programme, fulfil the mobility criteria detailed in section 4.5, and **not have previously begun any doctoral studies**.
- 1.3. The fellowship is made effective when the selected candidates and the host institutions reach an agreement regarding their recruitment. Once an agreement has been reached, the host organisation will hire the fellow using the funds provided by the "la Caixa" Foundation.
- 1.4. Fellows should start at the host institutions **between September and November 2025**. Nevertheless, in duly justified cases, the "la Caixa" Foundation may allow this to be delayed until January 31 2026.
- 1.5. The fellowship has a **maximum duration of four years**. Having said that, it is granted for one year and in all cases includes the possibility of three renewals, provided that the follow-up reports requested on an annual basis are favourable.
- 1.6. The call for applications opens on the date it is published and closes on **February 18 2025 at 14:00h** (mainland Spain time).

2. Fellowship amount

2.1. The "la Caixa" Foundation will sign an agreement with the host institution, which will receive the fellowship payments directly. This amount must be wholly allocated to cover the fellow's costs as broken down below:

/ **€35,800** per year to cover the fellow's **labour costs**. This amount includes the Social Security cost and any other compulsory fee or compensation, whether current or that may be provided for in a future legal framework, that are linked to the fellow's labour contract, as well as the fellow's annual gross salary.

In any case, the **minimum annual gross salary** to be offered to the fellow by the host institution must be **€25,000**. If the total labour costs exceed the maximum amount offered by the "la Caixa" Foundation, the host institution will cover the excess.

In the case of being recruited by a Portuguese host institution, the economic conditions will be the same as those described above, regardless of the type of relationship established between the fellow and the host institution (employment contract or fellowship contract), in accordance with the current Portuguese legislation.

/ **€3,500** per year for **research costs** such as conferences, courses, research stays, consumables, equipment, charges for the use of intellectual property, etc. This amount will be managed by the host institution for the benefit of the fellow and must be justified separately.

/ The **tuition fees** to the official doctoral programme where the fellow will be admitted to.

2.2. The contractual relationship between the fellow and the host institution must comply at any time with the provisions of the host country's current legislation. **In any case, the start date of the contract must coincide with the start date of the fellowship.**

3. Complementary training

In addition to financial support, the fellowship includes a **training programme on transversal skills**, which has been specially designed by leading international institutions in the sector.

This programme includes aspects such as technology transfer, entrepreneurship, commercialisation of innovation, intellectual property, leadership, creativity, communication skills, teamwork, personal development, planning, assertiveness and networking.

Three sessions will be held over the duration of the fellowship. Each session will last between 3 and 5 days, and attendance is mandatory for all fellows. The "la Caixa" Foundation will cover all costs for these sessions, as well as the fellows' accommodation and travel expenses.

4. Requirements for applicants

4.1. Nationality

Young researchers of **any nationality** are eligible to apply for the Doctoral INPhINIT Retaining Fellowships Programme.

4.2. Studies pursued


Applicants must hold a higher education degree that makes them eligible to enrol in a doctoral programme before starting at their host institutions.

The host university will verify, upon starting the admission process to the doctoral programme, that the studies taken up by the selected candidates make them eligible to enrol in an official doctoral programme in accordance with the regulations in force in Spain or Portugal. Should they be found not eligible after verification, the fellowship will be withdrawn.

Candidates must not have been enrolled in a doctoral programme prior to the start of the fellowship.

4.3. Language proficiency

Applicants must accredit their proficiency in the English language by submitting any of the certificates mentioned below. **Under no circumstances will any other certificate be accepted**, despite being issued by the same organisations and/or accredit equivalence with any of the accepted levels.

English certificates accepted		
● Cambridge Certificates		
First Certificate in English	} Grade: A or B / Minimum score: 176	
Certificate in Advanced English	} Grade: A, B or C	
Certificate of Proficiency in English	} Grade: A, B or C	
IELTS or IELTS UKVI: Academic or General Training version	} Minimum score: 6,5	
Linguaskill online test	} Minimum score: 176	
● TOEFL: Internet-based test	} Minimum score: 83	
● Duolingo English Test	} Minimum score: 105	
● School of Modern Languages (EIM) of the University of Barcelona	} B2 level or higher *	
● Official Language Schools (EOI) in Spain	} B2 level or higher *	

** B2.1 certificates will not be accepted, since they accredit a lower level than B2.*

Candidates who are nationals of any of the countries listed below, as well as applicants who have pursued their bachelor's studies (minimum of 3 years on a full-time basis) or postgraduate studies (minimum of 2 years on a full-time basis) at any of these countries are **exempt from submitting the English language proficiency certificate**:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Canada*
- Dominica
- United States
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Ireland
- Jamaica
- Malta
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- South Africa
- Trinidad and Tobago

**Applicants who submit transcripts of academic records from Canada do not need to submit the English language proficiency certificate provided that their transcript of academic records shows that English was the language of instruction.*

4.4. Research experience

On the deadline for applications, applicants must still be within the **first four years** (full-time equivalent research experience) **of their research careers**.

4.5. Mobility

4.5.1 Candidates must have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of destination (Spain/Portugal) for more than twelve months in the three years immediately prior to the deadline for applications.

Short stays, such as holidays, spent in a country other than their country of usual residence (where they carried out their main activity), will be considered as time spent in their country of usual residence.

4.5.2 Candidates who are awarded a fellowship must enrol in a doctoral programme at a university that is different from where they took up their bachelor's studies.

5. *Application and documentation*

- 5.1.** Candidates must apply using the online application platform available in the “Fellowships” section on the “la Caixa” Foundation website.

On this platform, the different sections of the application form clearly specify all information and documentation that must be provided to complete an application to this fellowships programme.

The application must be completed entirely in English.

- 5.2.** Candidates must indicate their prospective doctoral studies in the “Studies to be pursued” section of the online application form. They will not be required to provide a confirmation of admission or an endorsement from the director of the doctoral programme indicated beforehand.

This information will be understood to be provisional and strict abidance to it is not implied, which means that during the selection process for the fellowship, candidates may continue exploring other alternatives that may better suit their personal goals.

- 5.3.** Using the application platform, candidates must complete the formalities to obtain, prior to the deadline for applications, **at least three reference letters** from university professors or other relevant individuals with whom they have had contact either academically or professionally. It is advisable for candidates to contact them as soon as possible to let them know that the “la Caixa” Foundation will get in touch with them through an online procedure. This procedure makes it possible to request and attach up to five reference letters to the application form, provided that they arrive before the deadline for applications (February 18 2025 at 14:00h, mainland Spain time).

The reference letters must be written in English and preferably sent from an institutional e-mail address.

These reference letters are confidential. Under no circumstances will the “la Caixa” Foundation provide access to their contents, regardless of the final outcome of the selection process for this fellowships programme.

5.4. Academic records

Candidates must include the transcripts of academic records for the studies that make them eligible for a doctoral programme (bachelor's degree compulsorily, and master's degree, if applicable), preferably in the Diploma Supplement format. In any case, the student's name and surname(s), the university, the studies pursued, and all subjects and marks, year by year, must appear.

Note that if these studies have been completed by the deadline for applications, **the credits awarded and the total number of credits for the degree** must also appear. If these studies are still in progress, candidates must submit the transcript of records in its current status upon submission of the application.

Candidates may optionally include information about other degrees they hold (bachelor's, master's, etc.). Transcripts for these degrees must be submitted with the application.

- 5.5. Documents uploaded to the application platform in PDF format must be clear and legible. Similarly, each page of the original document must correspond to a page in the PDF document.
- 5.6. If the documents uploaded to the application platform were issued in a language other than English, **a translation into English**, which can be done by the candidate, must be attached.
- 5.7. The application platform makes it possible to submit the application even though it does not include accreditation of the English proficiency level by the deadline for applications (February 18 2025 at 14:00h, mainland Spain time). In this case, the applicant should likewise finalise and submit the application before the established deadline, but they have until March 4 2025 at 23:59h (mainland Spain time) to submit the accreditation, which must be appended to their application in PDF format, directly through the application platform.
- 5.8. The applicants who wish to do so, and particularly those in the artistic disciplines, may include links to online content showing their works or portfolio in their application.

6. Selection process

The evaluation and selection of applications will be carried out on a competitive basis, taking into consideration the European Science Foundation's recommendations published in the Peer Review Guide. The members of the shortlisting and selection committees choose the best candidates according to the evaluation criteria.

6.1. The process is comprised of three parts:

- a. **Eligibility screening:** all applications received are screened and applications that do not fulfil the criteria published in the call for applications rules are rejected.

Should an application not fulfil the formal requirements of the call for applications, the "la Caixa" Foundation will send a notification by e-mail specifying the reason for its rejection.

- b. **Shortlisting:** each of the eligible applications is sent to a remote evaluation panel made up of two or three professors or researchers with broad experience in the discipline of the application and an extensive list of publications and/or contributions within this field. The applications that receive the highest scores from each panel will pass to the next stage.

The "la Caixa" Foundation will notify candidates whether they have been shortlisted or not by e-mail on **May 19 2025**.

Shortlisted applicants are encouraged to reach out to the host organisations they are interested in if they haven't already done so.

- c. **Interviews:** candidates whose applications have passed the shortlisting stage will be called in for an interview before a multidisciplinary committee comprised of professors and researchers with extensive experience in selection processes by peer review.

The interviews will be held remotely on **June 11, 12 and 13 2025**.

They will be conducted entirely in English.

On the day of the interview, each candidate must show their original ID or passport. Otherwise, they will be rejected.

The "la Caixa" Foundation will notify interviewed candidates of the outcome of the process by e-mail on **June 25 2025**.

The dates scheduled for the selection interviews or for the notification of the results may vary due to organisational reasons. In case this occurs, candidates will be immediately notified by e-mail.

- 6.2. The evaluation criteria that govern the selection process can be found in the "Selection process" section of this fellowships programme [website](#).

7. *Redress Procedure*

- 7.1. Within 7 calendar days from the date the rejection notification is sent, candidates may submit a redress by sending an e-mail to fellowships@contact.fundaciolacaixa.org, which must include an explanatory text together with the documents that the candidate deems appropriate.
- 7.2. Redresses will be resolved by a redress committee. Resolutions will be sent by e-mail within 10 calendar days from the date of receipt of the redress.
- 7.3. The redress procedure is strictly confidential.
- 7.4. The technical or scientific appraisal of the evaluators cannot be called into question. The selection and evaluation processes themselves ensure the independence and the objectivity of the evaluation.

8. *Resolution of the call*

- 8.1. The final list of candidates chosen as fellows, as well as the candidates on the reserve list, when applicable, will be published with their names and surnames on the "la Caixa" Foundation website on **June 25 2025**.
- 8.2. Should there be any fellowships declined, these will be offered to the candidates on the reserve list, according to the order established in each case.
- 8.3. The "la Caixa" Foundation reserves the right to not grant all the fellowships available, if so proposed by the selection committees.
- 8.4. To be admitted as a fellow, the candidate must start at the host organisation no later than **November 30 2025**. In duly justified cases authorised by the "la Caixa" Foundation, this can be delayed until January 31 2026 at the latest. Once this date has passed, the fellowship may no longer be availed of.

- 8.5. The fellow must enrol in a doctoral programme at a Spanish or Portuguese university in accordance with the legislation in force.
- 8.6. To be considered fellows, **selected candidates must obtain the admission to the doctoral programme for which they applied for**. If not, they will lose the right to the fellowship.

9. *Incompatibilities*

- 9.1. Individuals who have already availed of a postgraduate fellowship from the "la Caixa" Foundation or individuals who were previously awarded a fellowship but declined it without any duly justified circumstance of illness or a reason of force majeure cannot apply for this fellowship.
- 9.2. Candidates applying for this fellowship will not have the option to simultaneously apply for another "la Caixa" Foundation fellowships programme of the same call.
- 9.3. Individuals who have already started a doctoral programme before the beginning of the Doctoral INPhINIT Retaining fellowship cannot apply for this programme.
- 9.4. These fellowships are exclusively for in-person studies, that is, to train and do research at the host institution's facilities, with fellows completely devoting themselves to their studies on a full-time basis.
- 9.5. Industrial doctorates are excluded from this call for applications.
- 9.6. If a candidate cannot attend the final interview which they have been invited to, they must notify it well in advance so the "la Caixa" Foundation can offer their slot to another applicant. Otherwise, they will not be able to submit applications to other calls, unless they can provide reasonable grounds for their nonappearance.
- 9.7. Under no circumstances may applicants contact the experts who are taking part or have taken part in the selection processes of this call for applications to ask them for information regarding the status of their application or any other aspect related to the selection process. Should this occur, the candidate will be disqualified from this and future selection processes.
- 9.8. These fellowships are incompatible with any other paid work, grant, or financial aid from any other organisation, unless expressly authorised by the "la Caixa" Foundation.

10. *Management of the fellowship and obligations of fellows*

- 10.1. The applicants who are awarded a fellowship should preferably be a current account or bankbook holder at any CaixaBank or BPI branch office, when applicable, which is where the host institution will deposit the monthly payments and any other amount included in the fellowship.
- 10.2. The fellow's host organisation will manage and administer the amounts that the "la Caixa" Foundation allocates each year for the fellowship.
- 10.3. At the request of the "la Caixa" Foundation, the selected candidates must accredit, through original documents, certified photocopies of them or verification via their university's official website, the files attached to their applications. Likewise, the "la Caixa" Foundation may ask them for the original certificates confirming any information mentioned in their application.

- 10.4. At the request of the "la Caixa" Foundation, and for the purpose of ensuring fulfilment with the terms and conditions of the fellowship, fellows must provide all academic and economic information related to their contracts that the "la Caixa" Foundation deems necessary or they must authorise their host organisation to provide it.
- 10.5. Fellows undertake to complete the doctoral studies covered by the fellowship. Upon their completion, they must send the "la Caixa" Foundation a copy of their doctoral degree by e-mail.
- 10.6. The research project carried out by the fellow must comply with the EU's ethical principles as well as the legislation applicable in this field.

11. *Privacy and data protection policy*

Fellowship applicants will be duly informed, within the framework of the application process, about the processing of their personal data, as well as about the exercise of their rights regarding the protection of personal data in accordance with the provisions of Article 13 and following of the General Data Protection Regulation.

12. *Further remarks*

- 12.1. All deadlines and times included in these rules are in mainland Spain time.
- 12.2. The submission of an application for these fellowships implies all candidates' express acceptance of these rules, as well as the criteria and decisions that the "la Caixa" Foundation may make in case of any doubts regarding how to interpret the requirements and terms and conditions contained herein.
- 12.3. Detection of any noncompliance with these rules, regardless of when this occurs and the status in which the application is found within the fellowship shortlisting, selection or awarding process, will result in the automatic cancellation of the application or the fellowship, should it have been already awarded.
- 12.4. Should the fellow not fulfil the obligations arising from these rules, or any other obligation included among the terms and conditions of the fellowship, the "la Caixa" Foundation reserves the right to act as it deems appropriate, including requesting reimbursement of the amounts received. The fellow will not be able to apply for another fellowship in future calls or any of the fellowships programmes of the "la Caixa" Foundation.
- 12.5. The "la Caixa" Foundation shall not be responsible for the content and results of the studies or research project, including any documentation and information related to it, notwithstanding the methods used for its creation (e.g., Artificial Intelligence tools). In this regard, in the creation of said content and results it shall be guaranteed the following: (i) compliance with all applicable current regulations, (ii) non-infringement of third-party rights of any kind, and (iii) the application of the best ethical practices. Furthermore, within the framework of this call, the "la Caixa" Foundation shall be exempted from any liability to third parties, arising from the breach of the foregoing.