

— *Call for applications 2021* —

***Doctoral INPhINIT  
Fellowships  
Incoming***  
*at research centres  
of excellence in Spain  
and Portugal*



"la Caixa" Foundation

# Doctoral INPhINIT Fellowships – Incoming

— Call 2021 —

## 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 fellowship programme for young researchers of any nationality to carry out a doctorate in **the fields of health and life sciences, technology, physics, engineering and mathematics in Spain or Portugal at accredited centres with the Severo Ochoa or María de Maeztu distinction of excellence, any centre of the Carlos III Health Institute, and units considered to be excellent by the Foundation for Science and Technology in 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 **35 fellowships** to take up official doctoral studies at accredited centres with the Severo Ochoa or María de Maeztu distinction of excellence, any centre of the Carlos III Health Institute, and units considered to be excellent and exceptional by the Foundation for Science and Technology in Portugal participating in this programme.
- 1.2. The call for applications is intended for **the pursuit of a doctoral degree in the fields of technology, engineering, physics, mathematics, life and health sciences** and is aimed at individuals who fulfil the requirements to be admitted into a doctoral programme, provided that they also fulfil the mobility requirements detailed in section 4.5 and that they have not previously enrolled in the doctoral studies applied for.
- 1.3. The research centres have published the **predoctoral fellowship positions they have available**. These can be viewed on the “la Caixa” Foundation website. Candidates should state their preferred predoctoral position on their fellowship application on a **provisional basis**. Likewise, the predoctoral position stated on the application will not be binding and may be modified by the candidates that are finally selected.

- 1.4. The fellowship is made effective when the selected candidates and the host institutions reach an agreement regarding their admission.
- 1.5. Fellows should start at the research centres in the **predoctoral fellowship position agreed upon** between **September and November 2021**. Nevertheless, in duly justified cases, the "la Caixa" Foundation may allow this to be delayed until 31 January 2022.
- 1.6. The fellowships have a maximum duration of three years. Having said that, they are granted for one year and in all cases include the possibility of two renewals, provided that the follow-up reports requested on an annual basis are favourable. If the thesis defence takes place before the three years of the fellowship are up, the fellowship will end on the same day of the defence.
- 1.7. The call for applications opens on the date it is published and closes on **4 February 2021 at 14:00** (mainland Spain time).

## 2. Fellowship amount

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- 2.1. The maximum total payment amount will be €122,592, as broken down below:
  - Three annual payments of €34,800 each. Where applicable, the amounts corresponding to the Social Security contributions payable by the employer (in this case, the host institution), as well as any other compulsory fee, whether current or that may be provided for in a future legal framework, will be deducted from the yearly gross amount of €34,800 to be received by the fellow.
  - €3,564 per year, as an additional amount for conferences, courses, research stays, consumables, equipment, charges for the use of intellectual property, etc. This additional amount will be managed by the centre for the benefit of the fellow and must be justified separately.

The "la Caixa" Foundation will award a prize of €7,500, which will be paid in the fourth year, **should the fellow be able to deposit their thesis within 6 months after the third year of their fellowship has ended.**
- 2.2. The "la Caixa" Foundation will sign an agreement with the host institution, which will receive the fellowship payment directly. This must be wholly allocated to cover the amounts arising from Social Security contributions and other required corporate expenses payable by the employer, where applicable, as well as the fellow's gross stipend and the additional amount.
- 2.3. The employment relationship between the fellow and the research centre must comply with the provisions of current legislation at any time.

The Portuguese host organisations, whenever possible, should recruit each fellow under an employment contract. In case fellowship contracts must be issued, the fellowship amount might be decreased.

## 3. Complementary training

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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: at the start of the fellowship, during the second year, and during the third year. 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

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### 4.1. Nationality

Young researchers of **any nationality** are eligible to apply for the Doctoral INPhINIT Fellowships – Incoming programme.

### 4.2. Studies pursued

All individuals who hold a higher education degree when they start at the host institutions, which allows them to enrol in an official doctoral programme in accordance with the regulations in force, are eligible to apply for the fellowship. This official university degree may be conferred by a university in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) or a non-EHEA-adapted one. In the latter case, studies taken up should make the individuals eligible to take up doctoral studies in the country where they earned their degree.

In any case, the host university should verify upon starting the admission process to the doctoral programme that the studies taken up by 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. Under no circumstances may candidates have previously enrolled in the same doctoral studies for which they are applying for 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.

- **TOEFL:** minimum score of 83 for the Internet-based test.
- **University of Cambridge:** minimum score of 173 (First Certificate in English grade A or B, Certificate in Advanced English or Certificate of Proficiency in English) or the Linguaskill online test.
- **IELTS:** minimum score of 6.5, in the Academic or General Training version.
- **School of Modern Languages (EIM) of the University of Barcelona:** B2 level or higher, either taking the online English accreditation test (PAI online) or other exam formats.
- **Official Language Schools (EOI) in Spain:** Certificate of Competence at the Advanced Level (pre-Bologna Process) or Certificate of B2 Advanced Level (Bologna Process), completed and passed.

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) or postgraduate studies (minimum of 2 years) at any of these countries are **exempt from submitting the English language proficiency certificate**:

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

*\*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. They must also not have any previous doctoral degree**, and not be in a position to apply for it.

#### 4.5. Mobility

Candidates who wish to join a Spanish centre or university cannot have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Spain for more than twelve months in the three years immediately prior to the deadline for applications.

Candidates who wish to join a Portuguese centre or university cannot have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in 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.

## 5. Application and documentation

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- 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 fellowship programme.

**The application must be completed entirely in English.**

- 5.2.** Candidates must indicate their preferred predoctoral position which they would like to get in the “Studies to be pursued” section via the application platform. They will not be required to provide a confirmation of admission or an endorsement from the director of the predoctoral fellowship position 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 different options among all the predoctoral positions available.

- 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 (4 February 2021 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 fellowship programme.

- 5.4. Academic records**

Candidates should include the transcripts of academic records for the studies that make them eligible for a doctoral programme (*licenciatura*, bachelor’s or *diplomatura* degrees compulsorily, and master’s degree, if applicable). The student’s name and surname(s), the

university, the studies pursued, and all subjects and marks, year by year, must appear. If these studies have been completed by the deadline for applications, **the total number of credits for the degree and the credits awarded** must also appear. It is preferable for this certificate to be in the Diploma Supplement format. Should this information not appear on the transcript of academic records, the degree (or the request for diploma) should also be submitted.

Candidates may optionally include the transcripts of academic records for any other degrees they hold (bachelor's, master's, etc.) to the same document.

### 5.5. Explanatory document

Additionally, it will be necessary to attach an explanatory document certifying that the candidate is eligible to apply for a doctoral programme in the country where they earned the degree that makes them eligible to apply for it in the following cases:

**5.5.1** When the studies that make them eligible to apply for an official doctoral programme do not reach 300 ECTS credits, of which at least 60 credits must be at master's level.

**5.5.2** When the studies that make them eligible to apply for an official doctoral programme were taken up at a university outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This explanatory document may be an official description of the country's educational system issued by the university or published on its website, or the admissions requirements to the university's doctoral programme.

In any case, once the fellowship has been granted, the Spanish or Portuguese host university will verify the equivalence of the candidate's studies in relation to the degrees in the Spanish or Portuguese educational system which make them eligible for the doctoral programme in Spain or Portugal. **Should they be found not eligible after verification, the fellowship will be withdrawn.**

**The "la Caixa" Foundation reserves the right to request an explanatory document from any candidate, when deemed necessary to shed more light on their academic situation.**

- 5.6.** 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.
- 5.7.** 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.
- 5.8.** The application platform makes it possible to finalise an application even though it does not include accreditation of the English proficiency level by the deadline for applications (4 February 2021 at 14:00h, mainland Spain time). In this case, the applicant should likewise finalise and send the application before the established deadline, but they have until 18 February 2021 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.

## 6. Selection process

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The evaluation and selection of applications will be carried out taking into consideration the European Science Foundation's recommendations published in the *Peer Review Guide* and are awarded on a competitive basis. The members of the shortlisting and selection committees choose the best candidates according to the selection 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. Remote evaluation (preselection):** each of the eligible applications is sent to an 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 **22 April 2021**.

It is advisable for applicants to contact the host organisations they are interested in once they have been shortlisted.

- c. Final evaluation (selection):** 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 in Barcelona on **25, 26 and 27 May 2021**.

In any case, candidates can always choose to be interviewed remotely, if this is what they prefer. The interviews 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 **7 June 2021**.

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.

Should attending the interview entail travel and/or accommodation expenses, candidates may request compensation in accordance with the reimbursement policy of the fellowship programme.

- 6.2.** The rating criteria that govern the selection process can be found in the [Evaluation of applications](#) section of the "la Caixa" Fellowship Programme website.

## **7. Redress Procedure**

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- 7.1.** Within 7 calendar days from the date the rejection notification is sent, candidates may submit redresses by sending an e-mail to [fellowships@fundacionlacaixa.org](mailto:fellowships@fundacionlacaixa.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

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- 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 **7 June 2021**.
- 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. The chosen candidates must reach an agreement with the host organisation regarding any of the available predoctoral positions published on the "la Caixa" Foundation website. This agreement must be formalised through the online application enabled by the "la Caixa" Foundation before 30 June 2021.
- 8.5. To be admitted as a fellow, the candidate must start at the host organisation no later than **30 November 2021**. In duly justified cases authorised by the "la Caixa" Foundation, this can be delayed until 31 January 2022 at the latest. Once this date has passed, the fellowship may no longer be availed of.

Once an agreement has been reached, the host organisation will hire the fellow using the funds provided by the "la Caixa" Foundation.

- 8.6. The fellow must enrol in a doctoral programme at a Spanish or Portuguese university in accordance with the legislation in force.
- 8.7. 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

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- 9.1. Candidates who apply for a fellowship for the Doctoral INPhINIT Fellowships – Incoming Programme will not be able to apply for a fellowship under the Doctoral INPhINIT Fellowships – Retaining Programme and the programme for Postgraduate studies abroad. 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. Individuals who have already enrolled in the same doctoral studies prior to the 2021-2022 academic year and who have already paid the corresponding fees cannot apply for this programme.
- 9.3. Holding a doctoral degree or being in a position to apply for it before the fellowship period disqualifies a candidate from applying for this programme. Likewise, where applicable, availing of the fellowship will no longer be possible once the fellow obtains the doctoral degree or is in a position to apply for it.
- 9.4. These fellowships are exclusively for in-person studies, that is, to train and research on the university or research centre'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. Should the university or research centre offer the fellow the opportunity to teach classes on a paid basis, they should notify the "la Caixa" Foundation of this as far in advance as possible. The amount received for this may be deducted from the fellowship amount. Generally speaking, and without prejudice to a personalised study and decision on a case-by-case basis, devoting more than 60 hours per annum to teaching duties will not be authorised.
- 9.9. 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***

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- 10.1. The applicants who are awarded a fellowship must be a current account or bankbook holder at any CaixaBank or BPI branch office, when applicable, which is where the centre or university 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, Spanish and international legislation applicable in this field, as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

## **11. Privacy and data protection policy**

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- 11.1.** The "la Caixa" Foundation fully complies with current legislation in terms of personal data protection.
- 11.2.** All personal data pertaining to fellowship applicants which are included in the documents referred to in these rules will be processed by the "la Caixa" Foundation to manage and process the application, service or enquiry made by the applicants; send them information—also by electronic means—about similar activities; meet with the legal obligations under which it is subject to; and, if so desired by the applicant, send them communications—including electronic ones—about other activities offered by it which are suited to their profile.
- 11.3.** Fellowship applicants agree to the document on the processing of their personal data upon completing their online application, using the application platform in the "Fellowships" section on the "la Caixa" Foundation website. This document can be viewed by clicking on this [link](#).
- 11.4.** Applicants may exercise their rights of access, rectification, erasure, portability, restriction and/or objection to processing by sending a letter to the Data Protection Officer of the "la Caixa" Foundation to the address Av. Diagonal, 621-629, 08028 Barcelona (Spain) or by sending an e-mail to [dpd@fundaciolacaixa.org](mailto:dpd@fundaciolacaixa.org).

## **12. Further remarks**

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- 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 preselection, 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 fellowship programmes of the "la Caixa" Foundation.