

**Individual Sandwich PhD Scholarship Programme ITM-DGD
Call 2020**

Concept

In the 2020 call round, the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) at Antwerp will award maximally six PhD fellowships to outstanding alumni as part of a comprehensive capacity strengthening programme supported by the Directorate General for Development (DGD).

The candidates must be linked to a scientific institute or university in their country and present an outstanding PhD project proposal co-supervised by supervisors at the home institute and ITM, and at the university that is awarding the PhD degree. The fellowship is awarded after a competitive procedure based on the evaluation of academic merit, a full PhD project proposal and the quality and relevance of the institutional and supervisory set-up.

The doctoral research project will typically last four years. The scholarships are of the 'sandwich' type; meaning that the student will spend the doctoral research time partly in the home institute/country and partly at ITM. The ITM and DGD scholarships regulations apply.

The aim of PhD training at ITM is to train PhD students to become 'independent researchers' as defined for the [third cycle](#) (e.g. PhD or Doctoral degrees) of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area which refers to level 8 of the European Union's European Qualifications Framework.

Eligibility criteria

- Candidates must be an ITM alumnus according to the definition in annex 1.
- Candidates must be embedded in a scientific institute or university providing a supportive research environment.
- A supervisor at the home institute, ITM and at the university that will award the PhD diploma must declare their commitment to supervise the thesis work and explain how they will contribute to the PhD process. The home institute supervisor must be connected to the home institute in which the PhD student is embedded. In addition, co-supervisors can express their support as well. The (co)supervisors must be eligible as formal academic (co)supervisors of PhD theses according to their national and/or institutional regulations and must endorse the Principles for supervisors as laid down in the Code for effective PhD supervision. This Code (which is enclosed in annex 2) stipulates that 'The supervisor should serve as a good role model of what a researcher does. (S)he must have research expertise relevant to the area of the PhD student's research'.

- The proposed PhD proposal must contribute to capacity strengthening of the home institute and/or country.
- Candidates must be able to obtain the PhD degree before the age of 45. Candidates born before 1980 are not eligible.
- Candidates must be a national of a country eligible for DGD funding (list in annex 3). A very limited number of PhD scholarships can be awarded to nationals from [any developing country](#). Candidates who are nationals from a high-income country too are not eligible nor candidates that performed a professional activity for more than 1 year in a high-income country in a period of 3 years before the application deadline (this is 15 September 2020).
- Candidates must deliver proof of English proficiency with a certificate from a recognized institution. Required level for English: TOEFL paper-based 580, computer-based 230, Internet-based 88 or IELTS 6.5 or equivalent. (ITM Toefl Code 7727). Native English speakers are exempt . Non-native English speakers are exempt if they have obtained 60 credits from an English domestic or foreign higher education institution. None-native English speakers are also exempted if they have a higher education diploma issued by a higher education institution recognized by the Flemish Community.
- Candidates must be fully committed to their doctoral research during the grant period, with written consent and commitment of his/her superiors (see home institute binding statement as stipulated in the guidelines in annex 4). The student is allowed to fulfil other academic and clinical tasks for maximum 8 hours per week.

Grant conditions

The grant includes allowances to cover costs for the student (living allowance), research costs and supervision costs. The living allowance in Belgium amounts to 1.500 euro per month and can maximally be allowed for up to 24 months (in the total grant period of 48 months). A monthly living allowance in the home country/institute can be awarded: maximum 100% of a PhD salary/fellowship according to the home institute's salary/PhD fellowship regulations with the possibility of a maximum 80% topping up of the gross salary, if justified. The local scholarship amount cannot exceed 1500 euro per month. The payment and follow-up will be ensured by ITM's Student Support Services. The fellowship does not constitute an employment relationship between ITM and the grantee; in Belgium the candidate will have the legal and fiscal status of a student. The legal and fiscal status in the home institution and country is the responsibility of the candidate and the home institute.

A research allowance (bench fee, to be accounted for) of maximally 6000 euro per year is allowed to cover costs directly related to the student's training and research.

The supervision allowance (max. 300 euro/month, lump sum) is meant to cover costs for the support and supervision of the student. Payment of the supervision allowance will be made to the scientific department/unit of the supervisor of the home institute during the candidate's stay in the home institute and to the scientific department/unit of the ITM supervisor during the candidate's stay in Belgium. The supervision allowance can also be used as an additional bench fee to cover research costs.

Other allowances included in the grant: indirect mission cost allowance (150 euro/year), 1 annual flight ticket in economy class, PhD registration fees at Belgian universities, logistical allowance (850 euro), 1 mission per academic year of max. 10 days for the ITM or home institute supervisor.

All grant specificities will be detailed in the PhD contract.



Duration and progress evaluation

The grant is initially allocated for a period of 18 months, with a renewal for another 30 months after a positive progress evaluation. Progress will be evaluated after 1 year by the ITM PhD Committee based on the review of documents¹ in writing and an oral defence in February in presence of all the candidate's supervisors (home institute, ITM, PhD awarding university).

Evaluation criteria

The ITM PhD Committee will review the eligible sandwich applications based on the evaluation criteria below. Contribution to capacity strengthening of the home institute and/or country is an eligibility criterion ('conditio sine qua non'):

1. Scientific quality of the candidate

Study results, relevant scientific experience, scientific publications, motivation

2. Scientific quality of the proposal

Quality of the research proposal, feasibility of the research plan, relevance to health and health development in developing countries, potential output

3. Supportive research environment

- Coherence with research programmes at the home institute and at ITM
- Support, role, contributions and expertise of the supervision team

¹ A general description of the objectives and progress; Detailed protocol that has been submitted to the Ethical Committees and/or an early draft manuscript (e.g. systematic review, methods paper...), Evidence that all practical challenges can be resolved in due time, Original and updated Personal training and career development plan, Assessment letters from the supervisors, An abstract to a conference, a draft manuscript or a publication is an asset.



Submission, evaluation and selection procedure

- Applications have to be completed and submitted by the candidate, with detailed written support from all supervisors (home institute, ITM, PhD awarding university), according to the guidelines and form in annex 4 by 15 September 2020, 5 p.m. Belgian time. Submissions received after the deadline or incomplete applications will be considered as not eligible.
- Candidates will receive a confirmation of receipt.
- The ITM Academic Coordinator of Research will undertake an eligibility check. All eligibility criteria should strictly be met.
- The ITM PhD Committee will review the eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria of the call and will decide which candidates to interview. The best candidates will be invited for an online interview on 8 October 2020. Candidates need at least an overall review score of 'good' to be awarded a PhD scholarship.
- The selection and ranking advice by the ITM PhD Committee will be sent for final decision to the ITM Management Committee.
- Selected candidates will be registered as ITM PhD students and must endorse the *Principles for PhD students* as laid down in the Code for effective PhD supervision (annex 2).

Timeline

- 30 April 2020: launch of the call
- The deadline for submission is 15 September 2020, 5 p.m. Belgian time.
- The evaluation and ranking advice by the ITM PhD Committee will take place in September/October 2020.
- The final decision is taken by the ITM Management Committee in October 2020.
- The candidates and their supervisors will be notified at the latest by 15 November 2020.
- The PhD scholarships have to start 1 January 2021.

Contact

Further information can be obtained from Ann Verlinden, ITM Academic Coordinator of Research (averlinden@itg.be; +32 (0)3 247 66 86), to whom the applications should be sent in electronic form by the deadline (both in word and pdf). All applications will be checked using URKUND, plagiarism checker.



ANNEX 1. Definition ITM alumnus

Candidates must meet one of the options below:

1. have a diploma of one of the ITM Master programmes;
2. have a certificate of one of the ITM short courses with minimum 5 credits. See list ITM short course as published on the ITM website <https://edu.itg.be/course> (in case of questions to be confirmed with ITM Education Office, gvheusden@itg.be);
3. Alumni of the Interuniversity Programme in Molecular Biology (IPMB) can apply on condition that they finished their Master thesis at ITM (15 ECTS credits);
4. Have finished a predoctoral period at ITM of least 6 months under the supervision of an ITM supervisor.

An exemption to the options above can be made based on a well-argued proposition of the ITM supervisor.



ANNEX 2. Code for PhD students and Supervisors

A characteristic of PhD research is that the PhD student carries out her/his research under the guidance of one or more supervisors. This code outlines the mutual expectations and responsibilities of the (co)supervisors and the PhD student, considered as important to successfully conclude the PhD track.

Principles for PhD students:

Main focus:

The PhD student is expected to mature into an independent researcher. This entails a process that is a joint responsibility of the supervisor(s) and the PhD student. To this end, the PhD student will perform research, which will result in the defense of a PhD thesis and publication of research papers. (S)he will also seek training in various fields that are either directly relevant for the PhD work or for her/his future career in science and society.

Attitudes to be acquired during the process by the student

- The PhD student should be open-minded, willing to learn and capable of **critical thinking/analysis**. (S)he will take the supervisor's criticism and constructive feedback into consideration or builds arguments not do so.
- The PhD student should make sure that (s)he is in **frequent contact with the supervisor(s)**. Maintaining regular contact is considered to be a mutual responsibility of both the supervisor(s) and PhD student. The PhD student should let the supervisor(s) know when she/he needs support or guidance.
- The PhD student should **have a problem-solving attitude**: (s)he thinks about the topics (s)he would like to discuss with the supervisor ahead of time, write them down and possibly email them in advance. (S)he recognizes challenges and problems and will propose solutions.
- The PhD student should **manage his/her time well**. (S)he defines goals for the semester, year, and 4-year research period and aspires to complete the PhD in the foreseen timespan.
- (S)he should demonstrate a **good work ethics**. In addition, (s)he gradually becomes familiar with the appropriate rules, regulations, policies, and procedures i.e. with regard to ethics review and research integrity and acts upon them.
- The PhD student should be a **team player**. (S)he integrates in the research unit and relevant networks. While independent thinking is to be encouraged, the student has to respect the aims and context of his/her research project, which usually fit into commitments of the supervisor with regard to grant and/or consortium agreements.
- The PhD student should acquire **communication skills**. (S)he actively seeks opportunities to present her/his work at scientific meetings at various levels (local, national, international), applies for scholarships for conferences, writes research and review papers as soon as possible. (S)he communicates with peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about her/his areas of expertise.



Principles for supervisors:

There are 3 possible types of supervisors: ITM, home institute and PhD awarding university supervisor. The ITM and university supervisor or the home institute and university supervisor may be the same person. A home institute supervisor is only present in sandwich PhDs.

General tasks, expectations and responsibilities of supervisors

- The supervisor has several roles, including hierarchical **head, coach and mentor**. At the start of the PhD process, there is more emphasis on coaching, whereas to the end, the student should have acquired more independency, hence the supervisor will rather be a mentor.
- The supervisor aims to be an **accessible advisor**. Supervisors must discuss, assess and guide the progress of the PhD student at regular intervals. The necessary knowledge, time, commitment and access to resources to undertake the supervision should be guaranteed. When there is more than one supervisor, all parties should meet together regularly. It is expected that supervisors will comment on PhD student's written work within a mutually agreed turnaround period.
- Together with the student, the ITM and home institute supervisor also **guard the student's time** for her/his PhD research
- The supervisor should serve as a good **role model** of what a researcher does. (S)he should have research expertise relevant to the area of the PhD student's research.
- **Cultural sensitivity**: besides providing guidance on the "transcultural or universal" aspects of the scientific method, the supervisor should remain open to specific cultural background of the student and the research environment in his/her country.
- The supervisor has the responsibility to provide a **stimulating research environment**, including encouragement, support and guidance at all stages of the PhD research.
- The supervisor **assists in publications**: indicates possibilities for publication and acts as an advisor and critical reviewer during the publication process.
- The supervisor **assists in training**: helps the PhD student identifying specific areas in which the student requires development of skills (laid down in a 'Personal Training & Career Development Plan' - see below) and refers the PhD student to the appropriate courses or sources of assistance.
- The supervisor **assists in creating a network** for the student by introducing him/her to other researchers in related areas, to external agencies, industry, or other institutional links.
- The supervisor **guards the ethical and regulatory environment** of the PhD process. (S)he should indicate which rules, regulations, policies, and procedures are important for the PhD process, including ethical review and research integrity. Both the student and the supervisor should comply with those rules. The supervisor also assists the PhD student to prepare applications for ethics and other approvals as required.
- The supervisor supports the PhD student in **career preparation**. The supervisor advises the PhD student on post-doctoral research opportunities, visiting fellow appointments or other career options.



Specific roles and responsibilities:

- The ITM supervisor must guarantee the academic quality and compliance with ITM regulations during the PhD process.
- The role of the home institute supervisor is to coach the sandwich PhD student when (s)he is working in the home country and to guarantee the academic quality and compliance with the home institute's regulations.
- The role of the university promoter is to guarantee the academic quality and compliance with the university/faculty PhD regulations.

Personal Training & Career Development Plan (PTCDP) as a tool

In consultation with the supervisor(s) the PhD student establishes a 'Personal Training & Career Development Plan', describing in detail the skills sets, knowledge, and abilities needed to acquire in order to achieve the goals set, both in terms of the actual PhD project and her/his further career.

To this end, the PTCDP contains mutual practical agreements on:

- the milestones and timelines with regard to performing the actual research,
- the timelines for writing of papers and of the thesis,
- which courses/workshops/seminars and skills training will be followed when,
- the frequency of meetings between the student and the supervisors.

Since future career planning is part of this PTCDP, the Human Resources department of ITM will be involved in the conception and the follow-up.

The PTCDP has to be regularly updated. This update will be part of the Progress Report, to be evaluated by the PhD Committee.



ANNEX 3. Countries eligible for DGD funding

-Benin, Bolivia, Burkina-Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Palestine areas, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zimbabwe

-A very limited number of PhD scholarships can be awarded to nationals from [any developing country](#).



ANNEX 4. Application form



Individual PhD Sandwich Scholarship Programme

ITM-DGD

Call 2020

Candidate:

- LAST and first name candidate
- Date of birth
- Nationality
- Sex
- Graduate of which ITM course? (cf. annex 1)
- Email address
- Home institute + country

Supervisors:

- Name ITM supervisor(s)
- Name + Contact details supervisor home institute
- Name + Contact details supervisor PhD awarding university

Please send your application including this cover page electronically to Ann Verlinden, ITM Academic Coordinator of Research by 15 September 2020, 5 p.m. Belgian time (averlinden@itg.be, 32-(0)32476686). Please copy nbrouwers@itg.be. All applications will be checked using URKUND, plagiarism checker.



The PhD application should include:

1. The PhD research project proposal following the guidelines below.
2. Letters of acceptance and support from the supervisors (home institute, ITM and PhD awarding university). *Please add separate letters by each supervisor in which their expertise, their role and contribution to the PhD thesis supervision is explained.*
3. Motivation letter by the candidate.
4. A Curriculum Vitae including transcripts of higher education records (at Master and postgraduate level), other relevant training, a short description of the candidate's present employment, and other relevant experience.
5. Proof of proficiency in writing, speaking and reading English. Candidates should deliver proof of English proficiency with a certificate from a recognized institution. Required level for English: TOEFL paper-based 580, computer-based 230, Internet-based 88 or IELTS 6.5 or equivalent. (ITM Toefl Code 7727). Native English speakers are exempt. Non-native English speakers are exempt if they have obtained 60 credits from an English domestic or foreign higher education institution. Non-native English speakers are also exempted if they have a higher education diploma issued by a higher education institution recognized by the Flemish Community.
6. List of publications (if any). *Mention if the publication was published in a peer-reviewed journal.*
7. Full text of at least one published article, or one or more relevant chapters of a master thesis if no articles have been published.
8. Written approval of the ITM department (*to be obtained through the ITM supervisor*).
9. A 'home institute binding statement':
 - Attesting the candidate's full commitment to the PhD research. The candidate is allowed to fulfil other academic/clinical tasks for maximum 8 hours per week (please mention these other academic/clinical tasks – if any - in the statement).
 - Attesting the amount of the PhD scholarship or the (gross) salary of a (junior) scientific collaborator in the home institute.
 - Indicating if the candidate will continue to receive his/her local (full or partial) salary in the home institute or not.
 - Motivated request- if any - for a topping up. A maximum 80% topping up of the gross salary can be allowed if justified in the statement.

This statement on letterhead paper shall be signed by the home institute's legal representative and stating his/her name, function, email address and stamp of the institute.



Guidelines for the PhD research project proposal:

The sections 1-5 should not exceed 15 pages in total (including 'experts elaborations').

Use FONT CALIBRI 11, Line Spacing 1.

Please make sure that you write the main text (general parts) of your proposal in such a way that all PhD Committee members² can easily understand. In addition to the general part, you may provide for the sections you think it is relevant in-depth, specific 'expert' information (expert elaboration). Typically this 'expert information' can be provided for the methodology section (see section 4). You are free to add 'expert elaborations' for the other sections as well. The expert elaborations will only be reviewed by the members of the PhD Committee who are experts in your field, whereas the main text of the proposal will be reviewed by all members. Therefore, please indicate clearly which parts are "general" (for all committee members) and which are for the experts, as indicated below:

General part:

[Written in such a way that all PhD Committee member can easily understand. Avoid 'jargon' and abbreviations.]

Expert elaboration:

[Provide more in-depth, specific information for the expert reviewers of the PhD Committee]

The PhD Committee will review sandwich PhD applications on the criteria: 1. Scientific quality of the candidate, 2. Scientific quality of the proposal, 3. Supervision & Supportive research environment. Candidates should have at least an overall score of 8/10. Contribution to capacity strengthening of the home institute and/or country is an eligibility criterion ('conditio sine qua non').

1. Title
2. Abstract
3. Research question
 - a) State of the art

² The PhD Committee consists of at least nine ITM professors/postdocs and is balanced according to ITM's domains of expertise and disciplines. For each proposal the chairperson will assign two "expert" members.



- b) Main and secondary research objectives
- c) Working hypothesis
- 4. Research methodology & study design
- 5. Impact and relevance
 - a) Innovative character, originality of scientific contribution
 - b) Scientific, medical, societal relevance
- 6. Reference list
- 7. Research environment & institutional context
 - a) Supervision team: expertise, role, responsibilities and contribution of the (co)supervisors. Explain how they will function as a team.
Add the CVs of the (co)supervisors or provide a website link where the CV can be found.
 - b) Embedment in the research and teams of the home institute
 - c) Parts of the work to be done in the home institute and at the ITM
- 8. Management
 - a) Personal capacities and experience, indicating possible training needs
 - b) Logistical and organisational feasibility
 - c) Detailed budget and resources table for your PhD research.
Please involve the administrators of your ITM supervisor's department. Indicate how much your research will cost (itemize per year). If the annual amount of the bench fee (6000 €/year) will not be sufficient to cover the costs of your research, please specify how much more budget you will need and what will be the source of this extra budget. Please note that the supervision allowance (300€/month) can be used as bench fee as well.
 - d) Ethical, regulatory and legal clearances
 - e) Timeline and milestones
 - f) Risks and precautions plan

