

**Individual Sandwich PhD Scholarship Programme ITM-DGD
Call 2021**

Contents

1. Concept	2
2. Eligibility criteria.....	2
3. Grant conditions	3
4. Duration and progress evaluation.....	4
5. Evaluation criteria	4
6. Submission, evaluation and selection procedure	4
7. Timeline.....	5
8. Contact and further information.....	5
9. Annexes.....	6
ANNEX 1. Definition ITM alumnus	6
ANNEX 2. Code for PhD students and Supervisors	7
ANNEX 3. Countries eligible for DGD funding.....	10
ANNEX 4. Application form.....	11

1. Concept

In the 2021 call round, the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) at Antwerp will award maximally five PhD fellowships to outstanding 'alumni' as part of a comprehensive capacity strengthening programme supported by the Directorate General for Development (DGD)¹.

The candidates must be embedded in 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 PhD fellowships will enable the candidates to be trained 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.

2. Eligibility criteria

Prospective PhD candidates must fit the following criteria:

- fit the 'ITM alumnus definition' in annex 1;
- be embedded in a scientific institute or university providing a supportive research environment;
- be able to obtain the PhD degree before the age of 45. Candidates born before 1981 are not eligible;
- 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 2021);
- 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 equivalent². (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.

Please note that the ITM English language proficiency requirements must be strictly met. Your PhD awarding university might have higher language proficiency requirements. Please check and

¹ Depending approval ITM-DGD Framework Agreement 5, 2022-2026.

² If you wish to use an equivalent language test, a CEFR Council of Europe test, level C1 could be considered equivalent (equivalency will be checked by the ITM's registrar, Govert van Heusden).



make sure you comply with the admission requirements of the university you would like to enroll in (registration at the PhD awarding university must be done in year 1);

-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.

Proposal:

- The proposed PhD proposal must contribute to capacity strengthening of the home institute and/or country.

Research environment and supervision:

-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. Additional supervisors can express their support as well. The supervisors must be eligible as formal academic 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'.

3. 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), 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.

The above amounts may be subject to changes to the DGD regulations. All grant specificities will be detailed in the PhD contract.

4. 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 documents³ in writing and an oral defence in February in presence of all the candidate's supervisors (home institute, ITM, PhD awarding university).

5. Evaluation criteria

The ITM PhD Committee will review the eligible sandwich applications based on the evaluation criteria below:

1. Scientific quality of the candidate
 - *Curriculum of the candidate (including study curriculum results, relevant scientific experience, scientific publications (if any))*
 - *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 complementary expertise of the supervision team*

6. Submission, evaluation and selection procedure

-Applications need to be prepared in English by the candidate according to the guidelines and form in annex 4, and submitted by 15 September 2021, 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 must be strictly met.

³ 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.



-The ITM PhD Committee will review the eligible applications in two sequential steps. A first evaluation will be done based on the applications in writing. Next, candidates with an overall score $\geq 7,5$ over 10 (based on the three evaluations criteria in heading 5), will be invited for an interview with the ITM PhD Committee. Subsequently, the Committee will discuss until an interview score is reached by consensus. Candidates need at least a score of $\geq 7,5$ on the interview to be awarded a PhD scholarship. The PhD scholarships will be awarded to the highest ranked candidates taking the average of the scores obtained in the two steps described above.

-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).

7. Timeline

- 25 June 2021: launch of the call
- The deadline for submission is 15 September 2021, 5 p.m. Belgian time.
- The evaluation and ranking advice by the ITM PhD Committee will take place in September/October 2021.
- Interviews with preselected candidates: 8 October between 12.30-2.30 p.m. (Belgian time).
- The final decision is taken by the ITM Management Committee in October 2021.
- The candidates and their supervisors will be notified at the latest by 15 November 2021.
- The PhD scholarships have to start 1 January 2022.

8. Contact and further information

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.



9. Annexes

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 courses as published on ITM's website <https://edu.itg.be/course> (in case of questions to be confirmed with ITM Education Office, gvheusden@itg.be);
3. Be an Alumni of the Interuniversity Programme in Molecular Biology (IPMB) on the condition that they finished their Master thesis at ITM (15 ECTS credits);
4. Have completed a predoctoral period at ITM under the supervision of an ITM supervisor for a minimum 3 months.

An exemption to the options above can be made based on a well-argued proposition of the ITM supervisor showing the relationship between the candidate and ITM/supervisor (explicitly to be addressed in the ITM supervisor's letter of acceptance and support).



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, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, 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 2021

Cover page

Candidate:

- LAST and first name candidate
- Date of birth
- Nationality
- Gender
- 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

Applications must be submitted in English. Use FONT CALIBRI 11, Line Spacing 1.

Please send your application including this cover page in electronic form to Ann Verlinden, ITM Academic Coordinator of Research by 15 September 2021, 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 must include:

Candidate

1. Motivation letter

Write a letter in which you describe your motivation to do (your) PhD research

2. Curriculum Vitae

Your curriculum vitae must include transcripts of higher education records (at Master and postgraduate level), other relevant training, short description of your present employment, other relevant experience, list of publications (if any). Mention if the publication was published in a peer-reviewed journal.

3. Proof of English proficiency

You 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.

4. Current skills and training needs (training plan)

Describe your current skills and capabilities and present a training plan for your training needs during your PhD period.

PhD research proposal

Please make sure that you write sections 5, 6, 7 and 9 of your proposal in such a way that all PhD Committee members⁴ can easily understand. Sections 8, 10, 11 will only be reviewed by the expert reviewers of the PhD Committee.

5. Title research proposal
6. Abstract
7. State of the art (max. 1 page), knowledge gap, 'what's new', hypothesis, objectives (max. ½ page)
8. Research methodology (including study design, set-up, study population, data collection, & analysis, ethical considerations)
9. Impact: 'so what', policy and practice change, innovation and scientific relevance (max. ½ page, bullet points)
10. Reference list

⁴ 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 who will do an in-depth review of all sections in the PhD application.



11. Feasibility, budget, timeline, ethics, risk management, data management

With regard to the budget, 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.

Research environment, supervision and institutional context

12. Supervision team: expertise, role, responsibilities and contribution of the supervisors.

Explain in the PhD application how they will function as a team. Add the CVs of the supervisors or provide a website link where the CV can be found.

The supervisors (from the home institute, ITM and PhD awarding university) must send their letters of acceptance and support directly to the ITM PhD Committee (averlinden@itg.be and nbrouwers@itg.be). These must be separate letters by each supervisor including an assessment of the candidate and explaining the supervisor's expertise, role and contribution to the PhD thesis supervision. If an exemption is made to the alumni options as described in annex 1 the ITM supervisor must make a well-argued case for this in his/her letter (will be reviewed by the ITM PhD committee as part of the assessment of the candidate, evaluation criterion 1).

Letter of approval of the ITM department(s) involved: must be sent directly by the ITM supervisor to the PhD Committee (averlinden@itg.be and nbrouwers@itg.be)

13. Embedment in the research (team) of the home institute and ITM. Parts of the work to be done in the home institute and at the ITM

14. 'home institute binding statement':

This statement on letterhead paper must be signed by the home institute's legal representative and stating his/her name, function, email address and stamp of the institute. The statement must attest the following: (i) 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); (ii) the amount of the PhD scholarship or the gross and nett salary of a junior scientific collaborator in the home institute; (iii) if the candidate will continue to receive his/her local (full or partial) salary in the home institute or not (please indicate the amount that the candidate will continue to receive); (iv) 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.

