

SPECIAL RESEARCH FUND
Call 2023
PhD GRANTS

Announcement and application information

Each year the Flemish Government allocates research funds to Ghent University so as to implement the Flemish Government's Resolution of 21 December 2012. In accordance with this resolution, Ghent University has drawn up rules and regulations regarding the funds of the Special Research Fund (BOF-Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds). Each year the Research Council invites research proposals for the different initiatives.

Call for:

PhD Grants

Starting from October 1st 2023

The deadline for project proposals is:
April 24 2023 at 23.59 (Belgian time).

Definition of terms

Each year new PhD scholarships are being granted to predoctoral researchers, aimed at obtaining a doctoral degree within a time span of 4 years. In 2023 the Special Research Fund will provide about 50 PhD grants.

The amount of the scholarship is approximately € 2.470 per month, depending on the family status of the scholar. A bench fee of € 310/month is awarded to the promoter for operational costs.

In accordance with the regulations for PhD scholarship recipients, the doctoral program starts by definition with a **scholarship agreement of 1 year**.

If, before the end of the first year, the doctoral advisory committee or, in the absence thereof, the promoter(s) judge(s) that both the substantive progress in the context of the doctoral research and the overall functioning of the PhD scholarship recipient are such that the doctoral program can be successfully completed within a reasonable period of time, the promoter issues a positive advice in a written form. A positive recommendation leads to a **3-year extension of the doctoral scholarship**.

Conditions

Candidates who obtain a BOF doctoral scholarship in 2023 are obliged to (re)apply for an FWO PhD Fellowship fundamental research (FO) or an FWO PhD Fellowship strategic basic research (SBO) in 2024 or 2025.

Hence, this call is only open (*) to candidates who will **be eligible to apply for an FWO Fellowship FB/SBO on March 1, 2024.**

In accordance with the current eligibility conditions of the FWO, this implies the following eligibility conditions for the BOF doctoral mandate:

- Candidates for an FWO application in 2024 must have obtained their master's degree or equivalent at the earliest three years prior to the call deadline (1 March 2024).
- Candidates have maximum 18 months of scientific seniority on 1 March 2024.
- At the start of the FWO fellowship, candidates must be holder of a diploma at least equivalent to a master's degree following a bachelor's degree and awarded by an accredited institution in one of the countries of the European Economic Area, UK or Switzerland¹.

Candidates can apply no more than twice for a PhD fellowship with the FWO and have never before enjoyed an FWO fellowship, not even partially.

For more information about the conditions of an FWO Fellowship Fundamental Research (FO) or an FWO Fellowship Strategic Basic Research (SBO) grant, please consult the FWO website: <https://www.fwo.be/nl/onderzoeksfinanciering/predoctorale-mandaten/>

(*) Exceptions:

- **BOF Candidates who have entered a first FWO application in 2021 or 2022 and a second application in 2023**, and therefore will no longer be eligible for an FWO Fellowship FO/SBO in 2024, are allowed to enter an application for a BOF PhD mandate in 2023.
- **Candidates who enter an application with a GUGC label**, are not required to enter an FWO fellowship application.
- **Candidates who enter an application with a GUGC label**, do not need to hold a diploma at least equivalent to a master's degree following a bachelor's degree and awarded by an accredited institution in one of the countries of the European Economic Area, UK or Switzerland.

¹ For the purpose of this call, diplomas awarded in the United Kingdom are still subject to the same conditions as those awarded in the EEA and Switzerland.

They do have to meet the seniority requirements for their master's degree (maximum 3 years on the FWO deadline) and scientific seniority (maximum 18 months on the FWO deadline).

- **Candidates who have a master degree awarded outside EEA and Switzerland** can apply for NARIC to recognise their diploma as being on the level of a Flemish master degree. This recognition must be completed by the start of the fellowship.² This also applies to diplomas awarded in the UK.

- In case the awarded BOF doctoral scholarship holder also applied for a FWO PhD Fellowship FO or SBO and is invited for the second **FWO evaluation round (interview)**, he/she is **obliged to participate and thoroughly prepare the interview** .

Please note: if the candidate does not participate the FWO interview the Research Council might decide to discontinue the awarded BOF doctoral scholarship and reallocate it to a candidate on the BOF reserve list.

- If the **FWO fellowship is awarded**, the BOF doctoral scholarship holder is **obliged to switch to FWO funding**. The BOF scholarship will then be reallocated to a candidate on the BOF reserve list. In this way the number of awarded doctoral scholarships at Ghent University can be maximized.

Attention: As a holder of an FWO aspirant's mandate, one becomes a staff member of the FWO. If one previously held a contract at UGent, **leave cannot be transferred from the UGent contract to the FWO contract**.

- Candidates with a current appointment as PhD scholarship holder or scientific researcher (WP) on project funding awarded to the promoter can apply for a BOF doctoral scholarship, but only under the condition they meet the FWO regulation on scientific seniority. **It is not allowed to apply for funding through a BOF doctoral scholarship for the same research project as the one on which the candidate is already appointed.**

Previous appointments

- At the start of the BOF fellowship, BOF candidates must qualify for a 'dehousse scholarship', which is a PhD scholarship exempted from taxation.
 - **PhD students can receive a dehousse scholarship (exempted from taxation) only for a maximum of 48 months** during their entire academic career. When this limit is reached during the BOF fellowship, the PhD student can be appointed by BOF as WP (research staff) for a **maximum of 12 months (and a for a minimum period of 1 month)**. This implies that PhD students who have already received a dehousse scholarship for more than 12 months before the start of the BOF fellowship, **will have their BOF fellowship reduced by the number of months that exceed the maximum term of 12 months of appointment as WP.**
 - In this context, pending a positive evaluation and the granting of a doctoral mandate as of 1 October 2023, promoters are asked to only grant their candidates **a temporary appointment until 30 September 2023** at the latest if these candidates are appointed as ATP/AAP or WP. When an appointment as ATP/AAP or WP needs to be **interrupted** to take up a BOF doctoral mandate as dehoussebursaal, **this is only possible when the BOF doctoral mandate includes a new research topic**. An appointment as AAP or WP (group 1 and 3) may not be terminated early to take up a doctoral scholarship that includes the same research topic.

² For more information, please consult <https://naricvlaanderen.be/en/naric-vlaanderen>

Studies

Candidates will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Bachelor and Master study results;
- Ranking among fellow students³ (for both bachelor studies and master studies; you may give this ranking for each diploma); or percentile score⁴ (for both bachelor studies and master studies; you may give this score for each diploma)

All candidates are asked to give their study results in the application form:

- For each diploma if there is an end result available.

For Ghent University students: to find the **percentile** to which you belong with the study result with which you obtained the selected diploma please see the following link: <https://www.ugent.be/nl/onderzoek/financiering/bof/doctoraatsmandaten/ugentpercentiles.xlsx/view>

- Find your diploma and the academic year in which you obtained it.
- Look for the highest percentile value that is smaller or equal than your study result. However, in case multiple percentile values equal your study result, the lowest of these percentiles is to be filled in.

For Ghent University masters students who have **not yet obtained the master's degree**, the Central Student Administration will provide this data directly to the Research Administration after the exams in June (2023).

Candidates who obtained (bachelor and/or master) degrees at other universities or institutions of higher education than Ghent University (including interuniversity programs at Ghent University and Ghent University Global Campus (GUGC):

- Have to include copies of all documents which prove the study results mentioned: diplomas, transcripts of records and documents stating the **ranking among fellow students and/or the percentile score**. If it is not possible to provide a ranking or percentile score, please add an official document (letter or e-mail) from the university that they cannot provide the requested information. Add this statement as an enclosure to your application.

Non-Ghent University candidates who have **not yet obtained the master degree** at the moment of the application deadline have to send the study results of the final examination period (including a piece of evidence) no later than **10 July 2023** to BOF@UGent.be. **Candidate and promotor are responsible for the timely supply of these documents themselves**. During the evaluation, the evaluation committees will only take into account the available documents.

Candidates who have a master degree awarded outside EEA and Switzerland can apply for NARIC to recognise their diploma as being on the level of a Flemish master degree. This recognition must be completed by the start of the fellowship.⁵ This also applies to diplomas awarded in the UK.

³ **Ranking among fellow students:** ranking of the obtained study results of the student with regard to the group of students in the same year and the same study program. For example: Bachelor in Geology: 7th out of 145 students.

⁴ **Percentile score:** ranking among fellow students expressed in terms of percentage with regard to the group of students in the same year and the same study program. For example: Bachelor in Geology: $7/145 = 4,8\%$ = top 4,8% student.

⁵ For more information, please consult <https://naricvlaanderen.be/en/naric-vlaanderen>

The **study results (including the ranking among fellow students and the percentile score) have a major impact on the evaluation of the application**. Only when documents proving these results are added to the application, the evaluation committees will have all the necessary information at their disposal to assess the value of each candidate.

Candidates should take into account that the non-availability of a complete course of study (e.g. lack of scores for certain course units) may have a negative impact on the given candidate score

! Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applying for a BOF PhD fellowship in Corona times

During the Covid-19 crisis many teaching and research activities were affected and delayed. Possibly, your last master year and master thesis, or your starting PhD research has been influenced by the crisis. International mobility came virtually to a standstill. Also family circumstances during lockdown, increased commitment to teaching or healthcare, ... may have hindered your planned activities.

As a candidate PhD fellow you may be worried about the impact of all this on the strength of your application file and the ambitions of your research project.

Therefore we advise you to mention specific factors that influence your application in the application form. This can be done, where appropriate, in the application (for example: 'study narrative', 'career breaks', ...)

Academic support

Promoter (only one allowed)

The application must be supported by:

- (A) a promoter who is, at the moment of the deadline of this call, associated with Ghent University either as:
- a member of the tenured academic staff (Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel - ZAP)
 - a visiting professor with at least a research assignment

Or by:

- (B) a senior assistant, senior lector, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor or senior full professor within the integration framework at UGent who holds a PhD degree. **In this case, it is compulsory to add a co-promoter who is a member of the tenured academic staff (Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel - ZAP) or a visiting professor with at least a research assignment**

This promoter acts as the **sole** authorized person for the granted research budget and as spokesperson. The promoter carries the responsibility for the proper implementation of and reporting on the project.

Co-promoter (only one allowed)

Co-supervisors have no access to the budget for this PhD research. As is evident in the project description and the plan of work, the co-supervisor must make a real contribution to the coordination of the PhD research. Depending on the category to which the supervisor belongs, the following distinction is being made:

- (a) If the supervisor belongs to category (A) of the supervisorship, a co-supervisor is **optional**. At the moment of the deadline of this call, the co-supervisor must:
- belong to one of the categories of the supervisors
 - have an appointment at Ghent University, the University Hospital, VIB, IMEC, IBBT and/or Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School or at one of the University Colleges ("hogescholen") from the Ghent University Association **and** hold a PhD degree.

(b) If the supervisor belongs to the **integration framework** (B), or will **retire** during the course of the scholarship, it is compulsory to add one co-supervisor who belongs to category (A) of the supervisor. In that case the application has to be supported by at least one co-supervisor who is:

- a member of the tenured academic staff (Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel)
- a visiting professor with at least a research assignment

The status of the co-supervisor (including the type and duration of the appointment) and the home institution have to be specified in the application forms.

Please mention the ORCID-ID of the co-supervisor. The co-supervisor is obliged to have an ORCID-ID (publically available). Those who do not yet have an ORCID-ID can find more information on: <https://www.ugent.be/orcid>.

Researcher involved in the project (if applicable)

Researcher within or outside the Ghent University Association (AUGENT) who will make a contribution to the project (if applicable).

This researcher supports the research project in a substantial way (for example through the provision of facilities, methodologies or subcontracting services) without being a (co-)promoter. Describe the role of this researcher.

The role of 'Researcher involved in the project' has no consequences with regard to future BOF funding.

Scientific publications of the candidate

Candidates are asked to list all publications, divided into the categories mentioned below and to mention all authors of each publication. For each category, order the publications chronologically and number them. Only mention publications that are published, in press or accepted for publication. Also state expressly which publications are in press or accepted for publication. If an A1 article is included as well in the Web of Science as VABB, please only mention it as an A1 article.

To give equal opportunities to all candidates, no bibliographic updates will be accepted after the deadline

Web of Science

A1 **A1-articles** published in journals listed in the ISI Web of Knowledge (Science Citation Index, Social Science Citation Index, Arts and Humanities Citation Index) - restricted to contributions listed as: "article, review, letter, note, proceedings paper". Also mention (compulsory) the **quartile, ranking and impact factor** of the journal – preferably the impact factor and ranking of the year of publication, or if this is not (yet) available mention the most recent impact factor and ranking. If a journal has several rankings, mention the highest one (ranking and impact factor see <https://apps.webofknowledge.com/>)

P1 **Articles in proceedings** listed in the ISI Web of Science ('Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science' of 'Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Social Science and Humanities') - restricted to contributions listed as: "article, review, letter, note, proceedings paper", not included in (A1).

Full articles, no abstracts, please include the first and last page number.

VABB

- VABB/A2 **Articles** included in the “Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen (VABB-SHW)”, **not included in A1** (see: <http://www.ecoom.be/index.php?id=101> : Online access to the database).
- VABB/B1 **Author or co-author** of books included in the “Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen (VABB-SHW)” (see <http://www.ecoom.be/index.php?id=101> : Online access to the database).
- VABB/B2 **Chapters in books** (no proceedings or conferences) included in the “Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen (VABB-SHW)”.
- VABB/B3 **Editor of books** (including editor of proceedings) not included in VABB/ B1 of VABB/ B2 –) included in the “Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen (VABB-SHW)”.
- VABB/C1 Contributions in **Conference Proceedings** included in the “Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen (VABB-SHW).

Other

- A2 **Articles** published in widely circulated scholarly or scientific journals with international peer review not included under A1 or VABB/A.
- B1 **Author or co-author** of books (limited to books published by a scientific publishing company, no syllabi, no thesis) not included in VABB/B1.
- B2 **Author or co-author** of chapters in books (no proceedings of conferences) not included in VABB/B2
- B3 **Editor of books** (including editor of proceedings) not included in VABB/B3.
- C1 Articles published in **proceedings** of scientific conferences, not included in the categories mentioned above - A1, VABB/A, A2, A3 or P1.
Full articles, no abstracts, please include the first and last page number.
- C2 Patents.

Additional (co-funded) PhD Mandates (see Part II- APPENDIX application form):

Each year, Ghent University funds approximately 50 doctoral fellowships. Within the framework of three specific partnerships, a number of **additional fellowships** are provided each year. These fellowships are only awarded in the context of the proposed cooperation.

1. BOF PhD scholarship with UNU-CRIS (United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies) label

In light of the cooperation agreement between Ghent University, the Free University of Brussels and the United Nations University (UNU), - an independent Research Institute of the United Nations-, Ghent University allocates 2 BOF PhD scholarships with UNU-CRIS label on an annual basis since 2017. Holders of a BOF PhD grant with UNU-CRIS label are PhD students at Ghent University but will mainly (4 days/week) conduct their research in the United Nations University institute – CRIS, located in Bruges. On this campus, research is focused on processes of global and regional governance.

In 2023, 2 mandates with a UNU-CRIS label can be awarded.

Supplementary requirements:

→ **Subject:**

If the intended doctoral research fits within the theme “Challenges to Global or Regional Governance” the candidate and promoter can choose to apply for a BOF-doctoral scholarship with UNU-CRIS label.

Proposals that focus on the regional dimensions of the following are particularly encouraged:

- Climate governance
- Multi-level governance
- Subnational governance
- Sustainable governance
- Migration governance
- Trade governance

Applying for a BOF-doctoral scholarship with UNU-CRIS label requires a project proposal that is in line [with the UNU-CRIS strategic vision note and the research themes mentioned in this vision note.](#)

→ **Support letter.**

A statement by dr. Philippe De Lombaerde, Director of UNU-CRIS, should be added to the application form, in which he supports the application of the candidate for a BOF-doctoral scholarship with UNU-CRIS label. Dr. Philippe De Lombaerde can be contacted by e-mail via Management Assistant Pascale Vantorre (pvantorre@cris.unu.edu), with the UNU-CRIS Policy and Communications Officer, Andrew Dunn (adunn@cris.unu.edu), in CC.

More information about UNU-CRIS can be found on their website (<http://cris.unu.edu/>).

2. BOF doctoral scholarship with GUGC label

The Ghent University Global Campus (GUGC)⁶ is the only campus linked to UGent that is located abroad, in Incheon (Songdo), South Korea.

Scientific research at GUGC is conducted in five research centres, namely:

- *Centre for Biomedical Research*
- *Centre for Environmental and Energy Research*
- *Food Research Centre*
- *Lab of Plant Growth Analysis*
- *Centre for Biotech Data Science*

To further develop the research activities on the GUGC campus and to promote research cooperation between the GUGC campus and Ghent University, two joint UGent-GUGC doctoral scholarships are awarded every year since 2022. The scholarship is partly funded by Ghent University and partly by GUGC.

In 2023, 2 doctoral mandates with the GUGC label can be awarded.

→ **Supplementary requirements:** To be eligible for a BOF doctoral scholarship with a GUGC label, the following conditions must be met:

1. (at least) Two promoters are required, of which (at least) one promoter is mainly active at UGent and one promoter is mainly active on the GUGC campus in South Korea;
2. The proposed research project must have a clear added value in terms of strengthening the cooperation between the GUGC campus and UGent

⁶ See: <https://www.ugent.be/globalcampus/en>

3. The PhD student will carry out his/her research partly (2 years) at UGent and partly (2 years) on the GUGC campus in South Korea;

Please note: BOF doctoral scholarships with this GUGC label do not prevent GUGC professors with an appointment at UGent to act as sole promoter of doctoral scholarship applications. Such applications are not considered GUGC labeled applications but regular scholarship applications without label.

Submission

FWO applicants PhD fellowship Fundamental Research (FO) or Strategic Basic Research (SBO) deadline March 1 2023)

- who wish to apply for a BOF application at Ghent University in parallel can choose to resubmit their **FWO application (pdf)** instead of using the 'BOF application form'. The FWO application will be used to evaluate their BOF application. For that they must **e-mail a copy of their FWO application (pdf) to BOFapplication@ugent.be**
- FWO applicants must also e-mail a copy of their **FWO 'personalialia' (pdf)** alongside with the FWO application (pdf)
- The **applicant** must send **both FWO pdf's** (2) to BOFapplication@ugent.be before the BOF deadline (24 April 2023).
- *Candidates opting for a special mandate (UNU-CRIS or GUGC) are requested to complete part II (appendix) of the BOF application form in addition to their FWO/BOF application and to submit it together with their FWO/BOF application.*
- **Ghent university promoters** must send a separate document with their **advice** on the research potential of the candidate to BOFapplication@ugent.be

FWO applicants who wish to rework their FWO application can choose to use the BOF application form instead (*cf. and must follow the instructions for applicants without FWO application below*)

Applicants who will not submit an FWO application in 2023

- must fill in the **BOF application form**.
- The **applicant** must send the completed **BOF application + signed declaration** (*signed by both candidate and promoter*) on **study results and percentiles** to BOFapplication@ugent.be
- *Candidates opting for a special mandate (UNU-CRIS or GUGC) are requested to complete part II (appendix) of the BOF application form in addition to their FWO/BOF application and to submit it together with their FWO/BOF application.*
- **Ghent university promoters** must send a separate document with their **advice** on the research potential of the candidate to BOFapplication@ugent.be

The **BOF application form** and **other relevant documents (templates: appendix II, declaration on study results, advice promoter)** can be found on :

<https://www.ugent.be/en/research/funding/bof/doc/docen.htm>

The application deadline for BOF PhD grants is **April 24, 2023 at 23.59** (Belgian time).

The deadline will be strictly respected. Late or incomplete applications will be rejected without review.

- All applications have to be submitted by e-mail to BOFapplication@UGent.be (please use a PDF converted from the Word document⁷ and not a scanned PDF).
- When sending the application, please make sure both the promoter and copromoter (if applicable) are included in the e-mail, either as sender, or in CC.
- The application document (and other annexes) have to be (re)named as follows: "surname candidate_first name candidate_DOC application_name of the annex".
- Send the application form and each annexe as **separate PDF-files**.
- You will receive an email confirming the receipt of the application. These e-mails are not generated automatically, it is possible that there is some delay in receiving a confirmation e-mail.

The supervisor must submit the following document separately:

- Ghent university promoters must send a separate document with their **advice on the research potential of the candidate** to BOFapplication@ugent.be

This document must be named as follows: "surname candidate_first name candidate_Advice_promotor_DOC.pdf"

The following enclosures should be added as separate annexes to the application (if applicable):

- *If available:* own enclosures
- **Only for non-Ghent University degrees** (including interuniversity programs at Ghent University and University programs of the Ghent University Global Campus in South-Korea): **copies of diplomas, transcripts of records, and proof of ranking among fellow students and/or percentile scores.**
- *If applicable:* in case a BOF-doctoral scholarship with UNU-CRIS label is applied for, a statement by dr. Philippe De Lombaerde, Director of UNU-CRIS, should be added to the application form, in which he supports the application of the candidate for a BOF-doctoral scholarship with UNU-CRIS label.
- *If applicable:* in case a BOF doctoral scholarship with GUGC label is applied for: declaration by the supervisor to the GUGC that he/she will supervise the candidate's doctoral research.

Admissibility investigation

Shortly after the submission deadline all candidates will be invited by e-mail to complete an **online survey** that includes questions regarding the **admissibility of their application file**. Completion of this survey is **mandatory**.

Evaluation and granting

The Research Council will make a motivated selection of the applications. The Research Council will base its recommendation on the evaluation of the qualifications of the applicant (study results) and the PhD project proposal.

The PhD grant proposals will first be evaluated and ranked by the scientific committees of the Research Council. The research committees work with a **two-step procedure**. Applications that do not make it through to the second round will not be further assessed on their content.

To be taken into consideration, applicants preferably belong at least to the top 15% best students of the group of fellow students who took exams for the same degree (both bachelor and master). Applicants with a lower candidate score stand little chance of getting a BOF-doctoral scholarship.

During the past years, most of the candidates who achieved a BOF-doctoral scholarship belonged amongst the top 5% to top 10% best students for all diplomas.

⁷ Via File < Export < Create PDF/XPS document

The **score for the candidate** has the **largest impact** on the final evaluation of the application. The score of the candidate is calculated on the yearly study results of the candidate during the complete period of study and the ranking among fellow students or percentile of the candidate for all diplomas granted. Candidates should take into account that the non-availability of a complete course of study (e.g., lack of scores for certain course units) may have a negative impact on the given candidate score

In accordance with the substantiated selection of the Research Council, the chairperson of the Research Council allocates research funds to the selected candidates. The Board of Governors has given the chairperson the authority to do so.

Success rate

This call is **highly competitive**. The success rate for this program in 2022 was approximately 17%.

A high candidate score is an absolute requirement when applying for a BOF-doctoral scholarship.

Disclosing results and feedback

The results of the application will be published at the BOF-webpage from **August 30th, 2023** on (see <https://www.ugent.be/en/research/funding/bof/results/overview.htm>).

Non-awarded candidates will automatically receive feedback by e-mail within six weeks of the results being announced.

If the selection procedure takes place in two steps the projects of candidates who obtain an insufficiently high candidate score are not substantially evaluated (content assessment of project proposal).

For candidates who do not pass to the 2nd selection round, substantive feedback on the submitted project will not be available.

Final report

Within **three months** following upon the end of the grant a final scientific/scholarly report has to be sent electronically to BOFapplication@UGent.be . The promoter and co-promoter (if applicable) are included in this e-mail (either as sender, or in CC).

The scientific/scholarly report must be made on the **required forms**, which are available on the University website: <https://www.ugent.be/en/research/funding/bof>

Additional information

For additional information concerning the call for BOF doctoral scholarships please contact the Research Coordination Office by sending an e-mail to BOF@UGent.be or the secretary of the Research Council Dr. Dirk De Craemer.