

The background features a large blue rectangle containing the title. To the left of this rectangle is a vertical lime green bar. Above the blue rectangle is a grid of small blue dots. To the right and below the blue rectangle are diagonal lime green lines.

ICFO PhD Student Position

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December 2023

PhD Student Position at ICFO

Students are admitted to ICFO subject to some compulsory requisites, described below. Admission affords an *ICFO PhD Student Position* formalized through a specific labour contract*, and enrolment in an official PhD Program.†

An ICFO PhD Student Position is an institutional commitment defined by ICFO Policies and Regulations, compatible with applicable academic and labour laws. The Position gives access to a remuneration package and includes various benefits. Rights and obligations are described in the academic regulations of the corresponding PhD Program, in the labour contract in place and in the relevant ICFO Policies‡.

PhD Admissions

PhD Students are admitted at ICFO subject to three conditions:

- A. Positive evaluation by a Selection Committee;
- B. Acceptance into a host Research Group;
- C. Commitment of funding for a full ICFO PhD Student Position.§

All PhD Students are admitted through competitive selection processes where several standard ICFO PhD fellowships and also fellowships at a higher salary level linked to specific programs (e.g. MSCA-COFUND or DNs), with eligibility conditions and benefits specified in the call are on offer. Students may apply to external fellowships (e.g. la Caixa INPhINIT, or national scholarship programs) after or before being admitted to ICFO.

Fellowships are awarded following evaluation by a Selection Committee, which as a rule includes external experts. The selection process includes an interview with the Committee, which may be remote via video-conferencing, or in-person.

* There may be some exceptions for students with external fellowships.

† In most cases, students will be enrolled in the UPC's PhD in Photonics, although enrolment in other programs is possible.

‡ These can be found on the intranet and include ICFO's Policy on Research Integrity and Good Practice, Policies on Research Misconduct and Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Intellectual Property Rights, ICFO's Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors and Anti-harassment Policy, and policies on conflict resolution, including access to Ombudspersons.

§ If a student subsequently changes research group, then the availability of funding must be reconfirmed.

Selection & Admission Process**

All PhD Candidates must apply to a call through the ICFO recruiting website. Candidates are then evaluated as follows:

- 1) **Eligibility check** (Human Resources – HR): HR confirms that the application submitted is complete (all required documentation has been submitted and is correct) and that the Candidate is eligible for the fellowships on offer.
- 2) **Admissibility check** (Academic Affairs – AA): AA checks if the Candidate fulfil the academic requirements for admissibility into the PhD Program, including academic performance, and adequacy of research experience and background. Following the admissibility check, Group Leader/s of the requested Research Group/s indicate if they have a potential interest in hosting the Candidate, and may also provide statement to support the Candidate, which is passed on to the Selection Committee.
- 3) **Evaluation** (Selection Committee – SC): SC evaluates and selects Candidates to be invited for interview.
- 4) **Interviews:** Candidates passing the evaluation stage are invited for interview, which comprises:
 - a) **Individual interviews:** conducted between candidates and interested Group Leader/s.
 - b) **Panel Interviews:** with the Selection Committee.

Following the interviews, a consensus ranking is made by the SC of Candidates who will be offered the available fellowships, including reserve candidates. Group Leaders confirm offers to host (a) candidate(s). Fellowships are offered in ranked order to eligible candidates with at least one potential host Research Group. If multiple groups offer to host a Candidate, then the Candidate will have choice of group and offer^{††}.

ICFO PhD Salary Levels

ICFO has one standard gross annual salary level for PhD Students, approved by the Board of Trustees and effective from 1-1-2024, as follows:

€ gross per year	Trainee (up to 6 months)
TR	22.500

** This is a brief overview of the selection and admissions processes at ICFO, which are defined and monitored by the Academic and Research Recruitment Committee, following best practices in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the European Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Full details are published in each call.

†† The offer may be different with different research groups, since it will depend on availability of funding for the fellowship(s) on offer (e.g., co-financing of MSCA-COFUND fellowships).

€ gross per year	1st & 2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
PH1	22.500	25.200	25.200

The TR level is offered to all PhD students during the Trainee Period. The PH1 level is the minimum salary by default for ICFO PhD Student Positions during the PhD Period. A salary below PH1 level is not possible. If external fellowships with salary conditions below this level are used to partially fund a position at ICFO, top-up to PH1 is compulsory. A salary above PH1 level is possible through different fellowships as long as these are approved by ICFO.

External fellowships may have different length. If any fellowship is granted for less than 4 years, after the fellowship ends the salary will revert to PH1 (unless otherwise indicated by the Selection Committee). In some cases, an external fellowship may also have funding conditions that extend beyond the ICFO PhD Student Position. The additional period will be formalised through a suitable labour contract, among the possible allowed by the corresponding law at each point of time.

Assignment of PhD Fellowships

At ICFO, all PhD Fellowships are awarded through competitive calls. In general, fellowships with higher compensation than PH1-level are offered in the Spring & Autumn calls, even though they may be offered also in other ad-hoc calls. In all cases, the details of the fellowships offered, including eligibility conditions, salary and benefits, are specified in the call description and in due time to successful candidates.

Candidates already at ICFO may apply to calls for fellowships higher than PH1-level if these are available, provided that they are eligible and they have been in a PhD Student Position at ICFO for less than 12 months at the time of the call's deadline, and have not have applied to a previous ICFO call with fellowships higher than PH1-level on offer.

PhD Funding

Funding for PhD student salaries comes from a variety of sources, including base funding, institutional grants, research projects, individual fellowships, etc. Often a combination of several of these sources is used to finance a PhD Student Position. Most positions are funded by external competitive grants awarded to ICFO as a whole or by external research grants secured by the individual Research Groups.

Admitted students may be suggested to apply to external calls, with the motivation to partially fund the ICFO PhD Position and improve the student's CV. However, regardless of the outcome of such external calls, once a student has been admitted, funding is guaranteed for the whole duration of the PhD Student Position, subject to the periodic evaluations mentioned elsewhere.

PhD Duration & Structure

The ICFO PhD Student Position covers a Trainee Period and 4-year PhD Period (or until the thesis defence if this occurs before the end of the 4-year PhD Period), regardless of the funding source covering the position. More specifically:

- 1) **Trainee Period:** Prospective PhD students are initially contracted for a 6-month trainee period. During this period students join an ICFO Research Group, start their research and training, and have access to the same resources as all other PhD Students. However, they are not yet enrolled in a PhD Program. At the end of the Trainee Period the student is evaluated to decide on continuity into the PhD Period.
- 2) **PhD Period:** Following successful completion of the Trainee Period, PhD Students start a 4-year PhD Period formalized through a PhD contract and enrolment in a PhD Program. Continuation through the PhD Period is subject to periodic evaluation.

In exceptional cases, the Trainee Period may be shorter than 6 months or not offered (e.g. if enrolment in an official PhD Program is required by an external fellowship).

Provisions for maternity, paternity and extended sick leave are in place as established by the corresponding laws and academic regulations, and, where relevant, the regulations of the corresponding external fellowship program.

Trainee Period

One of the purposes of the Trainee Period is to verify that there is a good match between the interests of the prospective student and the supervisor (usually, an ICFO Group Leader). During the Trainee Period both, the trainee and the supervisor may decide that there is no match on their respective interests. Therefore, transition from the Trainee Period to a PhD contract is not automatic: Students must be positively evaluated by the supervisor, with approval from Academic Affairs, and ought to confirm their match with the supervisor in a meeting with Academic Affairs. A change of Research Group during or at the end of the Trainee Period is possible, provided that a match with another supervisor and his/her group exists and that the required funding to cover the remaining PhD Student position period is available.

Extension of Trainee Period

The Trainee Period may be slightly extended beyond 6-months under certain eligible circumstances e.g.: in order to fulfil the conditions required to benefit from an external fellowship awarded to the student or to fulfil the eligibility conditions to apply for certain approved external fellowships; if changing Research Group during or at the end of the Trainee Period; or for the student to demonstrate his/her capacity to undertake the proposed research project.

Any extension request is subject to approval on a case- by-case basis by Academic Affairs and HR and confirmation of availability of funding. A PhD student who is not successfully evaluated for continuity into the PhD Period, may apply to be transferred to another Research Group, subject to approval by Academic Affairs, HR and confirmation of availability of funding. By default, confirmation for a new hosting group shall be obtained before the end of the Trainee Period.

Academic Extension to Submit the Dissertation

Academic extension beyond the 4-year PhD Period is possible only in exceptional circumstances, subject to approval by Academic Affairs. Such an extension is only granted for the purpose of writing, submitting and defending the thesis, and does not imply a corresponding contractual extension.

As a result of the currently applicable legislation, contractual extensions beyond the 4th year are only possible under justified exceptional circumstances, and then within the limits and procedures available in the applicable law, after the corresponding approval process.

Approved by Prof Dr Lluís Torner, Director