



IL PRESIDENTE

Public selection notice Fondazione IHEA

PhD Scholarship

For Research-capacity and mobility

Background and Context - Tender code 2026_CON_IHEA_001 – N. CUP **E46E26000000005**

IHEA Foundation History

In 2019, six renowned Italian universities – University of Bologna, University of Florence, Polytechnic di Milano, University of Naples Federico II, University of Padua and Sapienza University of Rome – with the crucial support of the Ministry of Universities and Research, joined together aiming at contributing to facilitate and strengthen the collaboration and the integration between Italian and African higher education institutions with a special attention to transnational education approaches.

The effort culminated in the establishment of the IHEA Foundation – Italian Higher Education with Africa.

IHEA Foundation calls for a reassessment of internationalization as an asset of science diplomacy by fostering the collaborations between Italian and African universities, also by means of strengthening the presence of Italian universities abroad, with the ultimate aim of contributing, in line with the essence of academic cooperation, to local and autonomous development

The IHEA Foundation was formally launched in October 2020 to promote an innovative and collaborative approach to transnational higher education across the African continent, from the Mediterranean region to Sub-Saharan Africa. The Foundation's transnational education strategy foresees the launch of an Italian transnational campus abroad awarding first, second and third level degrees, and other advanced training courses to be delivered in African countries jointly with local African universities and their staff members.

The Project.

The Ministry of University and Research (MUR) has approved a project coordinated by the IHEA Foundation, entitled "Cooperation with African countries in the field of university education: first level master's degrees and mobility of doctoral students".

Through this project, in the three-year period 2023-2025 (extended to 2027) the IHEA Foundation plans to strengthen its presence on the African continent to promote innovative and quality training experiences by enhancing a path shared by 6 important Italian universities that have been operating on the African continent for over 3 years to strengthen individual capacities and the educational system as a whole.

In particular, the IHEA Foundation intends to operate on three axes that derive from the experience of the three-year period 2020-2023 and that mature considering the current socio-economic context and are in line with the AU-EU Innovation Agenda (capacity for science).

- provide three first level Specialist Master courses of 60 CFU with the awarding of a diploma to strengthen specific skills with particular reference to the target of young teachers and/or officials.



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- support the creation of “sandwich PhD programs” suitable for countering the brain drain that characterizes Africa as a whole, and allow periods of exchange between researchers
- promote the creation of an “Alumni network” of the IHEA Foundation to be able to monitor and evaluate the impact of the initiatives in the long term and generate an active community of researchers.

As part of the project, and in the frame of the above mentioned PhD Programs, the IHEA Foundation intends to award 2 mobility grants in the current year which are the subject of this call for applications.

Call for Applications

- Having regard to the fact that the Management Board of the IHEA Foundation approved on 20 June 2023 the budget relating to the MUR request approved with the decrees Reg. Uff. U. 0006121 of 02.05.2023 and Reg. Uff. U. 0011915 of 12.09.2023, including the joint Level I University Master's Degree ID 2856 in "Sustainable Management of Resources" for the academic year 2025/2026;
- Having regard to the commitment made by the IHEA Foundation within the framework of the above-mentioned project to launch a call for the awarding of scholarships for incoming doctoral students;
- Having regard to the above mentioned extension of the period of validity to 2027

The IHEA Foundation communicates the following:

Article 1

Scope and Profile Requirements

The PhD Research Scholarships will be awarded based on a joint identification of research arguments and the visiting periods that will be conducted in specific research groups within the Italian and African Research Ecosystem to equip African PhD candidates with competence in specific fields and/or research capacity.

The PhD Scholarships will engage 2 PhD students, exposed to the Italian and African education and research ecosystem, each for a visiting period of 6 to 12 months.

This call only addresses incoming students.

The eligibility criteria are defined in Art. 6.0.

The PhD mobility will be conducted in research groups of the IHEA Partner Universities and the research topic jointly selected around the priorities of the EU structural missions addressing macro areas: Culture, Competitiveness and Innovation, Green Transition and Health.





The research proposal needs also to align to the Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) which is structured around 5 priority sectors (agriculture; health; ICT; energy; environment) and 6 strategic priorities: Industrialization; Human Capital; Frontier technology; Science diplomacy and partnership; Private sector engagement; Youth and gender.

The candidates will have to choose one of the research areas indicated below.

Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism
Innovative technologies for sustainable water management
One Health, Global Health, Planetary Health
Precision Agriculture and Sustainable Food
Strategic Energy Planning and Industrial Ecology for Local Sustainable and Just Development in an era of geopolitical uncertainties
Sustainable business for new challenges

The candidates can choose among the areas and among one of the IHEA universities.

Each student will receive a grant of 15.000 (Fifteen Thousand) Euros to cover their stay in Italy, including travel expenses, visa costs, health insurance costs, subsistence and accommodation costs.

In case a selected student decides to withdraw before the end of the agreed mobility period, the amount of the grant will be reduced proportionally.

Article 2

The Scholarships Scheme Secretariat

The award (grant) is managed by IHEA-Italian Higher Education With Africa Foundation whose headquarters are located at Palazzo Baleani in Rome (Italy). The Foundation can delegate the operational and financial management of the scholarships to the hosting Universities.

The Secretary of the IHEA Foundation is also appointed as Secretariat of the Scholarships Scheme who takes part in the meetings of the Committee and takes the minutes.

The Secretariat receives the applications submitted by the Candidates, evaluates their compliance with the requirements of the PhD Scholarships Regulations and transfers those in compliance to the Selection Committee.



Article 3

The Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee is composed by the Members of the Board of the IHEA Foundation as representatives of the six founding members plus the President of the IHEA Foundation who will also serve as President of the Committee.

The Selection Committee receives the applications from the Secretariat and is in charge of evaluating each application submitted by the Candidates for awarding the PhD Scholarships.

The Selection Committee will produce a final report according to the requirements of this Regulation, stating that all the submitted applications have been duly examined and providing the list of the Candidates that are awarded with the Research Scholarships. The final report will give also evidence of the criteria adopted for the selection procedure.

The majority of the Members of the Selection Committee shall be present for their meetings to be considered valid. The deliberations of the Committee are made using the same voting rules used by the IHEA Foundation in its statute.

Article 4

Statement of Principle for the PhDs selection.

On the basis of the application submissions, the assessment, guided by the selection rubric and interview by the Selection Committee, will help to identify and select PhD students to be awarded with the PhD Scholarship. Hence, the need to ensure that the candidates have access to published criteria on eligibility and selection and that the selection process follows the documented procedure. The Selection Committee commit to secure a selection process that is based on equal opportunity without prejudice, regardless of gender, race, religion, age, pregnancy, disability or other personal attributes provided that they do not impair the candidate's professional performance (that is, unable to meet the reasonable and genuine requirements of the position). The Secretariat commits ensure that the selection process follows documented procedures, with candidates having access to published criteria on eligibility and selection.

Article 5

Equal opportunity and equity

In line with the commitment of the programme to equal opportunities and equitable selection process, consideration shall be given to participants with fewer opportunities. Such applicants may fall into the following categories:

- Female PhD candidates who are responsible for housekeeping and/or children upbringing;
- PhD candidates who have parenting responsibilities and are unable to provide themselves childcare during the planned in-presence activities;
- PhD candidates who experience a physical disability that hinders their possibility to travel and/or take part in presence activities.

Article 6

Evaluation procedure steps

0. Eligible PhD Profiles

The professional or academic experiences of the applicants will be used to assess the eligibility for participation in the programme. To be eligible for admission, applicants are required to:

- Be enrolled in a PhD program at one African university, with at least 1 (one) year left until graduation. Candidates should demonstrate within their CV and motivation letter;
- Show interest and commitment being coherent with the interest in multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary education and research and
- Be able to understand English effectively and to communicate clearly and accurately in spoken and written English.

1. Call for applications

This call for applications is now open and the Secretariat will leverage all available and appropriate channels to inform students who are enrolled for PhD in the African Universities.

Applications for the PhD Scholarships shall be submitted according to this call, published in English on the IHEA's website: <https://fondazioneihea.it/ihea-foundation/> on 04/05/2026 and within the deadline of 18/05/2026 Applications shall be sent with the deadline (12.00 PM CET) to the following e-mail address: fondazioneihea@gmail.com.

2. Evaluation of applications

The applications will be evaluated according to the specifications defined in the Requirement Profile (art. 1) by the Selection Committee (Art 3). On the basis of this evaluation, the applications will be ranked in accordance with Annex 1.

3. Interviews.

After evaluating the applications, the Selection Committee will invite up to a maximum of 4 candidates for an interview by Video Call. The interview follows a defined structure with a common template (See Annex 2) with predefined questions and an interview assessment sheet which will be archived. During the interview, the candidate will need to demonstrate that (s)he:

- has an experience background suitable for the training program;
- has appropriate communication skills in English;
- will be able to valorise this experience within their PhD researches and future careers.

4. Selection criteria

Selected trainees should show:

- Demonstrated Commitment to Pursuing their research in the area coherently with Art.1;

- Willingness to extend knowledge beyond field of study;
- Willingness to Train undergraduate to pursue activities in their home universities for the benefit of other students;
- English (Speaking);

5. Ranking

A ranking list will be developed based on an objective assessment of the candidates' abilities. To ensure an objective method of evaluation the application documentation (Art. 7) and the interviews will be ranked as follows. The candidates will be assessed based on various eligibility criteria from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5, the highest (Annex 1). The selection of successful candidates will be based on the ranking of the overall performance of the candidates. See Annex 2.

6. Selection of PhD Candidates

A maximum of 2 candidates will be selected on the basis of their application and the interview. The selection of successful candidates will be based on the ranking of the overall performance of the candidates. A reserve list of 2 additional candidates will be formed in case one or more of the selected candidates decides to withdraw (see below).

Article 7

Application documentation

Interested and qualified candidates are required to send their application including the following documentation via e-mail.

- Certificate of enrolment in a PhD programme from one of the eligible Universities;
- CV (in English, including section specifying points listed in section 5, academic background and professional experiences) (MAX: 2 pages);
- Motivation letter (in English) highlighting reasons to participate and showing the commitment of the candidate to the project (MAX: 1 page);
- Support Letter (in English) by the Supervisor/Tutor of the PhD candidate (MAX: 1 page);
- Research project (in English) that will be developed indicating also the University in which the PhD scholarships will be spent (MAX 1: page).
- Acceptance letter (in English) from the Professor who will host and supervise the activities of the awarded candidate in one of the six above mentioned Italian Universities (Max: 1 page).
- Additional Documents (in English) containing other information that may highlight experiences in innovation or experiences as trainer (MAX: 2 pages).

Incomplete and/or inconsistently filled out applications and/or those that do not meet the required criteria will be considered ineligible.

Article 8

Publication of Results

The Secretariat will announce the winner of the Scholarship on the [IHEA Foundation - Fondazione IHEA](#) website and will also promote the publication, divulgation, and communication of the PhD research as considered convenient in agreement with the Selection Committee.

Below is an indicative schedule of the participation of PhD students in the programme:

- **Publication of the call for applications:** 04/05/2026
- **Deadline for the submission of the applications:** 18/05/2026
- **Deadline for interviews** 30/05/2026
- **Deadline for Trainee Selection Announcement** 10/06/2026
- **Deadline for acceptance** 01/09/2026
- **Start of Mobility period:** September-October 2026

The possibility of a period abroad for selected students is always subject to acceptance by the host institution and the issuance of a visa by the destination country.

In case one or more of the selected students decide to withdraw from the Scholarships scheme, s/he will have to communicate this decision in writing and by registered mail no later than 5 days from the communication of the selection.

In this case, the next candidate(s) in the reserve list mentioned in art. 6 will be selected.

Article 9

Financial Support

In order to benefit from the financial contribution, of any type where provided, the selected candidates will have to sign, before departure, the financial contract prepared by IHEA Foundation, according to the indicated procedures and fulfil the required obligations.

The grant will be transferred by the IHEA Foundation or by the hosting University to the selected candidates, in three instalments, as follows:

1st instalment (EUR 5.000, five thousand): immediately after the signature of the contract:

2nd instalment (EUR 5.000, five thousand): two months after the first day of the scholarship

3rd instalment (EUR 5.000, five thousand): four months after the first day of the scholarship

In order to issue the request for the 2nd and 3rd instalment the student will have to produce a declaration of the tutor confirming that the student has carried out the expected activities.

Once the selection has been finalized, bilateral agreements will be signed between the sending and hosting HEIs for each selected student.

Article 10

Visa

The Visa procedures are entirely the responsibility of the student. Therefore, the possibility of carrying out the period abroad for selected students is always subject to the issuance of the Visa by the destination country. It should be noted that the issuance of a Visa for some countries may be restricted for certain nationalities.

Article 11

Insurance

The accident insurance and liability insurance provided by the hosting Italian University can only cover incidents that occur during educational activities. In order to cover all other medical services not related to study activities, a private insurance will be needed and included in the PhD scholarships.

Article 12

Restrictions and incompatibility

The mobility grants are incompatible with other European funding (such as Erasmus grants and other grants).

Article 13

Contacts

Any request for clarifications or communication shall be addressed to the IHEA Foundation Secretariat at:
fondazioneihea@gmail.com

Article 14

Personal Data

Personal data of the interested parties will be processed in accordance with the principles of correctness, lawfulness, transparency and minimization, for the protection of confidentiality and all the rights of the interested parties, in accordance with the provisions of the European Regulation on the protection of personal data. (EU Regulation 2016/679, so-called GDPR), by the Code regarding the protection of personal data (Legislative Decree 196/2003 and subsequent amendments) and by the consequent implementing measures adopted by the European authorities and by the Guarantor for the protection of personal data (www.garanteprivacy.it).

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Annex 1 – Ranking for the evaluation

Grading Rubric for Trainee Selection

Grade Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
CV (in English, including section specifying points listed in section 5, academic background and professional experiences) (MAX: 2 pages)	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Motivation letter (in English) highlighting reasons to participate and commitment of the candidate to the project (MAX: 1 page)	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Support Letter (in English) by the Supervisor/Tutor of the PhD (MAX: 1 page)	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Research project that will be developed indicating also the University in which the PhD scholarships will be spent (MAX 1: page)	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
The research project requires also an acceptance letter from the Department that will host the awarded candidate (Max: 1 page)	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent

Additional Documents containing other information that may highlight experiences in innovation or experiences as trainer (MAX: 2 pages)	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Demonstrated Commitment to Sustainable Development	No knowledge of sustainable development	Aware of sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Taken or taking courses or training on sustainable development and the SDGs	Taken action (e.g. social impact initiatives) on sustainable development and the SDGs	Conducted or conducting research focused on integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development or at least some of the 17 SDGs
Demonstrated relevance of the field of study for the development of the country, at regional scale and at planetary scale	No relevance	Fair relevance	Highly relevant for the development at country level	Highly relevant for the development at regional scale	Highly relevant at planetary scale
Demonstrated competence in the field of study and research	Scarce competence	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Multidisciplinary and Cross-sectorial education and research	Not interested in multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial education and research	Interested in multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial education and research	Taken or taking multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial courses	Conducted or conducting multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial research	Undergone or undergoing multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial degree programme(s)
Willingness to extend knowledge beyond field of study	Shows interest only in field of study	Shows little interest in fields closely related to field of study	Shows moderate interest in fields closely related to field of study	Shows knowledge of other fields of study while showing interest in extending knowledge	Shows extensive knowledge of and great interest in other fields
Willingness to Train undergraduate and high school students	Does not show any enthusiasm about training undergraduate and high school students	Shows some interest, but does not discuss how or why they would train undergraduate and high school students	Gives a brief explanation and discussion regarding sharing experiences and knowledge, but without much enthusiasm	very interested in training undergraduate and high school students, giving examples of how and shows willingness	very motivated by the question and demonstrated detailed methods for training and sharing experiences with undergraduate and high school students

English (Speaking)	Speech is unclear, poor grammar usage, and, unable to communicate well	Speech is all in English, but had difficulty making sentences. Grammatically deficient and does show a large vocabulary	Decent English Skills, capable of communicating and getting ideas across, but lacks fluency, clarity, and a large range of vocabulary	Very good English skills, can communicate excellently, but lacks complete fluency and has a thick accent	Perfect English skills, vocabulary, and fluency
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Annex 2 – Application and Interview Assessment

Interview Assessment Form

Candidate's name:	
Department:	
Interview date:	Interview time:

Step 1: Document Check (all in English)

- CV with list of publications if any
- Motivation letter
- Support Letter
- Research project
- Acceptance letter
- Copies of additional documents
- Evidence of PhD Enrolment with up to 3 years to graduation
- Candidates with special requirements
 - female PhD candidates who are, at the same time, responsible for housekeeping and/or children upbringing;
 - PhD candidates of any gender who have parenting responsibilities and are unable to provide themselves childcare during the planned in-presence activities;
 - PhD candidates who experience a physical disability which hinders their possibility to travel and/or take part in presence activities

Step 2: Presentation	
Question: Please discuss, in 5 minutes, your understanding the role of multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial education and research to foster just and sustainable transition	
Demonstrate appreciable knowledge (Yes/No)	Reasons and comments for decision and feedback

Based on the presentation, please comment on:

Presentation skills	
Effective Communication	
Any other comments of feedback	

Step 3: Interview
<p>1. Could you introduce yourself and your interest for the Application? Answer:</p> <p>Comment:</p> <p>2. Could you introduce your background and the present research activities? Answer:</p> <p>Comment:</p> <p>3. Could you share your knowledge/background and experience about sustainable development? Answer:</p> <p>Comment:</p>

4. What is your interest and experience in leveraging technology to impact policy?

Answer:

Comment:

5. What do you know about multidisciplinary and Cross-sectorial education and research?

Answer:

Comment:

6. Do you have interest in extending your knowledge beyond your field of study?

Answer:

Comment:

7. Why would you like to engage in training undergraduate and high school students and how?

Answer:

Comment:

Final Grading					
Score	1	2	3	4	5
CV (in English, including section specifying points listed in section 5, academic background and professional experiences) (MAX: 2 pages);					
Motivation letter (in English) highlighting reasons to participate and commitment of the candidate to the project (MAX: 1 page)					
Support Letter (in English) by the Supervisor/Tutor of the PhD (MAX: 1 page)					
Research project that will be developed indicating also the University in which the PhD scholarships will be spent (MAX 1: page)					
The research project requires also an acceptance letter from the Department that will host the awarded candidate (Max: 1 page)					
Additional Documents containing other information that may highlight experiences in innovation or experiences as trainer (MAX: 2 pages)					
Total Grade on the documentation	/30				

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrated relevance of the field of study for the development of the country, at regional scale and at planetary scale					
Demonstrated competence in the field of study and research					
Multidisciplinary and Cross-sectorial education and research					
Willingness to extend knowledge beyond field of study					
Willingness to Train undergraduate and high school students					
English (Speaking)					
Total Grade in the interview	/35				
OVERALL GRADE	/65				

Any other comments for feedback

Prof. Eugenio Gaudio
President IHEA
Foundation Italian Higher Education with Africa

Firma autografa sostituita a mezzo stampa ai sensi dell'art. 3, comma 2 del D.Lgs 39/93

Roma, 04 maggio 2026

PRIVACY NOTICE

Pursuant to art. 13 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR), we inform you that your personal data will be processed by computer and paper means by FONDAZIONE IHEA, as data controller, in order to evaluate your profile and give feedback to your application for a public selection notice “The PhD Scholarship For Research-capacity and mobility Background and Context” launched by the foundation. The legal basis for the processing is the execution of pre-contractual measures taken at the request of the data subject (Art. 6, paragraph 1, letter b) GDPR). The data you provide (all the data contained in your candidature and any data you provide for sending it) will not be disseminated and will not be used for further or different processing.

The provision of your personal data is free, however, failure to provide your email address will prevent us from responding to your request. Should you decide to provide us with your data, we inform you that it will be processed by personnel authorized by the Data Controller and will be kept for as long as necessary to respond to your request and in any case no longer than six months from receipt of your candidature. However, any further storage of this data or part of it may be ordered to assert or defend your rights in any possible forum and in particular in the courts. Your data will not be transferred abroad, but should this become necessary, for the recipients of the communication of data that is based outside the European Economic Area, the Company obtains the necessary guarantees so that the transfer of Data is carried out in accordance with the requirements of Chapter V of the GDPR. We inform you that your data may be disclosed to third parties who perform, on behalf of the Data Controller itself, specific services aimed at ensuring the proper pursuit of the purpose.

The list of these third parties is available upon request from the Data Controller. Your data will be processed exclusively by subjects assigned to the processing directly by the Data Controller. Finally, we remind you that, in accordance with Articles 15 et seq. of the GDPR, you have the right to obtain confirmation of the existence or otherwise of data concerning you, to obtain an indication of the origin and the purposes and methods of processing, the updating, rectification, and integration of data as well as the cancellation of data processed in violation of the law or if any of the reasons specified in Article 17 of the GDPR exist. To exercise these rights, you may contact the Data Controller by writing to Fondazione Italian Higher Education with Africa (C.F. / P.IVA 11459500960), with registered office in Piazza Leonardo da Vinci n.32, 20133 – Milano (MI), Italy, or by sending an e-mail communication to privacy.fondazioneihea@gmail.com.

If you believe that the processing of the personal data you provide is in violation of the provisions of the GDPR, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Supervisory Authority or take appropriate legal action (Articles 77 and 79 of the GDPR).