

IGC PHD PROGRAMMES

25 Years of the IGC PhD Programmes

13 September, 9:00am, Auditorium 2

Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education (Dr. Manuel Heitor).

Madam President of the Champalimaud Foundation (Dr. Leonor Beleza).

Distinguished Speakers, Researchers and Guests.

Dear Colleagues on the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Board of Trustees.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. It is with great pleasure that we celebrate the 25th (twenty fifth) anniversary of the of the first PhD program in Life Sciences that was promoted in Portugal at the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência.

I personally thank the Minister for Science, who with his presence signals the recognition of the importance within the panorama of Portuguese science of the PhD Programmes that followed that seminal year.

Indeed, since the first Gulbenkian PhD Programme in Biology and Medicine in 1993, in a country that generally lacked scientific research and education, the IGC PhD programmes, developed in

partnership with other entities, public and private, such as the Foundation for Science and Technology and at a later stage the Champalimaud Foundation, have welcomed around 600 doctoral candidates, the vast majority of whom have gone on to obtain their PhD.

With an innovative educational model in Portugal and in Europe, based on training provided by researchers, centred on the quality, autonomy and creativity of students and fully focused on their internationalisation, the IGC PhD programmes quickly gave the 'Gulbenkian students' a reputation for excellence in the research centres wherever they went in Europe and the United States of America.

From the IGC facilities in Oeiras, where the programmes were mostly based, the model was soon replicated in Porto and Coimbra, rapidly transforming research and teaching of life sciences in Portugal and making them internationally competitive.

With a transformative educational model, an innovative financing mechanism and offering studies on new areas for Portugal (such as computational biology, neuroscience or advanced medical training), the medium and long-term results of the IGC PhD programmes are deeply satisfying to all of us. Both in terms of the quantity and quality of the scientific work carried out by the researcher and the roles taken by them afterwards in business and universities.

We know, however, that we must continue to work with the ambition to go ever further. We need additional political measures in the Health Sector. This is the case, for example, for PhD students in the Advanced Medical Training programme, who, working in hospitals

without any legal framework, see opportunities to fully develop their skills, both now and in the future, significantly limited.

It is time, however, to celebrate the results achieved, while never losing sight of how much there is still to do. What we have achieved – and what we will certainly go on to achieve still – is the result of the efforts of many entities besides the Gulbenkian Institute of Science, whom I want to publicly thank here in the person of the newly appointed director and former ALMUNI of the PhD programme, Mónica Dias.

First of all, to the Foundation for Science and Technology, which has shared our belief and efforts from the outset; to the Champalimaud Foundation, which embraced this project alongside us virtually from the moment it was incorporated; to the Luso-American Foundation for Development; to the British Council; to the Institute of Chemical and Biological Technology of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa; to Siemens, Portugal; to the Portugal Telecom Foundation; to the Ministry of Health; to Merck, Portugal; to the Camões Institute... and to all those who, in the past and in the future, have and will give their commitment to this project, which works for the development and well-being of individuals and society through rigorous and systematic support for the research and practice of Life Sciences.

Ladies and gentlemen.

One cannot celebrate the IGC PhD programmes without mentioning António Coutinho, the man to whom we will implicitly pay homage in the next three days. Through his work as Director of the Gulbenkian Institute of Science, until 2012, this MD and immunologist is indeed one of the most renowned scientists in Portugal and has been one of the main drivers for the recent scientific development in Portugal, particularly in the area of the life sciences.

Educator and a born mentor, in 1993 he created the PhD programmes in Biomedicine at the Gulbenkian Institute of Science and, 20 years later, supported the creation of the Post-Graduate programme in Science for Development, aimed at students from Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. With these programmes, António Coutinho helped give a generation of young researchers the opportunity to learn about science with some of the best international scientists and institutions around the world.

In honour and acknowledgement of his contribution, whose impact will always be difficult to quantify, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, at the suggestion of the IGC Director, has decided to create, for the next three years, the **António Coutinho Scholarships in scientific research**, offering students from Africa a year-long scholarship to develop undergraduate, master's or doctoral theses that will allow them to broaden their horizons and eventually undertake their careers in science.

Each year, different institutions will be able to participate in the António Coutinho Scholarships, which for their inaugural year in 2019 will extend to three students, with funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Municipality of Oeiras and MERCK.

Dear Antonio, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the country owe you a great deal. I hope that the students receiving these scholarships will be inspired to devote their lives to Science.

Thank you.

Isabel Mota