

# **Application guidelines for the Doctoral Fellowship Program at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport**

## **Award Year 2023**

We accept applications on a rolling basis  
(No specific submission deadline)

Applicants should read the guidelines carefully, in particular the eligibility criteria and the scientific objectives of the program. Please consult the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for answers to any queries you might have prior to preparing an application. If you have any questions that are not listed in the FAQ, please contact the Barrié Foundation.

## **Contact details**

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Website: <http://www.fundacionbarrie.org>  
Registration and submission via  
<https://becas.fundacionbarrie.org/doctorado/>

## About the Program

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The Barrié Foundation and Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport (LSUHSC-S) are pleased to announce the 2023 Doctoral Fellowship Program (the Program) to enable outstanding Galician students to pursue their Ph.D. studies at LSU Health Shreveport's School of Graduate Studies.

The Program is designed to prepare Galician students to become biomedical scientists contributing to advances in healthcare and biotechnology, as well as educators equipped to train future generations of basic scientists, physicians, and other healthcare professionals.

The School of Graduate Studies offers Ph.D. degrees in five programs: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Ph.D.; Cellular Biology & Anatomy, Ph.D.; Microbiology and Immunology, Ph.D.; Molecular & Cellular Physiology, Ph.D.; and Pharmacology, Toxicology & Neuroscience, Ph.D. Students that graduate from the Program receive excellent preparation for a future in biomedical research.

Up to four doctoral positions are available for this call. Successful candidates will receive financial support in the form of a Research Stipend, plus an annual living allowance. A minimum of three full years is required for completion of the doctoral degree. The emphasis of the Program is research, and time available for research will increase each year.

## Eligibility Criteria

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To be eligible for the Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Be Spanish citizens.
2. Have been born in or have been a legal resident of Galicia for a continuous period of at least two years immediately preceding the Program start date; or have at least one birth parent born in Galicia.
3. Hold an undergraduate degree (bachelor's or equivalent) in life sciences from a Spanish accredited educational institution. **Undergraduate applicants in their last year of study are eligible to apply.** The undergraduate degree must be conferred by the start of the Program but is not required at the time of application. Eligible fields of study include:
  - Biology

- Biochemistry
  - Biotechnology
  - Biomedical Engineering
  - Genetics
  - Microbiology / Molecular Biology
  - Medicine
  - Pharmacy
  - Biomedical Sciences
  - Veterinary Sciences
4. Have a cumulative undergraduate grade average of 7.0 or higher on a 10 scale at the time of application.
  5. Be proficient in the English language.

## **Application Materials**

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There is one competition per year for the Doctoral Fellowship Program, based on available funds and LSUHSC-S priorities. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis (no specific submission deadline). Applicants must complete an online application form available on the Barrié Foundation website, and submit the following supporting documentation:

1. Copy of a citizenship document (e.g., national ID or passport.)
2. Applicants born outside of Galicia must provide either proof of Galician direct descent (e.g., national ID or passport of both or either parent) or proof of Galician continued residence for at least two years immediately preceding the Program start date (e.g., certificate of registration in Galician Census.)
3. Recent passport-size photograph.
4. University degree transcripts to date (an unofficial copy is acceptable.) Transcripts must be in English or accompanied by an English translation prepared by the University or a certified translator. Both the original transcript and a translation (from either the school issuing the transcript or a professional certified translation service) must be submitted. Official Transcripts will only be required if selected to the Program.
5. Curriculum vitae (CV), briefly detailing educational and academic background (and work experience, if relevant to the application.)

6. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) with a minimum score of 150 in the verbal and quantitative sections. Unofficial documents (score report copies submitted by applicant) are acceptable. The exam must have been taken within 5 years of the Program start date. Candidates can send their application without providing GRE scores. However, they must submit proof that you have scheduled a test date when completing their online application form.
7. Evidence of English Proficiency, either a copy of a valid score report or a scheduled test date. Unofficial documents (score report copies submitted by applicant) are acceptable. The below are accepted English language tests and minimum required scores. Expired certificates, and any other English proficiency tests, will not be accepted. Candidates can send their application without providing English language test results. However, they must submit proof that you have scheduled a test date when completing their online application form.
  - Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT.) Minimum score of 80; or
  - International English Language Testing System (IELTS.) Minimum score of 6.5
8. Personal Statement (750-word limit.) The statement should express your aptitude and motivation for applying to the Program –including your preparation for this field of study, your academic plans or research interests, and your career goals– and how the Program would positively influence your career development. Applicants are encouraged to contact LSUHSC-S to obtain specific information on current research and available technical facilities and to speak with LSUHSC-S researchers working in their areas of interest.
9. Letters of recommendation by three academic referees. Applicants are required to invite three referees to provide them with a letter of recommendation (maximum of two pages, in English). Letters may be sent to the Barrié Foundation electronically or on paper depending on the referees' preference. A template for the letter of recommendation can be found on the Barrié Foundation website. During the selection process referees may be contacted by the Barrié Foundation if further information is necessary.

All applications and supporting documentation must be uploaded to the online application system. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered.

## Selection Process

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Candidates are selected through a competitive, merit-based process consisting of the following three phases: eligibility assessment, expert review, and panel interview.

### Eligibility assessment

All proposals are screened for formal eligibility by the Barrie Foundation staff. Any application that does not meet the key requirements outlined in the guidelines will not be sent for expert review and will not move further in the selection process.

### Expert Review

Eligible applications are assessed by a Selection Committee, comprised of two representatives from the Barrie Foundation and two representatives of LSUHSC-S. The Selection Committee will individually evaluate and numerically score each application in accordance with the following criteria:

- i. Academic merit and potential to succeed in a rigorous academic setting, as demonstrated by transcripts, awards, distinctions and English language proficiency (45%)
- ii. Research ability and potential, as demonstrated by the relevance and strength of the personal statement, referees reports, work experience, and related research achievements (40%)
- iii. Teamwork and leadership abilities, as demonstrated by collaborations with supervisors, peers, and students; and participation in community activities (15%)

All applicants will receive written notification of the status of their application within approximately 3 weeks after submission. Only shortlisted candidates will advance to the next stage.

### Panel Interview

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an in-person interview at the Barrie Foundation headquarters. Virtual interviews shall be permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Such instances are considered on a case-by-case basis and a decision is made following consultation with LSUHSC-S.

Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted in English.

The interview will be a competency-based panel assessment. The panel will be comprised of representatives from both the Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S. A member of the Barrié Foundation staff will also be supporting the panel administratively.

The purpose of the interview is to enable candidates to demonstrate their commitment to pursuing an academic career; motivation for participating in the Program; ability to adapt to a challenging environment; and their potential to become outstanding representatives of Galicia in the U.S. academic community.

After the interviews are completed, applicants will be ranked in order of preference by the panel. The decision of the panel will be final and binding.

All candidates will be informed of the outcome of their interview within approximately 7 days.

Selected candidates will be asked to accept the award offer and provide pending information, if any, within the next 7 days of notification. If a candidate does not accept the award or fails to provide the requested information after 7 days, an established list of alternates will be used to fill the vacated position.

## **Program Description**

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The Doctoral Program in LSU Health Shreveport's School of Graduate Studies provides an environment for fellows to learn how to think; to ask questions and to answer them in the laboratory and library; to write and communicate; and to develop into a mature, articulate, and competent biomedical scientist.

Fellows must complete their undergraduate degree (bachelor's or equivalent) in life sciences from a Spanish accredited educational institution before the start of the Program. A minimum of three full years is required for completion of the doctoral degree. In most cases, especially for fellows who enter the doctoral program without prior graduate level experience and training, a period of four to five years is usually needed for completion of the doctoral degree.

An individualized program of study is developed for each fellow through regular consultation with a faculty Advisory Committee. This program consists of lecture and laboratory courses, seminars, journal clubs, preparation of research proposals, and independent research.

Fellows will be introduced to ongoing research projects during the first two weeks upon entering the Program. After these meetings, each fellow will select three faculty members for laboratory rotation. These rotations will allow fellows to gain first-hand knowledge of the research in these selected laboratories and serve as a basis to choose their Advisor. The selection of the Advisor will be made after fellows complete the laboratory rotations by mid-December of the first year and provide the Department Head with a letter in which choices for the faculty Advisor are listed. Every effort will be made to place fellows in the laboratory of their choice provided the faculty member is agreeable and space and funds are available to support the fellow's research.

To provide a foundation of knowledge, formal coursework is concentrated in the first year, including General Microbiology, Cell and Molecular Biology, Immunology, Virology, Bacteriology, Pathogenesis of Infectious Diseases, Genetics, Molecular Methods, and Biochemistry.

Fellows who have successfully completed coursework requirements will take the Qualifying Examination and Preliminary Examination, which are intended to assure that each fellow has the ability to identify specific questions that remain unanswered and to develop a written research proposal that describes experimental approaches to answer these questions. Thus, the first part of this double requirement process is the Qualifying Exam that requires that the fellow write a Research Proposal in NIH application format. The proposal for the Qualifying Examination must be on a topic that is substantially different from the fellow's dissertation research and the research interests of the fellow's Advisor. If the Advisory Committee decides that the student has passed the Qualifying Examination, the Preliminary Examination will begin. The Preliminary Examination consists of an oral defense of the written Qualifying Examination proposal and questions on any of a variety of topics posed by members of the Advisory Committee. When the fellow has been judged to pass the Preliminary Examination, the Advisor and members of the Advisory Committee shall recommend that the fellow be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

A major component involved in the quality control of research and of a training program designed to teach fellows about the real world of academic research is the preparation, presentation, and peer review of a Research Proposal describing the fellow's project. This proposal is written in NIH Grant Application format by the fellow and includes Background information from the literature, Specific Aims, Rationale, Preliminary Data, and Methods to be used to answer the questions being asked. The purpose of the Research Proposal is for the fellow to define his/her doctoral research project, which will be the subject of the doctoral dissertation. The choice of the topic should result from experiments conducted by the fellow during his/her first two years and from discussions with the

fellow's Advisor and Advisory Committee. The Research Proposal is to be prepared during the late part of the second year or in the early part of the third year. The student is then expected to devote his/her time to the doctoral research project. The progress of his/her research is monitored on a daily basis by the Advisor and by the periodic meetings of the Advisory Committee.

In addition to requirements concerning Research and Coursework, fellows are required to present seminars of two types:

- **Library Seminars:** Fellows must present at least two library seminars, one in the Spring semester of the first year and one in the Fall semester of the second year. In a library seminar, each fellow discusses the current status of an area of research and then presents the findings from one or two recent papers and demonstrates how these recent data further our understanding of the topic. The topic of the library seminars should not be directly related to the fellow's research in order to allow developments in other areas of microbiology, molecular biology, etc. to be brought to the attention of the faculty and students and to encourage the fellow to be knowledgeable in several research areas.
- **Research Report Seminars:** Fellows must present at least one seminar each year, starting in the Spring semester of the second year, on their research. The topic for presentation and the date of the seminar must be approved by the faculty member in charge of the seminar (Seminar Coordinator).

Teaching is also an important aspect of the doctoral training program, and fellows are required to participate in teaching. This may take the form of presenting information in a journal club format, participating in the training of new students or Research Associates in laboratory procedures, etc.

Finally, one of the most profitable and enjoyable aspects of the doctoral training program is the fellow's participation in one or more Journal Clubs. Although the format varies among the Journal Clubs, each involves a meeting of the faculty, fellows, and students working in areas of mutual interest to discuss recent developments, findings, and techniques that relate to their research interests. Each member of the Journal Club is expected to take an equal number of turns in presenting recent papers and in leading a discussion on how the work presented impact(s) the field. Journal Club presentations are usually informal and promote active and often lively discussion and exchange of ideas. Every fellow must be a regular member of at least one Journal Club throughout his/her enrollment in the doctoral program.



## Salary and Benefits

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The Program covers the following items:

**Research Stipend.** Fellows will receive a Research Stipend starting at \$26,000 (prior to income tax and social deductions).

**Living allowance.** Fellows are also awarded an annual living allowance of €6,000 for the duration of the Program. These funds are paid in equal monthly installments and can be used for relocation and moving costs, as well as for basic living expenses, and research costs. Funding is provided in one-year terms renewable for up to five years.

**Visas.** LSUHSC-S grants limited-term F-1 visas for non-US citizens. While LSUHSC-S and the Barrié Foundation will provide fellows with supporting documents for visa application, the timely securing of the visa is the sole responsibility of the fellows. Visa application processes are lengthy –the average processing time is 4-6 weeks– and fellows should plan accordingly.

**Temporary Medical Insurance and Travel Insurance.** Fellows will receive temporary health insurance to cover medical emergencies that may occur between the time of departure from their home country and the start date of the LSU Medical Coverage, which can take up to two (2) months. After entering the graduate program, fellows will be able to purchase health insurance through LSUHSC-S.

**Housing:** LSUHSC-S does not provide housing allocation for Ph.D. researchers. However, the departments and faculty involved may assist in finding appropriate housing.

**Program activities.** Fellows also benefit from access to the greater community of academics including visiting scholars and Journal Clubs. Fellows are encouraged to participate concurrently in several Journal Clubs and to attend meetings of other Journal Clubs when a topic of interest is to be presented. Although the format varies among the Journal Clubs, each involves a meeting of the faculty, fellows, and students working in areas of mutual interest to discuss recent developments, findings, and techniques that relate to their research interests.

## Award Conditions

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In accepting the fellowship, successful candidates agree to the following conditions:

- i. attend in the pre-departure briefing arranged by the Barrié Foundation;

- ii. provide the required information in a timely manner to the Barrié Foundation so as to ensure the effective administration of the fellowship;
- iii. satisfy all visa requirements determined by the relevant authorities;
- iv. conform to the rules and code of conduct of LSUHSC-S and exhibit a spirit of cooperation with the faculty, their fellow students, and all members of the Department. Fellows should take an active part in fostering the development of the Department and its graduate program and in promoting the research environment of the University;
- v. attend all scheduled events and activities related to the Program. Full-time commitment to the doctoral program is expected during the fellowship period. Fellows considering any other activity during the Program, must first consult with the Barrié Foundation to determine whether the proposed activity is permissible;
- vi. maintain a clear and direct line of communication with the Barrié Foundation and, in particular, keep the Barrié Foundation informed if:
  - Change your U.S. address, even temporarily.
  - Suffer any injury, illness, loss, or damage to your person or property.
  - Become involved in any legal action, actual or threatened.
  - Are absent for more than four days at any one time from the Program;
- vii. remain in the United States (except for authorized absences) during the entire fellowship period. Fellows have the obligation of notifying the Barrié Foundation of any periods of travel or absence from LSUHSC-S during the full term of their fellowship;
- viii. comply with all applicable laws and regulations in the United States. Fellows must explicitly acknowledge and accept responsibility for their own status and/or obligations with regard to personal taxation under applicable law;
- ix. acknowledge the support of the Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S in reports or other published materials that arises from the research, and other forms of media communication, including media appearances, press releases and conferences.;
- x. obtain approval of the Barrié Foundation before applying for any grant, scholarship, or funding from any public or private organization for the same or a different research project, and/or before engaging in any additional remunerated activities. No additional monetary aid or other remuneration may be accepted from another fellowship or similar grant during the period of the Program without the written authorization of both the Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S;
- xi. submit a comprehensive progress report annually. These reports must be accompanied by a confidential evaluation of the progress of the award from the

academic mentor/supervisor. Failure to supply these reports will result in payment of the award being suspended until such a time as they are received; and

- xii. provide follow-up contact details for the purpose of researcher career tracking in the final report or as otherwise requested by the Barrié Foundation. The Barrié Foundation will periodically carry out a destination survey of those who have received an award, and fellows shall agree to cooperate in responding there to. Where a fellow's contact details change post-completion of their award, the fellow shall provide updated details via their profile page on the Barrié Foundation Alumni online system.

Failure to abide by any of these terms and conditions could result in:

- suspension or withdrawal of stipend;
- dismissal from the Program; and/or
- repayment of the award in full

## **Publication and Intellectual Property Rights**

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It is expected that every doctoral candidate will publish at least one first-author paper on the findings from his/her dissertation research in a national/international journal. All intellectual property conceived, generated, made or otherwise during the course of the Program shall be disposed of in accordance with LSUHSC-S policy.

## **Acknowledgment**

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Fellows must acknowledge the support of the Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S in publications (articles, posters, book chapters, thesis, websites etc.) of any material, whether copyrighted or not, based on or developed under the Program.

The following wording should be used when acknowledging support from LSUHSC-S and the Barrié Foundation: "This material is based upon work developed under the Doctoral Fellowship Program at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport, supported by the Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S". The Program also must be orally acknowledged during all news media interviews, including popular media such as radio, television, and news magazines.

Except for articles or papers published in scientific, technical, or professional journals, the following disclaimer must be included: "Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport and the Barrié Foundation."

## Termination

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The Barrié Foundation, acting on behalf of LSUHSC-S, has the right to dismiss a fellow from the Program at any time, by immediate notice to the fellow in writing, in the event of:

- i. Failure to abide by any of the terms and conditions of fellowship.
- ii. Misconduct, whether in connection with the Program or otherwise.
- iii. Failure to make such progress in the project as is considered satisfactory.
- iv. Exceptional circumstances arising which would render it impossible for the fellow to complete the project satisfactorily.
- v. Breach of any local U.S. law and practices.
- vi. The discovery that the fellow has submitted fraudulent documentation.

In the event of such dismissal, the Barrié Foundation and LSU Health Shreveport shall have no further obligation to the fellow, and the fellow shall be bound to repay the amount that has been paid to under the fellowship, unless the Barrié Foundation has exercised its discretion to exempt the fellow from this condition.

## Data Protection

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The Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S may use and share a fellow's details for purposes necessary for the administration of the Program. By applying for the Program, each applicant agrees (i) to be contacted by the Barrié Foundation by telephone, mail, or email regarding this Program; (ii) to provide the Barrié Foundation with a short biography and photograph that can be published as a way of demonstrating the quality of recipients; (iii) and that personal data submitted by the applicant may be processed for the purpose of conducting and/or administering the Program.

## General Conditions

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The Barrié Foundation and LSUHSC-S reserve the right to modify, cancel, terminate, or suspend the Program at any time, in their absolute discretion.

The Barrié Foundation will not be responsible for any damage or harm that fellows may suffer during their trip to or from the United States or during their time in the United States. The Barrié Foundation shall not be liable for any loss or expenses (including airfares) for travel delays incurred by the fellow as a result of inaccurate information provided by the fellow, delays in submitting the required forms to the relevant authorities, or refusals of American authorities to grant a visa to the fellow. By applying for the Program, each Applicant agrees to be bound by these Terms and Conditions.