

CALL FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

(AE2026-0063)

INESC TEC is now accepting grant applications to award 1 Research Grant (BI) within the scope of the within the eduBEST project with reference 2022.08686.PTDC, Funded by National Funds through the FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.

1. GRANT DESCRIPTION

Type of grant: Research Grant (BI)

General scientific area: ENGINEERING

Scientific subarea: Computer engineering

Area of Work: Longitudinal Dropout Prediction

Grant duration: 3 months, starting on 2026-04-09, with the possibility of being renewed until the end of the project.

Scientific advisor: Flávia Barbosa

Workplace: INESC TEC, Porto, Portugal

Maintenance stipend: € 1309.64, [according to the table of monthly maintenance stipend for FCT grants](#), paid via bank transfer. Grant holders may be awarded potential supplements, according to a quarterly evaluation process (Articles 19, 21 and 22 of the [Regulations for Grants of INESC TEC](#) and Annex II), up to a maximum limit of 50% of the monthly maintenance stipend.

INESC TEC supports costs with registration, enrolment or tuition fees, during the grant duration, under the terms established in the internal document: [Payment of Tuition fees to grant holders](#).

The grant holder will benefit from health insurance, supported by INESC TEC.

2. OBJECTIVES:

Traditional dropout prediction models tend to underperform precisely in those educational settings where public intervention is most critical: university programmes with small student cohorts and limited historical data. This thesis evaluates the use of advanced machine learning methods, particularly TabPFN, as a policy-support tool for early dropout detection in higher education. Unlike classical approaches that require extensive retraining and large labelled datasets, TabPFN can generate calibrated predictions even in small-data environments. Beyond predictive accuracy, the model provides interpretable outputs that allow policymakers to monitor how the relative importance of risk factors evolves over time. This dynamic insight is essential for adaptive policy design, enabling institutions to adjust support measures as cohort characteristics, institutional structures, or learning environments change.

3. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME AND TRAINING:

1. Contextualisation of the education landscape in the European Union;
2. Literature review, as thorough as possible;
3. Identification of the knowledge gap that the dissertation aims to cover;
4. Collection and processing of data relevant to the problema;

5. Implementation of TabPFN and comparison with the state-of-the-art;
6. Analysis of the results;
7. Discussion of the results;
8. Write the report about the work developed.

4. REQUIRED PROFILE:

Admission requirements:

The awarding of the fellowship is dependent on the applicants' enrolment in study cycle or non-award courses of Higher Education Institutions.

Preference factors:

Good knowledge of the English language.

Minimum requirements:

Bachelor Degree in Computer Science. Attendance of PhD's Degree in Data Science and Computation. Oral and written communication skills in Portuguese language.

5. EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS AND SELECTION PROCESS:

Selection criteria and corresponding valuation: the first phase comprises the Academic Evaluation (AC), based on the criteria referred to in Article 12 of the [Regulations for Grants of INESC TEC](#), while the second phase comprehends the Individual Interview (EI). All factors are evaluated on a scale of 0 to 100, taking into account the applicants' merit, suitability and conformity with the preference factors.

The weight of the AC factors are as follows: Academic Qualifications (FA, 30%), Scientific Publications (PC, 20%), Experience (EX, 20%) and Motivation Letter (CM, 30%).

Candidates who score less than 50 points in the AC average will be considered excluded on absolute merit. The top five candidates approved on absolute merit will be qualified for the individual interview. The Final Grade (CF) is obtained by the weighted average of AC (60%) and EI (40%).

DISABILITY INCENTIVE

Candidates who present a degree of disability equal to or greater than 90% will benefit from an incentive (20) in the score of the CV Assessment.

Candidates who present a degree of disability equal to or greater than 60% and less than 90% will also benefit from an incentive (10) in the score of the CV Assessment.

Said score may, in these cases, exceed 100 points.

Candidates must demonstrate the degree of disability during the application, namely through the submission of the Multi-Purpose Medical Certificate of Disability, issued in accordance with Decree-Law no. 202/96, of October 23 currently in effect.

Candidates must declare, in the application form, the type of disability used throughout the selection process, in order to proceed with the required adaptations.

The Selection Jury is composed of the following members:

President of the Jury: Flávia Barbosa

Full member: Ana Camanho

Full member: Hermilio Vilarinho

Substitute member: Maria Conceição Andrade Silva

Release of results and prior hearing: the results of the selection process, as well as the terms and procedures for prior hearing, will be released to the applicants by email, under the terms referred to in Article 13 of the Regulations for Studentships and Fellowships of INESC TEC.

6. FORMALISATION OF APPLICATIONS:

Application Documents:

1. Motivation letter;
2. Curriculum Vitae (must include the list of previous fellowships, their type, beginning and end dates, funding entities and host institutions);
3. Certificate or diploma degree;
4. Proof of enrollment in a degree awarding study cycle or in a non degree awarding Higher Education program.
 - The proof of enrollment may be presented just during the grant hiring stage.
5. Signed declaration stating the infringement of the grant holder's duties (article 14, no. 4)
6. Documental evidence to support the country of residence, residence permit or other legally equivalent document, in cases where the applicant is a foreigner or non-resident in Portugal - valid until the beginning of the grant.
7. Other supporting documents relevant to the final assessment.

Failure to deliver the required documents within the 90-day period after the date of the notice of the conditional awarding of the grant implies its cancellation.

Application period: From 2026-03-05 to 2026-03-18

Submission of applications: the application will be formalised by submitting the form available in the *Work With Us* section of INESC TEC website.

7. BINDING LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

The hiring process shall comply with the current legislation regarding the Research Grant Holder Statute, approved by Law no. 40/2004 of August 18, in its current wording, as well as by the [Regulations for Grants of INESC TEC](#) and for [FCT Grants Regulation in force](#).

For more information, please check the [Regulations for Grants of INESC TEC](#) and relevant annexes at www.inesctec.pt/bolsas



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