

Research Studentships (PhD students)

Applications are open for 1 Research Studentship(s), within the framework of project/R&D institution *SignPain/ITI*, PTDC/PSI-GER/2615/2021, financed by national funds through FCT/MCTES (PIDDAC), under the following conditions:

Scientific Area: Computer Engineering, Human-Computer Interaction

Admission Requirements: *To be enrolled at a PhD.*

Workplan: Pain communication is a critical issue, yet it is underrepresented in existing healthcare discourse, despite its profound impact on the quality of health services. This is particularly relevant for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) individuals who often face unique challenges in communication due to language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of accessibility to communication aids.

This research aims to tackle the unique challenges in pain communication between the DHH community and healthcare professionals through digital technology. We will contribute to reducing pain care disparities and advocate for inclusive, culturally inclusive practices, ultimately elevating the standard of care for deaf individuals with pain.

In this project, we will draw upon the social communication model of pain, which emphasizes that pain is not solely a biological or psychological experience but also a complex social interaction. This model highlights how individuals express pain behaviors (verbal and non-verbal) that are interpreted by observers—such as healthcare providers—who then respond in ways that can influence the sufferer’s experience and reporting of pain. The model accounts for the context, including cultural norms, expectations, and interpersonal dynamics, suggesting that pain expression and assessment are shaped by social communication processes, not just internal states. Thus, the tool should account for these social features to improve pain expression and decoding between DHH and health professionals.

The candidate will engage in the following activities:

- Literature review.
- Conduct qualitative studies to understand the barriers and facilitators of pain communication.
- Design and prepare the material for a digital intervention to enhance pain communication.

Legislation and Regulations: Statute of Scientific Research Fellow, approved by Law nr. 40/2004, of August 18, as worded by Decree-Law nr. 123/2019, of August 28; FCT Regulation for Research Studentships and Fellowships, available on <https://www.fct.pt/apoios/bolsas/docs/RegulamentoBolsasFCT2019.pdf> and <https://dre.pt/application/file/a/127230968>.

Workplace: The work will be developed at Interactive Technologies Institute of IST-ID, under the scientific supervision of Professor Hugo Nicolau.

Duration: The research fellowship(s) will have the duration of 12 months. It’s expected to begin in December 2025 and may be eventually renewed for 24 months, including the duration of the initial contract.

Monthly maintenance allowance: According to the values for Research Fellowships awarded by FCT in Portugal (<https://www.fct.pt/fct-atualizou-o-valor-das-bolsas-para-2025/>), the amount of the monthly maintenance allowance is €1309.64, being the payment method an option of the Fellow by Wire Transfer/Check.

Selection methods: The selection methods will be the following: Curriculum evaluation and an optional interview for the top three candidates with the respective weight of 50% to the curricular evaluation and 50% for the interview. The candidate must have experience in the field of Human-Computer Interaction and conducting qualitative studies. Preference for candidates with a background in Social Sciences.



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Composition of the selection Jury: Hugo Nicolau (Associate Professor, IST); Nuno Nunes (Full Professor, IST); Valentina Nisi (Full Professor, IST).

Announcement/ notification of the results: The final evaluation results will be communicated to all applicants by email.

Deadlines and procedures of complaint and appeal. A complaint may be lodged from the final decision within 15 working days, or an appeal to the Executive Board of IST-ID within 30 working days, both counted from the respective notification

Application deadline and formalization: The call is open from October 29 until November 11, 2025.

It is mandatory to formalize applications with the submission of the following documents: i) B1 Form – Fellowship application (<https://ist-id.pt/recursos-humanos/bolseiros/#documentos-relacionados>); ii) *Curriculum Vitae*; iii) academic degree certificate, where applicable; iv) proof of enrollment at an academic degree course (PhD); v) motivation letter.

Applications must be submitted to the email: hugo.nicolau@tecnico.ulisboa.pt



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