NucPhys Career Orientation Day

Testimony from a PhD student

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NucPhys Graduate, Intake 8
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My background

Bachelor's degree in Physics
(2020-2024)

Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Spain)

Bachelor's thesis: Monte Carlo simulation of a PET scanner

Joint European Master's Degree in Nuclear Physics
(2024-2026)

Applications and small accelerators (Path 3)

Master's thesis: Monte Carlo simulation of a Prompt Gamma (PG) Imaging device for proton therapy (IP2I, Lyon)

PhD
(2026-)

Helmholtz Zentrum Dresden Rossendorf (Germany)

Development of dual-tracer PET imaging methods using PG signals

USC UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Erasmus Mundus JMD on Nuclear Physics

HZDR HELMHOLTZ ZENTRUM DRESDEN ROSSENDORF

How to survive to PhD applications

Lessons from my experience finding a PhD position

How to find a position or funding?

There are 3 main options:

- **Continue in your master's thesis/Internship research group**
  - Ask your supervisors whether there may be an opportunity to continue with a PhD
  - Do NOT rely on this one. Funding may fall through or the position may be awarded to another candidate in the selection process.

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- **Contact research groups directly**
  - Identify groups whose research interest you and ask about potential PhD opportunities.
  - Not every opportunity is advertised publicly!

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- **Search for advertised positions or funding**
  - Look for funded PhD vacancies or scholarships online in job portals, university websites and funding programmes.
  - Apply for a funded position or find a supervisor and then apply for funding.

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Where should I look?

- **For advertised positions**
  - EURAXESS
  - LinkedIn
  - University and research institute career pages
  - MSCA Doctoral Networks and other European research projects





- **For funding opportunities (after having a project and supervisor)**

	Scholarship	Deadline*	Selection process based on*
SPAIN	FPU (national predoctoral grants)	January 2027	Grades
	"la Caixa" INPhINIT	February 2027	CV and project
	Regional grants	January 2028	Grades and merits
FRANCE	Doctoral schools (Écoles doctorales)	May-June 2027	Project, grades, CV, interview

* Just illustrative data. Check requirements, eligibility and deadlines before applying, which may depend on the specific call.

When should I apply?

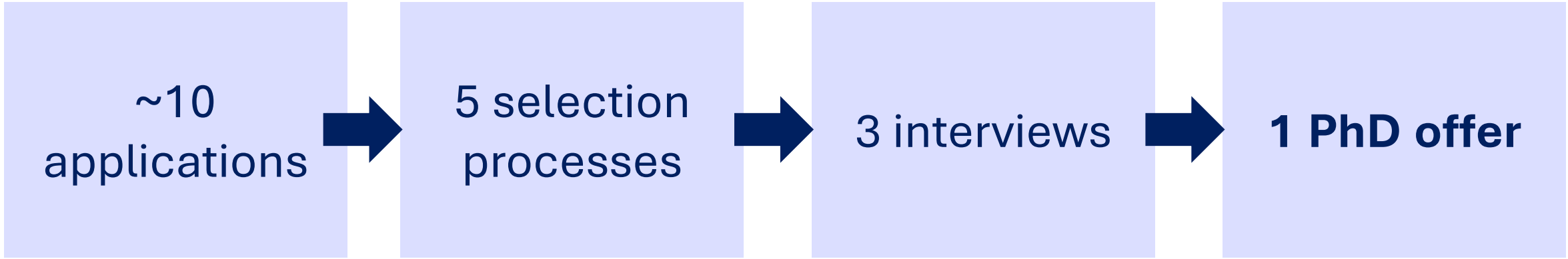
JAN-FEB	• Identify interesting research groups • Check funding options (especially in Spain!) • Update your CV • Prepare your LinkedIn or EURAXESS feed
MAR-MAY	• Apply to advertised positions that genuinely fit your background and interests
ALL YEAR	• New positions are advertised throughout the year. Don’t stop searching just because the main application period has passed

What do you need to apply?

CV	• Include all your education, research experience, skills, etc. • Clear, simple and specific • **Do not modify it for every application**
Motivation letter	• Prepare a template with the basics (e.g. experience, why do you want to pursue a PhD, etc.) • **Try to tailor it for each position** • How your experience and background matches the requirements and topic? Show examples!
Bonus	Read few relevant publications from the group, try to understand them and show interest (during interview)
Be careful!	Check required documents, deadlines, eligibility criteria and submission procedure

Rejection is part of the process!

My experience



A rejection is not a measure of your worth

Another candidate may have more relevant experience or a closer match with the project’s requirements.

Grades are important… but not everything

- **Gain diverse experience**

  During your internships and master's thesis try to explore different research fields, approaches within them or research environments

- **Develop complementary skills**

  E.g. programming, simulation, AI or data analysis

- **Find the right match**

  Better fewer, well-prepared applications for projects that fit your profile than many generic ones

My experience

PET imaging (bachelor's thesis) + **PG imaging** (master's thesis)

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Dual-tracer PET using PG signals

Don’t loose yourself in the process

- **Protect your mental health and be kind to yourself**

  Keep up with your master's responsibilities and make time to rest

- **Don't compare yourself with others**

  Luck matters, personal circumstances matter and more opportunities will come. This is not a race

- **Help and support your friends and classmates**

  Practise interviews together, review each other’s motivation letters and applications and share opportunities

I got an offer! Should I accept it?

- **Check and ask assertively the conditions**
  - Funding, salary and contract duration
  - Working conditions and expectations
  - Project objectives
- **Talk to people**
  - Contact current PhD students or alumni
  - Ask about supervision and the group's working style
  - Discuss the offer with professors or previous supervisors

If the topic or the working conditions don’t feel right, you can decline.

You should find a PhD position that suits you and where you can learn comfortably ☺

Other opportunities may come along!

Thank you for your attention!

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any doubts, questions or if you need some help!

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