


DP-FOBI APPLICATION GUIDE



FORESTS AND BIOECONOMY
DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

MSCA CODUND DOCTORAL PROGRAMME



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the European Union**

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1. THE DP-FOBI PROGRAMME

1.1 Programme Description

The Doctoral Programme for Advancing Forest-Based Bioeconomy (DP-FOBI) is an MSCA-funded doctoral programme at the University of Eastern Finland. DP-FOBI recruits 15 doctoral candidates. The programme offers structured doctoral training in an international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral research environment, supporting early-stage researchers in developing the skills, knowledge, and perspectives needed to contribute to sustainable innovation in the forest-based bioeconomy.

Application period June 11 – August 10, 2026

1.2 What We Offer

DP-FOBI offers fully funded 4-year PhD positions, high-quality supervision, access to an international research community, structured training, and opportunities for collaboration with academic and non-academic partners.

Doctoral candidates will benefit from:

- Individual research projects embedded within a joint doctoral programme
- Integration to UEF's Forests and Bioeconomy Research Community, comprising approximately 150 researchers across eight departments and schools
- High-quality supervision teams supported by UEF Doctoral Programmes and research groups
- Access to vibrant innovation ecosystem in the Forest Capital of Europe
- Secondments and short-visits to academic and non-academic partners
- Training in scientific, transferable, and career-development skills

1.3 Research themes

DP-FOBI aims to drive innovation in the forest-based bioeconomy through world-class research and the training of future experts and leaders. The programme integrates cutting-edge technologies and interdisciplinary approaches to address global challenges and support planetary sustainability.

DP-FOBI focuses on **three core research areas** that enable cross-disciplinary research:

- 1) **Forest inventory and ecosystem modelling:** This area advances understanding of forest structures and dynamics. It improves forest monitoring systems and develops data-driven tools for continuous-cover forestry and land-use planning.
- 2) **Novel forest-based products:** This area explores new uses of forest resources in well-being, nutrition and green chemistry. The aim is to increase the sustainable value of wood-based products.
- 3) **Market behaviour in bioeconomy:** This area examines the decision-making of market actors and conditions that support sustainable innovation. It draws on public discourse analysis, behavioural science, and innovation management.

1.4 PhD Positions Offered

The programme recruits doctoral researchers to work in key research areas including forest ecosystems, new bio-based products, and bioeconomy markets and policy.

DP-FOBI focuses on three core research areas and offers the following PhD projects:

Forest inventory and ecosystem modelling

- Coupling artificial intelligence and simulation-optimization for numeric forest management planning
- Dead wood dynamics in Fennoscandian forests
- European landscape-level assessment and modelling of forest plantations' growth dynamics and ecosystem services
- Multisource approach for mapping canopy and habitat composition in boreal forests
- Multi-temporal laser scanning for characterizing tree structure, growth, and wood quality

Novel forest-based products

- Bioactivity of biomass-derived chemical fractions in material applications
- Efficient enzymatic conversion of biomass to bio-based compounds
- Nutritional, functional, and business potential of Finnish forest-based resources
- Sustainable innovation and IPR law

Market behaviour in bioeconomy

- Behavioural biases in the adoption of bio-based innovations in the forest sector
- Contested conceptualizations of forest in bioeconomy-related discourses
- Environmental Discourses and the Spread of Multilingual (Dis)information in Social Networks
- Sensory marketing to promote sustainable consumer choices
- Strategic orientations driving bioeconomy transition in forest-based SMEs
- Sustainability assessment models for forest-based businesses

[Explore the offered doctoral positions](#)

1.4 Who Can Apply

Applicants must meet the following conditions at the time of the call deadline:

- 1) must hold a relevant Master's degree (or equivalent)
- 2) **must not already hold a doctoral degree.** Applicants who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but have not yet been formally awarded the doctoral degree are also ineligible.
- 3) **must not have resided or carried out their main activity** (work, studies, etc.) **in Finland for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately preceding the call deadline** (August 10)

At the time of signing the employment contract, recruited researchers must be enrolled in a [doctoral programme at the University of Eastern Finland](#) leading to the award of a doctoral degree, and must meet the requirements of that doctoral programme. Admission to the doctoral programme requires a research plan, which the selected candidates will prepare in collaboration with their supervisors shortly after being accepted to DP-FOBI. The doctoral programme related to each PhD research theme is named in the corresponding theme description.

1.5 Partner Organisations

The programme collaborates with universities, research institutes, companies, and public organisations, offering opportunities for practical experience and networking.

2. HOW TO APPLY

2.1 Timeline

- Call opens: June 11, 2026
- Info Q&A: June 24, at 1 pm (EEST)
- Application deadline: August 10, 2026
- Evaluation and selection period: August – November 2026
- Results announced: December 2026
- Appointments: January – March 2027

2.2 Application Process

The application process is as follows:

- Check the eligibility criteria and application requirements, and read all instructions carefully.
- Familiarize yourself with the research areas, themes, and supervisors.
- Choose a research theme.
- Prepare all required application documents.
- Complete the electronic application form and submit your application.

2.3 Application requirements

All application materials must be submitted in English via the UEF electronic recruitment system.

A complete application includes:

- 1) Completed electronic application form
- 2) Certified copy of the Master's degree (or equivalent) diploma (or equivalent proof if diploma is pending) in relevant field (defined in the theme description) and a transcript of records showing courses and grades
- 3) Curriculum vitae (CV)
- 4) Electronic copy of Master's thesis (or equivalent)
- 5) Two-page summary of the Master's thesis (or equivalent) in English
- 6) Ethics Self-Assessment form

- 7) Motivational letter, preferably one page and no more than three pages
- 8) Proof of English proficiency if not evident from academic credentials (as required in the theme description)

An additional application condition is that the **provided templates must be used**. Applications not adhering to the format or language requirements will not be considered.

If the degree certificate is not in English, you must provide official English translations of your degree certificate documents. All translations must be issued by the awarding educational institution or an authorized translator. Each page of the official translation must bear the translator's stamp and/or signature. Official translations must be accurate translations of the original documents. Translations made by the applicants themselves will not be accepted.

3. SELECTION PROCESS

The five-stage of the selection process includes: eligibility and ethics check, external review, interviews, final selection decision, and appointment

1. Eligibility and ethics check (August 2026)

The eligibility check is conducted by the Programme Manager (PM) to verify compliance with the predefined eligibility criteria. Ethics check is performed by the Ethics Committee to assess ethical considerations based on the Ethics self-assessment form. If necessary, the UEF Ethics Board may be consulted. Applications that fail to meet eligibility or ethical standards, or lack required documentation, will not proceed.

2. External review of written applications (September – October 2026)

Review panel is composed of three independent, unbiased external experts per application. Evaluation materials will be sent securely by the PM, including application documents, evaluation guide and criteria, and pre-designed scoring forms. The reviewers will evaluate candidates' 1) qualifications and merits (based on

diplomas, CV) and 2) motivation and research fit (based on motivational letter). The reviewers will have one month to complete evaluations.

3. Interviews (November 2026)

Interviews will be conducted online. Interview panel includes an HR expert, an intersectoral expert, and two independent scientific experts. The Impact Manager will provide mandatory training to the interviewers on unbiased evaluation. The interviewers evaluate applicants' 1) understanding of the research area and topic, 2) motivation, commitment, learning goals, and career plans and 3) English language proficiency. The interview includes a short presentation on the Master's thesis (or equivalent), followed by a structured discussion on research ideas and motivation. Based on pre-designed forms, final scores are averaged across panel members. Candidates must meet minimum scores in each category to be ranked.

4. Final selection (December 2026)

The DP-FOBI Steering Committee will finalize the ranking, considering interview scores, balance across research areas, and gender balance (in line with Finnish law). In case of tied total scores, the research presentation score will be the deciding factor. If still tied, both candidates will be included in the final ranking. In cases of tied scores, the Steering Committee will consider: 1) gender balance within the programme and research areas, 2) scientific balance across themes, and 3) resource availability within hosting research groups. In accordance with Finnish law (Act on Equality between Women and Men 609/1986, especially section 9 on temporary, planned special measures to promote effective gender equality), if candidates are equally qualified, preference may be given to the underrepresented gender in the relevant research area.

5. Appointment (Flexibly January – March 2027)

The PM will notify selected candidates and provide instructions for signing employment contracts. Remaining interviewed candidates will be placed on a reserve list. If any positions are declined, the next candidate on the list will be offered the position. Once all positions are filled, remaining candidates will be informed.

Appeals and redress

The candidates will receive feedback at each stage. Appeals must be submitted within five working days of notification. The Appeals Committee, that consists of two external experts and two internal UEF experts, will address complaints within the following five working days. If procedural errors are identified, the PM will organize a re-evaluation of the affected application.

3.2 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation process is structured in accordance with best practices established through the regular Doctoral Candidate recruitment procedures at UEF and is aligned with the principles of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

External review criteria

The external review of application documents will be based on the following criteria:

1. Candidate's merits (weight 50%)
 - academic qualifications (course grades and the grade of the Master's thesis (or equivalent))
 - suitability of the Master's degree (or equivalent) to the chosen DP-FOBI research theme
 - research experience in the chosen research area topic
 - international experience
 - interdisciplinary and intersectoral experience
2. Motivational letter (weight 50%)
 - commitment and motivation to pursue PhD studies
 - understanding of the chosen research topic
 - understanding of the research methods used in the chosen research topic
 - understanding of the interdisciplinary and intersectoral aspects in doctoral training
 - prospects of completing PhD studies in the given timeframe

The scoring system is as follows: candidate's merits, maximum of 5 points, and motivational letter, maximum of 5 points. Total maximum score is 10 points.

Reviewers are encouraged to use the full scoring scale including decimal values, and to give short verbal feedback.

To qualify for the interview stage, applicants must achieve: 1) A minimum total score of 7 points, 2) At least 50% of the maximum score in each individual section (merits, and motivational letter). In cases where there is a significant divergence in individual scores, the PM will convene a consensus meeting. The PM will calculate the average scores of the three reviewers for each applicant. Based on the ranking, three times the number of positions will be invited to interviews.

Interview criteria

The interview evaluation criteria include master's thesis summary presentation, motivation and English language proficiency.

1. Research presentation (weight 50 %)

- presenting master's thesis (or equivalent) summary in the given timeframe
- articulation of research purpose and aims for the chosen research topic
- mastering theory, methods, and ethics for the chosen research topic

2. Motivation (weight 30 %)

- motivation for PhD studies and for the chosen topic
- articulation of learning goals for PhD studies
- relevance of career goals for future

3. Language proficiency (weight 20 %)

- English language proficiency

Each of these categories is scored 0-5, and the candidates must achieve a minimum of 3.5 points (out of maximum of 5) in each category to be included in the final ranking list. Decimal scoring is permitted, and short verbal feedback encouraged. The PM will calculate the average scores of the for reviewers for each applicant.

4 TRAINING

DP-FOBI provides a flexible doctoral training structure that combines disciplinary

expertise, interdisciplinary learning, and intersectoral engagement. The programme equips doctoral candidates with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed for impactful research and diverse careers.

Doctoral candidates build advanced expertise through discipline-specific studies tailored to their research objectives and career goals. Individual study plans are prepared with the primary supervisor and aligned with each candidate's career development plan.

All candidates are integrated into the DP-FOBI partner ecosystem, collaborating with academic, industry, and public-sector stakeholders. Regular DP-FOBI workshops and summer schools support networking, knowledge exchange, and research presentation skills. Candidates also participate in international scientific conferences to present their work and expand their professional networks.

A mandatory core training programme is complemented by optional UEF courses in areas such as research ethics, open science, research writing, communication, project management, leadership, career planning, and entrepreneurship. Open Science is a key theme, supporting transparent, accessible, and impactful research.

DP-FOBI also emphasises public engagement and science communication. Doctoral candidates interact with citizens, media, policymakers, and other stakeholders to strengthen the societal relevance of their research.

Interdisciplinary and intersectoral learning is supported through collaboration with supervisors, mentors, and partners; stakeholder-driven research; secondments; joint training events; and access to national and European doctoral training networks.

4.1 Doctoral studies

DP-FOBI doctoral studies follow **the structure and study modules of the UEF Doctoral Programme to which each doctoral candidate belongs.**

The doctoral degree primarily focuses on research and engagement with the academic community. In addition to the **doctoral dissertation**, the degree includes 30 ECTS of doctoral studies that support the candidate's research:

- Transferable skills studies (5–10 ECTS), including courses in research ethics, scientific writing, and academic and other professional skills.

- Studies in the discipline and field of research (20–25 ECTS), including methodological studies, seminars, and other discipline-specific studies.

4.2 Secondments, short visits and collaborative projects

Doctoral candidates are encouraged to complete secondments (that last at least three months), short research visits, and collaborative projects with universities, research institutes, companies, and other organisations within the programme's partner network.

These experiences support knowledge exchange, hands-on learning, and adaptation to different research and work cultures. They also strengthen teamwork, problem-solving, and innovation skills. By working with academic and non-academic partners across sectors and countries, doctoral candidates gain a broader perspective on research and career opportunities. This mobility also helps ensure that doctoral research is informed by real-world needs and contributes to the scientific quality and societal relevance of forest-based bioeconomy research.

5 Your Doctoral Journey at the University of Eastern Finland

Why choose UEF?

The University of Eastern Finland is one of Finland's leading multidisciplinary universities, offering doctoral candidates an international, research-intensive and supportive environment. With campuses in Joensuu and Kuopio, UEF combines high-level research, interdisciplinary collaboration and a strong commitment to sustainability, responsibility and equality.

[Discover what international students say about studying at UEF](#)

Key facts about UEF

- The most multidisciplinary university in Finland

- Campuses in Joensuu and Kuopio
- Approximately 17,600 degree students
- Approximately 3,500 staff members
- Four faculties covering a wide range of disciplines
- Research ranked among the world's best in several fields
- Doctoral programmes across all scientific fields of the university

[Explore more about UEF](#)

[Discover research at UEF](#)

Forests and Bioeconomy Research Community

As a doctoral candidate at UEF, you will become part of an international and interdisciplinary research environment that addresses some of the most urgent global challenges of our time. UEF's strategically significant Research Communities (RCs) bring together researchers across disciplines to produce high-quality scientific knowledge, develop practical solutions and support research-based education.

Doctoral candidates in this programme will join the Forests and Bioeconomy Research Community (FOBI), an international and multidisciplinary environment focused on the future of forests, sustainable resource use and the transition towards a biosociety — the third wave of the bioeconomy. FOBI research develops science-based solutions for the sustainable and multifunctional management and use of forests, supports ecosystem services, and contributes to new sustainable markets, innovations and business models in the forest-based bioeconomy.

[Meet our research community](#)

Doctoral Programmes at the UEF

The University of Eastern Finland offers doctoral education across all its scientific disciplines, educating high-level researchers and experts for careers in academia, research, teaching and demanding expert roles in society.

Doctoral education at UEF is organised through discipline-specific and thematic doctoral programmes. These programmes provide doctoral candidates with a

structured research environment, academic supervision and opportunities to develop both field-specific expertise and broader transferable skills.

Doctoral candidates in DP-FOBI will join one of UEF's doctoral programmes, depending on their disciplinary focus and faculty affiliation:

- Doctoral Programme of the Philosophical Faculty
- Doctoral Programme in Science, Forestry and Technology
- Doctoral Programme in Health Sciences
- Doctoral Programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies

Through these programmes, doctoral candidates become part of UEF's wider academic community and develop the expertise needed to contribute to high-quality research, education and societal impact.

[Learn more about doctoral education](#)

As a DP-FOBI Doctoral Candidate, You Are Part of UEF Staff

If selected for DP-FOBI, you will become a member of the UEF staff. UEF offers its employees meaningful work in an international academic environment, supports a healthy work-life balance, and provides time to recharge as well as staff benefits that promote wellbeing.

[Explore what it is to work at UEF](#)

- [Staff benefits](#)
- [Work well-being](#)
- [Equality and accessibility principles](#)
- [Guide for international staff](#)