

Trees form a hugely important and integral part of the lives of all South Africans. Yet it is seldom recognised that these important plants are seriously threatened by pests and diseases. In South Africa, the largest research programme focusing on the health of trees is the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and National Research Foundation (NRF) funded Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB). The CTHB is hosted at the University of Pretoria in the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI). To achieve its vision, the CTHB team undertakes research across a broad suite of disciplines including genetics, microbiology, entomology, genomics, plant pathology, ecology, biostatistics, biochemistry and chemistry.

The CTHB wishes to invite applications for a three-year PhD scholarship for full-time study towards the PhD degree in Microbiology at the University of Pretoria, starting February 2020. The selected candidate will work on a project, entitled "Cross-kingdom sRNA trafficking in pathogenic plant-fungal interactions", which aims to understand the effect of sRNAs in the plant pathology of trees. The centre is offering financial support (bursary and project running funds) to previously disadvantaged South African students who intend to study at Doctoral level at the University of Pretoria. Applicants must be close to completing (or have completed) their M.Sc. degree and expect to achieve a mark of 60% or higher. The programme is funded to the amount of up to R 127, 000 per annum, which will go towards costs associated with the degree and a monthly stipend.

- To find out more about the TPCP, CTHB and FABI, visit <http://www.fabinet.up.ac.za/>

Eligibility:

- South African citizen;
- MSc degree (or equivalent) in Microbiology, Genetics, Biotechnology or a related science completed not more than 6 years ago;
- Good working knowledge of English;
- Strong motivation and commitment.

Desirable Skills:

- Molecular biology techniques (e.g. DNA cloning, DNA isolation, PCR, DNA transformation etc.)
- Prior expertise in Next Generation Sequencing would be considered
- Initiative, independence and collaboration in a research group

Applications:

Please submit the following documentation to Thabiso.motaung@up.ac.za as a **single PDF file**, by **17:00 on Monday 20th January, 2020**.

1. Letter of motivation (explaining your interest in Microbiology/Genetics/Biotechnology and why you wish to do a PhD. Maximum 1 page);
2. Full CV
3. Certified copy of academic transcript/degree certificates;
4. Reference letters from 2 academic references, including the letter of MSC degree supervisor;

5. Passport/ID as proof of citizenship.

Please name the file 'FABI-Your name'.

Female applicants and applicants from less privileged backgrounds are encouraged to participate in the programme

Queries may be addressed to Prof Emma Steenkamp (emma.steenkamp@fabi.up.ac.za) or Dr Thabiso Motaung (thabiso.motaung@up.ac.za).

Shortlisted candidates will be notified by email with further instructions. If you do not hear from us 6 weeks after our closing date, you should assume that your application was unsuccessful.