Guide for applicants

Breath : BRinging hEAlTH and Social Sciences to a new level through interdisciplinary doctoral program

1/01/2025 – 31/12/2029

Angers University has been awarded with an MSCA COFUND to develop a European interdisciplinary doctoral programme: Breath. Please read this guide carefully before applying.

This is a call for applications for 20 fellowships (3-years) in **Health and SSH - Social Sciences and Humanities** in the "Pays de la Loire Region" in the West part of France. The doctoral student will be hosted in one of the 3 cities of the implemented partners Angers, Nantes, Le Mans.

10 doctoral students have been recruited in 2025 from all over the world. Through the call for applications number 2, 10 additional doctoral students will be recruited in 2026.

Call #2 Calendar

19th of January 2026	Opening of the 1st call for 10 fellowships
12th of March 2026	Deadline for submitting applications online
13th– 20th of March 2026	Eligibility check
April 2026	Evaluation of candidates
May 2026	Online interviews of selected applicants
June 2026	Final results of the call are published
1st of October 2026	Beginning of the 3 years thesis

Contacts :
Email : breath@univ-angers.fr
Project Manager : Meryl Galdeano
Scientific coordinator : Sébastien Fleuret

Table des matières

1. About Breath: BRinging hEAlTH and Social Sciences to a new level through interdisciplinary doctoral program

1.1 What is the Breath programme?

The Breath project, cofounded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions MSCA-COFUND-2025 is led by the University of Angers on behalf of the three public universities in Pays de la Loire: University of Angers (UA), Le Mans University (LMU) and Nantes University (NU). The BREATH project offers 20 fellowships divided into 2 cohorts, in the framework of the European Horizon 2020 programme. They will be hosted in one of the cities of the implementing partners Angers, Nantes or Le Mans, in the West Part of France. It also aims to bring together all the stakeholders in the Pays de la Loire region who have a shared interest in training young researchers in SSH/Health.

1.2 Who can apply ?

The call is open to researchers having a master's degree in SSH/Health of any nationality at the deadline of the call. They must respect the mobility rule: they cannot apply if they have spent more than a year in France during the past three years before the call.

1.3 Which research topics are offered?

11 topics in **the medical sciences and the humanities and social sciences** have been selected to be offered to the candidates. They are displayed on the Breath's website. The candidate can also offer its own topic if it is in line with the Breath's project framework. In this case, the candidate must find its two main supervisors (one from Health, one from SSH) at least one from one of the implementing partners Angers University, Nantes University or Le Mans University. Support can be offered by the BREATH management team.

1.4 How to apply?

Candidates must apply online on the dedicated platform Amethis within the specified deadlines by submitting the required documents. **<u>All documents must be written in English</u>** or must be translated in English. **Access the [application platform HERE](#) or go on Breath website and click on the chosen subject, available here:** https://breath.univ-angers.fr/en/apply/phd-opportunities.html. All eligible proposals will be evaluated in the selection. A final list of 10 fellows will be established at the end of June. Fellowships will start in October 2026.

1.5　What kind of contract will fellows have?

Recruited fellows will be hired for a 36-month temporary research work contract by one of the three implemented partners: Angers University, Le Mans University, Nantes University, in accordance with the French labour legislation. The fellows will benefit from French public health care system. The employment conditions will be similar as permanent researchers from their hosting university regarding working hours, paid annual leave, child leave and unemployment insurance

1.6　What wage will the fellows have ?

Selected fellows will get a **wage around 2 250€ per month gross** + **400€ for mobility allowance**. **Additional 400€ will be offered to doctoral students with family** (being married and/or having children) as family allowance: a very attractive bonus! Please, note that social taxes apply on the mobility and family allowances.

In addition, financial support for the thesis costs up to 700€/month is provided to cover environmental, travel and training costs. These funds will be paid to the laboratory, for the doctoral student. Therefore, selected fellows will be affiliated to the French Social Security during the stay, together with their potential family members.

2. Eligibility criteria

The call is open to researchers in SSH/Health of any nationality.

2.1　Language:

The applicant must be fluent in English (written and spoken – B2 minimum following the Common European Framework of Reference for languages). Tests scores have to be provided and shouldn't be older than 2 years old.

2.2　Mobility rule:

Doctoral candidates must comply with the "Mobility Rule", they cannot have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in France for more than 12 months in the 36 months before the deadline of the call. Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not considered.

2.3　Education:

At the deadline of the call for applications, the candidate should justify a master's degree (or international equivalence) with connection and relevance to the chosen Breath PhD

Topic, particularly SSH/Health. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of Breath, no specific Master' field will be expected. The candidate shouldn't be in possession of a PhD.

2.4 Adequacy discipline/candidate

Disciplinary background must align with the chosen PhD topic. The scientific coordinator will reject applications that are not related to the topic for which the candidate is applying.

3. Application

3.1 Open projects for call#2

Doctoral school BS – Biologie Santé - Biology health

- Psychosociologic functionning of young adults with childhood onset pituitary deficiency: nationwide multicentric observational study. A sociological and clinical psychological approach.
- Towards replacing animal models in biomedical research with 3D cellular models? An embedded ethical analysis.
- African families facing the risk of chronic kidney disease (CKD): Towards a transnational approach to disease prevention using genetics
- One Health Rehabilitation: Animal-Assisted Therapy for Children with Cleft Lip and Palate Using Rehabilitated Dogs with the Same Condition
- Evaluating Capacity-building and Outreach to reduce the environmental impact of MEDications (ECO-MED)

Doctoral school STT – Société Temps et Territoires - Societies, times and territories

- Tele-epidemiology of diarrheal diseases in Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil) in the context of global changes
- Working together to provide care? Identifying the conditions for emergence and gathering in a community health center.
- Adjusting to Aging in Place: Occupational Therapy and Environmental Issues

Doctoral school ECLIS – Education, Cognition, Langages, Interactions, Santé - Education, Cognition, Languages, Interactions, Health

- Women's Ultra-Endurance Running, Psychological Flexibility and Empowerment in Space and Pain (France–USA)
- Comparing CBT and ACT for Burnout with Cognitive Complaints: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Doctoral school EDGE – Economie et Gestion

- The Role of Artificial Intelligence Large Language Models and Deep Learning in Mental Health Support: A Multidimensional Analysis of Effectiveness, Ethical Issues, and Stakeholder Perspectives

3.2   How to apply on the application platform?

Candidates have to apply online on a dedicated platform Amethis within the specified deadlines by submitting the required documents. The application and all supporting documents must be written in English or translated in English.

All open research projects are available on the dedicated page « **PhD Opportunities** » on the breath.univ-angers.com. Select one topic and click on it to be transferred to the application platform Amethis.

Doctoral candidates who would like to offer its own individual driven research project will also use the application platform and will chose the « ONLY FOR CANDIDATES PROPOSING THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL DRIVEN RESEARCH PROJECT »

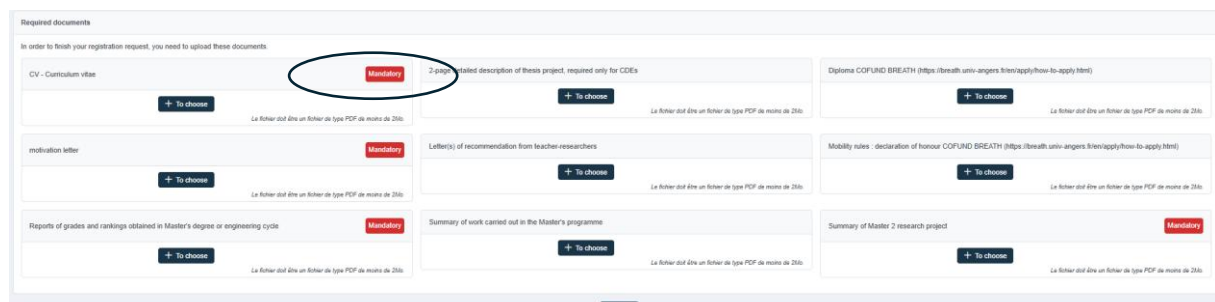They will need to identify by him.her self:

- 2 co-supervisors, one of them at least will be from one of the partners universities: University of Angers, Nantes University or Le Mans University.
- 1 non-academic supervisor

Reach the BREATH management team for support to find supervisors.

3.3   Application material: **READ CAREFULLY!**

Applications must be submitted exclusively online through the dedicated Amethis platform and must include the complete set of application material.

Note that all boxes including a red "Obligatoire" or "Mandatory" must have a document uploaded.

- **Online application form including personal details**
- **Eligibility check list :** the eligibility declaration for mobility rule *(use BREATH template)*

- **CV :** The candidate's extended CV *(PDF - Europass anonymized – use BREATH template)* No other form of CV will be allowed
- **Motivation letter**. *(use BREATH template)*
- **Copy of diplomas (Bachelor and Master) and English certificates (when if it's required) :**
  - If your Master's degree certificate is not yet available, you have to complete a declaration of honour (BREAT template to use) originals transcripts/degree should be provided later before call completion end of May at latest)
  - English level requires B2 minimum following the Common European Framework of Reference for languages). Tests scores has to be provided and shouldn't be older than 2 years old (IELTS, TOEIC, TOEFL, Cambridge certificates). For native English speakers and non-native English speakers having completed their Master's degree in either United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, USA, Australia or New Zealand will be exempted from providing any English proficiency test certificate.
- **Transcripts for Bachelor, M1, M2**
- **Resume of Master**
- **2 reference letters**
- if applicable ethics self-assessment (for PhD topics proposed by applicants – available at the end of your Guide for Applicants)

Download the BREATH templates to use on Breath's website : Breath.univ-angers.fr

- **Motivation letter**
- **Anonymized CV**
- **Eligibility check list : declaration for mobility rule**
- **Declaration of honour for Master's degree if your transcripts are not available yet**

Please note that selected candidates must provide hard evidence that they fulfil the eligibility criteria: copies of previous employment, university grades, utility bills, entry/exit stamps in passport, etc. The project management team will check the authenticity of the documents and detect fraud. They can issue warnings to the applicants before the closing date of the call, when the application is incomplete, or when documents provide insufficient information or cannot be clearly identified as official documents emanating from Higher Education establishments.

Ethics and equal opportunities

The Breath programme will respect the principle of equal treatment in recruitment, working conditions, monitoring and management. The goal of Breath is to hire the best possible researchers regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disabilities.

Each application will be anonymized with no name and gender, no picture, no civil status in the CV template.

4. Evaluation process for candidates

4.1 Eligibility check for online applications mid-March 2026

All submitted applications and supporting documents will go through an eligibility check. At the end of the eligibility check process, a provisional list of eligible candidates will be known and sent for evaluation of their application. All uncompleted applications will be automatically rejected.

4.2 Evaluation of the applications – April 2026

A list of pre-admitted candidates will enter the external evaluation. Each admitted applicants will be evaluated by 2 external experts and will receive scores according to the evaluation criteria (see evaluation grid). Once each expert will have evaluated his/her assigned applications, scores will be be calculated to obtain the mean mark. At the end of this process, the best ranked applications will be short-listed for interviews, and applicants will be informed.

All application below 75/100 will be automatically rejected.

4.3 Interview of eligible candidates - May 2026

The 4 best-ranked applications per doctoral project offered will be invited for an interview through video conference with the interview panel. The possible ex aequo (among the 4 best-ranked) will be counted among the candidates to be invited for the interview. A reserve list for the interviews of 10 candidates will be made (to reduce the risk of losing candidates who would have changed their career plans).

The online interview will be divided as follow: a 15 min scientific presentation (scientific quality, the feasibility of the thesis and the career development you have in mind) followed by 10 min of questions and answer with the jury.

All interview below 75/100 will be automatically rejected.

4.4　Final selection - June 2026

The final ranking of the candidate will be calculated considering the results from the external evaluation (50% scoring weight) and the interviews (50% scoring weight).

In case of difficulty to reach an agreement, the supervisor's opinion will be asked. At the end of June, all candidates will be notified by email about its results.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION AND EVALUATION GRID

Evaluation grid for first stage, online applications:

Online Applications			
Evaluation	**Criteria for the first phase of selection**	**Scoring**	**Ex aequo priority**
Quality and Academic Merit (weighting 60%)	Academic record, training and skills of the candidate	/5	1
	Motivation and quality of the candidate (based on Motivation letter and recommendations)	/5	
Leadership potential (weighting 40 %)	International experience (stays or studies abroad, international collaborations, etc.)	/5	2
	Partnerships and collaborations (incl. the planned ones)	/5	
	Ability and/or interest to engange with interdisciplinarity	/5	
	Personal skills (e.g., problem-solving, language and communication skills, capacity to work independently, perseverence, etc. as evidence e.g., in extracurricular activities)	/5	
Total *Threshold 22,5 (75%)*		**/30**	

Evaluation grid for third stage, online interviews:

Evaluation			Ex-aequo priority
Scientific quality 5 min	Presentation skills, clarity and originally of the presentation, awareness of the current debates and current state of the art	/40	1
Feasibility 5 min	Adequacy between the research area and the candidate's skills. Expected contributions. Capacity to carry out the research project	/20	2
Career development 5 min	Relevance of the fellowship at this career stage. Personal motivation and career plan	/30	3
Interview 10 min	Quality of the answers to the questions	/10	4
		TOTAL /100	

5. Training programme

5.1 Training

The training will include personal career development in the individual professional project in order to open doors in and outside the academic field, towards the economic world and civil society.

Doctoral student will have access to a catalogue of disciplinary (in SSH and health themes) and transversal trainings. They will compose their individual training plan from this catalogue, and they must follow Breath specific trainings in SSH and in Health with an equal weight in the training plan.

The initial programme of a traditional PhD is to participate to a minimum amount of 100 hours. Within Breath, mandatory specific network wide events will complement this initial programme reaching a total of more than **200 hours training during their 3 years project**.

5.2 Secondment

In addition to their research training, the doctoral students will complete a mandatory three-month internship in a non-academic structure.

6.ETHIC considerations – BREATH

Please write "**yes**" in the table below if your research raise the following ethical issues

1. HUMAN EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS AND HUMAN EMBRYOS		Yes/no
Does your research involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs)?		
If **yes**:	Will they be directly derived from embryos within this project?	
	Are they previously established cells lines?	
	Are the cell lines registered in the European registry for human embryonic stem cell lines?	
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?		
If **yes**:	Will the research lead to their destruction?	
2. HUMANS		**Yes/no**
Does your research involve human participants?		
If **yes**:	Are they volunteers for nonmedical studies (e.g. social or human sciences research)?	
	Are they persons unable to give informed consent?	
	Are they potentially vulnerable individuals or groups?	
	Are they children/minors?	
	Are they patients for medical studies?	
	Are they healthy volunteers for medical studies?	
Does your research involve interventions (physical also including imaging technology, behavioural treatments, etc.) on the study participants?		
If **yes**:	Does it involve invasive techniques?	
	Does it involve collection of biological samples?	
Does your activity involve conducting a clinical study as defined by the Clinical Trial Regulation (EU 536/2014)? (using pharmaceuticals, biologicals, radiopharmaceuticals, or advanced therapy medicinal products)		
If **yes**:	Is it a clinical trial?	
	Is it a low-intervention clinical trial?	
3. HUMAN CELLS/ TISSUES (not covered by section 1)		**Yes/no**
Does your research involve the use of human cells or tissues?		

If **yes**:	Are they human embryonic or foetal cells or tissues?	
	Are they available commercially?	
	Are they obtained within this project?	
	Are they obtained from another project, laboratory or institution?	
	Are they obtained from biobank?	

4. PERSONAL DATA		**Yes/no**
Does your research involve processing of personal data?		
If **yes**:	Does it involve the processing of special categories of personal data (e.g.: sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, genetic, biometric and health data, political opinion, religious or philosophical beliefs)?	
	If **yes**: Does it involve processing of genetic, biometric or health data?	
	Does it involve profiling, systematic monitoring of individuals, or processing of large scale of special categories of data or intrusive methods of data processing (such as, surveillance, geolocation tracking etc.)?	
Does your research involve further processing of previously collected personal data (including use of preexisting data sets or sources, merging existing data sets)?		
Is it planned to export personal data from the EU to non-EU countries?		
If **yes**:	Specify the type of personal data and countries involved:	
Is it planned to import personal data from non-EU countries into the EU or from a non-EU country to another non-EU country?		
If **yes**:	Specify the type of personal data and countries involved:	
Does this activity involve the processing of personal data related to criminal convictions or offences?		

5. ANIMALS		**Yes/no**
Does your research involve animals?		
If **yes**:	Are they vertebrates?	
	Are they non-human primates (NHP)?	
	Are they genetically modified?	
	Are they cloned farm animals?	
	Are they an endangered species?	

6. NON-EU COUNTRIES		**Yes/no**
Will some of the activities be carried out in non-EU countries?		
If **yes**:	Specify the countries:	

In case non-EU countries are involved, do the research related activities undertaken in these countries raise potential ethics issues?		
If **yes**:	Specify the countries:	
Is it planned to use local resources (e.g. animal and/or human tissue samples, genetic material, live animals, human remains, materials of historical value, endangered fauna or flora samples, etc.)?		
Is it planned to import any material (other than data) from non-EU countries into the EU or from a non-EU country to another non-EU country? For data imports, see section 4.		
If **yes**:	Specify material and countries involved:	
Is it planned to export any material (other than data) from the EU to non-EU countries? For data exports, see section 4.		
If **yes**:	Specify material and countries involved:	
Does your research involves <u>low and/or lower middle income countries</u>? (if yes, detail the benefit-sharing actions planned in the self-assessment)		
Could the situation in the country put the individuals taking part in the research at risk?		
7. ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH AND SAFETY		**Yes/no**
Does your research involve the use of substances or processes that may cause harm to the environment, to animals or plants (during the implementation of the activity or further to the use of the results, as a possible impact)?		
Does your research deal with endangered fauna and/or flora / protected areas?		
Does your research involve the use of substances or processes that may cause harm to humans, including those performing the activity (during the implementation of the activity or further to the use of the results, as a possible impact)?		
8. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE		**Yes/no**
Does your research involve the development, deployment and/or use of Artificial Intelligence? (if yes, detail in the self-assessment whether that could raise ethical concerns related to human rights and values and detail how this will be addressed)		
9. OTHER ETHICS ISSUES		**Yes/no**
Are there any other ethics issues that should be taken into consideration? Please specify		

If you have entered any ethics issues in the ethical issue table above, you must:

- Provide details about the ethical issues raised by your project
- Describe how the proposal meets the national legal and ethical requirements of your country or countries where the tasks raising ethical issues are carried out, as well as the European or international requirements;
- Explain in detail how you intend to address the issues raised in the ethical issue table, in particular as regards:
  o Research objectives
  o Research methodology
  o The potential impact of the research
- Indicate the documents you will provide to prove that you respect legal ethical requirements.

Your statement