

## The joint master's degree in palaeontology of Nova FCT and the University of Évora (2012–2025): contribution to training and research in Portugal

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### Resumo

The MSc in Palaeontology, established in 2012 as a joint program between the University of Évora and NOVA FCT, represents an important milestone in consolidating Palaeontology as a field of advanced teaching and research in Portugal. This study assesses the program's development and scientific impact from 2014 to 2025, based on institutional documentation, A3ES evaluation reports, and dissertations deposited in both universities' repositories. Organised as a 120-ECTS, four-semester degree, it is Portugal's only interuniversity program in Palaeontology. During the period analysed, 148 students applied and 118 enrolled. The program has an international dimension. About 90% of students obtained their previous degree externally, and 38% of enrolled students were international, from Angola, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, India, Italy, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, Turkey, and the United States. Since its creation, the program has involved 16 PhD-holding faculty members from the two institutions, invited professors from other Portuguese and Spanish universities, and guest lecturers. The authors coordinated the program and provided its scientific and pedagogical oversight. To date, 66 students completed the degree, and 17 dissertations are in progress, reflecting considerable thematic diversity, including vertebrate and invertebrate palaeontology, micropaleontology, palaeobotany, paleoecology, geochemistry applied to fossil studies, geoconservation, and paleontological heritage. These works addressed materials from several Portuguese regions and international contexts, namely Angola, Spain, and Greenland. Some dissertations contributed to the recognition of new fossil occurrences, the description of at least seven new taxa (*Cambelodon torrensensis*, *Epapatelo otyikokolo*, *Issi saaneq*, *Krokolithes dinophilus*, *Mystriosuchus alleroq*, *Nujalikodon cassiopeiae*, *Suchoolithus portucalensis*), and the publication of more than 50 scientific papers co-authored by alumni. Eighteen graduates continued to doctoral studies, and 77% of surveyed graduates in the most recent A3ES evaluation period were employed in field-related activities. Beyond its scientific output, the program has fostered outreach initiatives and the promotion of paleontological heritage in collaboration with museums and scientific institutions. These results show that interuniversity advanced training programs can play a structuring role in specialised scientific fields, contributing simultaneously to geoscience education, palaeontological research, and the promotion of palaeontological heritage in Portugal.

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