

Prepare your research project: my experience as a young researcher

Inês Valente

PhD student, Programme in Environment and Sustainability Studies, NOVA FCT
CENSE—Center for Environmental and Sustainability Research & CHANGE—Global
Change and Sustainability Institute, NOVA School of Science and Technology, NOVA
University Lisbon

01

INTRODUCTION

Introduction



- Integrated Master's in Environmental Engineering at NOVA FCT (2023)
- PhD Student at Programme in Environment and Sustainability Studies, NOVA FCT – Awarded with a FCT Studentship (2025)
- Energy poverty and thermal comfort vulnerability among youth



- Experience on energy poverty related projects, One-stop shops, Funding schemes for energy efficiency, Proposal writing

*“It’s **awful being at school** in the winter when it’s freezing cold, (...) At home, **the nights are the hardest**, and they often **keep me from sleeping** because either it’s so cold (...), or it’s so hot (...).”*



Source: Valente and Gouveia (2023).

Research Objectives

Primary Objective: Explore the vulnerability to energy poverty and thermal discomfort among children and young people aged 10–18

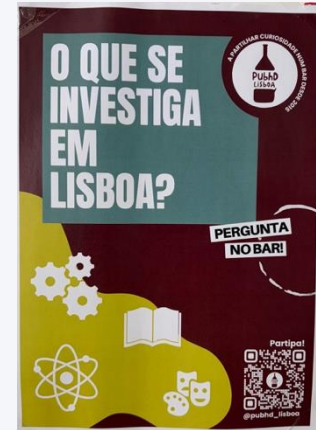
- 1 Collect perspectives on energy poverty at home and thermal comfort at schools, focusing on energy-use habits, expectations, and adaptive capacity.
- 2 Examine regional differences across Portugal (school type, climate, season).
- 3 Compare objective and subjective approaches to thermal comfort; cross-validate results with established thermal comfort indices.
- 4 Compare and validate children's perspectives with those of teachers, parents, and educational stakeholders.

02

CONFERENCES AND JOURNALS

Scientific Communication

- Communicating your work is as important as doing it;
- Identify target annual conferences or events early, consult colleagues and supervisors, keep a running list;
- Start sharing your research early, don't wait until you have all the results;
- Develop your presentation skills, test different techniques and refine what works for you.



There are different formats to communicate your PhD. Example: PhD pub – 10 minutes presentation, no slides

Conferences

- Conference submissions typically begin with an abstract, which may later be followed by an extended abstract or a short paper;
- The abstract must be relevant and aligned with the conference theme or scope;
- Common formats include unstructured abstract or structured abstract (Introduction, Methods, Results, Conclusions);
- Abstracts typically do not include space for detailed discussion or interpretation of results.
- Tip: start with smaller conferences or conferences with slots for young researchers.



Example of a conference with a young researchers slot.

Journal Submission

- Scientific papers are typically structured into standard sections: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusions;
- Conferences can be used as a platform to refine and improve research materials before journal submission;
- After revision, peer review outcomes may be:
 - Formal acceptance
 - Minor revisions
 - Major revisions
 - Rejection (with possible resubmission)
 - Rejection
- When revisions or rejections occur, reviewers usually provide detailed justification and feedback explaining their decision.
- Peer review is commonly conducted by two (or more) reviewers.
- The scientific publishing process is iterative: Write → Submit → Receive feedback → Revise → Resubmit → Repeat

Journal Submission



Energy Research & Social Science
Volume 113, July 2024, 103550

Original research article

Growing up in discomfort: Exploring energy poverty and thermal comfort among students in Portugal

Inês Valente , João Pedro Gouveia 

[Show more](#) 

[Add to Mendeley](#) [Share](#) [Cite](#)

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2024.103550> [Get rights and content](#)

[Under a Creative Commons license](#) [Open access](#)

Major revision -> Final Revision -> Publication



IOPscience  Journals  Books Publishing Support  Login 

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH ENERGY

PAPER • OPEN ACCESS

Local accommodation energy efficiency in Lisbon: a red flag for tourism, indoor thermal comfort, and energy renovation targets

Inês Valente, Bárbara Fernandes, André César, Laura Menezes and João Pedro Gouveia^{*}

Published 19 September 2024 · © 2024 The Author(s). Published by IOP Publishing Ltd

[Environmental Research: Energy, Volume 1, Number 4](#)
[The Role of Energy in Global Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation](#)

Citation Inês Valente et al 2024 *Environ. Res.: Energy* 1 045001

DOI 10.1088/2753-3751/ad76b2

[Article PDF](#)

Rejected -> Rejected -> Major Revision -> Final Revision -> Publication

Journal Submission

Examples of feedback from reviewers

Introduction:

- The research gap is clearly stated.
- Surely the Portugal energy poverty indicators are from 2022 (as the European ones) but it would be more clear if it was clarified in the text.
- Even if I agree with the fact that "studies focusing on younger populations aged 15-18 are particularly noteworthy", I would like to understand better why are they "more reliable compared to younger cohorts". I would say that all perspectives can contribute with different aspects of the problematic; I would like to know more about it.
- You mention the energy poverty vulnerability index, and later you refer as it as EPVI; acronyms should be checked throughout the text to see if they are correctly introduced.

Literature review:

- I think that the literature review could be expanded with some references as the work that O'Sullivan (2017) has conducted with teenagers (also with surveys on energy poverty at home). I would also recommend incorporating references regarding the importance of subjective perceptions regarding energy poverty and how these perceptions can change in groups of different ages sharing the same reality. Mainly, how specifically teenager views can be conditioned by their stage in life, if they are.
- Also, in 2.2 Thermal comfort in schools section, I think that when all the different studies tackling thermal comfort are mentioned, a conclusion is lacking trying to sum up what all this generated knowledge brings to this particular study.

Reviewer #1: The paper presents the results of the statistical analysis of tourist accommodation in Lisbon; the paper characterises the region in terms of building and equipment characteristics and conducts a comparative evaluation of the same variables for all apartments in the region.

In my opinion, analysis is simply and does not contain any scientific novelty. Although the authors indicated research gap, they did not support it with an in-depth review of the literature. The authors presented only the research background. Similar analyses are published periodically by the main statistical offices in individual countries.

The title of the article is wrong because the authors did not analyse thermal comfort, but only equipping buildings with HVAC systems.

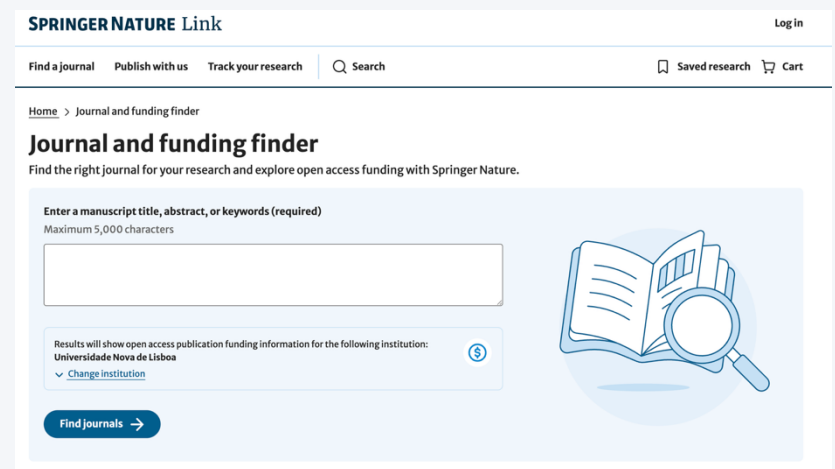
The article is written correctly (except for the title) but is not suitable for a journal of such a high rank.

Journal Submission

Most journals have a tool to support you in finding the right journal for your research.



The screenshot shows the 'Journal Finder' interface. At the top left is the 'Journal Finder' logo. On the right, there are links for 'Find journals' and 'My journals'. The main heading is 'Find the right journal for your research'. Below this, there are two radio buttons: 'Match my abstract' (selected) and 'Search by keywords, aims & scope, journal title, etc...'. A text input field labeled 'Enter your abstract' is present, with a 'Find journals >' button to its right. Below the input field, it says 'Maximum 5,000 characters'.



The screenshot shows the 'SPRINGER NATURE Link' interface. At the top right is a 'Log in' link. Below the header, there are navigation links: 'Find a journal', 'Publish with us', 'Track your research', and a search bar. On the right, there are links for 'Saved research' and 'Cart'. The main heading is 'Journal and funding finder' with the subtext 'Find the right journal for your research and explore open access funding with Springer Nature.' Below this, there is a section titled 'Enter a manuscript title, abstract, or keywords (required)' with a 'Maximum 5,000 characters' limit. A large text input field is provided. To the right of the input field is an illustration of an open book with a magnifying glass over it. Below the input field, there is a note: 'Results will show open access publication funding information for the following institution: Universidade Nova de Lisboa' with a 'Change institution' link and a currency icon. At the bottom, there is a 'Find journals →' button.

03

FCT STUDENTSHIP

FCT Studentship

Studentship promoted by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P., that supports PhD projects. Calls typically are announced in February/March, close at the end of March/April, and the results are announced in August. Three main criteria are important for the development of a proposal:

Criterion A

Merit of the Applicant (30%)

- 50% attributed to Academic Career: Bachelor and Master's grade. International students must have their academic degree recognized
- 50% attributed to Personal Curriculum: **Scientific papers, Conferences and Letter of Motivation** (750 words on the reasons to pursue a PhD and the reasons why you believe you are able to complete the proposed work plan)

Criterion B

Merit of the work plan (40%)

Assesses the quality, originality and relevance of the work plan. Divided in three criteria of relevance of the object of study, scientific quality of the state of the art and methodology of the work plan and feasibility of the work plan.

Criterion C

Merit of the Hosting Conditions (30%)

Analyses the adequacy of the supervisors and host institutions to the work plan as well as the experience and merit of the supervisors to the research plan.

FCT Studentship

Criterion A: Document proving your grades, Ciência Vitae, CV synopsis (500 words), Motivation Letter (750 words)

Criterion B: Abstract (150 words), SDG related, State of the Art (500 words), Objectives (300 words), Detailed Description (1000 words), Cronogram and Additional documents, Ethical questions (500 words, if applicable)

Criterion C: Supervisors (up to 3) and Adequacy of Hosting conditions (500 words)

Main Scientific Area	Secondary Scientific Area	Subarea	Evaluation Panel Regular Line
5 Social Sciences	5.1 Psychology	Criminal Psychology	Psychology
		Social and Organizational Psychology	
		Cognitive Psychology and Neuropsychology	
		Clinical Psychology	
		Psychology of Development and Learning	
		Educational Psychology	
		Community and Health Psychology	
	Psychology – Other		
	5.2 Economics and Management	Economics Management	Economics and Management
		Economics and Management – Other	
5.3 Educational Sciences	General Education	Educational Sciences	
	Educational Sciences		
5.4 Sociology	Sociology	Sociology	
	Sociologic Criminology		
	Social Service		
	Sociology – Other		
	Anthropology	Anthropology	
Anthropology – Other			
5.5 Law	Public Law	Law	
	Criminal Law		
	Private Law		
	European and International Law		
	Human Rights		
	Law, Social Sciences and Humanities		
	Law – Other		
5.6 Political Sciences	Political Science	Political Sciences	
	Military Science		
	Compared Politics		
	Political Theory		
	International Relations		
	Public Policy		
	European Studies		
	Political Sciences – Other		
5.7 Social and Economic Geography	Economic and Social Geography	Social and Economic Geography	
	Geographic Urbanism		
	Social and Economic Geography – Other		
5.8 Media and Communications	Documental and Information Sciences	Communication and Information Sciences	
	Journalism and Media		
	Communication and Science Management		
	Media and Communications – Other		

FCT Studentship

Critério B - Mérito do Plano de Trabalhos

3,800 [^] x

Comment

Plano de trabalhos relevante, no contexto da energia (contribui para a redução da pobreza energética e aborda a questão do conforto térmico no sucesso académico de um grupo específico, pouco estudado a nível nacional).

Bom Estado da Arte, com referências atuais. A Metodologia de trabalho é apresentada sucintamente, deixando por definir as alternativas disponíveis, o que será feito até ao meio do 2º ano do período de bolsa.

O plano de trabalhos é exequível, tendo como maior risco um baixo número de respondentes (dado os grupos etários envolvidos), o que pode inviabilizar a extração de conclusões e recomendações estatisticamente significativas. O tempo dedicado à implementação e análise dos inquéritos/questionários (tarefa 5) é potencialmente curto para o número de entidades a envolver. O plano de contingência será desenvolvido posteriormente, o que representa uma potencial limitação. O cronograma apresenta uma sequência lógica mas com pouco tempo dedicado especificamente à tarefa 5, não sendo consistente com a descrição das tarefas efetuada no texto (ex. tarefa 6 dura 12 meses na descrição detalhada e apenas 6 meses no cronograma; tarefa 5 dura 18 meses na descrição detalhada e 21 meses no cronograma).

Não fica claro se a candidata irá validar a perceção dos alunos com os dados factuais energéticos das diferentes escolas.

O trabalho apesar de ser relevante fica um pouco deficitário de novidade no campo da investigação.

Score

3,800

WEIGHT 30%

Critério C - Mérito das Condições de Acolhimento

SCORE
4,300 [^]

Comment

Orientador com extensa experiência de investigação na área científica da candidatura, muito bom registo de publicações e atividades científicas na área da candidatura. Não tem orientações concluídas de PhD (2 em curso).

A candidata demonstrou bem os motivos subjacentes à escolha do orientador e da instituição de acolhimento, bem como a sua adequação ao plano de trabalhos, nomeadamente no que diz respeito à experiência de investigação na área e à rede de contactos do grupo de suporte ao projeto.

Poderá ser necessário um novo elemento de orientação mais no campo social para apoiar no desenvolvimento de inquéritos, entrevistas e triangulação de dados.

Score

4,300

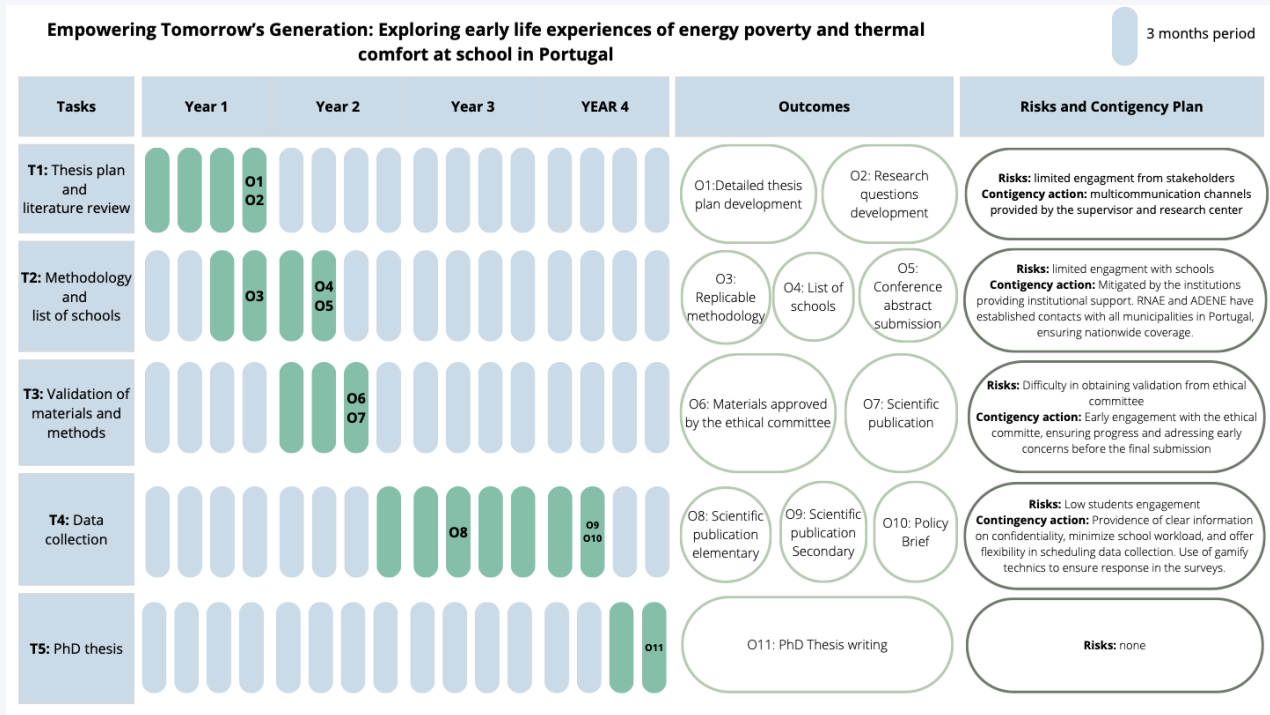
Main reasons for refusal in the first submission:

- Incoherencies between the chronogram and the work plan descriptions
- Indicated that some tasks had little time attributed
- Lack of detail on the methodology
- No novelty in the methods

Aspects that were appreciated in the second submission:

- Two supervisors who complemented each other
- Detailed risk mitigation plan, including clear tasks, the results, and risks on the chronogram plan
- Social impact and connection beyond academia

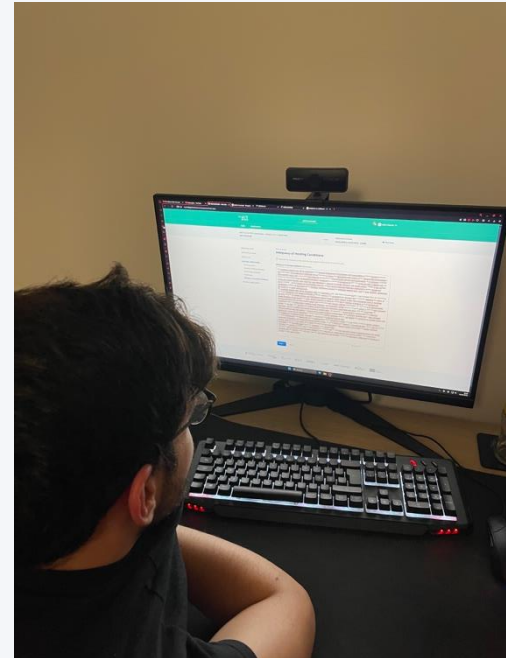
FCT Studentship



FCT Studentship

Tips for a strong application:

- Clear and feasible proposal, described with precise and structured writing;
- Start preparing as early as possible; If your degree needs to be recognized, start as early as possible;
- Ensure coherency between all the sections;
- Highlight the research gap you are trying to cover and translate why your research is relevant for the academia and how the results support policy;
- If relevant, ask for letters of support of your research or recommendations letters;
- Keep Ciência Vitae Updated;
- Request feedback: from supervisors, more experienced colleagues or even from someone totally “outside” your area.



FCT Studentship

Extended network of forums and groups to place questions and to learn with other's experiences.



04

FINAL REMARKS

Final Remarks – Prepare your Research Project

- What is your evaluation panel? Are you in the correct one?
- What are the methods involved on your research? Are there any ethical questions involved?
- Does your research plan involve contact with external stakeholders/interviews/surveys? If so, who might provide a letter of support?
- Are your outcomes balanced and diverse enough?
- What are the risks associated with your research? How do you plan to act if anything fails?

ETHICS ISSUE 1: HUMAN EMBRYOS/FOETUS

1. Does this research involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs)?
 - 1.1 If yes, will they be directly derived from embryos within this project?
 - 1.2 If yes, are they previously established cells lines?
2. Does this research involve the use of human embryos?
 - 2.1 If yes, will the research lead to their destruction?
3. Does this research involve the use of human foetal tissues/cells?

ETHICS ISSUE 2: HUMANS

1. Does this research involve human participants?
 - 1.1 If yes, are they volunteers for social or human sciences research?
 - 1.2 If yes, are they persons unable to give informed consent?
 - 1.3 If yes, are they vulnerable individuals or groups (children, patients, discriminated people, minorities, persons unable to give consent, people of dissenting, immigrant or minority communities, sex workers, etc.)?
 - 1.4 If yes, are they children/minors?
 - 1.5 If yes, are they patients?
 - 1.6 If yes, are they healthy volunteers for medical studies?
2. Does this research involve physical interventions on the study participants?
 - 2.1 If yes, does it involve invasive techniques?

ETHICS ISSUE 3: HUMANS CELLS/TISSUES

1. Does this research involve human cells or tissues? (other than from Human Embryos/Foetuses, see section 1)
 - 1.1 If yes, are they available commercially?
 - 1.2 If yes, are they obtained within this project?
 - 1.3 If yes, are they obtained from another project, laboratory or institution?
 - 1.4 If yes, are they obtained from biobank?

ETHICS ISSUE 4: PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

1. Does this research involve personal data collection and/or processing?
 - 1.1 If yes, does it involve the collection and/or processing of sensitive personal data (e.g., health, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinion, religious or philosophical conviction)?
 - 1.2 If yes, does it involve processing of genetic information?
 - 1.3 If yes, does it involve tracking or observation of participants?
2. Does this research involve further processing of previously collected personal data (secondary use)?

Final Remarks – Useful tools

Organization



Templates for presentations, leaflets, Infographics and general documents



References manager



Spelling and translation



Thank You

Inês Valente

Imo.valente@campus.fct.unl.pt