

International Olive Council

Call for applications: Scholarships for the International Expert Course in Virgin Olive Oil Tasting (University of Jaén). 23rd edition, 2026

As part of its technical cooperation and training programme for 2026, and with the aim of fostering the transfer of technology in order to enhance the knowledge of the composition and quality characteristics of virgin olive oils, the International Olive Council (IOC) plans to award scholarships for the International Expert Course in Virgin Olive Oil Tasting, taught at the University of Jaén (Spain).

These course scholarships are aimed at professionals with at least two (2) years of experience in olive oil mills, quality control, tasting or research. An academic background in agronomy, food technology or equivalent fields will be taken into consideration.

The course will cover the theoretical principles and the methodology for the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oils, the analysis of the factors – including positive and negative attributes – that define sensory quality in relation to cultural practices and processing methods, as well as other general physical and chemical quality control parameters.

It provides foundational training for establishing olive oil tasting panels within the framework of the IOC's work aimed at improving the capabilities and competence of laboratories where the sensory analysis of virgin olive oils is performed.

The course will begin on 21 September and will end on 11 December 2026¹. It will be simultaneously taught in Spanish and English.

Scholarship applications must be forwarded to the IOC and must include the specific application form available here: [English version](#) and [Spanish version](#). **The deadline for applications is Tuesday 6 April 2026 at 12:00 (CET).**

¹ Minor adjustments to the start and end dates of the course may occur.

Scholarships for this course will only be awarded to nationals of [IOC member countries](#) who meet all the requirements outlined in the selection criteria. Those applicants who do not meet the selection criteria, as well as applications received after the deadline, will be excluded from the selection process.

The IOC's scholarships will cover the registration fees, travel expenses at the start and end of the course, and three-monthly payments of €1,000 that cover board and lodging. The IOC will also directly pay to the University the costs related to the required participation insurance. The administration of the scholarships may be delegated to another body, typically the University itself, rather than being managed directly by the IOC.

Applicants must be aware that a full-time commitment to the course is required and that, therefore, participants must not engage in any other professional activities while taking the course.

Annex I outlines the principles governing the scholarship as well as the criteria for exclusion, selection, and subsequent evaluation for its award.

Please note that candidates may be excluded from the selection process at any time, and that the IOC may request candidates to submit additional information or ask them to clarify any aspect of the documents submitted.

Special consideration will be given to candidates from IOC member countries who are endorsed by their country's representative or assessor to the IOC, or by any other relevant national authority.

The awarding of scholarships is subject to budgetary availability. The submission of applications does not in any way oblige the IOC to select candidates.

Information notice: in line with the IOC's transparency guidelines, the names of the selected scholarship recipients will be published on the [IOC website](#).

ANNEX I- PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE SCHOLARSHIP: EXCLUSION, SELECTION AND AWARD CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Principles governing the scholarships

- The aim of the scholarships is to encourage the achievement of the objectives set out in the current [International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives](#), aiming to foster the transfer of technology and enhancing the knowledge of the composition and quality characteristics of virgin olive oils.
- Principle of non-profit: scholarships may not have the purpose or effect of generating profits for the beneficiary.
- Principle of non-retroactivity: expenses incurred before the formal awarding of the scholarships are not covered.
- Principle of non-cumulation: a single application may result in the award of a grant to only one beneficiary per financial year.
- Principles of publicity, transparency and equal treatment.

Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria are established in order to assess the eligibility of applicants.

Candidates will be excluded from the call for applications if:

- Applications arrive after the deadline.
- They are not nationals of IOC member countries.
- They do not meet the requirements outlined in the selection criteria, particularly those related to academic background, professional experience and language skills.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria make it possible to assess an applicant's capacity for completing the course.

To be selected for a scholarship, candidates must have at least two (2) years of experience in olive oil mills, quality control, tasting or research. An academic background in agronomy, food technology or equivalent fields will also be taken under consideration. Applicants must demonstrate that they work or conduct research in the olive oil sector, as well as providing proof of their academic background.

Applicants must also have a sound knowledge of Spanish or English (minimum a B2 level), given that these are the working languages of the course. An official certificate should be provided from recognised language centres as proof of language proficiency.

Motivation and recommendation letters will be also taken in consideration.

Award criteria

Award criteria are established in order to assess the quality of applications.

The criteria used to award the scholarships include the academic background of the candidates, as well as their professional experience in olive oil mills, quality control, tasting or research (a minimum experience of two (2) years is required). Activity and/or training certificates related to the olive sector will also be analysed.

Another award criterium is candidate's level in Spanish or English (minimum a B2 level).

A motivation letter will also be taken into account. It should set out the reasons for applying to the programme (i.e. a detailed description of the reasons why a scholarship is required), and the expected impact of the scholarship on the applicant's activities.

Recommendation letters from IOC representatives, public administration bodies or from entities operating in the olive sector (enterprises, laboratories, etc) will be taken into account when awarding the scholarships.

The quality and clarity of the application will be also considered during the evaluation process.

The IOC will seek to achieve the greatest possible geographical diversity when awarding of scholarships.

Exceptional profiles that bring particular added value to the programme will also be taken into consideration.

The awarding of scholarships is subject to budgetary availability.

CRITERIA FOR AWARDING A SCHOLARSHIP	POINTS
Academic background & professional experience in olive oil mills, quality control, tasting or research and/or other certificates related with the olive oil sector	70
Language proficiency (English or Spanish with a minimum level of B2)	10
Cover letter with reasons for applying (a detailed description of the reasons for requesting the scholarship) and the expected impact of the scholarship on the applicant's activities.	10
Recommendation letter(s) from IOC representatives, public administration bodies or entities in the olive sector	10
Total	100