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## Scholarship Opportunity for MSc and PhD studies in 2015

### Plant invasions and the role of mutualistic microbes:

#### *Acacia dealbata* as a case study



The Centre for Microbial Ecology and Genomics (University of Pretoria) in collaboration with the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology (Stellenbosch University) is offering two scholarships (1 MSc and 1 PhD) in Microbial Ecology. The successful applicants will study the role of mutualists (rhizobia and mycorrhiza fungi) in the success of *Acacia dealbata* invasions and the impact of these invasions on ecosystem functioning. More specifically, we aim to determine (i) the diversity of rhizobial and mycorrhizal fungi in native (Australia) and invasive range (South Africa, Chile and Portugal) soils, (ii) the extent to which rhizobial availability influences the ability of *A. dealbata* to establish beyond its current invasive ranges in South Africa, and (iii) the impact of *A. dealbata* invasions on the functional abilities of South African soil microbial communities. Understanding plant-microbial interactions may be important to predict and manage biological invasions.

Preference will be given to candidates with demonstrated skills in microbiology, molecular genetics, and/or ecology, and excellent academic track records. Candidates should be willing to travel extensively in South Africa and possibly abroad.

Interested candidates should send a CV (including details of at least two contactable referees), transcripts and a letter of motivation to Dr. Angel Valverde at [angel.valverde@up.ac.za](mailto:angel.valverde@up.ac.za)