PhD Admission

Step-by-Step Manual

Version: October 19, 2026
As discussed in the Program Council on June 19, 2023
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Background

All PhD candidates at the AISSR are admitted through an application procedure. *Employed PhD positions*, often within a research project that is externally funded, will be advertised on the UvA vacancy portal. Recruitment and selection take place with the support of the department.

This document establishes the application procedure for *scholarship* and *external PhD positions*. we would like to ensure that the application procedure is conducted in an equal and diligent way, considering all aspects of the PhD trajectory. In addition, the procedure aims at transparency and a clear overview of new PhD candidates entering our departments. The hiring of new external and scholarship PhD candidates is a collective matter. The procedure has to be followed for the admission of all new external and scholarship PhDs.

Ultimately, when a programme group decides to embed a PhD candidate in the programme group, they are expected to take full responsibility for the PhD candidate and their PhD trajectory.

Types of PhD trajectories

At the AISSR we distinguish three types of PhD trajectories:

1. *Employed PhD candidate ('werknemerpromovendus')*
   The employed PhD candidate has an employment contract with the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and receives a monthly salary from the university. Funding typically comes from external funds such as NWO or EU/ERC. This covers the salary and research costs of the employed PhD candidate. These trajectories typically take 4 years.

2. *Scholarship PhD candidate ('beurspromovendus')*
   The scholarship PhD candidate receives a scholarship from an external provider. They do not have an employment contract with the UvA. Typically, the monthly allowance provided by the scholarship is not sufficient to cover living expenses in the Netherlands, so they require a "top up" from the programme group to meet the minimum income of €1833 per month. In many cases not all research costs can be claimed from the scholarship, so they also require a research budget from the programme group. These trajectories typically take 4 years.

3. *External PhD candidate ('buitenpromovendus')*
   The external PhD candidate provides, in one way or another, for their own income. They might be an entrepreneur, use savings, be employed elsewhere, or be financially supported by their partner or family. In this case it is equally important to check the time plan for the PhD trajectory and financial security. The conditions for these trajectories are identical to the first two types: the trajectory should be the equivalent of 4 years, and the minimum income should be €1833. Also, a research budget should be available for the PhD candidate. If this is not the case, the programme group is expected to offer support.

Application procedure

Scholarship PhD candidates and external PhD candidates are welcome to submit their own research proposal. The application form (see annex) is used for this purpose. These candidates cover the fees and their monthly allowance with a scholarship, private resources or by being employed by UvA units, institutes, or companies.

Joint Doctorate PhD candidates are registered as external PhD candidates as well. For more information about the procedure to start a Joint Doctorate PhD trajectory, please contact the PhD coordinator.
See the flowchart for a detailed overview of the protocol.

Role of the programme group

The programme group that the proposal in the application form pertains to, will evaluate the proposal on:

1. Compatibility of the project with the programme group and staff members;
2. Composition of the supervision team;
3. Feasibility of the proposed project and the time plan;
4. For scholarship PhDs also consider if grant conditions are in line with AISSR policy The supervisor and or programme group should not approve the proposal if PhD candidates need to pay back their grants in case they do not successfully complete their theses.

   The supervisor has to be aware of the grant conditions. Academic freedom has to be guaranteed (e.g. no obligatory sharing of data and results) and the scholarship has to be a gift. Under no condition it can be a loan that the PhD will have to pay back.

The financial aspects should also be considered – the programme manager will inform the programme group director(s) about the possibility of a required top-up payment and/or the necessary available research budget from the material budget of the programme group. The evaluation of the PhD proposal and prospective PhD candidate should be conducted by a small committee of at least two evaluators. At least one of the evaluators should not be a prospective supervisor.

Should the programme group leadership approve the application, the candidate will be embedded conditionally as a (non-employed) PhD student. Admission will become unconditional upon submission of a valid language test score, valid copy of diplomas, original transcripts and proof of funding.
The supervisors or programme group director must inform the prospective candidate of their rights and working conditions in the Netherlands before they accept the PhD position on offer.

Admission criteria

The AISSR wants to take on PhD candidates of excellent level and stimulate outstanding research. The minimum requirements below therefore apply to all PhD candidates.

The minimum educational requirement for all PhD candidates
Dutch nationals need to hold a master's degree. International candidates must prove that their foreign academic degree is equivalent to the Dutch final university examination.

An English language proficiency test
Non-native speakers of the English language, are required to demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English. All candidates must be able to read textbooks, understand lectures, take part in programme group discussions and produce articles in English.

To demonstrate this the PhD candidate either holds an accredited Dutch master's degree or other master's degree fully taught in English (equivalent to the Dutch final university examination). In other cases a test result of an English language proficiency test is required.

TOEFL:

- Paper-based test: minimum total score 600; minimum score on each component 57 (components are: listening, structure/writing, and reading)
- Internet-based test: minimum total score 100; minimum score on each component 22 (components are: listening, structure/writing, reading, and speaking)

IELTS:

- A minimum of 7.0 for the test, with a minimum of 6.5 for each test component.
- Cambridge International Examinations
- CAE and CPE: minimum score of C
- Prior to admission privately funded candidates are required to submit a brief description of their proposed project comprising the following details:

    - The topic they would like to explore
    - The programme group they would like to join
    - The supervisor they have in mind
    - The kind of funding they have obtained, and
    - A time plan

Fees for External PhD candidates
PhD candidates who are not employed by the University of Amsterdam but receive a scholarship, pay a fee of €4.545 up to €15.000 annually (depending on the specific situation). This fee covers a variety of costs such as the selection procedure, supervision, PhD training (core courses, seminars) and a small research budget. Self-funded PhD's can ask for a tuition fee waiver. The PhD and programme group can expect that in general the waiver is always granted for self-funded external PhDs. The programme

manager can provide information about fees and fee waivers. The programme manager decides about fee waivers.

Flowchart

WHAT	WHO
1. The prospective PhD candidate contacts a prospective supervisor or programme group.	*Prospective PhD candidate*
2. The prospective PhD candidate submits a brief description with the following details: (1) research topic, (2) programme group they would like to join, (3) supervisors they have in mind, (4) funding or financial means to support themselves and (5) a time plan.	*Prospective PhD candidate*
3. For Scholarship PhD candidates only: prospective supervisor considers the finances and conditions of the grant. Especially: a) Would the prospective PhD candidate need to pay back the grant in case PhD does not successfully complete a thesis? b) What obligations does the prospective PhD candidate have to the grant organization? For example: sharing research data and results, refrain from taking certain positions. c) Does the grant cover a full 48 months PhD trajectory?	*Prospective supervisor*
4. For both Scholarship and external PhD candidates: prospective supervisor has a meeting with the prospective PhD candidate and explains the PhD's rights: no childcare allowance, no Dutch basic health insurance, and other rights that contract PhD candidates do have (no pension accrual, no unemployment benefits eligibility etc.) On the AISSR wiki page you can find the Excel document 'Conditions per PhD type', please share this overview with the prospective PhD candidate.	*Prospective supervisor*
5. If the prospective supervisor considers the abilities and plans of the PhD applicant to be of sufficient quality, then the prospective supervisor contacts the programme group director and PhD mentor about the project plan and the candidate.	*Prospective supervisor*
6. Supervision team, programme group director and PhD mentor discuss how the prospective candidate and project fits in the programme group. (See 'role of the programme group' above.)	*Supervision team, programme group leadership, PhD mentor*
7. Programme group director informs the Chair of the department about the prospective candidate, as office space, working climate and well-being of colleagues is the responsibility of the Chair.	*Programme group leadership*
8. The programme group director decides if the prospective PhD candidate is invited to submit a full application form (see annex). The programme group director gives	*Programme group leadership*

this approval in written form. The approval to draft a proposal does not imply admittance to the PhD trajectory.	
9. The prospective PhD candidate submits a proposal to the AISSR PhD coordinator.	*Prospective PhD candidate*
10. The PhD coordinator receives the application form and checks compatibility with the minimum criteria of the AISSR in consultation with the programme group leadership, with support of the programme manager: - minimum educational requirements; - English language proficiency; - Time plan; - Conditions of the grant; - Minimum monthly allowance (scholarship & external PhDs).	*PhD coordinator*
11. The programme group evaluates the submitted application form. This should be conducted by two evaluators, other than the prospective supervisor.	*The programme group leadership and evaluation committee*
12. Based on the findings of the PhD coordinator with regards to the minimum criteria of the AISSR and the programme group evaluation of the application form the prospective PhD candidate is informed about the decision.	*PhD coordinator*
13. In case of a positive or negative decision all relevant parties (supervisors, Secretariat, PG director and PhD mentor) are informed about the new PhD candidate so facilities and support can be arranged and taken into account. This includes top ups, research budget, workspace, UvA net ID, laptop, housing support, visa support etc.	*PhD coordinator*
14. The PhD candidate receives a Letter of Acceptance from the PhD coordinator once all paperwork is complete and approved.	*PhD coordinator*
15. Secretariat and PhD mentor invite the PhD candidate, to hand out UvA ID and to have introductory meeting.	*Department secretariat & PhD mentor*
16. Shortly after the official start date of the PhD trajectory and 1st day at UvA campus, the PhD coordinator invites the PhD candidate for an intake meeting at the AISSR Bureau.	*PhD coordinator*
17. The programme group leader also invites the PhD candidate for an intake meeting on programme group level.	*Programme group leader*

Research proposal template

Permission of the programme group leadership.

Please note that the programme group leadership needs to give official approval to draft a research proposal. When you have not received this permission from the programme group, the AISSR Bureau cannot process your PhD application request.

Name applicant:

I apply for a PhD position in the AISSR research programme group

Based in Anthropology:
- Exploring Diversities:
- Moving Matters: People, Goods, Power and Ideas
- Health, Care and the Body

Based in Sociology:
- Institutions, Inequalities and Life courses
- Political Sociology: Power, Place and Difference
- Cultural Sociology:

Based in Political Science:
- Challenges to Democratic Representation
- Transnational Configurations, Conflict and Governance
- Political Institutions and Identities
- Political Economy and Transnational Governance

Based in Human Geography, Planning and International Studies:
- Urban Geographies
- Urban Planning
- Political and Economic Geographies
- Governance and Inclusive Development

The proposal

The proposal should be a maximum of 2800 words, inclusive of everything except the reference list. Please use Times New Roman, font size 11, 1.5 line spacing, one-inch page margins and APA in-text citations. The proposal should include the following items. You may use different section headings or change the order, but it is important to address all the items.

1. **Title of the project**
   Provide a brief title. Do not use acronyms.

2. **Abstract**
Describe your project in no more than 300 words. The abstract should provide the project's rationale and highlight its scientific significance.

3. **Introduction**
Including a problem statement and research question.

4. **Theoretical approach**
Including concepts.

5. **Research design**
Including methods, data, case selection, work plan.

6. **Fit with the AISSR and programme group**
Provide an explanation of how the project complements and reinforces existing lines of research within the programme group and the institute.

7. **The provisional (co)supervisor(s).**
At least one of the provisional supervisors should be tenured faculty member of the AISSR.
Note that you need the support of a provisional supervisor for your application. Do not include research staff members' names when you have not discussed your PhD application with this person

8. **Reference list**
Please note: the reference list is not included in the word count.

AISSR minimum criteria:

9. **Time plan**
Give a rough indication of your time plan. The standard AISSR PhD trajectory is 4 years (48 months), full-time. The minimum duration is 42 months.

10. **Funding**
How will your trajectory be funded?
Please elaborate: have you obtained a scholarship to pursue your PhD? If so, what are the conditions?
If this is not the case, we need to know how you will provide yourself with a monthly allowance for the duration (in general 4 years, full-time) of the PhD trajectory. When you will be residing in Amsterdam this minimum monthly allowance is rated at €1833.
Next to that, you will need a research budget of at least €9.000 for the whole trajectory.

11. **Diploma quick scan**
Dutch nationals need to hold a master's degree. International candidates must prove that their foreign academic degree is equivalent to the Dutch final university examination.

For non-Dutch diplomas, please share:

- Copies of all relevant academic degree certificates (both bachelor's and master's). For the diploma quick scan these copies do not need to be authorized.
- Copies of diploma transcripts (both bachelor's and master's).

12. **English language proficiency**

The following tests are accepted:

- **TOEFL International – internet-based test (IBT)**
- **IELTS Academic**
- **Cambridge: C1 Advanced,** formerly known as Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) and C2 Proficiency, formerly known as Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE).

The following applicants are automatically exempted from the requirement to submit an English test score:

- Applicants with the nationality of the USA, Australia, UK, Canada (English speaking part), Ireland or New Zealand.
- Applicants who have obtained their English taught Master's degree in the USA, Australia, UK, Canada (English speaking part), Ireland or New Zealand.
- Applicants who have obtained their Master's degree at a Dutch university (*Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs* – academic Master's degree).

Applicants can *request* a waiver from the requirement to submit an English test score if:

- they have completed an entirely English-taught Master's degree from a country other than those stipulated above;
- they have been raised and/or educated in the USA, Australia, UK, Canada (English speaking part), Ireland or New Zealand, but do not have the country's nationality;
- they have a sufficient test score which is more than two years old and can submit proof that they have actively maintained their English since taking the test.