



# PhD Admission Step-by-Step Manual

*Version: February 19, 2024*

*As discussed in the Program Council on June 19, 2023*

*Contact person: Simon Cijssouw (AISSR PhD coordinator)*

## Table of contents

Background .....	1
Types of PhD trajectories.....	2
Application procedure .....	3
Role of the programme group .....	3
Admission criteria .....	4
The minimum educational requirement for all PhD candidates .....	4
An English language proficiency test .....	4
Fees for External PhD candidates .....	4
Protocol flowchart .....	5
Annex Application form .....	7



## 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 €1717 per month (for academic year 2023/2024). 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 €1717 (for academic year 2023/2024). 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.	<i>Prospective PhD candidate</i>
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.	<i>Prospective PhD candidate</i>
3. For Scholarship PhD candidates only: prospective supervisor considers the finances and conditions of the grant. Especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Would the prospective PhD candidate need to pay back the grant in case PhD does not successfully complete a thesis?</li> <li>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.</li> <li>c) Does the grant cover a full 48 months PhD trajectory?</li> </ul>	<i>Prospective supervisor</i>
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.	<i>Prospective supervisor</i>
5. If the prospective supervisor considers the abilities and plans of the PhD applicant are considered to be of sufficient quality, then the prospective supervisor contacts the programme group director and PhD mentor about the project plan and the candidate.	<i>Prospective supervisor</i>
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.)	<i>Supervision team, programme group leadership, PhD mentor</i>
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.	<i>Programme group leadership</i>
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	<i>Programme group leadership</i>



<p>this approval in written form. The approval to draft a proposal does not imply admittance to the PhD trajectory.</p>	
<p>9. The prospective PhD candidate submits a proposal to the AISSR PhD coordinator.</p>	<p><i>Prospective PhD candidate</i></p>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- minimum educational requirements;</li> <li>- English language proficiency;</li> <li>- Time plan;</li> <li>- Conditions of the grant;</li> <li>- Minimum monthly allowance (scholarship &amp; external PhDs).</li> </ul>	<p><i>PhD coordinator</i></p>
<p>11. The programme group evaluates the submitted application form. This should be conducted by two evaluators, other than the prospective supervisor.</p>	<p><i>The programme group leadership and evaluation committee</i></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><i>PhD coordinator</i></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><i>PhD coordinator</i></p>
<p>14. The PhD candidate receives a Letter of Acceptance from the PhD coordinator once all paperwork is complete and approved.</p>	<p><i>PhD coordinator</i></p>
<p>15. Secretariat and PhD mentor invite the PhD candidate, to hand out UvA ID and to have introductory meeting.</p>	<p><i>Department secretariat &amp; PhD mentor</i></p>
<p>16. Shortly after the official start date of the PhD trajectory and 1<sup>st</sup> day at UvA campus, the PhD coordinator invites the PhD candidate for an intake meeting at the AISSR Bureau.</p>	<p><i>PhD coordinator</i></p>
<p>17. The programme group leader also invites the PhD candidate for an intake meeting on programme group level.</p>	<p><i>Programme group leader</i></p>



## Annex Application Form

### AISSR-Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research

Name applicant:

**I apply for a PhD position in the AISSR research programme group (please delete):**

*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 Economy and Transnational Governance

*Based in Human Geography, Planning and International Studies:*

- Urban Geographies
- Urban Planning
- Political and Economic Geographies
- Governance and Inclusive Development



1. Title of the project

2. Give a brief description of your project (max. 400 words)

3. The research question

- a. Description of the field of study and the existing body of knowledge with reference to that: what we don't know? What has been neglected? The central object of the proposed research. (max. 300 words)





[Empty rectangular box for writing]

b. The core question. Which central question would you like to answer with the research? How do you unfold the central question into sub-questions, so that the joint answers will generate the answer to the central question? (max. 150 words)

[Empty rectangular box for writing]



4. The innovative character of the proposed project

What is the significance of your thesis? Does it contain an original contribution to the field of existing knowledge? Is it of specific social or theoretical relevance? (max. 200 words)

5. Considerations regarding theory and prior empirical research

Sketch of the dominant theoretical approaches and debates. Sketch of the dominant empirical findings. How does your research fit in with the present state of research and theoretical discussions in your field? Which scholars in your field do you find especially relevant to your work? (max. 200 words)



6. Proposition, hypotheses and concepts.

What is the central proposition? Which are the working hypotheses? What are the main theoretical concepts you intend to use? (max. 150 words)

7. Data

Describe the empirical data, i.e. the sources, to be used for answering each of the research questions. How do you intend to gather your data? Do you have whatever permission might be required? Have the necessary informants agreed to cooperate? Do you have access to the archives you need? (max. 200 words)



Additional information.

8. Organisational context

- a. Is your project related to the work of teachers, PhD students or programme objectives of the AISSR?

- b. Which staff members would you like to have as members of your supervision committee?



9. Time plan. Give a rough indication of your time plan

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 €1717 (academic year 2023/2024). Next to that, you will need a research budget of at least €9.000 for the whole trajectory.

11. List 1 or 2 references

12. List your own publications that are relevant to the project.

13. Provide a short and provisional bibliography

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

14. Which of the courses you have taken, what previous employment and other experience is relevant to an assessment of your ability to successfully complete the proposed project? Mention references, if any.

Provide concise and clear answers, based on the ideas and information you have now. If and when new data become available, you may have other ideas and of course your plans may change accordingly.