

LUISS



Handbook
of the
PhD Programme in
POLITICS
(Academic Year 2025/2026)

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Welcome Note

From the Coordinator of the PhD Programme

Welcome to the PhD Programme in Politics at Luiss University!

You are about to embark on a significant and transformative journey – the pursuit of a doctoral degree – and we are delighted that you have chosen to take this step with us. Joining the Luiss academic community means becoming part of an intellectually vibrant and internationally oriented environment, and I am confident that your presence and work will make a valuable contribution to it.

A PhD is unlike any other stage in academic life. It marks the transition from student to independent researcher and demands not only intellectual curiosity and perseverance, but also the ability to work both collaboratively and independently. Your path over the coming years will include sustained study, close cooperation with your supervisors, lively exchange with peers and faculty, and also many solitary hours spent reading, analyzing, and writing. At the end of this journey stands the defence of your dissertation – an important milestone and a moment to demonstrate the originality and scholarly value of your research.

While the thesis is ultimately your own achievement, you will not be alone in this process. The PhD programme is designed to support you every step of the way – through structured coursework, research seminars, supervision, administrative and financial support, and opportunities to present your work and gain international experience. The entire team – your supervisors, the teaching faculty, the PhD Office and tutor, and I – are here to guide you, challenge you, and help you succeed.

As the new coordinator of the PhD programme, I take over this responsibility from my colleague Professor Thomas Christiansen, who has led the programme with great dedication. I am honoured to continue building on the strong foundation he helped to establish, and I look forward to working with each of you as you develop your own research path.

I wish you a stimulating, productive, and rewarding start to your time at Luiss – and hope that, in the midst of all the hard work, you will also find inspiration, community, and joy in your research.

Kristina Stoeckl

Professor of Sociology

Coordinator of the PhD Programme, Department of Political Science

1. Introduction

The PhD in Politics at Luiss Guido Carli is a fully funded **three-year programme**, aimed at giving participants the skills needed to embark on an academic or professional career in international institutions, NGOs, public and private research institutes, and political and institutional communications.¹

The programme requires full-time attendance. The working language of the programme—including all coursework, supervision, written assignments, and the final thesis—is English.

The programme is structured in three pillars:

1. Supervised research and thesis writing
2. Taught courses (only in the 1st and 2nd year)
3. Research seminars and presentations

Candidates will be assigned a **supervisor** and one or more co-supervisors who will guide their research throughout the whole duration of their studies. Furthermore, the programme facilitates exchanges with partner universities abroad and provides additional financial support to enable study periods and field work outside of Luiss University.

During their first year, candidates will attend taught **courses** encompassing the areas of political and social sciences, political theory and qualitative and quantitative research methods. PhD candidates are assessed in each course based on participation, attendance, and the completion of assigned work, which may include short written assignments, presentations, or other forms of evaluation as determined by the instructor.

Research progress is assessed at the end of each academic year through specific milestones, such as coursework completion, the presentation of the research proposal, and thesis submission. A full list of annual milestones is available on the programme website:

<https://phd.luiss.it/politics/activities/structure/>

Candidates who do not pass this assessment, or who fail the taught course requirements, may lose their PhD candidate status, subject to a unanimous decision of the Academic Board.

During the second and third years of the programme, PhD candidates primarily focus on **conducting research** and preparing their doctoral thesis for submission and defence. In addition to their individual research, candidates are expected to participate actively in the academic seminars organised by the Department (see Section 5).

Progress is monitored regularly also by the supervisors: at the end of each semester, both candidates and their supervisors are required to submit a detailed **progress report** to the PhD Coordinator and the Academic Board.

Candidates are also asked to provide **feedback** on the programme. This includes completing an internal evaluation survey on PhD courses and instructors at the end of each semester, as well as responding to the annual national survey administered by ANVUR (the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems).

2. Programme leadership and support team

Programme Coordinator

Kristina Stoeckl, kstoeckl@luiss.it

The [Coordinator](#) is in charge of the strategic choices related to the programme, such as taught courses, research activities, the organisation of seminars and the relations with both internal and external colleagues. Kristina Stoeckl joined Luiss University as a Professor of Sociology in the Political Science Department in 2023. She previously held positions at Innsbruck University, the University of Vienna and the University of Rome Tor Vergata. Her research areas are sociology of religion, political sociology, religion and global politics, religion and state in Russia and Christian right politics.

PhD Tutor

For more information see [here](#).

phdtutordisp@luiss.it

The PhD tutor serves as a point of contact for candidates regarding any issues related to the programme. In addition to offering guidance and support, the tutor acts as a mediator between PhD candidates, the Coordinator, and the PhD Office. The tutor also assists with the organisation of seminars, events, and teaching activities, and helps coordinate administrative tasks such as the collection of forms.

PhD Office (Ufficio Dottorati)

For more information see [here](#).

Leonardo Risorto (Head), Francesca Pandozy, Nina Nachkebia, Gianluca Grilli: dottorati@luiss.it

The PhD Office is responsible for all official communications between the PhD candidates and the University. It helps PhD candidates on all aspects related to administration and compliance with the PhD Programme.

The PhD Office is also in charge of the strategic organization, according to the University Strategic Plan, the management, innovation and coordination of the PhD Programmes and the ministerial accreditation process.

PhD Representative

For more information see [here](#).

phdrepdisp@luiss.it

The PhD representative is elected by the PhD candidates for a period of two years and is in charge of representing the PhD candidates during the PhD meetings and the Academic Board meetings. Furthermore, the PhD Representative represents PhD candidates' request to the PhD Office, as well as share information provided by the PhD Office to their peers.

3. PhD Mentor Programme

Starting a PhD marks an important new chapter, often accompanied by many questions—some academic, others practical and personal. To support incoming doctoral candidates in their transition, the PhD Mentor Programme connects each new student with two current PhD researchers. These mentors serve as informal points of contact, offering peer-to-peer guidance on a wide range of everyday matters, such as settling in Rome, navigating housing, understanding local transport, or simply discovering the best places for coffee. While the PhD Office provides official administrative and academic support, the Mentor Programme complements this by fostering a welcoming and supportive community through shared experience. It ensures that new students are not only well-informed but also feel part of a broader network from the very beginning of their academic journey.

Contact the PhD Representative for more information: phdrepdisp@luiss.it

4. The Academic Board (*Collegio*)

Each PhD Programme has an Academic Board (*Collegio dei docenti*) that consists of at least twelve academic members belonging to the scientific fields consistent with the programme’s educational aims. All Board Members have a documented research record in the disciplines covered by the doctoral programme. The board is chaired by the Coordinator of the PhD programme.

Details about the membership of the board can be found at this website <https://phd.luiss.it/politics/about-us/faculty/>

5. PhD Supervision

Each PhD candidate is assigned two supervisors, appointed by the PhD Coordinator in consultation with the Academic Board. The main supervisor must be a member of the PhD Board, while the co-supervisor may be external, provided they meet the academic qualifications required by the programme. In cases where more than one co-supervisor is appointed, at least one must belong to the scientific discipline in which the thesis is written.

Supervisors play a central role in guiding and supporting candidates throughout their doctoral studies. They provide academic mentorship across all stages of the research process—from the development of the initial proposal to the final submission of the thesis. This includes advising on the research topic, methodology, structure, literature, and publication strategy, as well as supporting the candidate’s broader academic and professional development. While the supervisors offer guidance and critical feedback, the candidate bears full responsibility for the quality, originality, and content of the final thesis.

Supervision is a continuous process. Supervisors are expected to maintain regular contact with their candidates, ideally meeting at least once a month in person or remotely. Together with the candidate, they complete a formal Monitoring and Evaluation Report (see Annex 1) at the end of each semester, which is submitted to the PhD Coordinator and the Academic Board for review.

In the final year of the programme, supervisors are expected to carefully read and comment on the full draft of the thesis before its official submission, ensuring that it meets the academic standards of the programme and can be defended successfully.

Among their responsibilities, supervisors:

- Help the candidate situate their project within the relevant academic literature and formulate a coherent research question and strategy;
- Advise on appropriate research methods and assist with the planning and management of the research process, including data collection, analysis, and writing;
- Review and provide timely, constructive feedback on all written work, including the research proposal, draft chapters, and the final thesis;
- Assist the candidate in understanding and meeting the academic expectations of the programme, working toward timely completion;
- Provide guidance on academic publishing, career planning, and, where appropriate, write letters of reference for job market applications.

Supervisors are not compensated through additional honoraria, including in cases where the co-supervisor is external to Luiss.

6. PhD candidate responsibility in relation to supervision

PhD candidates are expected to take an active and responsible role in the supervisory relationship. This includes preparing for and participating in regular meetings with their supervisors, sharing written work in a timely manner, and responding constructively to feedback.

Candidates should:

- Propose a clear schedule for meetings and maintain regular contact with both supervisors;
- Submit drafts and other materials for discussion well in advance of meetings;
- Be open to critical feedback and take initiative in revising their work accordingly;
- Keep a personal record of meetings and agreed next steps;
- Inform supervisors promptly of any difficulties—academic or personal—that may affect progress.

While supervisors provide guidance and support, the primary responsibility for the planning, execution, and timely completion of the research lies with the candidate.

7. Course Programme Overview

While supervised research is at the core of the PhD programme, a structured set of taught **courses** in the first and second year equips candidates with theoretical foundations, methodological tools, and academic skills necessary for their own research.

The PhD in Politics is a full-time, three-year programme combining coursework, individual research, a visiting period abroad, and the writing of a doctoral thesis. Year 1 offers **foundational training** in political and social theory, political and social sciences, and research methods. PhD candidates are expected to attend all courses, complete assigned readings, participate in class discussions, and pass course assessments, which may include written assignments or presentations. By the end of the first year, they will have earned at least 60 ECTS credits and developed an extended research proposal.

Progress is assessed through coursework, supervisor evaluations, and a mandatory presentation at the **Annual Departmental Postgraduate Conference**. Advancement to the second year depends on successful completion of all first-year requirements.

I YEAR (A.Y. 2025/2026)

Semester I

Theory of Knowledge of the Social Sciences
 Reading Group 1: Government
 Qualitative and Historical Methods

Research Design
 Academic Writing Lab Part 1

Semester II

Reading Group 2: EU Studies & International Relations
 Reading Group 3: Philosophy
 Reading Group 4: History
 Quantitative Methods
 Applied Research Design

II YEAR (A.Y. 2026/27)

Semester I

Qualitative Methods Masterclass
 Quantitative Methods Masterclass
 Applied Methods
 Research Skills
 Academic Writing Lab Part 2

III YEAR (A.Y. 2027/28)

Semester I

Career Skills
 Academic Writing Lab Part 3

Throughout the programme, PhD candidates participate in the **Departmental Research Seminars** and the **Young Researchers' Seminar Series**, where they present their work and engage with peers and faculty.

8. Course descriptions

YEAR I – Semester I

Theory of Knowledge of the Social Sciences

The course will address topics that are of relevance both for PhD students in Management and for PhD students in Politics. It addresses key themes related to the epistemology of the social sciences, with the aim of providing doctoral students with conceptual tools to critically analyze the theoretical foundations, methods, and internal dynamics of their disciplines. It is intended for PhD students in Politics and in Management, tackling cross-cutting issues relevant to both fields. The course is structured into four main thematic units: Philosophy of Science and the Organization of Knowledge – This unit discusses major theories of scientific progress and examines the organization of disciplines into scientific fields, the role of the rules that govern them, and the formation of paradigms. Particular attention will be given to the coexistence of multiple paradigms and to the epistemological implications of theoretical and methodological pluralism. Reason and Rational Choice – This part of the course is dedicated to rational choice theory as it developed in the second half of the twentieth century. It will explore its philosophical foundations, its applications in political theory, and its implications for understanding individual and collective action. Modernity and the Birth of the Social Sciences – This unit addresses the social sciences as a product of modernity. It will discuss major theories of modernity and rationalization, with a focus on multiple modernities and on the role of the social sciences in constructing and understanding the modern world. The

course will reflect on how the social sciences contribute to representing, interpreting, and transforming contemporary societies. Social Constructivism and Epistemologies of the Social Sciences – This unit will examine social constructivism as a theoretical approach that emphasizes the active role of actors in the construction of social reality. It will explore the epistemological implications of constructivism for the social sciences, different understandings of "objectivity" and "truth" in scientific practices, and the relationship between knowledge, power, and context.

Reading Group 1: Government

The course aims to make students familiar with the problems and dynamics of the process of democratic representation, in terms of its fundamental mechanism of responsiveness governing the relationship between (governing) political parties and citizen preferences. As a result, students will become familiar with classic and contemporary political science approaches to voting behavior and party competition, allowing them to properly understand the dynamics of (lack of) political responsiveness, and to develop research in these fields. Doctoral candidates will be encouraged to bring texts of relevance to their research into the course in order to discuss them collectively and bring them into dialogue with the theoretical issues addressed during the sessions.

Qualitative and Historical Methods

The course aims to provide doctoral students with a solid foundation in qualitative and historical methods applied to research in the social sciences, with a focus on political science and political theory. The epistemological foundations of research, the relationship between qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the consequences that methodological choices produce on the quality of empirical inquiry will be addressed. The starting assumption is that good methods generate good research, regardless of their orientation. An effective project, however, stems from a well-formulated question, sound knowledge of the literature, precise use of concepts, a coherent and possibly innovative design, adequate mastery of available tools, and awareness of the obstacles involved in data collection and analysis. With this in mind, the course will focus on such central themes as research design construction, theoretical development, conceptualization, and historical and comparative analysis. The course is divided into thematic modules including: introduction to qualitative and historical methods, causal explanation and historical institutionalism, social science epistemology, process tracing, case studies and case comparison. A number of specific methodological approaches will also be explored: contextual analysis developed by the Cambridge School in the history of political ideas; conceptual history; political anthropology as a method, with a focus on generational and genealogical analysis; examination of primary, written and visual sources; and, finally, an overview of digital methods, with examples of data mining and computational textual analysis techniques. Sessions will combine theoretical reflection and discussion of empirical cases, with the aim of providing participants with useful tools that can be applied in their own research projects.

Research Design

This course aims at providing tools for developing a sound research design. Moreover, it offers a wide-range introduction to the diverse strategies and methodological tools employed by contemporary social science, in order to first provide students with the ability to understand research products that belong to different research traditions and approaches in political science. The second part of the course moves on to a comparison among different approaches and strategies that a researcher may adopt within the broad framework of the comparative method, and particularly the long-term debate between small-N and large-N strategies, case-oriented and

variable-oriented research. Finally, PhD candidates are asked to prepare and present their own PhD research design, based on what they have learnt throughout the course.

Academic Writing Lab Part 1

This course is designed to support PhD students in developing the skills necessary for drafting the PhD prospectus, the structured research project that represents a fundamental milestone in the doctoral journey. The course focuses on academic writing in English, understood as a tool for clearly, coherently, and persuasively communicating the scientific, theoretical, and methodological value of the proposed research. Through thematic sessions, practical exercises, and collective review workshops, students will be guided in constructing the key elements of the prospectus: the social and scientific relevance of the research, the theoretical and conceptual framework, the formulation of research questions, the selection and justification of the methodological design, and the organization of the timeline. Special attention will be given to argumentative coherence, paragraph structure, the use of metadiscourse, and techniques for revision and rewriting. The course alternates between lectures, collaborative discussion, writing exercises, guided feedback, and individual reflection. By the end, students will have produced a first draft of their research project, which will serve as the foundation for the subsequent stages of their PhD.

YEAR I – Semester II

Reading Group 2: EU Studies & IR

This course will afford the participants with the basis of the main theories and approaches developed in the study of politics beyond nation states. PhD candidates are expected to familiarise with the theoretical debate on the organisation and functioning of unions of states from a federalist perspective. PhD candidates are also expected to learn to debate, in particular by approaching other theories of European integration. PhD candidates will be encouraged to bring texts of relevance to their research into the course in order to discuss them collectively and bring them into dialogue with the theoretical issues addressed during the sessions.

Reading Group 3: Philosophy

This course aims at reconsidering Contemporary Liberal Democratic Theory in the wake of an increasingly pluralised and divided world. Although democracy is a widely endorsed modern ideal and a guiding principle in both domestic and international politics, disagreement emerges on what exactly democracy means, why it might be a good thing, which values it entails and/ or what institutions give expression to it and, finally, how and whether liberal democratic justice should be endorsed globally. This course will consider Liberal Democracy from the vantage point of Rawls' political liberalism, with the aim of confronting this influential perspective with recent debates emerging in contemporary political theory. The course will cover several topics ranging from more standard debates on the meaning of democratic equality, tolerance and religions, to more recent challenges to liberal democratic justice, including populism, the place for historical injustices and disability.

The course will comprise 3 parts: the first part will focus on foundations and methods; the second part will provide an overview of the basic components of this influential political liberal theory; the third part will consider the political liberalism from the point of view of the struggle for inclusion. PhD candidates are also expected to learn to debate, in particular by approaching other theories of European integration. PhD candidates will be encouraged to bring texts of relevance to their

research into the course in order to discuss them collectively and bring them into dialogue with the theoretical issues addressed during the sessions.

Reading Group 4: History

The course aims to provide doctoral candidates with a solid methodological and critical foundation for the analysis of modern and contemporary political history, with a focus on the transformations of political institutions, doctrines and cultures. The main historiographical paradigms and topics such as the history of political thought, the formation and evolution of representative institutions, the processes of democratization and crisis of representation, the birth and development of political parties and movements, the dynamics of state power and technocratic institutions, and the transformations of citizenship and international relations will be addressed, with a comparative look at European and non-European contexts. Special emphasis will be given to political movements, political cultures, institutional developments, and transformations of democracy. Lectures will alternate between theoretical frameworks, discussion of case studies and analysis of primary sources. The ultimate goal is to develop a critical and independent ability to interpret political phenomena over the long term, while also providing useful tools for understanding the complexity of the present. Ph.D. candidates will be encouraged to bring texts of relevance to their research into the course in order to discuss them collectively and put them in dialogue with the topics addressed during the sessions.

Quantitative Methods

The aims of the course are: a) to introduce students to the main quantitative research approaches in empirical political science and b) to foster capacity to do original empirical research on the various themes of the discipline (political institutions, voting, public opinion analysis, public policy, etc.) in a comparative perspective. This is not a class on statistics/mathematics although some statistics will be discussed and studied. Rather it is a class on research methods which will allow students to select the appropriate research design for their own PhD thesis/research papers. Active participation by students is expected and reading requirements are to be fulfilled beforehand (the reading list is kept short, but all requirements have to be met, in order for students to discuss them in class). No previous knowledge is expected. A statistical software (STATA) will be used. Students need to have the software on their laptop. At the completion of the course students will be familiar with different research designs and basic statistical techniques (i.e., regression analysis) to conduct their own research.

Applied Research Design

The Applied Research Design course is the operational follow-up to the Research Design course and accompanies doctoral students in the development, presentation and discussion of their research design. The objective of the course is to consolidate the ability to develop a methodologically coherent and theoretically grounded design, ready to be implemented in the empirical research phase. Building on the work done in the previous course, each doctoral student will be asked to refine his or her research design, clearly articulating the research question, definition of concepts, case choices, temporal and spatial setting, as well as the comparative or empirical strategy adopted. Research designs will be presented in dedicated seminar sessions, where each participant will receive structured, interdisciplinary feedback from faculty and colleagues. The course has a laboratory format, geared toward the practical application of the knowledge acquired, and plays a crucial role in the transition between the design and operational

phases of the doctoral program. It helps ensure the conceptual and methodological soundness of theses, and encourages critical reflection on the epistemological implications of research choices.

YEAR II – Semester I

Quantitative Methods Masterclass

This course offers advanced training in quantitative methods applied to research in the social sciences, with particular reference to political science and political sociology. Designed as an operational masterclass, the training proposal aims to strengthen doctoral candidates' analytical skills through direct application of statistical tools and reflection on methodological choices in their own research projects.

Qualitative Methods Masterclass

This course offers advanced training in qualitative methods applied to empirical research in the social sciences. The masterclass is designed for doctoral candidates who intend to refine tools and techniques for field investigation, with an emphasis on the operational concreteness of qualitative research and methodological choices in practice. The course will cover in depth methods such as ethnographic research, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, focus groups, text analysis, and media analysis, including visual and digital sources. Special attention will be paid to coding as a tool for systematic analysis of textual material. The course will also address key ethical issues, including the handling of informed consent, anonymization of data, the researcher-participant relationship, and the challenges of protecting personal data and research in sensitive contexts. Alongside these technical skills, critical reflection on the role of the researcher in the field, the epistemological implications of observation and narrative, and the transparency of the research process will be encouraged. Sessions will include time for discussion of participants' research projects, with the aim of supporting direct application of the techniques discussed.

Applied Methods

The Applied Methods course accompanies doctoral candidates in a structured way in writing and discussing the methodological chapter of their doctoral thesis. The course represents the moment when the theoretical and practical skills acquired in the methods courses are translated into concrete, focused and personalized application. Over the course of the semester, each doctoral candidate will be asked to draft an initial version of their research methods chapter, including justification of methodological choices, research design, data collection and analysis strategy, and ethical and operational reflections related to the project. Each participant will present his or her work in a dedicated session, where he or she will receive structured feedback from methods course instructors (qualitative, quantitative, historical). This process is intended to foster internal coherence between research questions, theoretical approach and methodology, as well as to stimulate comparisons between different approaches and disciplinary practices. The course has a seminar format and is an essential intermediate stage in the construction of the doctoral thesis, with the aim of ensuring methodological soundness, clarity of exposition and epistemological awareness.

Research skills

The Research Skills course is designed to provide doctoral candidates with hands-on training in a wide range of skills essential for successfully addressing the operational phases of the research process. The course focuses on planning data collection, managing sources and bibliographies, using software and digital tools for archiving, analyzing and organizing empirical material

(including qualitative, quantitative and historical data), and processing and presenting results. A central part of the course is devoted to the development of soft skills such as academic writing, oral presentation and the effective use of English in scientific communication. Key strategies for attending conferences and seminars, writing and presenting conference papers, analyzing publication formats, and producing policy papers and other tools for transferring knowledge to society will also be addressed. The course is structured as a series of hands-on workshops in which participants will be able to directly apply the skills learned to their own projects and research interests. The goal is to offer concrete support for the development of a robust researcher profile, able to effectively communicate and discuss their work in academic and public settings.

Academic Writing Lab Part 2

The course Academic Writing Lab – Part 2 is dedicated to the development and drafting of the key chapters of the doctoral dissertation: the literature review, the theoretical framework, and the methodology chapter. The aim of the course is to strengthen PhD students' ability to construct convincing and coherent arguments, based on a critical assessment of the existing literature and well-justified theoretical and methodological choices. During the sessions, participants will learn to distinguish between the different purposes and functions of the literature review, theoretical framework, and methods chapter, including cases where these sections are combined or kept separate. The course will explore strategies for effectively integrating citations, clearly structuring paragraphs and sections, using metadiscourse to guide the reader, and, more generally, producing scholarly texts in English that meet international standards. The course alternates between theoretical lectures, hands-on workshops, writing exercises, peer review, and collective reflection. PhD students will be guided in drafting a first version of one of the core chapters of their dissertation (literature, theory, or methods), which will be discussed and refined through dialogue with instructors and peers. Academic Writing Lab – Part 2 represents a crucial step toward the completion of the dissertation and helps strengthen epistemological awareness and argumentative coherence in academic writing.

YEAR III – Semester I

Academic Writing Lab Part 3

The course Academic Writing Lab – Part 3 supports PhD students in the final phase of dissertation writing, with a specific focus on drafting the analytical chapters, the discussion of results, and the conclusion. The aim is to strengthen students' ability to present collected data, interpret its significance, relate it to the existing literature, and draw convincing conclusions in relation to the research question. The course takes a practical, hands-on approach to writing empirical analyses—both qualitative and quantitative—paying close attention to the structuring of the narrative, the construction of arguments, the effective use of citations and data, and the use of rhetorical tools such as metadiscourse to ensure coherence and clarity. An important component of the course is also dedicated to transforming dissertation chapters into publishable journal articles. Through a combination of theoretical input, writing exercises, individual work, peer review, and guided feedback, participants will be supported in completing a first draft of an analytical, discussion, or concluding chapter, with the goal of effectively integrating results and interpretations. Academic Writing Lab – Part 3 represents a crucial moment in the transition from dissertation to publication, helping PhD students communicate their research contributions clearly, persuasively, and meaningfully.

Career Skills

The Career Skills course supports PhD students in building a competitive professional profile for the academic and research fields, both nationally and internationally. In addition to encouraging strategic reflection on their career paths, the course provides concrete tools for addressing the challenges of the postdoctoral career stage. Key topics include drafting project proposals for competitive grants (ERC, Marie Skłodowska-Curie, PRIN, etc.), preparing an academic CV, a research statement, and a teaching portfolio, as well as strategies for scholarly publishing and best practices for organizing research output. A portion of the course will also focus on academic and institutional communication, research dissemination, management of online professional identity (Google Scholar, ORCID, ResearchGate), and networking within international scholarly communities. The course aims to provide practical support for career planning through simulations, individual feedback, practical examples, and opportunities for discussion with experienced scholars and professionals in the field.

CONTINUOUS RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Departmental Research Seminars

Departmental Research Seminars are an integral part of the doctoral training program, designed to foster PhD students' academic development and integration into the research community. These seminars, organized by the department, feature invited scholars and colleagues who present their ongoing research projects. Attendance is mandatory for PhD students for the number of hours specified in the program requirements. Participation in these seminars offers students the opportunity to engage with current debates, expand their scholarly network, and refine their critical and analytical skills. Regular attendance contributes to students' academic growth and familiarizes them with diverse research approaches and methodologies across disciplines.

Young Research Seminars

The Young Researchers Seminars (YR Seminars) provide third-year PhD students with the opportunity to present and discuss their research within a formal academic setting. As part of their final-year training, students are required to deliver a presentation at an Early Career Seminar, transitioning from audience members to active contributors. Alternatively, with prior approval from the Academic Board, students may fulfill this requirement by presenting at an external academic conference. This presentation complements participation in the PhD Conference, ensuring that every doctoral candidate has the opportunity to present their work publicly at least once in their final year within the institution. The YR Seminars thus play a key role in preparing students for the professional standards of academic dissemination and scholarly exchange.

9. Thesis Submission and Defence Process

The PhD Office will circulate the candidates' theses and the evaluation sheets to the respective referees. Referees are expected to complete their review and to return the evaluation sheets within one month of receiving the theses.

The role of the referees is to assess the quality and academic merit of the candidates' theses, and to recommend either admission to the public defense or a postponement of up to six months. More specifically, referees evaluate:

- The quality of the research project;
- The quality of the methodology;
- The relevance of the topic and the significance of the findings;

- The candidate’s ability to demonstrate a “researcher’s mindset” – including the framing of a relevant research problem, the selection of appropriate methods, the analysis of findings, and the formulation of research-based conclusions.

Following the referees’ review, candidates may revise and resubmit their thesis in response to the feedback received. If the revised version is deemed satisfactory, the candidate will be admitted to the public defense.

The public defense takes place before the Dissertation Exam Committee, which consists of at least three members, appointed by the Academic Board and formally confirmed through a Rector’s decree. The Committee typically includes one internal examiner (chosen for subject expertise) and the two external referees. Three substitute members are also appointed. If one or more Committee members are affiliated with a foreign institution, they may participate in the defence remotely.

At the end of the defence, the Committee reaches a collegial decision to approve or reject the thesis. In exceptional cases, the Committee may unanimously award the distinction cum laude for theses of outstanding academic merit.

A graduation fee of €200 applies to PhD candidates from Cycle 40 onwards.

PhD titles jointly awarded with institutions abroad (under cotutelle agreements) are subject to specific agreements and must comply with the legal and academic regulations of the respective countries.

A detailed timeline for the thesis defence process will be circulated in due course for each cohort. The table below outlines the key steps.

| No. | Action |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Coordinator contacts supervisors regarding the thesis progress of PhD candidates entering the final year. |
| 2 | Candidate submits draft thesis to supervisors |
| 3 | Supervisor(s) provide comments and suggest final revisions on draft thesis prior to formal submission |
| 4 | Supervisors(s) propose possible referees to coordinator |
| 5 | Supervisor(s) and PhD candidates declare absence of any conflict of interest with proposed referees |
| 6 | Candidate provides one-page summary of their thesis to PhD Office and Coordinator |
| 7 | Coordinator agrees possible referees and internal examiner with supervisors and informally explores their availability. |
| 8 | Supervisor(s) (with assistance of PhD tutor) submits thesis to plagiarism check. |
| 9 | Board approves submission of thesis and appointment to the referees and of internal examiner |
| 10 | Candidate submits the final version of the thesis |
| 11 | PhD Office sends thesis, explanatory notes and evaluation form to referees |
| 12 | Referees submit their reports to the PhD Office and Coordinator within one month |
| 13 | PhD Office shares report with coordinator, candidate, supervisors, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 13(a) In case of positive evaluation: the thesis submission process will proceed with step 16 ➢ 13 (b) In case of negative evaluation: PhD office must re-send the thesis to the referees, indicating deadline for re-submission of final version of the thesis, and wait for a second review. |
| 14 | Candidates re-submit final version and required documents by the deadline |
| 15 | PhD office sends the revised thesis to the referees |
| 16 | Referees submit their final reports to the PhD Office and Coordinator within one month |
| 16 | PhD office schedules defence thesis |
| 17 | In case of successful defence, PhD candidate is invited to the Annual Ceremony |

10. The PhD Thesis: Formats and Requirements

General expectations

The PhD thesis must make a substantial and original contribution to knowledge and demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct independent, high-quality academic research. It must be written in English, appropriately cite all sources, and will be subject to plagiarism detection software upon submission.

As common practice, the thesis shall be submitted in Monograph Format (Traditional Thesis). Also, the Article-Based Format (Cumulative Thesis) is admissible. The choice between formats must be made in close consultation with the supervisors. In the case of an article-based thesis, Academic Board approval is also required.

Monograph Format

The standard format consists of a single, book-length manuscript (typically 80,000–120,000 words), structured into discrete chapters. These should include:

- An introductory chapter outlining the research puzzle or question, its relevance, the conceptual and analytical framework, methodology, and an overview of the thesis structure;
- A series of empirical and analytical chapters;
- A concluding chapter summarising the main findings, discussing theoretical and empirical contributions, and suggesting future research directions.

The thesis may include annexes with supplementary materials, such as data sources, interview transcripts, tables, or legal documents.

Article-Based Format

While the monograph remains the standard model, PhD candidates may submit a thesis consisting of several academic articles, subject to the following conditions:

- Eligibility and Approval

A formal request must be made by the candidate, supported by both supervisors, and submitted to the PhD Coordinator. If the request meets the criteria below, the Coordinator may approve it. In cases of doubt or non-standard requests, the Academic Board will make the final decision.

- Structure and Content

The article-based PhD thesis shall have a specific thematic focus, and the various elements of which the thesis is composed need to demonstrate meaningful connections between them, providing for the internal consistency of the complete work. The submission of a collection of papers on different and unrelated topics is not permissible.

- Length

In order to be considered of acceptable standard, the thesis shall be composed of a minimum of three completed papers of at least 8,000 words each.

In addition to the three (or more) papers, the thesis also includes: introductory and concluding chapters which demonstrate the links between the individual contributions, provide an overall synthesis of the findings and establishes the wider significance of the work; and a comprehensive bibliography listing the sources used in all the elements of the thesis.

- **Publication Status Requirements**

The papers submitted as part of the PhD thesis shall meet the following criteria at the point of the formal submission of the PhD thesis

1. at least one paper (but ideally more) has been submitted to a ranked journal² and is in an advanced stage of peer review (i.e. has moved beyond the desk review by the journal editors);
2. at least one other paper has been submitted to a ranked journal and is undergoing review;
3. a third paper is complete and ready for submission to a ranked journal.

- **Authorship rules for article-based thesis**

At least two of the three papers are single-authored by the candidate, whereas the third paper may be co-authored (e.g. with academic peers including one or both the candidate's PhD supervisors)

Final Assessment and thesis defence

The award of the PhD degree remains subject to:

- A positive evaluation by external referees;
- A successful defence of the complete thesis in the final oral examination.

In the case of an article-based thesis, regardless of the publication status of the individual papers, the award of the PhD title remains subject to the final assessment by external referees and the successful defence of the complete thesis in an oral examination by the appointed jury.

Guidelines

- You can consult Luiss' recommendations and guidelines on how to design, organize and write the final thesis here: <https://biblioteca.luiss.it/en/how-write-thesis>
- The first page templates to use for PhD candidate are available here: <https://phd.luiss.it/procedure/tesi-di-dottorato/>

11. Academic events and seminars

PhD Welcome Day

A Welcome Day is organized at the beginning of the academic year. It provides an opportunity for the new PhD Candidates to meet the top academics such as the Rector and the Deputy Rectors, the PhD Coordinator and the PhD Academic Board. The new PhD Candidates will have also the opportunity to meet some PhD Graduates, the PhD Tutor and the PhD Candidates enrolled in the previous cycles.

Annual Postgraduate Conference

At the end of each academic year, generally in mid-June, an Annual Postgraduate Conference is being held. On such occasion, the PhD candidates who have completed their first year of programme will present their research progress. The Annual Conference includes presentations from other PhD candidates and members of the faculty as well.

Activities of the Clusters of Research Excellence

² For the purposes of these guidelines, "ranked journal" refers to scientific journals publishing in the English language and following the recognised standard of double-blind peer review. The journals included in the relevant disciplinary lists of ANVUR (Fascia A) can be regarded as a suitable reference.

Following a re-organization of the Clusters of Research Excellence of our Department of Political Science in January 2023, four new interdisciplinary Research Clusters have been created:

1. Elections and Political Systems (Coordinator: Vincenzo Emanuele)
2. Global and International Studies (Coordinator: Valentina Gentile)
3. European Integration and Public Policies (Coordinator: Cristina Fasone)
4. Communication, Sustainability and Social Innovation (Coordinator: Emiliana De Blasio)

The aim of the Clusters is to strengthen the culture of research collaboration by facilitating the organization of events, the writing of joint publications and the submission of research funding applications. You can find all the details of our Research Clusters here: <https://phd.luiss.it/politics/about-us/research-clusters/>.

Faculty members, Postdoctoral Research Fellows, and PhD Candidates will be invited to join the one cluster closer to their research interests.

Other academic events

The PhD Coordinator, the PhD Office and individual PhD candidates may be engaged in the organisation of external conferences and other activities. The conferences may be hosted by both Luiss University and other national or international institutions. External conferences have the aim of promoting Luiss University as a global hub for high-level research, networking and academic experiences.

12. Research Visits Abroad

PhD candidates are encouraged and expected to spend a research period abroad, typically between 1 and 6 months, usually beginning in the second semester of the second year. This period may be dedicated to activities such as interviews, data collection, archival research, fieldwork, or specialized training relevant to the doctoral project.

For candidates enrolled in a **cotutelle** agreement, the period abroad may be extended up to a total of 18 months, as defined in the agreement between the partner institutions. In such cases, the programme of study, degree-awarding procedure, and composition of the final examination committee are defined in accordance with the national regulations of the involved institutions. However, the scholarship increase (see below) is still capped at 18 months in total.

The choice of the host university or institution must be agreed upon with the supervisor(s) and the PhD Coordinator, and is subject to formal approval by the Academic Board.

How to Request Approval for the Period Abroad

Before departure, candidates must submit the “Request for Study Experience Abroad” form (Annex 2), accompanied by:

- An official invitation or confirmation letter from the host institution, indicating the research period and institutional contact;
- A description of the host institution and its relevance to the project;
- A clear statement of the research objectives and expected outcomes;
- The identification of a temporary co-supervisor (if applicable);
- Written endorsement from the supervisor(s) and the PhD Coordinator.

The completed documentation must be submitted to both the PhD Office and the PhD Coordinator in due time for consideration and formal approval by the Academic Board.

After returning, the candidate must submit the “Report on Study Experience Abroad” form (Annex 3) along with an official confirmation letter from the host institution confirming the completed stay. The report should outline the activities undertaken and their contribution to the doctoral research. Both documents are to be submitted to the PhD Office and the Coordinator.

Increase of scholarship for visiting periods abroad

PhD candidates are eligible for a scholarship increase when spending part of their doctoral studies abroad. For research stays longer than one continuous month, candidates may request a 50% increase of their regular scholarship (note that specific scholarship types may be subject to different provisions). This increase is calculated based on the exact number of days spent abroad and is granted upon submission of official confirmation from the host institution.

Please note that the increased amount cannot be used for research periods spent in the candidate’s country of birth (citizenship), residence, or domicile.

How to request the increase:

The confirmation of the mobility period must be provided in the form of an official letter from the host university or institution, stating the exact dates of the stay. PhD candidates can choose between two options for submitting this confirmation:

Option 1: Submitting Periodic Confirmation Letters

Candidates submit confirmation letters during the mobility period.

Example: the stay started on 1 January 20XX. By the end of the month the PhD Candidate asks the host institution for a confirmation letter, which should state that said person has been a PhD visiting at their institution from 1 January to 31 January 20XX. Such letter, signed and dated no prior to 31 January, should be immediately sent to the PhD Office to request the increased amount for the above-mentioned period. The amount will thus be paid by the end of February, together with the scholarship payment.

Option 2: Submitting a Single Confirmation Letter at the End

Candidates submit a single letter upon completing the entire stay.

Example: the PhD visiting period lasted from 1 January to 30 June 20XX. The PhD Candidate submits the letter of confirmation received from the host institution and with specific indication of the period of the stay. The increased amount related to this whole period will be paid with the subsequent scholarship payment.

13. Funding and Financial Support ***Scholarship***

PhD Candidates awarded a scholarship (specific types of scholarships may vary), will receive an annual gross amount set in Ministerial Decree n. 247 of 23 February 2022 and is worth € 16,243, paid in 12 monthly instalments. The scholarship is paid out on the 30th of each month. If the 30th falls on the weekend the scholarship will be paid out on the preceding Friday.

The scholarship is subject to social security deductions in accordance with current Italian legislation and benefits from the tax exemption provided under Article 4 of Law 476/1984 (IRPEF exemption).

Scholarships are initially awarded for one year and are renewed annually, provided that the candidate has successfully completed the programme of activities required for the previous year.

This progress is assessed according to the procedures established for each doctoral programme. Renewal of the scholarship is conditional upon passing these evaluations in each subsequent year.

Research Budget

PhD Candidates (specific types of scholarships may have different provisions) have an **annual research budget** of € 1.624. Eligible expenses include travel, conference and seminars fees, consumables (e.g. audio-visual media, photocopies...), publication fees, specific training aimed at research (e.g. language courses). All reimbursement requests must be approved by the Academic Board.

PhD candidates have access to individual research funds starting from the first year of the programme. The annual budget may be carried over and combined with funds from subsequent years if it is not fully spent. However, funds from future years cannot be requested in advance. The annual budget is usually allocated in September, at the start of the academic year.

Example: Each year, a PhD candidate may request up to € 1,624. If they spend only € 1,300 in year X, the remaining € 324 can be added to their budget for the following year, giving them a total of € 1,948 (€ 1,624 + € 324).

PhD candidates are invited to consult the dedicated website (below) for the detailed information regarding the procedure for Reimbursement Request submission and follow the directions carefully.

Said procedure can be consulted [here](#), and the relevant Reimbursement Request Form is available below as Annex 4.

14. Rules & Regulations

Beyond the provisions in this handbook, PhD Candidates should be aware of the following rules and regulations that also apply to the programme.

Please consult our website for the [Code of Ethics](#) and the [Research Doctorate Regulations](#) of Luiss University.

Rules of Conduct

PhD Candidates are obliged to observe applicable laws and regulations and act in keeping with the principles of honesty, propriety, earnestness and cooperation in their dealings with fellow PhD Candidates, Faculty and all Luiss personnel.

PhD Candidates' behavior must be informed by the principles of personal dignity, nondiscrimination on the basis of physical condition, political opinion, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability. PhD Candidates must dress in a sober and dignified manner on university premises in keeping with the fact that they are at an academic institution and refrain from consuming alcohol and/or drugs.

Without prejudice to freedom of expression and the right of criticism, PhD Candidates must always express themselves (in writing, verbally and through digital channels) in a dignified and civilized manner, avoiding violent and discriminatory language that could damage the University's reputation.

PhD Candidates must not damage the facilities (including Luiss property, premises and resources) that they use and must abide by the instructions given by Governance Bodies, Faculty, Employees and other workers of Luiss or other university/institution where they are staying for a period of study.

In addition, PhD Candidates are required to adopt an attitude consistent with the principles of environmental protection and sustainability, avoiding the waste of resources, energy and food. The provisions of this article also apply when PhD Candidates spend a period of study at other Italian or foreign institutions/universities, consistent with the latter's own rules.

Teaching Activities

PhD candidates are not permitted to undertake any teaching duties during the first year of the programme. In the second and third years, they are encouraged to gain teaching experience—primarily as teaching assistants in Luiss courses—provided this does not interfere with their academic obligations. Candidates may be involved in a maximum of three courses per academic year. Teaching commitments must not compromise attendance in taught PhD courses or hinder research progress. Time off from PhD coursework for teaching purposes is not permitted.

Plagiarism and good standards of scientific practice

PhD candidates are expected to uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity and academic honesty throughout their research and writing.

Plagiarism, and in any case any improper use of academic material in the writing of dissertation for assessment, is forbidden. Plagiarism has obvious consequences for the academic evaluation of the guilty PhD Candidate but it can also give rise to further moral and legal sanctions. A judgement in the matter is given on a case-by-case basis by the Ethics Committee, which informs the University's top bodies thereof. Acknowledgment of the sources and of the work of others to which the work of others has been used and/or for which the assistance of individuals, associations or institutions has been obtained, shall be clearly reported in notes, references and appendixes. Plagiarism consists in using the intellectual work of others without acknowledgment. According to academic conventions and copyright law, participants are required to acknowledge the use of ideas of others whether paraphrased or quoted verbatim. Verbatim quotations must be either in inverted commas or indented and sources – e.g. books or journal articles - thereof must be indicated in the bibliography. Luiss will check plagiarism in all the doctoral thesis uploading them on a specific software.

If PhD candidates plagiarise their own work or that of others, they can be expelled from the PhD upon decision of the PhD Academic Board.

Obligations and Responsibilities of PhD Candidates

Admission to a doctoral programme entails a full-time and exclusive commitment, as outlined in the PhD programme structure and in accordance with national and Luiss regulations. Enrolled PhD candidates must attend the programme's courses and activities and continuously pursue study and research using the facilities and resources made available for that purpose.

PhD candidates are responsible for:

- Developing their research proposal and discussing it with their supervisors;
- Maintaining progress according to the agreed milestones;
- Being familiar with and adhering to the Luiss Codes of Ethics and the principles of scientific integrity.

Expectations for candidates in relation to supervision, including regular meetings and feedback processes, are outlined in the dedicated section above.

PhD candidates must submit a formal request for approval to the Academic Board for any activities undertaken outside the PhD programme (e.g. teaching, research assistance, external courses, or other work-related commitments). All such activities must comply with [the National and Luiss Regulations for PhD candidates](#).

IRIS and ORCID ID

PhD candidates are required to regularly update their publication records in the IRIS system ([guide available here](#)) and to create an ORCID profile, which must be linked to their IRIS account.

ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier managed and controlled by the user, which distinguishes her/him from other researchers: it is possible to link your ID to your professional data and use it to share information with other systems, thus ensuring the right recognition for all contributions.

Suspension

In the case of serious and documented illness or for proven reasons that make it impossible to attend courses and undertake the activities scheduled for the PhD Programme, PhD Candidates may request a suspension. The application for a suspension, stating the reasons therefor, must be submitted for approval by the academic board of the doctoral programme concerned. If the application is approved, a suspension of at most one year may be granted. During that period of suspension PhD Candidates cannot use any scholarship that they may have.

Extension

Under particular and documented circumstances PhD candidates may present a request of extension of the path and of the scholarship for an additional year, subject to the approval of the academic board.

Post-Doctoral Unemployment Benefit (Dis-Coll)

Within the deadline of 68 days from the date of completion of the doctorate or termination of the scholarship, it is possible to apply to INPS for DIS-COLL benefit. For more information (in Italian only):

<https://www.inps.it/it/it/dettaglio-scheda.it.schede-servizio-strumento.schede-servizi.dis-coll-indennit-mensile-di-disoccupazione-50183.dis-coll-indennit-mensile-di-disoccupazione.html>

Annexes

Please find below (for illustration) the forms required at various stage during the PhD trajectory:

- Annex 1: Monitoring and Evaluation Form
- Annex 2: Request for Study Period Abroad
- Annex 3: Report on Study Period Abroad
- Annex 4: Reimbursement Request Form

For more forms: <https://phd.luiss.it/procedure/>

Annex 1

Monitoring and Evaluation Form

A.Y. 2024/2025 – I Semester

Please complete this form and submit it by **[date]** to phdtutordisp@luiss.it

The first part of the form involves a self-assessment by the PhD candidate of the state of play of his/her doctoral research project, while in the second part supervisors may provide their observations on the responses by PhD candidates and their own assessment of the progress of the PhD project.

PhD Candidate:

PhD Supervisor(s):

1. Please describe the current state of your research project ? (500 words)
2. What challenges have you encountered in the past semester? (500 words)
3. What are your plans for next semester? (500 words)
4. Assessment of the PhD candidate's progress by the PhD Supervisor(s) (500 words).

Completed by:

[Name]

Date

Annex 2

Request for Study Period Abroad

Name of PhD Candidate:

Name of PhD 1st Supervisor:

Name of PhD 2nd Supervisor:

Research plan (500 words):

Relevance of host institution to the research project (500 words):

☐ The Confirmation letter from the Host institution has been submitted

Date: Signature:

Annex 3

Report on Study Period Abroad

Name of PhD Candidate:
 Name of PhD 1st Supervisor:
 Name of PhD 2nd Supervisor:

Host Institution:
 Period: from... to...
 Local Mentor:

Description of research activity (max. 500 words):

Date: Signature:



Annex 4

Reimbursement Request Form

NAME and SURNAME _____

PHD and CYCLE _____

OBJECT OF REQUEST _____

PERIOD _____

PLACE _____

Expenses

(cross the type of expenditure incurred and report the amount, or the sum of the amounts, indicated in the expense receipts /invoices)

☐ **Flights**

Amount in euro _____

Description (es: Flight a/r Rome – London)

☐ **Train**

Amount in euro _____

Description (es: train a/r Rome-Salerno)

☐ **Other transport (es: bus, metro....)**

Amount in euro _____

Description (es: bus a/r Roma – Salerno)

☐ **Hotel**

Amount in euro _____



Description (es: n°2 nights in Hotel Hilton)

☐ **Restaurant**

Amount in euro _____

Description (es: n°3 receipts for restaurant/food)

☐ **Fee enrollment**

Amount in Euro _____

Description (es: iscrizione Summer School)

☐ **Other (not included in the previous expenses)**

Amount in Euro _____

Description

Total amount requested _____

Place, date

Signature