



Guidelines for PhD candidates

I. Your status

A defining feature of the PhD students at the Observatory is that they are considered as full members of staff, not students. They are entitled to an office, generous travel funding, and many other perks - this is not the case in most universities. But this also means that we require from them, besides their doctoral research, that they fully engage in the activities of The Observatory, partake in the development of new research projects, contribute to teaching, etc. Most universities or research centres will consider PhD students as students - we consider them as staff members.

II. The work we do

We work on migration dynamics, environmental changes, and the interaction of both. Though we do not wish to disparage other research topics or minimize their importance, we consider that environmental changes and migration are two of the defining issues of the 21st century, which require a very broad scientific engagement, especially from social sciences. We believe that excellent science can help build more open, inclusive and democratic societies. We are the exact opposite of an ivory tower: we have daily interactions with policy-makers at various levels of governments and engage openly in public debates. We strive to make an impact. There is no doubt that Trump, Bolsonaro or Salvini would label us as leftists or liberals who should be put in jail and silenced, but we pride ourselves on that. Media, including social media, are important tools to communicate and explain research results, as well as to inform public debates. Thus if you're afraid of addressing an audience or get homesick when you travel, The Observatory is probably not the place for you.

III. Administrative issues

Everyone can register for a PhD at the University of Liège: there is no selection process and you can enroll at any time. Tuition fees are about 900 EUR the first year, then about 30 EUR for the subsequent years. These are waived, however, if you are on the payroll of the university (see below). We can supervise PhD in different subjects, but preferably in Geography or Political and Social Sciences. You don't need to attend any course or formal training, but you are expected to engage in a series of academic activities (conferences, workshops, summer schools, etc.) and you need to report on these activities every year. This programme of activities is to be agreed between you and your supervisor.

Though the Observatory is located in Liège, you don't have to live in Liège - but you can! Liège is a mid-sized city (about 250,000 inhabitants), and we understand you might prefer living in a bigger, more international city like Brussels. Liège is cheaper though. But we ask you to be present at the office at least two days a week if you are on a scholarship, and three days a week if you are on our payroll (see below). We know a lot of your research can be done remotely from home, and we value homework, but we don't want the Observatory to be a network of researchers who all work from home. We put a great emphasis on collective and collaborative work, and this can only be done if you have drinks from time to time with your colleagues.

IV. Funding

This might sound shocking, but **we only take in PhD students who are fully funded**. Completing a PhD without funding is a very difficult task, and the rate of drop-outs is really high. We are keen to avoid that. We consider that researching towards a PhD is real work, not just studies - and thus should be compensated. We don't agree that researchers should live on a string, and that being constantly broke is part of the charm of the job. On the contrary: though salaries in the academic sector can't be compared with those of the private sector, you are a highly-qualified worker and should be treated as such. This doesn't mean that we stay at Four Seasons hotels all across the world and dine in Michelin-starred restaurants every night, but we don't do cheap motels and tacos either. We offer generous travel funding and cover all your professional expenses (the only exception to that being your phone bill, but we're working on this).

There are three possible ways to get funding, and we'll help you secure funding. This doesn't mean you'll be successful every time (competition is tough), but if you don't manage to secure funding after a year or two, you might want to reconsider your career options.

- *Option 1:* You manage to get funding on your own, with a **scholarship** related to your country of origin, a competition you've won, your previous university, etc. We

will point out towards these opportunities, but of course you're encouraged to look by yourself as well.

- *Option 2:* The **Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS)** offers generous PhD scholarships every year. There are two calls every year: a **general call** for all disciplines with a deadline in late January, and a **call specific to social sciences** (called FRESH) with a deadline in July. Both are for a start in October. The scholarship is for 4 years, about 2000 EUR/month tax-free, with travel funding. We can only support one candidate per call however, which is the reason why we operate a pre-selection (see below, item #5). <http://www.fnrs.be/en/index.php/funding/mandates/doctoral-researchers>

The **University of Liège** also offers a number of PhD scholarships in human sciences – these scholarships are very comparable to FNRS scholarships. The deadline is in October every year. See here for the conditions: https://www.ulg.ac.be/cms/c_435645/fr/financement-de-doctorat-en-sciences-humaines

- *Option 3:* A large part of the work of the Observatory is funded through **collaborative research projects** (Horizon 2020, Belmont Forum, etc.) Such research projects often include the possibility to hire PhD students and/or research assistants, which means that we regularly open positions for PhD students. It is also possible for us to support you in the development of a project, or you can work with us towards the submission of a project that would include funding for your PhD.

V. Application process

If you're interested in applying for an FNRS scholarship (Option 2 - general call), please send us a CV (with academic transcripts) as well as a research outline (following the FNRS template, see link above) **by December 1st**. We will then review the applications internally, as we can only support one candidate to the FNRS. We will let you know about our internal selection by December 15th, so that you can finalise your application (due in late January).

If you'd like to apply for an FNRS scholarship under the call specific to social sciences (Option 2), please send us the same material **by May 1st**. We will then review the applications internally, as we can only support one candidate to the FNRS. We will let you know about our internal selection by May 15th, so that you can finalise your application (due in early July).

If you'd like to apply for a scholarship of the University (Option 2), please send us the same material **by September 1st**. We will then review the applications internally, as we can only support one candidate. We will let you know about our internal selection by September 15th, so that you can finalise your application (due in mid-October).

Of course, these options do not exclude each other! You can apply for both FNRS call while seeking other scholarships or developing research projects. Keep in mind that applications are seldom successful on their first try, so it is always recommended to try your luck in as often as possible - and to re-try if the first attempt was not successful!

Though luck does play a part in the process, if you haven't managed to secure funding 18 months after your first application, you might want to reconsider your options. Sometimes we might have a bit of funding to support you between applications, but this is not something we can do indefinitely. If you haven't managed to secure funding, in a way or another, 18 months after your first application, it is unlikely (though not impossible) that you ever will. If you're still determined to pursue a PhD, you might want to approach another research centre (some enrollment PhD students without funding) or simply consider another career path. That might seem harsh, but life is short and we don't want to make you wait indefinitely for an opportunity that might just never materialize.