

Step-by-step Guide for Applicants to the Part-time PhD Programme in European Studies

Step 1: First contact

Before sending an application for the part-time PhD programme European Studies you are welcome to contact the director of the programme, Dr Paul Stephenson (p.stephenson@maastrichtuniversity.nl) in order to:

- exchange ideas about your potential research project
- learn more about the expectations regarding a successful PhD project
- check your eligibility in terms of prior studies (read the typical profile below)
- find out whether we are able in principle to provide supervision in the area of your interest.

Step 2: Outline of your research interest

In order for us to be able to match you with a potential supervisor, we need from you an outline of your intended research. Please identify your area of interest as well as any preferences regarding theoretical and methodological choices. You may also indicate a preference for a PhD supervisor and co-supervisor based on the list published on our website.

Please send the outline to the director of the programme, Dr Paul Stephenson (p.stephenson@maastrichtuniversity.nl), as well as the programme's institutional address phd-es@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

We will then contact you and put you in touch with proposed PhD supervisor(s).

Step 3: Feedback from prospective supervisor(s)

Once we inform you who may be available to supervise your PhD thesis if your application is successful, you are welcome to make contact with these colleagues to gather feedback on your initial outline and advice in drafting the full research plan which is required for your application. Such contact may occur by phone, through skype or, if possible, in a personal meeting.

Step 4: Research plan

Based on the initial outline you wrote, and on the feedback you received from the programme director and the prospective supervisors, you will then need to write a full research proposal which should contain the following elements:

- Introduction of the proposed research topic
- Proposed research question
- Indication of the analytical framework
- Identification of possible research methods
- Discussion of the existing literature

A format for this research plan can be downloaded on <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/course/phd-european-studies/admission-application>

This research plan is a key part of your application and will form the main plank in the decision about acceptance into the programme.

Step 5: Submission of the application

The deadline for applications is **30 May 2026**. Make sure to submit in time and send all necessary files to our email address: phd-es@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Your formal application should contain the following documents:

- Curriculum vitae
- Letter of motivation
- References
- Transcript of grades/MA diploma
- Your research plan

Step 6: Selection interview

Your application will be reviewed and, if considered promising, you will then be invited to an interview with the academic board of the PhD programme. The interview will either take place in person at the UM Brussels Campus or, if necessary, can be conducted over skype. In the interview the board members will discuss your personal and professional circumstances, your motivation for the PhD studies and the intended research. Based on the discussion in the interview, as well as on the submitted documents, the board will then make a decision whether or not to admit you to the programme.

Step 7: Acceptance

The programme director will inform you about the outcome of your application. If successful, you will be sent an agreement to be signed by yourself and the dean of the Faculty, outlining mutual rights and obligations. You will also receive a letter detailing the payment schedule for the tuition fees for the first year of the programme.

Step 8: Start of the PhD studies

Once we have received the signed agreement and the initial payment, you will receive the confirmation that you are enrolled in the programme. Further details concerning the PhD training programme in Brussels and regarding your supervisory team will follow soon thereafter. Supervision usually commences with the beginning of the academic year, in September, and the Brussels-based PhD training in mid-October.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What does it cost?**

There is an annual tuition fee of €4.000,- payable at the beginning of each academic year. In the first year, half the annual fee is paid as a first instalment on the acceptance of the offer and the second half is then due on following 1 January.

- **What is the typical profile of a part-time PhD fellow?**

- MA or MSc/ M.Phil degree in political science, public administration, international relations, European studies, European Law, or a similar discipline
- Some prior experience of academic research
- Professional and/or volunteer experience in the area of intended research
- Interest in European politics, administration and society
- Curiosity to find out something new about EU affairs
- Highly-motivated, disciplined and committed to the long-term project of completed a PhD
- Ideally with support for further study from employer

- **Is it possible to do an article based PhD instead of a book?**

This is possible. The minimum for an article based PhD is usually regarded to be four articles, out of which at least two would already have been accepted for publication. But that is also something that is decided on a case-by-case basis and depends on how substantive each individual paper is. A pdf document with the UM PhD regulations for download is available on

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/phds>.

- **How does the PhD training look like?**

In the first year, there will be 6-8 training sessions (roughly once a month) providing general guidance on PhD writing, research design, introduction to theory and methods.

In the second year, there will be a series of specialised research methods sessions, including training tailored to the specific needs of the participating fellows. In addition, we will have annual symposia to present and discuss the fellow's work in progress as well as occasional workshops on specific topics of interest.

Training sessions will be held at the UM Brussels Hub and usually take place on Thursdays from 17.30-19.30 hrs. Attendance is not obligatory but strongly recommended. We make every effort to timetable sessions so that everyone can participate.

- **Who should I contact with questions?**

- For academic matters: Dr Paul Stephenson, Director of the Programme (p.stephenson@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
- For administrative matters: Ms Sabine Kuipers, Assistant Part-time PhD Programme ES (phd-es@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

- **How should letters of reference be submitted?**

Your referees can send them to you, and you can then upload these together with the other documents. If your referees prefer to send them directly to us, that's also possible. They can send the letters to phd-es@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

- **Is there a discount for UM/FASoS alumni?**

We do not have a discount for UM/FASoS alumni. Our fee is based on the cost that we have for supervision, PhD training and administration of the programme, and therefore applies to all accepted candidates.