

# DOCTORAL STUDIES IN FRANCE

After earning a European Master or equivalent degree, aspiring scholars and researchers join a doctoral department, where they will undergo 3 years of training in and through research with a research team that will support them in their scholarly or scientific development.

Following a successful defense of their dissertation candidates are awarded **the Doctorate**.

Each doctoral department is affiliated with a university or other postsecondary institution. The department houses a set of research teams that assume responsibility for training doctoral candidates and preparing them for a future in Research.

## FRANCE'S DOCTORAL DEPARTMENTS

**Each PhD student joins a research team or unit affiliated to a specific Doctoral Department. Candidates are guided and supervised by a thesis supervisor.**

The Doctoral Departments at each higher education institution represent multiple **research teams** from one or more institutions. Each department is organized around a specific theme.

The departments are responsible not only for **training** doctoral students but also for preparing them for **research careers** by offering them a scholarly setting in which to work and learn. Through instruction, seminars, and internships, students are introduced to a range of career opportunities in various settings, including academia, government, and industry.

**The departments fulfill an essential coordinating role, ensuring the scientific coherence of candidates' research projects.**

- Every Doctoral Department is affiliated with a university or other higher education host institution accredited to deliver Doctoral Degree (called **support or principal institution**) in the field represented by the department. The department, while formally affiliated with a single institution, may coordinate the work of research teams at several "**co-accredited**" or "**associated**" institutions. Co-accredited institutions grant Doctoral Degree independently. Associated institutions may grant Doctoral Degree only in conjunction with the Doctoral Department's host institution.
- Proposals for doctoral projects are drawn up by the department's research teams. The department reviews and approves the teams' proposals and supervises the recruitment of doctoral candidates to carry out the projects. Successful candidates enroll in the educational institution with which the department is affiliated.
- The director of the doctoral project is a key figure. He or she is responsible for developing the project and for recruiting candidates to carry it out. For three years, as the direct supervisor of the successful candidate's laboratory work, the director oversees the progress of the research project, co-signing the dissertation plan. The research director must possess the academic qualification known as the HDR (Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, or qualification to direct research).
- Doctoral departments may pool their efforts within a COMUE, a community of universities and other postsecondary institutions. In such cases, doctorates earned by candidates working in the member institutions are awarded by the COMUE.
- In order to improve supervision of doctoral candidates and disseminate research opportunities more effectively, the doctoral departments affiliated with a given institution often join together in a "doctoral college," which then becomes the nerve center of the institution's doctoral community.
- Doctoral Departments are accredited by France's Ministry of higher Education and Research.

## KEY FIGURES

- 270 doctoral departments (2015) and 10 scientific fields
- 14 400 Doctorates (2014)
- **42% of foreign doctoral candidates**

## IN BRIEF

Doctoral program provides training in and through research as well as professional research experience.

- Research activities (laboratory, research center)
- Preparation and defense of a dissertation leading to award of the Doctorate
- Approximately 160 hours of complementary training approved by the doctoral department, a portion of which is mandated by the department, with the rest being selected by the candidate (French language study; business and innovation; courses in the candidate's discipline; teaching and popularizing science; etc.)

## APPLYING FOR ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

**Doctoral Departments are the linchpin of doctoral studies in France. Students begin doctoral studies by applying for admission to a Doctoral Department.**

### How to apply

- Aspiring candidates must hold a degree equivalent to a European Master (5 years of Higher Education)
- Applicants should contact a Doctoral Department to inquire about the procedure for submitting a **research or consulting department's research proposals**.
- The Doctoral Department will refer the candidate to a **thesis supervisor and review with the candidate the options for financing the candidate's doctoral studies**.
- Once the candidate is accepted by the Doctoral Department and thesis supervisor, he or she signs a **thesis contract**.

*The thesis contract represents the agreement of the doctoral candidate, the department, and the research center, team, or laboratory that will host the candidate.*

*The contract helps ensure quality by setting forth the rights and responsibilities of each party.*

## GOOD TO KNOW

- Campus France a unique online access to all the information you need to select a doctoral program or research program in France : A directory of doctoral departments, dissertation opportunities, internships, and postdocs, Presentations on financial aid

[www.campusfrance.org/en>Research in France](http://www.campusfrance.org/en>Research in France)

