

HuME Phd Program

Information for prospective applicants

HuME is an interdisciplinary PhD programme covering a wide range of topics across philosophy and the cognitive (neuro-) sciences. Every year it advertises a variable number of scholarships, usually in the spring and early summer, which are advertised internationally via email lists and the websites of scientific associations. In any case, interested candidates are invited check our website regularly from April until July.

HuME does not accept students without scholarships. Some advertised scholarships are 'open', in the sense that they can be assigned to any candidate who intends to work in one of our areas of expertise. Others – funded by external agencies and foundations – may be linked to specific projects or topics, as specified in the call for applications.

HuME receives every year a large number of applications, which means that the selection process is highly competitive. The appointed selection committee looks carefully into every application and draws a shortlist of applicants to be interviewed. The interviews usually begin with a request to briefly illustrate one's research project, followed by a Q/A session. It also gives applicants the opportunity to ask questions to the members of the committee, if they wish. After the interviews, the committee publishes a ranking of the candidates. Some are immediately offered a scholarship while others are 'reserves', meaning that they may receive an offer in the following weeks if someone rejects the offer.

There is no formula or recipe for writing a successful proposal, but some elements are usually taken in high regard by the selection committee. One is the scientific quality of the project. We do not expect candidates to know exactly how their PhD thesis will look like, but your project should demonstrate an adequate knowledge of the current state of research in your area of interest, including knowledge of the literature; the capacity to identify important questions that remain to be settled, and to formulate them precisely. Awareness of the methods that may be used to address your research questions is also appreciated.

Although our expertise covers a wide range of topics, we are not omniscient. Innovative research requires specialization, and we would not make you a favour if we selected a project that we cannot supervise adequately. Ideally, one should apply to a PhD programme where she can receive help and guidance by one of the top researchers working in her field of interest. An important question that you should ask yourself before sending an application, then, is: Why HuME? Why do I want to carry out this research at the University of Milan, IUSS Pavia, or the Scuola Normale? Is one of these institutions at the frontier of research in the topic that I am interested in? If the answer is 'No', then there is a low chance that your project will be selected. Every year many valid and interesting projects are unsuccessful, simply because they don't properly match our major research lines and expertise and hence would not be provided adequate support.

A list of all the members of HuME's academic board, with areas of expertise, can be found on our website. You should also check the personal webpages of individual researchers, to acquire more information about their research interests and skills. You are welcome to contact them individually in advance, if you have doubts or if you would like to receive some specific information. Although we cannot provide detailed help or feedback about research projects before the call for applications, we will be more than happy to answer specific queries and/or to provide general guidance.