

ISS PhD programme 2018-2022

Vision paper

This document lays down the vision of ISS for its PhD programme from 2018 and 2022. It is based on current policy of ISS, including the ISS Strategic Plan 2018-2022, the ISS Budget 2018, and "Envisioning the Future", which is the PhD candidates' input into the strategic planning of the institution.

ISS Vision and Mission

The ISS vision is of a just, global society. The ISS mission is to conduct:

- high quality research with high societal relevance
- high quality capacity development through training and education at post-graduate level (MA, PhD).

ISS has been developing into an academic research-led institute with a focus on Global Development and Social Justice. The number of PhD candidates is increasing (now appr. 125 registered). This increase follows global developments: with more master programmes in the Global South, there is more interest in international PhD programmes.

Embedding the PhD programme in the overall ISS research programme

The ISS research programme Global Development and Social Justice has been assessed in 2017 and scored very well on the three criteria:

- *quality*: 2 (very good), while stressing that this should be interpreted at the higher end and tending towards excellence;
- *relevance to society*: 1 (world leading/excellent).
- *viability*: 1 (world leading/excellent)

As the PhD programme is strongly connected to research, this is a very good starting position.

Following this assessment, ISS has defined its strategy for the period of 2018 to 2022.

The PhD programme will be aligned with the overall ISS research programme. The integration of the PhD programme in the ISS research programme will enhance the coherence between PhD research projects and research projects of academic staff. It will also enhance supervisory capacity and effectiveness. Moreover, it will be stimulating for PhD candidates to work in a broader research framework, together with senior researchers.

Targets

- At least 14 defences per year, in 2018-2022, of PhD theses that continue to be of high quality, are societally relevant and contribute to the ISS research programme;¹
- A more efficient and supportive PhD programme, based on professional care for the PhD candidates to guarantee that they find a professional and caring environment in ISS, in which they can flourish and focus on their PhD;
- Strengthening of the alignment between the research programme at ISS and the PhD research projects;
- Strengthen the ownership of the PhD candidates of their PhD journey, to enable them to work on their PhD with the support they need ;
- Strengthening of the monitoring and accountability structures of the PhD programme;

¹This number is what can be reasonably expected from a PhD population of 130, according to the agreement between EUR and ISS.

- To ensure that PhD candidates will get the supervision they need, ISS will guarantee sufficient supervision capacity, by professors and associate professors and co-supervision in teams including assistant professors; and by moving towards supervision in teams enhancing peer learning.

The development of the ISS PhD programme: 2018-2022

The PhD programme is a vital component and a major strength of the ISS research programme. ISS envisions a PhD programme where the PhD candidate is the owner and driver of the PhD process. The candidate takes responsibility for the process and feels confident to signal needs with regards to supervision and support. Supervisors and support structures are equipped to respond to these needs.

The supervisory team shares in the responsibility for the PhD journey. The supervisory team is the first line of support and ensures that the PhD process and its outcomes fulfil the standards of the institute and university.

To enable the quality of the process and the wellbeing of the candidates, accessible support structures will be in place with well-defined roles.

Clear accountability structures will safeguard the process. This refers to the formal requirements of the process, as well as accountability mechanisms between the candidate and the supervisory team. Problems are in principle resolved in dialogue between supervisors and candidates, and there is a support structure in place in case problems cannot be resolved.

Alignment of the PhD projects with the ISS research programme

Alignment with the ISS research programme will play a bigger role in the selection of PhD candidates, in order to ensure that candidates can link their research firmly in the wider research community at ISS, will find appropriate supervision and that academic staff can better integrate the collaboration with PhD candidates in their own research.

One way of integrating the PhD programme in ISS research is through joint publications between PhD candidates and supervisors. The publication strategy is decided between the candidate and the supervisors. It is essential to discuss the publication strategy with the PhD candidate and the team at an early stage because only then can the supervisory team meet the expectations placed on them.

Monitoring and accountability

PhD candidates are represented in all major governance structures of ISS for collective feedback and policy contributions of PhD candidates to the institute. Participation of the PhD representatives at different levels (e.g. IC, RDC) will be facilitated. In the future there will also be regular PhD surveys to generate feedback, in line with national PhD experience survey (EUR-wide, pilot autumn 2018).

In the coming years, individual monitoring and accountability will be strengthened in different ways. The *Hora Finita* system will be introduced in January 2019, and will enable a systematic and transparent reporting and monitoring mechanism of the individual PhD journeys.

To enhance mutual feedback and accountability between supervisors and candidates, a yearly 'light' form of evaluation will be introduced, as part of *Hora Finita*. At the beginning of the PhD journey, expectations, opportunities and constraints to supervisory support will be discussed and agreements will be incorporated in the Training and Supervision Plan (see below).

PhD double degree strategy

ISS will seek to expand partnerships in integrated collaborative programmes with key strategic partners in the global South, consisting for example of joint research projects, joint PhD supervision and double degree MA education. This may be done in collaboration with other research-intensive institutes in the global North.

The existing double degree PhD programmes with University of Witwatersrand and with Ruhr Universität Bochum (Germany) are a good starting point. As are the double degree MA programmes e.g. in Vietnam and Indonesia, and collaborations with other key strategic partners (e.g. Ethiopia, Colombia). We also plan to further develop joint PhD supervision arrangements for individual PhDs (*cotutelle* arrangements) for PhD defences at ISS. Our alumni, all over the world, will be important ambassadors and contributors to these collaborations.

In 2016, ISS has started an experiment for 3 years with 5 PhD bursaries per year (15 in total), coming exclusively from the non-European Economic area. The fellowships, (with an allowance comparable to a net PhD employment salary) will be included in the regular budget of the institute.

The last 5 PhD experiment bursaries have been selected in 2018. The experiment plays a role in strengthening of research capacity as it enables us to attract more bright young candidates from outside Europe to ISS. They will help increase our research capacity in key strategic areas.

Continuation of this experiment may be vital for ISS, but depends on the evaluation of the experiment by the Ministry. This evaluation will be prepared by ISS for Erasmus University in close collaboration with the only other Dutch university in the PhD experiment, the University of Groningen.

Supervision

As alluded to above, supervisory capacity will be strengthened to ensure that PhD candidates will receive the supervision they need. High quality supervision is an important condition for the timely completion of high-quality PhD projects. The EUR graduate school EGSH is further developing its training offer for PhD supervision, just like the CERES research school. ISS supervisors will be encouraged to enhance their skills through such training.

In case there is a gap in the expertise required for PhD projects within ISS, external supervision can be sought, on the basis of clear agreements laid down in a Memorandum of Understanding.

Training and Supervision Plan

The TSP is of great importance to organize and structure the PhD journey. It entails strategic choices and decisions that fit the different stages of the PhD trajectory (start, fieldwork, writing, prepare for next career move). It should contain agreements on coursework, on monitoring seminars and progress meetings, on co-publication agreements, on societal relevance and research like presenting papers at conferences, as well as preparation for a career inside or outside academia.

Training and supervision may also entail participation in PhD monitoring seminars, interactions between PhD candidates and other PhD initiatives that enhance debate and self-reflection.

Educational component

The compulsory parts in every ISS PhD trajectory will be redefined, also in the light of the growing attention for scientific integrity and responsible research, proper data management, privacy legislation, safety and security of PhD researchers and their research participants.

Options for learning to teach/lecture will be further investigated, as ISS PhD candidates are often not allowed to teach in ISS. However, it is important for their future career to have some experience with respect to teaching activities. ISS offers – in cooperation with EGSH - an alternative in the form of a basic didactical training course.

For those PhDs that are allowed to teach, ISS will take care that teaching does not interfere with the primary responsibilities for the PhD. Teaching cannot be made compulsory, and PhD candidates need to guard that the teaching contributes to their professional profile and development.

Career support

In response to feedback of the PhD community, ISS will seek ways to pay more attention to supporting the career development of PhD candidates. EGSH provides a career development course to prepare for life after the PhD defence.

Care and support: It takes the whole ISS to fully support a PhD candidate

As referred to above, ISS aims to provide good quality support to PhD candidates. This will be grounded in an efficient and supportive PhD programme, based on professional care for the PhD candidates to guarantee that they can flourish and focus on their PhD.

This includes transparent and complete information. In 2018, rules and regulations will be simplified to make them more transparent. The information on the website will be improved and made specific for the different types of PhD candidates of ISS (OIO's, bursaries, *cotutelles* and others).

The introduction of new PhD candidates into the ISS community is a key issue. This ranges from responses to questions before arrival, registration, welcoming and familiarization in the first two weeks, finances and support in the search for housing.

New and current PhD candidates are entitled to accessible and sufficient facilities, including desk space, library access, computer, and printing facilities.

The whole of the ISS is involved in making PhD candidates feel at home in ISS. A PhD advisor will be appointed as the first port of call for various concerns of candidates. This support is especially important for international PhDs, as they will encounter changing (and often contradictory) requirements by the IND/Visa, municipality administration, EUR and Dutch policies.

Safety and security

Safety and security during fieldwork is most important for ISS candidates, as well as for their research collaborators, partners and participants. ISS will continue to work towards a solid safety and security system, including policy, training and appropriate insurance.