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Université du Luxembourg

Doctoral Education
at the University of Luxembourg

Contents

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Key Contacts

Office of Doctoral Studies	phdstudies@uni.lu
Transferable Skills Team	ts@uni.lu
Luxembourg Career Centre	careercentre@uni.lu
Luxembourg Alumni Centre	alumni@uni.lu
Support and Well-Being Services	UMatter@uni.lu

Acronyms

ADR	Autorisation à diriger des recherches / supervision rights
BED	Bureau des Etudes Doctorales
CET	Comité d'Encadrement de Thèse
DEA	Doctoral Education Agreement
DC	Doctoral Candidate
FNR	Fonds National de la Recherche
RE	Règlement des Etudes
ROI	Règlement d'Ordre Intérieur
VRR	Vice Rector for Research

Dear Doctoral candidates,

I am delighted to welcome you to the University of Luxembourg. This handbook provides the essential information you need to begin your journey with us and serves as a helpful guide throughout the doctoral education trajectory.

Doctoral research is a vital component of Luxembourg's research landscape and plays a key role in our partnerships with academic, industrial, and governmental entities. Currently, around 1,100 doctoral candidates are enrolled at the University of Luxembourg, contributing significantly to the university's output and reputation as a research-driven institution.

As you embark on this new chapter in your life, you may encounter new challenges along the way. We aim to support you by offering useful information and services to ensure a smooth start and continuation of your doctoral studies. This new version of the PhD handbook includes important details regarding your path to obtaining a doctoral degree. Developed by the Office of Doctoral Studies and the Doctoral School administrators, this guide is work in progress, continuously improved each semester, so please check for the latest version regularly and keep it handy. It is designed for both new and experienced doctoral candidates and is provided in a digital format to make it easier for you to consult and find new information.

We value your feedback, so feel free to reach out to PhDstudies@uni.lu with suggestions, comments, or ideas on how we can further enhance this guide.

I wish you a successful and inspiring doctoral journey at our University.

Prof. Dr. Simone Niclou Vice-Rector for Research

Your PhD – A journey of research and impact

A PhD is more than a degree.
It is a journey of discovery, innovation, and learning.

At the University of Luxembourg, our Doctoral Education programmes empower early-career researchers to drive innovation in a dynamic, international and interdisciplinary research environment.

Whether you are aiming for a career in academia, industry, or entrepreneurship, your research will contribute to real-world solutions and scientific advancements.

Why choose a PhD at the University of Luxembourg?

- Research is conducted across **pioneering fields**, with supervision provided by internationally recognised **experts**.

- The University is the **ideal location** to conduct research in an international and interdisciplinary environment.

- Founded in 2003, the University is **young** and **vibrant**. It already ranks among the top 20 Universities under 50 years of age.

- More than 50% of our doctoral candidates stay in Luxembourg after graduation, expanding our Alumni network to most sectors in the **industry**, **institutions** and **academia**.

- The campuses are spread across sites in the city center and in **Belval** – a bold example of urban regeneration serving education and technology.

DOCTORAL EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Duration: 3-4 years

Language:

English/French/German/Luxemb.

Registration fees: 400€/semester

Application period: year-round

// Website

// Contact

phdstudies@uni.lu

What we offer

We offer an **enriching, supportive**, and **internationally recognised environment** for doctoral research and personal development.

Clear framework from enrolment to thesis defence

Close guidance and mentoring from experienced faculty members

Workshops, seminars, and training for academic and professional growth

Competitive funding and strong academic support, enabling full focus on research

Doctoral education in numbers

4	13	+90	~200	1100
Doctoral Schools	Doctoral Programmes	Countries	Doctoral defences/year	Doctoral Candidates

Facts and Figures

Founded in 2003, the University of Luxembourg is the only public university in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It is multilingual, international and research-oriented, and is also a modern institution with a personal atmosphere.

The University has 1,600 academic staff (including doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, research associates and others) supporting over 300 professors, assistant professors and lecturers in their teaching. It has close links with European institutions, financial institutions and leading industry players.

THE UNIVERSITY

2003 Foundation

3 Faculties

3 Campuses

5 Interdisciplinary Centres

OUR VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION
A University for Luxembourg and the World

OUR MISSION
To be a world-class research university focusing on:
- Cutting-edge Research
- High-quality Education
- Contribution to the social, cultural and economic development of the country

OUR APPROACH

INTERNATIONAL | INTERDISCIPLINARY

MULTILINGUAL | **RESEARCH ORIENTED**

CLOSE TO EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND LEADING INDUSTRY PLAYERS

RESEARCH

2,600 Publications in 2024

900+ Ongoing Projects

234 Horizon projects accepted to Dec 2024[1] — EU funding

22 ERC Grants awarded to Dec 2024

137 FNR[2] projects accepted in 2024 — National funding

€49.6m FNR awarded funding in 2024

[1] Horizon Europe is the biggest EU Research and Innovation funding programme, with a €95.5 billion budget for the 2021-2027 period. It succeeds Horizon 2020, which ran from 2014 to 2020, with a budget of €80 billion.
[2] The Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR) is the main funding body for research activities in Luxembourg.

RANKINGS

#20 in the THE (Times Higher Education) Young University Rankings 2024

among the top **#250** best universities worldwide according to the THE World University Rankings 2024

#4 worldwide for our international outlook according to the THE World University Rankings 2023

TEACHING

51 Master's Degrees

24 Bachelor's Degrees

13 Doctoral Programmes

58 Bilingual & Multilingual Degrees

15 Continuing Education Programmes

4 Teaching Languages (French, German, English and Luxembourgish)

OUR FOCUS AREAS

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
Trustworthy ICT | Cybersecurity | Digital humanities | Big Data of the past | FinTech | Space technology and telecommunication | Data science

MEDICINE AND HEALTH
Systems biomedicine | Neuroscience | Oncology | Experimental psychology | Digital Health | Social and economic determinants of health

SUSTAINABLE AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT
Sustainable finance and governance | Inequalities | Diversity and migration | Law and regulations | Educational research

PEOPLE

3,600 Bachelor Students

2,500 Staff

2,100 Master Students

300+ Professors

1,000+ Doctoral candidates

1,600 Academic Staff

19,000 Alumni (since 2003) including 1,700+ doctoral graduates

150 Nationalities

Doctoral Education at UNILU

A doctoral degree enables you to start or continue a piece of research in a field you are passionate about, building on the knowledge and expertise acquired in your Master's degree. It is the highest degree awarded in an academic environment and means that you have achieved the highest level of competence in a given area of study. With support and guidance from a supervisor, you will be able to direct your research in your chosen field as you see fit.

A doctoral degree enables you not only to establish yourself as a scholar but also to engage in networking among leading researchers in your field, gain new perspectives and meet a range of people from a variety of settings who have similar interests. It is an exciting time to exchange ideas and perspectives with academics, other researchers, and luminaries and to hone your skills by attending or presenting at conferences and seminars in a variety of countries. In addition, in most cases, you will also have the opportunity to teach and transfer knowledge to other students at the university.

A doctoral degree can boost your career and signal to the market that you are an expert in a certain area of study. Many careers require you to have a doctoral degree – not only academia but also medicine, science and technology, finance, law, social sciences and, increasingly, the field of security. Holders of Doctoral degrees are employed by the public and private sector alike for their analytical skills and their ability to conduct sound research independently and with integrity.

Am I eligible for admission?

For eligibility, please refer to the admissions page: Doctoral Candidates - Admissions - University of Luxembourg I Uni.lu. This includes diplomas needed at admission and language requirements.

Research and coursework

At UNILU to obtain your doctoral diploma, you will need to:

1 / Conduct Research – whether archival, in the field, or in a laboratory. This research will culminate in the writing of a thesis, which you will defend at the end of your studies.

> // **Thesis formats:** Your thesis will be either in the format of a monograph (a single, cohesive body of research on a specific topic) or a **cumulative** thesis (composed of a collection of related but independent articles that the author has published or submitted for publication). This needs to be discussed with your supervisor and should follow your doctoral programme / discipline rules.

2 / Complete course work – course work includes transferable skills, disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses. The aim is to give you the opportunity to develop skills and useful knowledge for your thesis, whilst at the same time gaining a solid basis for your research within your specific discipline, the academic community and future employers.

> // In the course of your doctoral studies with us you are required to gain a minimum of **20 ECTS credits** (under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).

Central Administration and your doctoral school / programme organize a variety of courses. You can check the course offer from the central team and your own specific doctoral school offer by using the following links:

Skills and Training - University of Luxembourg I Uni.lu

https://www.uni.lu/research-en/doctoral-education/schools-and-programmes/

The Office of Doctoral Studies and Doctoral Schools at Uni.lu

:: Office of Doctoral Studies (BED)

The BED centralizes all procedures and communications related to doctoral education. These include amongst others, managing the admission of a doctoral candidate, enrolment of doctoral candidates, monitoring the timely delivery of supervision committee reports, managing the authorization of a defence. For any queries on admissions please go to: Doctoral Candidates - Admissions - University of Luxembourg I Uni.lu.

:: Doctoral Schools and Doctoral Programmes

The University of Luxembourg has four Doctoral Schools comprising a diverse number of programmes. Click on the links below for more information.

Doctoral School in Science and Engineering (DSSE)
DP in Complex Systems Science
DP in Computer Science and Computer Engineering
DP in Engineering Sciences
DP in Mathematics and Applications
DP in Physics and Materials Science
DP in Systems and Molecular Biomedicine

Doctoral School of Law (DSL)
DP in Law

Doctoral School in Economics, Finance and Management (DSEFM)
DP in Economics and Management Sciences
DP in Finance

Doctoral School in Humanities and Social Sciences (DSHSS)
DP in Education
DP in Humanities
DP in Psychology
DP in Social Sciences

:: Doctoral Candidates – Dual Status

At our university, the majority of our doctoral candidates have a contract and are employed by the university, giving them dual status as both employees and students. It is possible however to enroll as a self-funded student. However, it is important to note that all doctoral candidates enrolled at the University of Luxembourg must meet the same academic and administrative requirements, regardless of their funding status. The only distinction for self-funded students is that the duration of their studies is longer if they are registered as part-time, as outlined in the section on Defence.

Please check our admission page for further details Doctoral Candidates - Admissions - University of Luxembourg I Uni.lu and the job pages for opportunities: Job Portal - University of Luxembourg

We also welcome Doctoral candidates employed by the Luxembourg institutes, including the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST), the Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH), and the Luxembourg institute of Socio-Economic Research.

Doctoral candidates with a Uni.lu contract are paid by the University. Contracts are initially for 36 months (3 years) with a possible extension of 12 months. The full thesis must be submitted within a maximum of 48 months (4 years) from the start date of the studies.

A contract may be based either on a structural position at the University (working with professors) or on external funding (e.g. from the FNR as individual/group funding). The budget and the rules governing its use may vary slightly depending on the source of your funding.

The Doctoral Candidate Life cycle

This section gives you a graphic overview of the PhD lifecycle at Uni.lu.
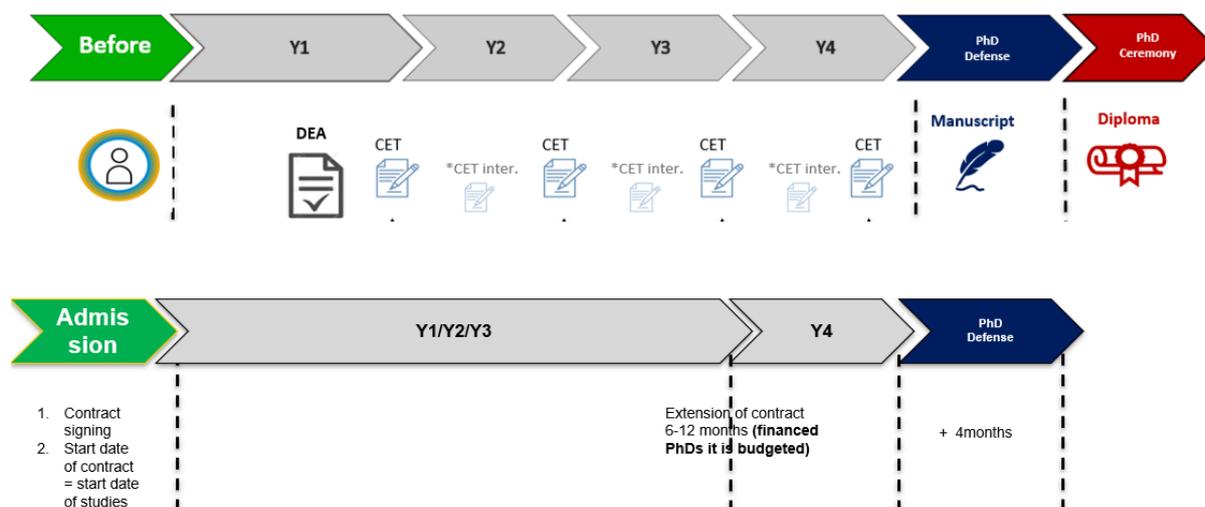
Full-time candidates have 48 months to complete their full thesis and to submit it. Part-time candidates follow the same cycle but have up to 96 months to finalise their work. The figure above shows a cycle for a full-time doctoral candidate.

// **Studies cycle:** doctoral candidates are students of the university and are subject to the study regulations (Law and Study Regulation). Once they have been admitted by a main supervisor, a **supervision committee (CET) is nominated** with two other academics (3 in a joint supervision). This committee **meets at least once a year** and is formally in charge of the decision to authorise the progression of the doctoral candidate.

The final CET, usually the 4th (or the 8th for part-time candidates), is the key one, authorising the defence of the candidate. At the end of the 48 month-period (or the 96 month-period), the candidate has 4 additional months to prepare for the defence and to complete any other administrative matter.

// **HR cycle:** candidates with a contract also have an employment status governed by the Luxembourgish labour law. Once admitted, as employees they have a probation period of 6 months. The contract is initially for 36 months and, if the CET allows, it can be extended for a further 12 months.

CET – Thesis Supervision Committee

The Thesis Supervision Committee (CET) accompanies the Doctoral Candidates for the entire duration of the doctoral cycle at the University of Luxembourg, monitoring their progress and advising them on the key stages of their development to ensure the successful outcome of their studies at Uni.lu. The composition of the CET must be agreed upon and officially validated within two months of the start of the doctoral candidate's studies. The supervisor initiates the process via an electronic platform and agrees with the doctoral candidate on the proposed members.

The CET consists of three members, all holding a PhD:

1 / The thesis supervisor, who is an academic researcher with an ADR.

2 / At least one member must hold an employment contract with the UNILU for the duration of the candidate's doctoral studies and have an ADR or is an affiliated professor at UNILU.

3 / The CET can include a maximum of one member (external or internal to the UNILU) without supervision rights (ADR).

Other scenarios include:

- If the DC is employed in a project in partnership with a private or public entity, an observer may be invited to the CET meetings in an advisory capacity. They will, however, not have any signatory rights.

- If the doctoral studies are being jointly supervised by a partner institution (known in French as cotutelle), the DC will have one supervisor from each institution, increasing the number of CET members to four.

- If a committee member resigns or is unavailable for an extended period, the Rector appoints a replacement for the remainder of the candidate's doctoral studies.

- Some funding programmes may make specific recommendations for the composition of the CET: for FNR-funded projects, recent guidelines mention the inclusion of a member from a foreign institution.

The role of the CET

The role of the CET is above all to foster and support the DC development into an independent, highly competent academic/researcher/scientist. The DC will be supported in their journey towards becoming a critical thinker capable of producing high quality research work and a final doctoral thesis that meets recognized international standards.

Supervision and evaluation of the doctoral student throughout the Doctoral journey

1 / The CET meets on a regular basis **at least once a year**. Meetings typically last between **one and a half and two hours**. Additional **'intermediary' CET meetings can be held** any time during the doctoral lifecycle.

2 / The **DC must always take part in these meetings** with the whole CET committee. These meetings can be held in person or online.

3 / During the meetings, the DC will be asked to present their work, focusing specifically on the findings and outcomes of their research.

4 / The presentation section of the annual compulsory CET meeting **may be open to the public**.

5 / The presentation should also **include a list of publications and conference presentations**, a **list of courses** taken and ECTS gained, as well as planned research and training to cover the period until the next CET meeting.

6 / The presentation is followed by an **academic/scientific discussion** between the CET members and the DC. The CET members will then provide some feedback and comments on performance and future planned research and training.

7 / The CET checks the list of courses taken and ECTS gained, as well as planned research and training to cover the period until the next CET meeting.

8 / The presentation is followed by an **academic/scientific discussion** between the CET members and the DC. The CET members will then provide some feedback and comments on performance and future planned research and training.

9 / The CET evaluates progress and decides whether the DC should continue to pursue their doctoral work. This is an integral and important part of the CET tasks. If a doctoral student has not made considerable progress and the CET sees no prospect of future progress, it has the right to terminate the thesis work.

The Law (article 37(5)) states that "in the event of serious shortcomings, the Thesis Supervision Committee may recommend to the Rector that the candidate be prevented from re-enrolling the following academic year".

Note: For doctoral candidates with an employment contract at UL or at any Luxembourg research institute, the employment contract will be terminated at the same time.

10 / The opportunity to terminate the thesis work is also in the interest of the doctoral student. As a student, **the DC may also request termination of their studies** if they realise that completing doctoral studies is no longer something they wish to pursue. For doctoral candidates with an employment contract at UNILU or at a research institute, the employment contract will be terminated at the same time.

11 / In the most likely scenario in which the CET recommends the continuation of the thesis work, it will **suggest avenues for future research, specific further training, publications to be written** (mainly for cumulative theses), **presentations to be delivered, and other actions, as necessary.**

12 / After each CET meeting, a **CET report** is prepared. It is the task of the supervisor to write the report and to upload it on the online database. The report must be approved by all the CET members. The doctoral candidate will acknowledge receipt. The report should cover the following points:

- Research project
- Training
- Dissemination activities
- Strengths and weaknesses, suggested improvements
- Use of AI and AI tools and justification
- Overall assessment and decision

Doctoral Education Agreement (DEA)

To help the DC navigate their four years as a full-time student, or eight years as a part-time student, DCs are asked to draw up a **DEA within their first six months at UNILU** (and no later) with the support of the supervisor. This is obligatory according to the study regulations (art. 47), see Official Documents UNILU.

The DEA provides a framework for enrolment in the doctoral programmes at the University of Lux-embourg. It is drawn up in accordance with the University Act, the Internal Regulations (Règlement d'Ordre Intérieur), and the Study Regulations (Règlement des Études). **The objectives of the DEA are to describe and regulate the rights and obligations of the doctoral candidate and the (co-supervisor(s)).**

Who needs to complete a DEA?

The DEA is **compulsory** for all doctoral candidates, and it must be completed and signed by the parties (doctoral candidate, (co-supervisor(s), Doctoral Programme Director). The DEA contains a **Research Training plan** that needs to be discussed and agreed with the main supervisor.
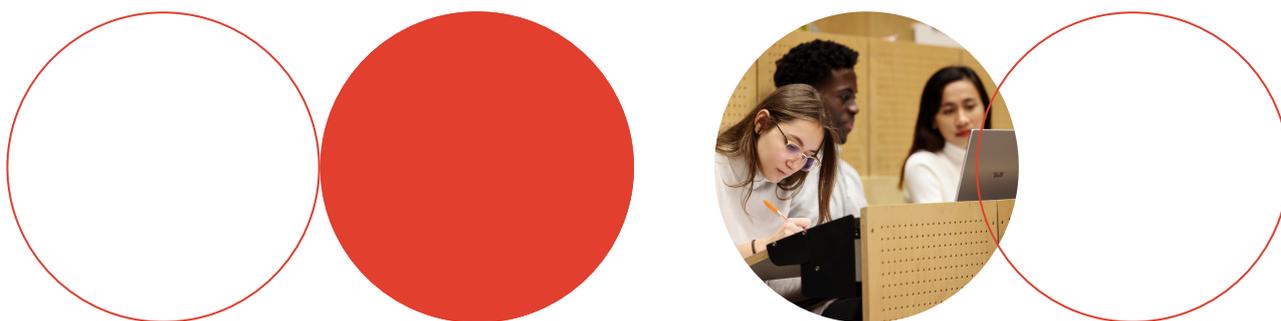
Defence

For full-time doctoral candidates, the 100% thesis report must be submitted within 48 months from the start date of studies. The Doctoral Candidate then has another 4 months to defend (48+4). The earliest a Doctoral Candidate can defend is at 36 months from their start date.

For part-time candidates, the 100% thesis report must be submitted within 96 months from the start date of studies. The defence can take place at the earliest after 36 months from the original start date but not beyond 100 months (96+4).

At the **final** CET **meeting**, the committee **decides whether the research project the DC has submitted**

(which should be a defendable version) **is ready and a thesis defence can be scheduled.** The authorisation for defence should only be requested from the VRR if the CET members are sure that the DC is ready for the defence. The CET guarantees that the quality of the work meets international standards in the respective field of research.

Thesis **publication** is **mandatory**. The Jury may request modifications, which must be completed within 3 months after the defence.

Joint supervision (co-tutelle)

During the admission process, the main supervisor can request a joint supervision (co-tutelle) **with another university. The first enrollment date**, no matter in which university, **will serve as a reference date for the start of the studies**. A **co-tutelle agreement must be signed** during the first year of the DC studies.

Under this arrangement, the DC must follow the rules regarding doctoral studies and conduct their research under the responsibility of a supervisor in each institution. The supervisors undertake their supervisory responsibilities jointly. The research is carried out over alternating periods at the institutions concerned in accordance with the arrangements laid down in the joint agreement.

Employability

The Career Centre

The career centre can help DCs prepare for a world of work opportunities after graduation. It offers tailored support and advice by identifying DC aspirations, strengths, potential, talents and passions. It can also:

- Teach career strategies, skills and techniques
- Review CVs and cover letters and offer practice job interviews
- Explain different career options and labour market trends

- Show how the job platform works
  https://uni-lu.jobteaser.com
- Establish direct links with employers
- Support vocational exploration with the UNILU partner "Central Test"
- Provide a variety of workshops

The career centre brochure is here:
https://wwwen.uni.lu/students/career_centre

Euraxess

"EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion" is a pan-European initiative launched by the European Commission to promote research careers and facilitate researcher mobility across Europe. EURAXESS is a platform for researchers, entrepreneurs, universities and businesses to interact with each other.

It addresses mobility issues, helps institutions to find talent and connects people, projects and funding. All EURAXESS network services are free of charge.
https://www.euraxess.lu/

UMatter services – Support when it matters

At the University of Luxembourg, we understand that **well-being is fundamental** to student success, personal growth and academic achievements. That is why we have established UMatter, a comprehensive support network **designed to provide assistance, guidance and resources to help students navigate the challenges and triumphs of their academic journey.**

UMatter is committed to fostering a caring, supportive and inclusive campus environment **that prioritises physical, mental and emotional** well-being. UMatter ensure that everyone has the tools and support they need to flourish.

UMatter services include mental and well-being support, hardship assistance, inclusion and support, disability support, refugee student support, and much more.

For more information go to UMatter - University of Luxembourg I Uni.lu

The Ombuds

Ombuds team

The Ombuds team provides confidential, impartial, informal and accessible services to the University community. Their aim is to create a safe environment for individuals to raise questions and concerns and discuss possible options for resolution. They offer visitors the opportunity to reflect and act on their own initiative before, during, or after experiencing any type of discord. The core of the team's work is represented by Appropriate Dispute Resolution Services (ADRS):

- ADRS include conflict coaching, facilitated dialogues, mediation, and restorative practices.
- The perceived discord is addressed in a flexible and voluntary way without engaging in formal procedures.
- The focus is on open communication and mutual understanding.

The primary goal is to reach a resolution collaboratively and amicably, without the need for official sanctions or policy changes. You can consult the ombuds page at Ombuds - Univer-sity of Luxembourg

The Go-to-team

In today's fast paced and increasingly complex environment, issues and challenges inevitably arise. Whether it is a difference of perspective, a procedural problem, or a wider institutional concern, resolving these problems quickly, effectively, and empathetically is crucial in order for us to maintain a thriving community. This is where the Go-to-Team comes in. Trained by the Ombuds, Go-to-team members act on the ground, as a first point of contact and offer a safe space for dialogue and exchange with the primary goal of providing guidance on what options there are to solve a problem. They are not Ombuds, and act as a first point of contact for the doctoral community on any arising matters.

The Go-to-Team member is someone who operates in confidence and can be contacted anonymously by all members of the doctoral community, including doctoral candidates, their supervisors and other stakeholders in doctoral research and education. You can consult the Go-to-team pages here: Go-To-team

Health insurance

All DCs must be affiliated with a national health insurance scheme to enroll at the University of Luxembourg. Students without an employment contract can pay their affiliation to the Luxembourg National Health Fund (CNS) when they enroll.

Become part of the alumni network

The University is placing renewed emphasis on developing its alumni network. Uni.lu alumni are now firmly established as the third pillar of the University community together with the students and staff.
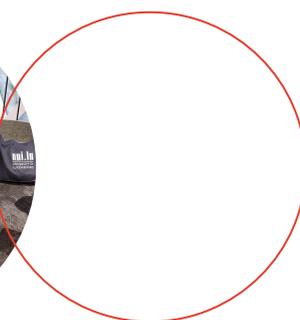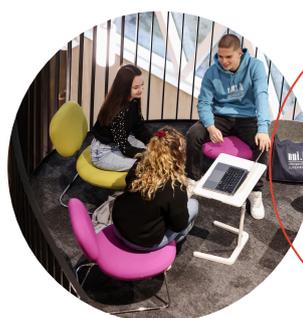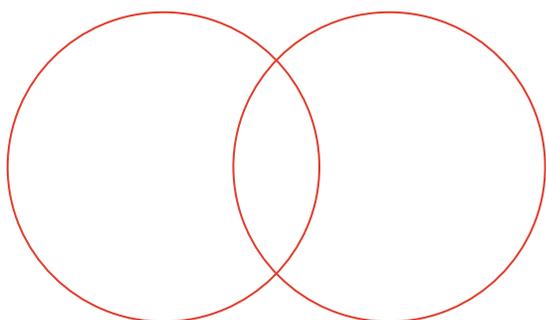
Incubator and Entrepreneurship Programme

The Incubator and Entrepreneurship Programme team is on hand to support DCs in bringing their business idea to the market. Entrepreneurship Programme offers two options for doctoral candidates to gain entrepreneurial skills: **Introduction to Entrepreneurship and International Summer School**. The first course is mainly for the 1st and 2nd year doctoral students while 3rd year doctoral students will find the Summer School more interesting.

If a DC decides to start their own business, their **startup can be incubated at the University of Luxembourg.** They will be given their own offices in Belval and will benefit from an extensive infrastructure.

They will gain access to a wide network of experts who will help take the necessary steps, from registering a company in Luxembourg and engaging with customers to finding funds. Whatever stage a DC is at in their startup project, the **Incubator's mentoring service offers tailormade support from high-profile experts in the Luxembourg start-up ecosystem and beyond.** It helps startups get a first foot on the ladder in the Luxembourg entrepreneurial ecosystem and provides extensive support throughout their development process.

DCs are welcome to send Incubator an email to discuss their new startup idea.

Multilingualism policy Uni.lu Language Centre/INL

The University of Luxembourg Language Centre offers **French, German and English courses** for academic and professional purposes.

It also pro-vides other ways of improving language skills, including an e-learning platform, tandem partnerships, language games nights, a grammar café, conversation workshops, etc.

General language courses

French, German, Italian and Portuguese courses for beginners (A1 level) are offered (no registration fees required).
For more information: languagecentre.uni.lu
languagecentre@uni.lu /// (+352) 46 66 44 9269

Institut national des langues

The Institut national des langues (INL) offers general language classes in French, German, English and Luxembourgish in Belval, Luxembourg City and Mersch.
The INL pricing schedule applies for all language courses and payment should be completed directly with INL. Registration fees are partially reimbursed for French, German, English and Luxembourgish courses under certain conditions.
https://www.inll.lu/

Housing

For any housing query, you should go to Application - Accommodation - University of Luxembourg I Uni.lu. The number of requests for accommodation is very high and exceeds the UNILU capacity. This is why the University of Luxembourg cannot guarantee accommodation for all eligible students. Applicants are strongly recommended to look for other alternatives.