

Call for application 2026

Practice-led PhD

Rules and conditions of submission

Call opens: 2 March 2026 at 2 p.m.

Call closes: 13 April 2026 at 2 p.m.

The complete PDF file must be sent as a single compiled file to the following email address:

candidature-aac-eur@cyu.fr

Updated: 27 February 2026

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I. General presentation

The University School of Research *Humanities, Creation, Heritage* (PSGS-HCH), supported by CY Cergy Paris University, will welcome at the start of the 2026 academic year students wishing to embark on a practice-led doctoral course. This call for applications is intended to recruit these future doctoral students.

The University School of Research *Humanities, Creation, Heritage* (PSGS-HCH)

The University School of Research *Humanities, Creation, Heritage* (PSGS-HCH), winner of the third future investments program "Programme d'Investissement d'Avenir" (PIA 3), brings together the human and social sciences components of CY Cergy Paris University and four schools working in the field of creation and heritage: the National Higher School of Architecture of Versailles (ENSAV), the National Higher School of Landscape of Versailles (ENSP) and the National Heritage Institute (INP), all members of the Foundation of Heritage Sciences, and the National Higher School of Arts Paris-Cergy (ENSAPC).

The originality of the project is to propose, in addition to aligning the training offer in human and social sciences at CY Cergy Paris University, the establishment of training focused on practice-led research, at master's and doctoral levels. Indeed, the member establishments of the University Research School, schools or universities, share the same concern: that of developing research on their respective subjects, by favouring research practices in direct contact with the activity of the professionals they train. From this perspective, the emphasis placed on practice-led research constitutes a strong marker of the EUR scientific project.

Practice-led research

The practice-led research intends to integrate practice (artistic, conception/design, restoration, conservation, etc.) into the research process, considering that the production of knowledge can also - and must also - take place in practice and by practice. In line with the most recent theoretical and epistemological developments in the field of creation, the aim is to design and operationalise research strategies in which practice is the driving force, the source of both questioning and research results (practice-led research). The intention is to place the practice in a strategy of continuous improvement through research, via a posture of reflexivity on its own approaches, tools and intervention logics. One of the objectives is, through this work to distance professional practice, to promote the development of a more autonomous and less normative thinking, especially in the context of the exercise of heritage practice.

It is therefore a question of imagining a research based on the practice of the project, the material of which is produced in the course of the project and by the project. In a more traditional protocol, the researcher would act as an observer, at some distance from the actors involved, to analyse the ongoing process and the resulting productions. Project research suggests that this observer himself becomes an actor, designer and bearer of the approach that will be the subject of his analysis. Practice-led research therefore necessarily includes a reflective dimension, aiming to retrace the conditions of the project's progress, and therefore the production of research materials, to identify its effects and limits, and to infer the area of validity of the approach thus proposed, tested and analysed.

The approach is therefore very ambitious and very demanding. In the end, the analysis concerns both (and at the same time) what is produced in the project and the production process itself, i.e. the project as a modality of intervention (on the real life, on the social, on language, on nature, on the imaginary, etc.).

From this perspective, practice-led research is also a research through the project, although here it is carried out by the designer himself. It will draw on the repertoire of project research, as long as it is based on a state of the art and will therefore seek out pre-existing productions, emanating from various disciplinary fields, likely to shed light on the understanding of the research object and the research situation. Practice-led research will also

borrow from research for the project, since it aims to inform and guide future project practices; yet this dimension is intrinsic (although often implicit) to the requirement of reproducibility and transferability which is one of the criteria of scientific work.

The idea of reproducibility is also one of the possible difficulties of practice-led research, particularly in its most sensitive forms, artistic, opening space for inspiration, forms that are generally resistant to protocolization and standardization. The part thus left to uncontrollable randomness or to non-reproducible inspiration should at least be underlined and characterized, in order to identify precisely what, in the process of creation/interaction with the material under analysis, can be part of repeatable approaches and what is irreducible. Here, the main requirement is to make explicit the conditions under which the creative act takes place, so that others can form their own opinions about the studied process, its determinants and its effects.

II. The practice-led PhD path at EUR *Humanities, Creation, Heritage*

The EUR *Humanities, Creation, Heritage* proposes to set up a practice-led doctoral course. This selective path, reserved for thesis projects explicitly based on a project practice, will consist of reinforced support, including biannual seminars bringing together all the participants, as well as a continuous annual monitoring of the progress of the thesis work.

This course is only for graduate students in the various proposed specialties. The prepared theses, which will have to meet the usual academic requirements, should also be based on:

1. a dialogue between humanities, literature and theoretical research, and project practices (in order to define, in particular, reflexivity tools);
2. for some specialties, the articulation with a societal demand, partnerships with institutions in the field of practice concerned or with territorial actors who can play a role as activators of project situations;
3. formats for publishing research results (including a written dissertation) guaranteeing the administration of proof and its reproducibility.

A common approach

- practice-led research places designers (artists, architects, landscape architects, curators, restorers) and their practice at the heart of the methodological process. It produces knowledge about practice that can be reinvested in practice.
- the research approach is articulated by the project (artistic, architectural, etc.): it constitutes a space for reflection and production that support the individual work, as much as the individual work can feed the research process;
- practice-led research aims to invent specific forms of dissemination and valorisation, called by the research project itself. In the arts in particular, artists consider that research should not obey any particular form but that it is an integral part of their practice process.

However, the academic requirements for the PhD are maintained. The practice-led doctorate consists of the elaboration and presentation of an original work (the project in architecture, landscape, art, literary creation, heritage studies or conservation-restoration) supported by theoretical research and includes the submission of a written analytical document followed by its defence; the whole being examined and evaluated as a single unit.

A cross-disciplinary approach

Because it aims at a broad apprehension, as complete as possible, of the mechanisms or phenomena in question – without, however, pretending to reach exhaustiveness – practice-led research mobilizes a plurality of disciplinary contributions. Practice necessarily involves a plurality of dimensions. Practice-led research, which draws on practice and strives to reflect it, must therefore mobilise as many interdisciplinary perspectives as are useful for a sufficiently informed understanding and representation of the intrinsic complexity of the practices involved in the project.

Thesis supervision

It will be done by a co-supervision: 1 professional (who may not belong to the academic world) and 1 teacher-researcher authorized to conduct and supervise research activities (HDR) at Doctoral School 628 *Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* (AHSS) of CY Cergy Paris University.

It is strongly recommended to have already identified an academic thesis director before submitting the application file. However, candidates will be able to submit thesis projects for which the scientific supervision (HDR) has not yet been determined. And the EUR will be able to assist these candidates, if their applications are accepted, in identifying suitable supervisors and setting up a thesis supervision system, without however guaranteeing any specific results.

The doctoral student will be hosted in one of the laboratories of the member institutions of the EUR *Humanities, Creation, Heritage*, in accordance with the doctoral degree being pursued. The registration for the thesis is done within the Graduate School *Arts and Humanities* of CY Cergy Paris University under the direction of a teacher-researcher or researcher authorized to direct the research (HDR) within the Doctoral School 628, *Arts, Humanités et Sciences Sociales* (AHSS).

A foreign teacher-researcher invited for 3 years and affiliated with a laboratory of the Graduate School or an HDR from another university in contract with the Graduate School can supervise the work. In all cases, the defence will take place at the Doctoral School *Arts, Humanités et Sciences sociales* of CY Cergy Paris University.

Thesis monitoring and evaluation

A regular and compulsory follow-up is set up: one evaluation per year based on a written report detailing the progress of the doctorate and an oral presentation; intermediate presentations in June of year 1 and June of year 2, thesis defence in year 3. The validation of this annual monitoring is essential to continue progressing in the PhD. Failure to pass will result in the requirement to resubmit the written assignment and repeat the oral presentation. The written assignments on progress mark the advancement in both the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and critical reflection on one's own practice.

Thesis defence

To defend their thesis, a student must have validated the evaluations of years 1 and 2. They submit their arguments in front of a mixed jury (academic and professional) composed of at least 4 members and must meet the rules for the composition of thesis juries. The co-supervisors are members of the jury.

The final production expected for the defence includes two dimensions: the project carried out (literary creation, architecture, arts, landscape, heritage studies, conservation-restoration); and a final analytical writing (the characteristics of which will be defined with the supervisors). The defence will be an opportunity to orally explain the project and the scientific approach.

Non-explicit and unjustified use of AI is prohibited. Thesis directors will use software to check plagiarism and detect the use of AI on all dissertations before authorization for defence. A positive result will constitute grounds for refusal of the defence.

Specific qualified and qualifying defence locations can be considered (exhibition, gardens, etc.).

Common doctoral training

Doctoral students must validate credits by attending at least 3 days of doctoral workshops and 5 half-days of research seminars per year, involving specialists from different disciplines, in order to provide doctoral students with the methodological and critical tools they need to develop their thesis projects.

These cross-disciplinary courses are compulsory for all doctoral students, regardless of their chosen doctoral specialisation, thus enabling them to compare perspectives from an identical scientific perspective (practice-led doctorate).

In the event of justified inability to attend one or more seminars, credits may, as an exception, be validated, in liaison with the Doctoral School, for example, as part of involvement in the scientific activity and production of the EUR (study day, publication, etc.).

Internationalisation

International mobility assistance grants (AMI) may be granted by decision of the executive commission after analysis of the motivation file for a stay abroad.

III. List of doctoral specialties

Candidates must indicate the doctoral speciality in which they intend to register their thesis, among the following:

Please note: candidates must register for a single specialization, otherwise their application will be rejected.

Practice and theory of literary creation

The doctorate through the literary project starts from the principle that a literary creation is in itself a research that can be the subject of theorisation. The thesis in practice and theory of literary creation must therefore include two necessarily articulated dimensions, according to an organization specific to each project: an original literary creation which can take various forms (inscribed in a genre or hybrids, digital or not, associating or not the art of speech and visual arts); a theoretical part of around 200 pages, closely linked to the creative part. The two parts must constitute a whole, around a literary problem or the literary treatment of a common theme, also including an analysis of the creative process. This dissertation makes it possible to evaluate, in addition to artistic

skills, skills in literary culture, theory on literature, interpretation of texts and the ability to adopt a reflective posture on one's own creations.

Please note: the doctorate thesis must be completed in French.

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Architecture

Ten years after the creation of the doctorate in architecture, ENSA-V wishes to develop a project-led doctorate. The aim is to encourage innovation by granting a high level of recognition to project-based research in languages that may be experimental and new writings, or original architectural and urban designs, likely to promote a regeneration of practices and creative processes. Whether relying on simulation tools specific to the discipline or on technical and material processes, the project will be the central element of the thesis. By distancing himself from the professional project approach, he will be able to draw inspiration from its contextualising value to identify elements of theories which will demonstrate the contribution of architecture to knowledge.

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Landscape

The landscape project doctorate must contribute to the advancement of landscape sciences through the production of new knowledge in the fundamental disciplines which serve as a reference for landscape expertise as well as in the technical disciplines implemented in landscape practice, and of course in the very design of landscape project approaches. It relies on project practice to propose, establish, test and verify approaches, working procedures or intervention protocols likely to change the references and ultimately the practices of landscapers. It can take as its object all the stages which characterize and constitute the landscape project, as well as the overall approach to designing the landscape project.

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Arts

Art research places artists, authors, creators and their practices at the heart of the methodological process. Closely associated with high-level artistic and professional experience, it is deployed within artistic practice itself. Between thought practice and artistic practice, art research brings together the different stages of the creative process (from design to production, distribution and reception) which it structures. This process is nourished by a reflective gaze which creates a back and forth between experimentation and critical distance. Inventing their own devices and choosing to do so the mediums and languages that are necessary for them beyond disciplinary boundaries, the acts and forms of art research articulate minority stories in friction with dominant stories.

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Conservation-restoration of cultural goods

The doctorate in heritage conservation-restoration is a professional research experience that begins in the practice of conservation-restoration. The analysis and putting into perspective of the results, the reflexivity around this practice, the invention or construction of know-how, technologies, or in the broad sense, tools, whether conceptual or methodological, which are at the heart of this doctorate, are currently absent from the disciplinary field of conservation and restoration. This project-led doctorate would be the expected complement,

both by conservation-restoration professionals but also by stakeholders in the heritage chain, to the academic doctorate which may have as its theme the history of restoration, the history of techniques or materials sciences. It therefore requires having a conservation-restoration practice.

Prerequisites specific to the specialty: a Master 2 in conservation and restoration allowing interventions on national collections is required in application of *livre IV du Code du patrimoine, articles R452-10 à R452-13*.

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Heritage studies

For the heritage curator, the practice-led doctorate must make it possible to produce new knowledge, both in the fundamental disciplines which serve as a reference for heritage expertise (notably history, art history, archaeology, history of science and technology) and in the technical disciplines which are implemented in the exercise of heritage practice (notably museology, archival science, methods of analysis and description of movable and built heritage, as well as archaeological heritage). It revolves around a heritage project which can be, for example, the curating of an exhibition, the development of a new scientific and cultural project, the design and creation of a new display of permanent collections, the processing and enhancement of an archive, the analysis and description of a set of movable objects or those resulting from an excavation.

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IV. Projects selection process

Step 1	Launch AAC PSGS-HCH 2026	Monday 2 March 2026 at 2 p.m.
Step 2	Closure AAC PSGS-HCH 2024	Monday 13 April 2026 at 2 p.m.
Step 3	Analysis of the projects' admissibility. Expertise and evaluation.	20 April - 31 May 2026
Step 4	Candidate interviews	22 and 23 June 2026
Step 5	Results publication	Between the 1st and the 10th of July 2026
Step 6	Validation of contracts (if doctoral contracts are available; to be confirmed at a later date) by the Doctoral School's Scientific Council (if required).	According to the date of the Doctoral School Board meeting
Step 7	Registration and start of the thesis	Registration starting In July 2026 Start of the thesis in October 2026

The admissibility of the projects will be examined by external experts and by the Executive Committee of the EUR *Humanities, Creation, Heritage*, composed of members of each partner institutions. The Executive Committee will interview the candidates selected at the end of this initial review stage.

Project leaders are asked to indicate laboratories or experts for whom there could be a conflict of interest if they were to participate in the project evaluation. The EUR Executive Commission selects the projects to be financed by ranking the laureates and establishing a supplementary list. The registrations and doctoral contracts will be submitted for validation to the Council of the Doctorate School of the Graduate School *Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* of CY Cergy Paris University.

V. Evaluation and eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for projects shall correspond to the following points:

- Only complete applications that comply with the submission requirements set out in sections VIII and IX will be considered.
- The project must fall within the thematic fields of the doctoral specialties of the EUR *Humanities, Creation, Heritage* doctoral programme. In the disciplines of architecture, landscape, arts and conservation-restoration, the required training must be preparing students for the practice of the discipline.
- The candidate must have completed a master's degree, or equivalent, in the chosen thematic field. If the candidate is selected, but cannot attest to this master's degree or recognized equivalent at the time of administrative registration, their registration will be refused.
- The candidate must demonstrate in their training course or in their personal itinerary an initiation into research; this prerequisite aims to enable a rapid start to doctoral work and to provide favourable conditions for the successful completion of the doctoral process.
- The candidate cannot submit his application to more than three calls.

The evaluation criteria include:

- the project scientific quality,
- the enrolment in thematic fields relevant to the chosen doctoral degree,
- the articulation to the current debates within these fields, both on the theoretical and epistemological aspects and on the artistic, social or pragmatic challenges,
- the positioning in the national and global context,
- the adequacy of the project to the modalities and principles governing the thesis completion in the course of project-led PhD, as set out above,
- the project feasibility.

VI. General provisions for thesis funding

All application files must explain the financing arrangements planned for the thesis. Three scenarios can be considered:

1. The candidate applies for a doctoral contract from the EUR

The decision to offer doctoral contracts for the 2026 applications has not yet been made. It will be made at a later date and announced by June 2026.

If doctoral contracts are available for this year (subject to confirmation), the amount would be €130K in total payroll costs for a period of 36 months, i.e. a gross monthly salary of €3,600 (see Decree No. 2019-1095 of October 28, 2019 creating CY Cergy Paris University and approval of its statutes: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000039287925>). The candidate must then check the “doctoral contract request” box in the application file which will then serve as a request for registration in practice-led thesis and a request for funding. The positive decision of the jury to be registered for a practice-led doctorate does not entail the decision to award the thesis grant. This decision to award the thesis grant is the subject of another deliberation by the jury. The funding awarded by the EUR takes the form of a doctoral contract between

the university and the student. The terms of financing and carrying out the thesis are aligned with other doctoral contracts managed by the Doctoral School. The call for practice-led doctoral applications for 2026 should include the allocation of a number of doctoral contracts, which is not yet known at this stage.

2. The candidate is not applying for a doctoral contract from the EUR but benefits from funding obtained elsewhere (for example by their host laboratory, as part of a predefined research project).

The application file then only concerns formal registration for the doctorate, within the practice-led doctorate system. The jury can nevertheless verify that the funding obtained allows the thesis to be carried out under satisfactory conditions.

3. The candidate only has partial funding or intends to finance his thesis by his own means, the doctorate being pursued in parallel with his professional activity.

The thesis can then be carried out part-time, and its maximum duration can be extended to 6 years. The doctoral student must then check the box provided for this purpose in the registration file. The jury must verify the feasibility of the project and can in particular ensure that the financial package envisaged is plausible.

Monitoring of funded projects

Presentations of funded projects currently underway may be requested as part of EUR activities.

VII. Publications and intellectual property

Publications

Registered doctoral students must mention their membership of the EUR under the "Programme d'Investissement d'Avenir" in all publications or oral communications related to the thesis work by including the following mention:

"This work benefited from the support of the University School of Research Humanities, Creation, Heritage (EUR PSGS HCH) and state aid managed by the National Research Agency under the Programme d'Investissement d'Avenir, integrated into France 2030, bearing the reference ANR-17-EURE-0021."

Intellectual property

Depending on the funding obtained, there are three possible scenarios.

1. The candidate has obtained a potential doctoral contract from the EUR: the employed doctoral student is subject to the legal regime of the Intellectual Property Code.
2. The candidate benefits from funding obtained elsewhere: Development and signature of an agreement between the host laboratory and the EUR, which will specify the terms of implementation of the doctorate (project management, intellectual property regime).
3. The candidate only has partial funding or intends to finance his thesis by his own means, the doctorate being pursued in parallel with his professional activity. An agreement between the employer and the EUR will specify the intellectual property regime.

VIII. Completing the application form

Each application must be submitted as a **single concatenated PDF document** containing the following items:

1. This application form presenting the thesis project.
2. A copy of the diploma certifying the required five years of higher education.
3. The candidate's CV, maximum five (5) pages, followed by any supporting documents.
4. A letter or email of commitment from the thesis supervisor and/or the head of the specialisation or the director of the host laboratory; where applicable, the CV of the professional co-supervisor.
5. A portfolio, in any layout, in PDF format, explaining the candidate's professional practice. It may contain photos, drawings, etc. For the *Practice and Theory of Literary Creation* speciality, it may contain relevant extracts from the candidate's works. Websites are accepted, and the URLs must be provided in the portfolio.

The portfolio is limited to five (5) pages, except for the *Arts* speciality, for which there is no page limit.

The file must be named as follows: PSGS_HCH_AAC_2026_Candidate's name.

IX. Procedures for submitting and sending applications

Applications must be sent exclusively to the following address: candidature-aac-eur@cyu.fr. As this address is reserved solely for the submission of applications, **no action will be taken on any other messages sent to it**. For any questions of an educational, administrative or other nature concerning the EUR, candidates are invited to use the address doctoratparprojet@cyu.fr.

Applications may only be submitted between 2 March 2026 at 2 p.m. and 13 April 2026 at 2 p.m. Applicants wishing to make changes to their application may submit a new version until the closing date.

Any application that is incomplete or submitted after the deadline will be declared inadmissible.

The EUR Executive Committee and the selection panel for candidates for the practice-led doctoral programme reserve the right to request additional information in order to facilitate the assessment and evaluation of the projects submitted.

REMINDER

You can only apply in one speciality.

If you submit your application in several specialities, your application will be declared inadmissible.