



PRISM

PhD Research Programme for International Training in Sustainable Soft Matter

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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This guide has been designed to help the applicants throughout their application process to the Cofund **PRISM** PhD program at Université PSL. Before the applying, each applicant should check that they meet the eligibility requirements and should have all their supporting documents ready.



First cohort of doctoral candidates:
APPLY FROM 1 SEPTEMBER TO 31 OCTOBER 2026
 14 PhD positions available at prism.psl.eu

CONTEXT OF THE APPLICATION

Programme

PRISM (*PhD Research Programme for International Training in Sustainable Soft Matter*) is an ambitious and innovative doctoral training programme which aims to train at Université PSL 30 highly skilled researchers to address the challenges of the ecological transition in the field of soft matter science.

PRISM will train a new generation of interdisciplinary scientists and innovators to develop new concepts for the future as part of the environmental transition. Our goal is not to improve existing processes but rather to be disruptive and tackle major bottlenecks (Carbon Capture, Valorisation & storage, fully renewable energy, industrial processes, plastic upcycling, bioconversion) in new ways. We aim to work on breakthrough processes to prepare for the economy of 20 years from now.

PRISM thesis offers will correspond to these four general topics:

- (T1) developing eco-friendly chemical processes
- (T2) building a circular economy
- (T3) researching innovative concepts for renewable energies
- (T4) researching innovative concepts for carbon capture storage and valorisation

The **PRISM** programme is built around the 3i dimensions (international, intersectoral, and interdisciplinary) which provide Doctoral students with an outstanding research and training environment:

- **International:** **PRISM** builds on Université PSL's highly international research environment, requiring all Doctoral students to undertake secondments with leading academic partners worldwide and participate in major international conferences. These experiences will enhance scientific excellence, international collaboration, and career development.
- **Intersectoral:** **PRISM** offers strong exposure to the non-academic sector through partnerships with leading industrial companies (for instance BASF, L'Oréal, Saint-Gobain Recherche Paris). Doctoral students will also benefit from PSL's Technology Transfer Office, gaining experience in innovation, entrepreneurship, or technology transfer to strengthen their employability.
- **Interdisciplinary:** **PRISM** brings together chemistry, physics, biology, engineering, and social sciences to develop innovative solutions to societal challenges. Doctoral students will work across disciplines through PSL's unique multidisciplinary environment, that foster cross-disciplinary research and broaden their scientific perspective.

The programme will recruit a total of **30 doctoral candidates across two cohorts**, with their thesis starting respectively in 2027 and 2028.

Training

Participation in the **PRISM** programme requires doctoral candidates to complete **180 hours of mandatory training** over the course of their 3-year thesis. The doctoral training is structured around six main thematic areas and is delivered by a diverse range of contributors, including research laboratories, expert consultancies and organisations, industrial partners, and PSL's own training staff.



The programme also includes **compulsory international secondments**, **short industrial internships**, and **dissemination activities**. These placements are defined within each doctoral research project and agreed upon by the doctoral candidate and their supervisors.

Main thematic areas	Main training events & conferences (and action year)
1 Research in sustainable soft matter	- Clean Energy (Y1) - Decarbonation (Y2) - Clean water (Y2) - Circular economy (Y3)
2 Ecological transition	- Anthropocene (Y1) - Social Responsibility (Y2) - Life cycle assessment (Y3)
3 Career development	- Planning strategically your PhD (Y1) - Designing your career plan (Y1) - Optimising your presentation (Y2) - Individual career guidance (Y2)
4 Scientific outreach	- Science communication in practice (Y1) - Science in society (Y2) - Informal science-based education (Y2) - Science in culture (Y3)
5 Advanced transferable skills	- Ethics and science integrity (Y1) - Open Science (Y1) - Supervision of internships (Y2) - Diversity and inclusion (Y2) - Industrial safety (Y3) - Project application and management (Y3)
6 Innovation and entrepreneurship	- Innovation (Y2) - Intellectual property (Y2)

Supervision

Each doctoral candidate will be supervised by a **principal supervisor** based at the host laboratory and possible co-supervisor(s). During each secondment, doctoral candidates will also be assigned a dedicated **scientific mentor** at the host institution and will benefit from structured follow-up through meetings held before, during, and after the placement to support its successful implementation and integration into their research.

In addition, the **PRISM** programme **management team at ESPCI Paris – PSL** will work closely with doctoral students, to support their integration into the host institution, coordinate their training activities and secondments, and remain available throughout the programme to provide guidance on any administrative, organisational, or practical matters related to their doctoral studies.



To learn more about the context of the application, or the working environment, visit the website prism.psl.eu

APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

Compliance with the following **eligibility criteria** will have to be confirmed by the applicant when submitting the online application:



At the time of application, candidates must be **in possession of their Master's degree or equivalent/postgraduate degree** which formally entitles them to start a doctorate. All applicants with a doctoral degree are ineligible.



A minimum level of **English C1** (Advanced) or equivalent is mandatory for applicants to apply for one of the positions. No level in French is required.



Applicants must fulfil the transnational mobility rule: open to all nationalities but all incoming applicants must **not have resided or carried out their main activity** (work, studies, etc.) **in France for more than 12 months in the 3 years** immediately prior to the call for applications deadline.



Applicants must be available to start the programme on schedule: **1st March 2027** (call 1).



Completeness of the application, submitted in English via **PRISM** website, before the call **deadline**.

TIMELINE

The **PRISM** programme will be organised in two calls for applications, resulting in the recruitment of 30 PhD students in total:

- Call 1: 2026–2027
- Call 2: 2027–2028

For **PRISM** Call 1, **applications will be open** for a two-month period, **from 1/09/2026 to 31/10/2026**, during which the PhD positions will be advertised on the website, along with a description of the host laboratory. After this deadline, candidates will no longer be able to register or submit their application through the programme website.

Selection timeline

1. **Call for doctoral candidates:** launch of the call for applications for doctoral candidates. A total of **14 PhD proposals** (call 1) will be included in the catalogue of Open PhD Proposals. Applicants may further shape the selected proposal during the interview stage.
2. **Eligibility check:** verification of candidates' files completeness and eligibility.
3. **Remote evaluations:** evaluation of applications by the Evaluation Committee.
4. **Interviews:** organisation of candidates' interviews exclusively online via videoconference. Final selection of doctoral candidates by the Selection Committee.
5. **Recruitment** and start of the PhD on **1 march 2027** for the first cohort.

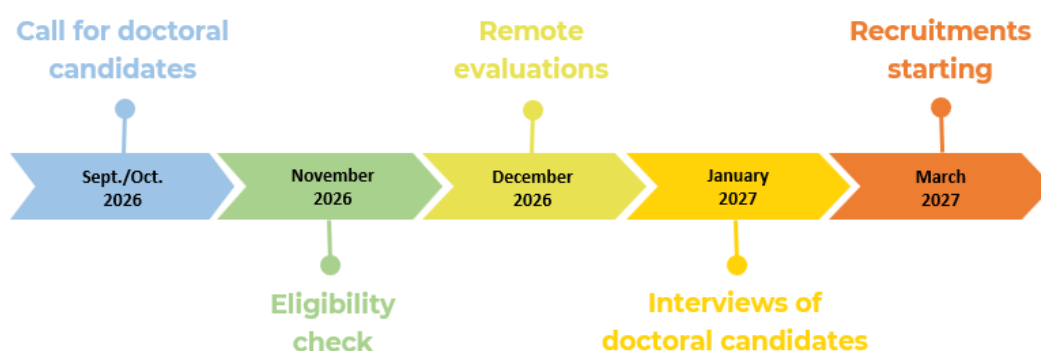


Figure 1: PRISM calendar for the recruitment of doctoral students (1st cohort, 2026 - 2027)

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Equal opportunities

PRISM is committed to an open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment process that ensures equal opportunities for all applicants, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic. In line with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, Université PSL aims to recruit the best researchers while fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. Particular attention is given to promoting gender balance and providing appropriate support for applicants and doctoral candidates with disabilities throughout the recruitment process and their PhD studies.

Application website

Applications should be submitted via the **PRISM** website through your personal applicant account from **September 1st 2026** and before the application deadline on **October 31st 2026**. Before applying, please ensure that your application fits the eligibility requirements.

- 1) The applicant should access the **PRISM** website via www.prism.psl.eu to create their personal account with their personal email address.

In order to apply, you must first connect with an existing account or create a new account.

CONNEXION

Personal identifiers

1 E-mail

2 [Create an account](#)

[Submit](#)

- 2) Once the account creation has been requested, the applicant will receive a confirmation email containing a temporary password for the first login. The email can take up to an hour to be delivered. If not received, please check your spams.

- 3) The applicant can now access their account and start completing the online form **in English**.

Welcome back ! You're connected as **test@mailbox.com**

[Apply to PRISM](#) [New password](#) [Disconnect](#)

Applicants are not required to complete the application in a single session. They may save a partially completed application and return to it at a later time, by clicking on the “Submit” button at the bottom of each section. **If an “Error” text appears, please click again on “Submit”.**

[Submit](#)

- 4) All sections from the online form must be **completed in English exclusively**:

- ☐ Personal data
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Professional experience
- ☐ Mobility
- ☐ Skills
- ☐ Other (publications, conferences, projects, etc)
- ☐ Recommendations*
- ☐ PhD subjects**

Personal data > **Education** > Professional experience > Mobility > Skills > Other

Recommendations > PhD subjects > Documents

*Important information about Recommendations

In this section, applicants must provide the contact details of two members of their professional or academic network who can recommend their profile (e.g., a former or current manager or professor). **Applicants are strongly encouraged to inform their referees in advance** so that they have sufficient time to prepare and upload their recommendation letters before the call deadline.

In this section, you can simply enter the contact details of your two referees without notifying them through the platform. However, when you are ready, make sure to tick the “Send recommendation emails” box. This will automatically send an email to each referee inviting them to upload their recommendation letter.

Recommendation emails

Once you select this checkbox, the request for recommendation will be immediately sent to the referees you have chosen.

☒ Send recommendation emails

➤ Submit

NB: Please note that your application will not be complete unless both recommendation letters have been uploaded by both your referees.

**Important information about PhD projects

The applicant may **apply for up to 5 different PhD subjects**. The selected projects must be ranked in order of preference (1-2-3-4-5), with 1 indicating the highest priority. Until the final submission is validated, the applicant may unselect any PhD project from the list at any stage of the application process. Any changes made to the selection will be saved by clicking the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form page. Once the application has been finally submitted, the applicant will no longer be able to change their choice of projects or their order of preference.

First choice (1) (Required)

Select the project you are most motivated to join.

Second choice (2)

Third choice (3)

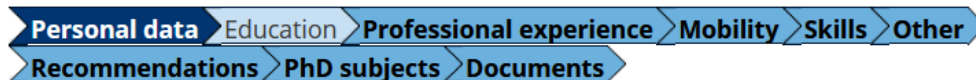
Fourth choice (4)

Fifth choice (5)

➤ Submit

*NB: All available PhD positions are listed in the “Projects” section of the **PRISM** website. If applicants want to have further details on a PhD project, they have the possibility to contact the supervisors by checking the email addresses available in the description of the project. **Applicants are encouraged to get in touch with the supervisors in order to know more about the PhD project.***

- 5) Once a section has been completed and saved successfully, it will appear in dark blue. Applicants should complete all remaining sections before they can submit their application.



In the example above, the “Personal Data” section has been completed, the “Education” section is currently open, and the remaining sections are still incomplete.

- 6) The applicants will be asked to **upload the required documents**, in the “Uploaded documents” section, accessible from the right-hand menu.

Four to five mandatory documents must be uploaded by the applicant:

1. The master’s degree diploma or equivalent, translated in English, including date of issue, and transcripts.
2. The sworn statement on mobility rule, completed and signed (from the template available on the website).
3. Your CV in English (template available on the website).
4. A cover letter in English (only one cover letter per applicant).
5. For non-native English speakers, applicants should also provide a C1-level English certificate or equivalent¹.

Applicants may also submit additional documents to support their application (academic transcripts, distinctions, etc).

*NB: Templates of a CV and the sworn statement on mobility rule must be downloaded on the **PRISM** website.*

PRISM Home

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Uploaded documents

Application summary

Download application pdf

Projects

- 7) Letters of recommendation are also required and must be uploaded by the referees once applicants have completed the “Recommendations” section by providing their contact details. Once a referee has uploaded a letter through the website, both the referee and the applicant will receive a confirmation email. Applicants will not have access to the content of the letters.

¹ Applicants holding an official certification of English proficiency have the highest likelihood of passing the eligibility check. For information on other types of equivalent supporting documents, please consult the FAQ on the website under the “How to Apply” menu.

Two referees must upload their letter of recommendation must be received for the application to be complete.

Applicants can check the status of their reference letters in the “Application summary” section (accessible from the right-hand menu):

Uploaded recommendations	Uploaded recommendations	Uploaded recommendations
		
<i>Incomplete. “No recommendation letters have been uploaded by the referees”</i>	<i>Incomplete. “1 recommendation letter has been uploaded by a referee”</i>	<i>“Two recommendation letters have been uploaded.” Candidates must check their inboxes to ensure that the letters have been submitted by two different referees, rather than the same referee uploading a letter twice.</i>

- 8) The progress of the application is available in the “Application summary” section, accessible from the right-hand menu. A green sign appears when all the required information/documents have been uploaded by the applicant; on the contrary, a red sign shows up when the required field has not been completed yet.

Application summary 	Application summary 
Your application status: Your data  • Personal data  • Education  • Professional experience  • Mobility  • Skills  • Other  • Recommendations  • PhD subjects  • Documents  Uploaded recommendations  You may download your application summary as PDF	Your application status: Your data  • Personal data  • Education  • Professional experience  • Mobility  • Skills  • Other  • Recommendations  • PhD subjects  Uploaded recommendations  You may download your application summary as PDF
<i>Incomplete. “Required documents and recommendation letters are missing”</i>	<i>Complete. “All required information, documents, and recommendation letters have been uploaded”</i>

9) Once the application is complete and all required documents have been uploaded, applicants can submit their file by clicking on the “Submit” button in the confirmation box². This submission is definitive. **Once submitted, an application cannot be modified.**

10) **After submission**, a confirmation email of the online application will be sent to each applicant. They can access the status of their application and upload a PDF summary of the application via the “My application status” section on the **PRISM** website.

Required documents or information

In order to complete their application, candidates will have to provide the following documents:

1. At the time of the call for applications deadline: **copy of the Master’s degree or equivalent / postgraduate degree, and marks from the three previous years**. These documents must be **translated into English** by the awarding institution or a sworn translator³.
2. **Certificate of C1 level in English** for applicants who are not nationals of an English-speaking country (no French language proficiency is required).
3. **Two letters of reference**, by previous teachers/supervisors expressing an opinion on the motivation to pursue research. The procedure is as follows: during the online application process, **applicants will be asked to provide the contact details of two referees** (first name, last name, title, and email address). The referees will then receive an email inviting them to upload their letters of reference directly to the platform. Applicants will not have access to these letters. Applicants are strongly encouraged to **contact their referees as early as possible to ensure they have sufficient time to submit their letters before the application deadline**.

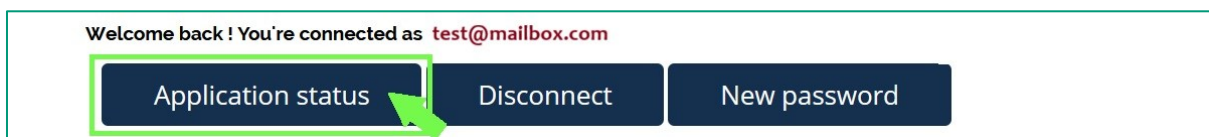
² If the submission button does not appear even though you have uploaded all your documents, it may be because the recommendation letters from your referees are still missing. Please consult the FAQ to find out how to proceed.

³ The following information must be provided by the sworn translator: (1) confirmation from the translator or translation company that it is an accurate translation of the original document, (2) the date of the translation, (3) the full name and signature of the translator or of an authorized official of the translation company, (4) the translator or translation company's contact details.

4. **Signed sworn statement on mobility rule** in which the applicant declares not to have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies) in France more than 12 months during the 3 years prior to the call for applications deadline. The template of a sworn statement is available on the **PRISM** website, it must be completed and signed by the applicant.
5. An **international curriculum vitae** encompassing academic and professional experiences, extracurricular activities, exchange programs, mobility experiences, and non-scientific training. The template of the CV is available on the **PRISM** website.
6. A **cover letter** addressing why the candidate is interested in the topic of the PhD programme, outlining the motivation to join PSL and in the chosen PhD project(s); and articulating the longer-term professional aspiration. A guide to writing the cover letter can be found on the **PRISM** website, under “How to apply > Preparing the application” menu.
7. A ranked list of up to **five (5) open PhD subjects** from the list provided by **PRISM** on the application account, in order of preference (1 = most preferred; 5 = least preferred).

Follow-up of your application

Once the application has been submitted, applicants can track its progress in the "Status of my application" section on the home page of the **PRISM** website. There, they can view the current status of their application (e.g. eligible, non-eligible, invited for interview, put on the reserve list, or not selected) and download a PDF summary of their application.



The applicants will receive feedback at every step of the application:

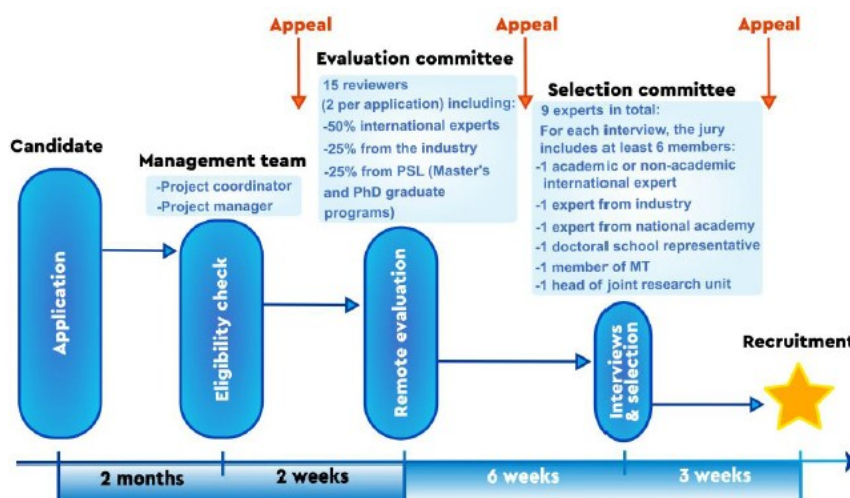
- After the **eligibility check**, the applicants will receive an email to consult their status (“eligible”/ “non eligible”) on the platform.
- After the different steps of the **selection process**, all applicants will receive feedback regarding the evaluation of their application (strengths/weaknesses) based on a scoring table and specific evaluation and selection criteria.

Appeal procedure regarding the application

The applicants will have the possibility to appeal the decision by contacting the **PRISM** Management Team, demonstrating a factual error and by providing proofs. For example, a rejection based on a missing CV in the application can be appealed with the proof that the CV has been transmitted in due time. The redress requests must be addressed to contact@prism.psl.eu or via the contact form on the website within two weeks after the result notification e-mail.

APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Evaluation and Selection procedure



The applications will go through the following assessment steps:

- 1) **Eligibility check** to ensure the administrative compliance of the applications (mandatory documents provided and eligibility conditions met; see section “application eligibility”).
- 2) **Remote evaluation** of each application by different reviewers depending on the open PhD projects selected by the applicants. The selected applicants will be informed of their results, their ranking and invited to participate in the next step of interviews. Unsuccessful applicants will receive a detailed report by email.
- 3) **Interview and selection** of the shortlisted applicants via videoconference, comprising:
 - **A presentation** (maximum 10 minutes) by the applicant of their motivation for applying to the programme, including their experience and training in the field. Applicants will be explicitly asked to explain the fundamentals of the selected PhD research project and its scientific literature. The applicant will have the opportunity to make suggestions to shape their future PhD project.
 - **A series of questions** (10 minutes) put by the committee to the applicant. These will include technical questions on the fundamentals of the topic. In addition, in the interests of fairness, a list of common questions will be asked to each applicant.
- 4) **Recruitment:** once a candidate has been selected and has accepted the offer, the management team will initiate their recruitment process. For some nationalities, in compliance with French national requirements, the mandatory security clearance procedure will be launched at the final stage of recruitment. In the event of an unfavourable decision, the position will be offered to the next candidate on the reserve list.

In the case of **equally-ranked** applicants, **the score obtained with the Selection Committee will prevail** and, secondly, the gender less represented in the research domain will be selected.

The **final score** will be used to draw up a **shortlist and a waiting list**. The highest-ranking applicants will be requested to **take their final decision about their PhD offer**. The choice will be given on a first

ranked, first choice basis. If any of the successful applicants withdraw, the waiting list will be used. The final list of selected applicants will be officially communicated to each applicant.

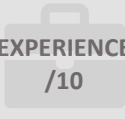
To ensure equal opportunities for all applicants, **supervisors are not involved** at any stage of the candidate selection process.

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

A **minimum score of 70/100** will be mandatory at each step of the evaluation. The final score of an application will be calculated on **40% of the Evaluation Committee results** and **60% of the Selection Committee results**.

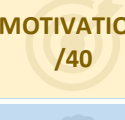
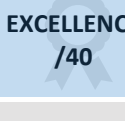
- **First round:** Evaluation Committee (scoring /100) = **40% of the final score**

For the evaluation of the applicants, the documents to be reviewed will be submitted upon application: international CV, letters of reference, cover letter, degree, transcripts etc.

 EDUCATION /60	• Correspondence between education background and programme requirements /20 • Academic records (ranking of the applicant in their class if available) /20 • Honours /10 • Letters of reference /10
 MOTIVATION /30	• Clarity of the professional project /10 • Motivation to integrate the PhD programme and PSL research environment /20
 EXPERIENCE /10	• Mobility/international experience (exchange programme, Erasmus, etc.) • Work experience • Training (scientific and non-scientific courses) • Extracurricular activities

- **Second round:** Selection Committee (scoring /100) = **60% of the final score**

In the selection step, the applicants will be evaluated on their presentation and answers to the jury's questions.

 MOTIVATION /40	• Motivation for applying to PRISM /20 • Experience and training in the field /20
 EXCELLENCE /40	• Knowledge of the scientific literature on the chosen research topic /20 • Answer to the questions (accuracy) /20
 COMMUNICATION /20	• Evaluation of the presentation (clarity, accuracy) /10 • English level /10

Appeal procedure regarding the evaluation

In case of issues during the recruitment procedure, the request will have to be sent officially to contact@prism.psl.eu. The appeal will have to be based on factual reasons and demonstrate actual proofs of the error, two weeks after the decision.

CONTACT & INFORMATION



The **PRISM** programme is funded through the European Commission's **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND** scheme, under Grant Agreement GAP-101261637.



PRISM is coordinated by Université PSL, with programme management based at ESPCI PARIS – PSL and PhD projects hosted in each PSL establishment working on the programme's research areas.

Any questions?

All information about the PRISM programme and the application procedure is available on our dedicated website: prism.psl.eu

Before contacting us, please consult the **FAQ** (Frequently Asked Questions) section under the “How to Apply” menu, where you may find the answers you need.

If your question is not addressed in the FAQ, you can contact the PRISM Management Team at contact@prism.psl.eu