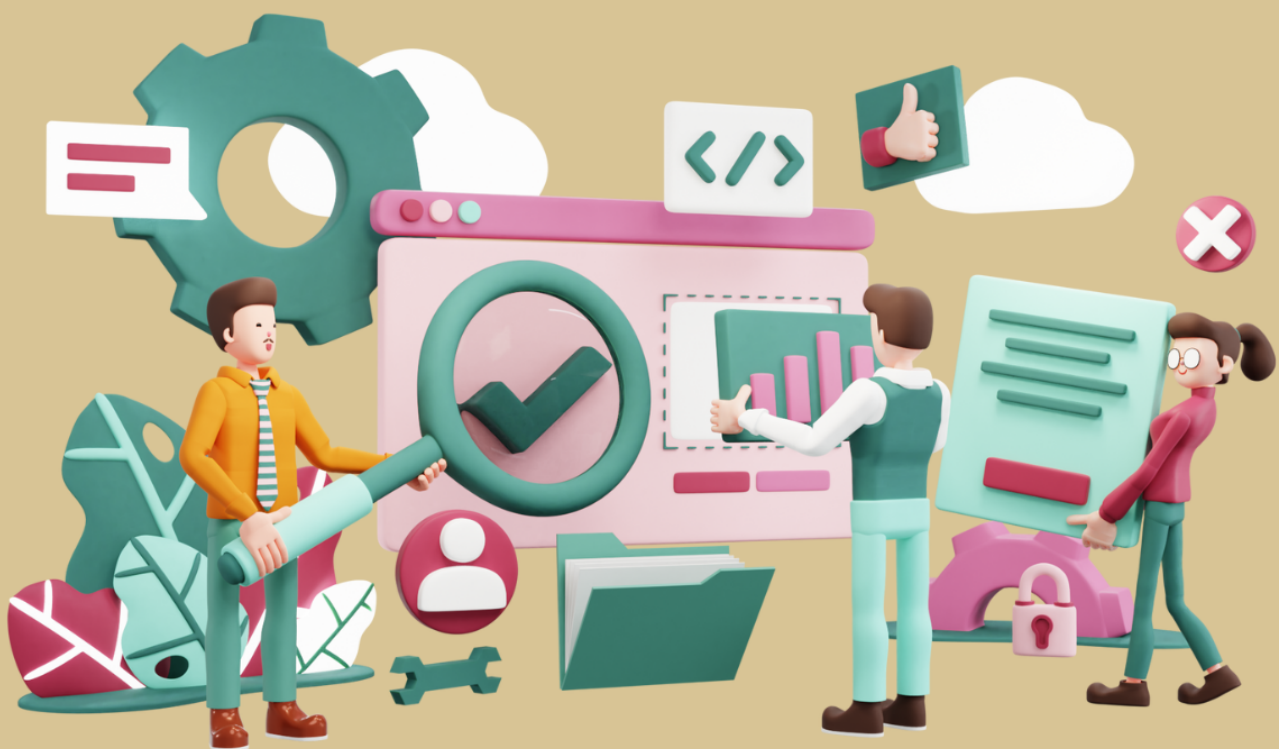


# PH.D. SURVIVAL GUIDE

Virginia Angius, Luca Serafini and Federico Atzori



## Summary

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Part I General information</b> .....	<b>4</b>
The Ph.D. Program.....	4
How long does the Ph.D. last?.....	4
Who is your supervisor?.....	4
What is the Ph.D. dissertation, and how does it work?.....	4
The period abroad: when, how, and why? .....	5
<b>Part II Didactics</b> .....	<b>6</b>
How many and which exams do we have to take?.....	6
Internal Seminars .....	6
Conferences & Other Seminars.....	7
What are the Ph.D. Days?.....	7
Ph.D. Log(s).....	7
<b>Part III Administration</b> .....	<b>8</b>
When do they pay us? How does the scholarship work? .....	8
How do I get my money back if I go to a conference?.....	8
How To Get An Email @unica?.....	8
Can I receive additional funds?.....	8
If I work from home, how do I access university resources? .....	8
What software can we use for free?.....	9
<b>Part IV Services</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Our office: Ph.D. Student Rooms.....	10
Our Beloved Behavioral Laboratory .....	10
<b>Part V Extra activities</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Will I get behind the teacher's desk?.....	11
Tutoring .....	11
Can I be a teacher?.....	11
Who represents me in the academic Board? .....	11
<b>Part VI More handy information</b> .....	<b>12</b>
The research topic: How to choose it?.....	12

Is the Ph.D. only for those who want to work in the academic field? .....12

Useful documents and links to read absolutely .....12

Get into it: Map Your Community .....13

## Introduction

Congratulations! If you read this Ph.D. survival guide, you have passed the admission process and are officially a Ph.D. student. This guide was written by students who had this experience before you... and survived.

This guide is constantly updated (or at least we try) and will cover all the significant concerns that first-year students (but even the ones of later years) may struggle with.

We advise you to read it carefully as it contains many answers to many of your questions.

## Part I General information

### The Ph.D. Program

What is a Ph.D.? The formal definition is "the highest level of education in the academic system," whose goal is to prepare the methodology for advanced scientific research, including internships abroad and attendance at research laboratories.

Less formally, the Ph.D. is a challenging and enriching path that will lead you to face increasing challenges and broaden your knowledge.

### How long does the Ph.D. last?

The [Ph.D. program](#) lasts three years. At the end of the three years, you'll have a (variable) period of time to submit and defend the dissertation (see the section below).

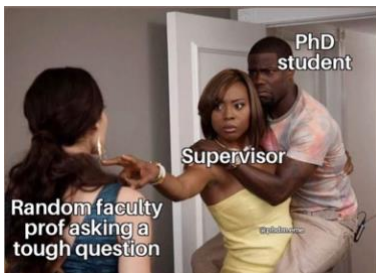
When you finally finish your PhD and pick up your life right where you left off

There are several circumstances under which a request for an extension may be made. Still, those circumstances are exceptional (such as illness, maternity, and so on).

We advise you to read the [Ph.D. regulations](#) to understand more about this.



### Who is your supervisor?



The supervisor is your point of reference during the three years. They are professors belonging to the Academic Board. Your supervisor will accompany you while you conduct your research. Still, you may seek the assistance of other lecturers depending on your chosen research topic.

There is no standard rule on how much and when to see your supervisor. You will have to coordinate with them to find the best solution.

If you have begun this path without knowing precisely who your supervisor will be, consider the research topic you have chosen, and speak to the lecturer you believe may be most knowledgeable about it. Do not be frightened!

### What is the Ph.D. dissertation, and how does it work?

The Ph.D. dissertation is the final product of your research that will be presented at the end of the third year in front of a committee composed of internal and external members (from other universities) who are experts in the topic you have studied. The basic rule of thumb is that it should embody three papers that could be published in academic journals. However, a dissertation could have a general theme developed in three separate articles or three articles that study the same phenomenon. You may also decide to write it conventionally, in an essay form divided into interconnected chapters. The chosen research design is entirely up to you and your supervisor.



By the end of your Ph.D., the dissertation you have written will be sent to the committee. Within thirty days of receiving the dissertation, the evaluators will express a written analytical judgment which could result in two possible outcomes: the admission of the dissertation to public defense or its postponement for a period not exceeding six months if they consider significant additions or corrections are in order. After this time, the dissertation, accompanied by a new written opinion of the same evaluators, issued in the light of any corrections or additions made, is, in any case, admitted to the defense.

### The period abroad: when, how, and why?

A minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 18 months must be spent abroad. This period can be done all in one go at a single destination or in several destinations with different timing (for example, three months plus three months). You will need to start thinking about this at the end of the first year. When you are abroad, the scholarship is increased by 50%. You can also participate in Erasmus calls to get extra funding to support the living cost of your time abroad. You might look at the [Mobility Programmes for Ph.D. and Graduate Students](#).

The main criteria to organize your time abroad are of two types: to follow courses not available at our university (usually specialized or advanced courses that are useful for your research) and the presence of a particular foreign lecturer that can be helpful for your research.

Your supervisor chooses the destination(s); you could propose it yourself if you are aware of some specific locations where you could find the proper support and environment for your research. Alternatively, your supervisor will suggest possible destinations that they think are related to your research field.



## Part II Didactics

### How many and which exams do we have to take?

You will have to take some exams during the first year of your Ph.D. The exams currently scheduled for the first semester are:

Exam	Type of exam	Suggested prerequisites
Quantitative Methods in Economics and Business	Essay during the course plus final exam (written or oral)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Functions of two or more variables; limits, derivatives, integrals</li> <li>▪ Linear algebra</li> <li>▪ Basic probability theory</li> <li>▪ Linear regression model and Ordinary Least Squares estimation method</li> <li>▪ Point estimation, confidence intervals, hypothesis testing</li> </ul>
Qualitative Research Methods	Activities during the course plus a final essay	
Explaining Social Phenomena (Inter-doctoral conferences series)	Final Presentation	
Experimental Methods in Economics and Business	Final Essay	

While in the second semester, you will have to take the following:

Exam	Type of exam
How to write an academic paper	Final essay
Literature review: data search and management	Final Test

In addition to these exams, during the second semester, you will have to attend different lessons specific to your topic, in agreement with your supervisor. Those lessons will benefit your research field, topic, or design.

### Internal Seminars

About once a month, our department holds a few [internal seminars](#). Attendance in these seminars might be compulsory and is usually highly advised.

Do I have to participate even if I have no interest in the subject matter?

Well, participating would allow you to stay current with what others are doing, learn new methodologies, get used to how research should be presented, and generate fresh ideas, so even when they're not compulsory, we strongly suggest scheduling them in!

## Conferences & Other Seminars

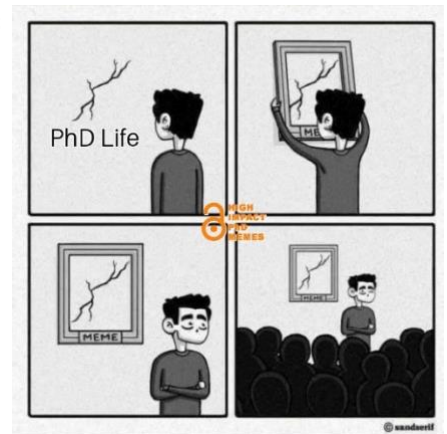
Conferences are essential events, mainly for networking... and having much fun. In agreement with your supervisor, you can follow those of your interest (including Summer or Winter Schools).

Generally, after the first year, you will start to present the results of your research at these kinds of international gatherings, sometimes abroad! Do not be afraid to participate in these events; you should grasp every opportunity to receive feedback on your work and get used to presenting it in front of a real audience!

### What are the Ph.D. Days?

At the end of each year, the Ph.D. days are the occasion where the Academic Board evaluates the activity carried out by the Ph.D. students during the year. You will have to present your work in progress (including the outcomes of your research as it progresses), and you're expected to mention your prospects. The typology of the presentation and the time available will change from year to year (through the years, as you progress, you'll be given more time).

Each year, you'll receive feedback from other lecturers of the Ph.D. Board. Your progress (including the exams' results during your first year) will be evaluated by the Board for admission to the following year - or even exclusion from the course, with a reasoned decision. Considering this, you should not underestimate this moment as it is your showcase moment with the rest of the Ph.D. community.



### Ph.D. Log(s)

The Ph.D. students receiving a scholarship must fill in the log for each month of activity, starting from the starting date of the Ph.D. program, and a cover page (a single cover page for each academic year). The log can be downloaded [here](#).

At the end of the academic year, the duly completed monthly forms must be digitally signed by the Ph.D. student and the supervisor. The coordinator of the Ph.D. program and the Ph.D. student will sign the cover page.

The monthly log and the cover page must be sent by email to the address [dottoratiemaster@unica.it](mailto:dottoratiemaster@unica.it) (object: Name and Surname of the Ph.D. student - Name of the Ph.D. program - Register [year]).

Ph.D. students who receive a POR FSE scholarship or a NOP RI scholarship have different dispositions; therefore, we advise you to contact the administrative office to ask for more information about it.

## Part III Administration

### When do they pay us? How does the scholarship work?

About two months into the Ph.D., the secretariat will contact you to fill in some documents relating to the scholarship. You'll receive the first payment around this time.

### How do I get my money back if I go to a conference?

Attendance at national or international events and gathering in other universities and research institutes, including, and not limited to, conferences, seminars, and Summer Schools, are called "missions." As such, they're officially part of your Ph.D. path and are subject to authorization by your supervisor and coordinator. Once authorized, they are entitled to reimbursement of the related expenses up to 6000 € for cycles from the XXXVIII onward and up to 4000€ for the rest of the cycles.

To request authorization and refund and deal with all the related administrative aspects, you must first register on the STARTS platform (<https://starts.unica.it/it>). After registering as a "general user," you will have to write to the secretariat to request access to the group of documents of the Department of Economics and Business Sciences.

To request your first refund, our advice is to rely on the wise guide of Giovanna Boeddu: [giovanna.boeddu@unica.it](mailto:giovanna.boeddu@unica.it).

### How To Get An Email @unica?

We understand that your old student email might not be the best way to present yourself in the newly found academic world (right, lover97@hotmail?).

To get an official (and much more professional) @unica email, you must fill in a specific request and you can ask about that to the administration office.

When filling in the file, remember that the "Head of the structure" (Responsabile della struttura) is the director of the department (currently Prof. Rinaldo Brau).

After completing the document, you must send it to the student office ([segreteria@unica.it](mailto:segreteria@unica.it)). Within a few days, you will receive your login credentials.

You can contact the help desk ([help.teams@unica.it](mailto:help.teams@unica.it)) if you have any issues with your email.

### Can I receive additional funds?

This point has been partially modified by recent legislation, and updates will be provided.

According to the regulation now in effect, Ph.D. students have access to 6000 euros to conduct their research starting from the first year (conferences, summer school, period abroad, etc.).

### If I work from home, how do I access university resources?

Being on the UNICA team will allow you to access many resources, including software, data banks, scientific journals and so on. When you get online through a university online network (such as Eduroam), you will have instant access to all these resources thanks to your IP. When you're not on campus, however, things can get trickier. Most of the time, you will be asked to access these resources with your institutional account to take advantage of the agreements between UNICA and each institution. Another handy way to grant this access is by installing the UNICA VPN. This kind of VPN (Virtual Private Network) is a way to connect to the internet through the UNICA network from the comfort of your home.

First, to get access to the VPN we recommend that you request the @unica email first because the process is faster. Then, access the page <https://people.unica.it/settorereti/>, find the section "VPN ACCESS". Read the [manual](#) and request the authorization by following the instructions on the page. Download the software and set it according to the manual that you can find on the same page.

## What software can we use for free?

The software made available for Ph.D. students grows from time to time; here are the ones currently available:

Office 365 ([https://www.unica.it/unica/it/studenti\\_s08\\_ss12.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/it/studenti_s08_ss12.page))

STATA (write to Barbara Dettori asking for the procedure: [bdettori@unica.it](mailto:bdettori@unica.it))

MATLab ([https://www.unica.it/unica/it/studenti\\_s08\\_ss09.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/it/studenti_s08_ss09.page))

Wolfram Mathematica ([https://www.unica.it/unica/it/studenti\\_s08\\_ss15.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/it/studenti_s08_ss15.page))

Pro Tip: be advised that sometimes a license can be bought with Mission funds upon authorization. Don't be afraid to ask your favourite administrative person of reference for information about purchasing extra resources.

## Part IV Services

### Our office: Ph.D. Student Rooms

Ph.D. students have 3 dedicated offices: studio 18, studio 31, and studio 32. Studio 18 is in Via Sant'Ignazio, 74, while studios 31 and 32 are at civic 17 (above the Law library).

There are 10 workstations in each studio with a computer connected to the network.

To access you need to book your seat here: <https://dipartimenti.unica.it/scienzeeconomicheedaziendali/servizi/richiesta-disponibilita-sala-dottorandi/>

Once you have received the authorization, you will see your reservation in the calendar: <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=c67r3m2g34tijuemm7tc69bg@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=Europe/Rome&pli=1>

You can book up to two weeks' worth of slots. For more information, you can refer to Emanuele ([emanuele.deri@unica.it](mailto:emanuele.deri@unica.it))

Why should I come to the office?

While you are not required to be in the office, it is an excellent opportunity to bond with the other students and the rest of the department. You will often find yourself discussing your work with new people and receiving hints and feedback about your research topic and academic life over coffee. Networking is always an excellent opportunity to discover new activities and is a chance to build up your social capital! Last but not least, you could also strike new lifetime friendships!

### Our Beloved Behavioral Laboratory

Our department has a cognitive and behavioral analysis laboratory (LACC) with 24 network-connected computerized workstations for the simulation of interactive scenarios. It is in Via Sant'Ignazio, 74.

A high-performance eye-tracker (Tobii Pro Spectrum 300 hz with a custom configured laptop) is also included, as is a Shimmer3 GSR sensor for studying the galvanic response of the skin.

To use it for research it is necessary to request a specific authorization following the rules you can find here: <https://www.unica.it/unica/protected/348496/0/def/ref/STR299844/>

## Part V Extra activities

### Will I get behind the teacher's desk?

Putting yourself in the class environment is a fun and challenging experience to complete your Ph.D. path and learn valuable skills. Luckily, we have several opportunities to achieve that, formally and informally. Tutoring and teaching are allowed during your Ph.D.. They consist of structured agreements with the departments allocating a certain number of hours devoted to specific courses. But don't be afraid to side with your supervisor in their day-to-day activities if you wish!

### Tutoring

Ph.D. students can tutor students in bachelor's and master's degree courses. Tutoring consists in assisting students with practical learning as part of their curricular courses. Think of subjects as statistics, accounting, etc. Tutors are essential figures to help students with exercises, mock tests, and so on.

The tutoring calls you can participate in are released just before the first and second semesters begin ([https://www.unica.it/unica/it/fac\\_scienzeecopolit\\_18.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/it/fac_scienzeecopolit_18.page)).

If you win the tender as a Ph.D. student, in addition to the documents needed to activate your contract, you will need to ask the academic Board of our Ph.D. for authorization to engage in the tutoring activity. To do so, you must address your request to the Ph.D. Board and send it to the coordinator of our Ph.D. (currently Prof. Vittorio Pelligra) for evaluation.

If the tutoring activity begins before the next academic board meeting, do not panic! In that case, the coordinator can send you a "coordinator determination", which is an interim clearance. You should remember that without it, you will not be able to sign the tutoring contract. At the next possible Board meeting, your case will be discussed and eventually authorized.

There are no time limits regarding tutoring hours but be careful not to overcommit. Students and professors will rely on you as a Tutor, so you must carry on the assignment with no excuses!

### Can I be a teacher?

Ph.D. students can carry out supplementary teaching activities for a maximum of 40 hours. It is not usual, but it is a possibility. We suggest discussing the matter with your supervisor to understand if it's feasible considering your amount of existing work.

### Who represents me in the academic Board?

Each year, Ph.D. students elect their own representative. It is an internal procedure in which the Ph.D. students of each new cycle must choose their voice within the Board. The election will be based on a voting rule you can select (secret ballot, acclamation, deliberation, and so on). The elected representatives mandate lasts three years; each Ph.D. representative will participate in the Ph.D. board and represent their cycle therewithin.

## Part VI More handy information

### The research topic: How to choose it?



"The research topic chooses the Wizard, Mr Puddu"

Although it would be lovely if it were true, these statements still hold some validity.

The first step is to chat with your supervisor about your preferences and areas of interest. Reading usually follows. Take the time to read as much as you can on that topic. Doing so will help to discern what's been done, the gaps, and what lies unspoken in your field. Sometimes what seemed like a brilliant

idea will turn out not to be interesting from a scientific point of view (remember when you wanted to study the entrepreneurial spin-offs of mongooses?).

If your scholarship is double tied with a study topic (for instance, if your funding comes from specific projects), worry not! You will still need to understand the better approach and point of view to it and reviewing the literature (a fancy way to say: reading everything at hand), will still be necessary and beneficial.

### Is the Ph.D. only for those who want to work in the academic field?

No, it's not.

But I heard that...

I. Said. No.

### Useful documents and links that you really need to check out

#### Ph.D. Website

<https://dottorati.unica.it/sea/>

#### Department website

[https://www.unica.it/unica/en/dip\\_scienzeecoaziend.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/en/dip_scienzeecoaziend.page)

#### News and deadlines

[https://www.unica.it/unica/en/studenti\\_s01\\_ss05\\_sss03.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/en/studenti_s01_ss05_sss03.page)

#### Ph.D. UniCa Regulations

<https://www.unica.it/unica/protected/367960/0/def/ref/DOC224182/>

#### Ph.D. Rooms Regulations

[https://www.unica.it/unica/page/it/aule\\_dottoranti\\_del\\_dipartimento\\_di\\_scienze\\_economiche\\_ed\\_aziendali](https://www.unica.it/unica/page/it/aule_dottoranti_del_dipartimento_di_scienze_economiche_ed_aziendali)

#### Research and academic trips

<https://www.unica.it/unica/en/missioni.page>

#### Ph.D. Rules and Regulations

<https://dottorati.unica.it/sea/files/2019/10/Regolamento-Dottorato-ENG.pdf>

#### Economics Seminar Calendar

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=65v0r8tjc12hiq27gnm671ngvq@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=Europe/Rome>

#### Mobility Programmes for Ph.D. and Graduate Students

[https://www.unica.it/unica/en/ateneo\\_s04\\_ss03.page](https://www.unica.it/unica/en/ateneo_s04_ss03.page)

## Get into it: Map Your Community<sup>1</sup>

Below you can find some questions to answer that will allow you to clarify your community of reference. This is also very important to understand which conferences to go to, which universities to orient the visiting visitor to and which scholars to follow.

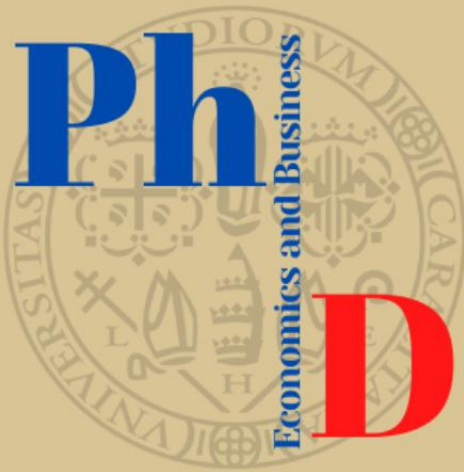
	Who are the most influential scholars?	Who are the most living influential scholars who have most influenced you?	What are the most influential worldwide research centers, departments, and universities?	What are the most influential Italian research centers, departments, and universities?
Disciplinary Area				
Specific subject				
Main area of specialization				

Name the most relevant academic associations in your field:

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: *L'apprendista stregone: Consigli, trucchi e sortilegi per apprendisti studiosi* by Daniele Archibugi



Department of Economics and Business Sciences (SEA)  
Via Sant'Ignazio, 17 - 09123 Cagliari - ITALY