

Rules of Admission

to the Doctoral School of the Graduate School for Social Research, GSSR, (in Polish, Szkoła Nauk Społecznych, SNS) for the Academic Year 2026/2027

Recruitment to the Doctoral School of the Graduate School for Social Research (GSSR/SNS) is conducted as an open, competitive process consisting of two stages: (1) evaluation of application documents, followed by (2) interviews with shortlisted candidates. The same transparent and merit-based principles apply to recruitment conducted under externally funded research grants.

Admission rules are developed by the Coordinating Unit, the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with the two Partner Units, the Institute of Psychology (IP) and the Institute of Political Studies (ISP), both at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). The three institutes jointly agree on a common structure and timeline for the admissions process, which is coordinated by the GSSR administration.

The review of applications and the selection of new doctoral students are carried out by the respective institutes, depending on the discipline chosen by the candidate, as follows:

- The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, IFiS PAN admits PhD students in Sociology
- The Institute of Psychology, IP PAN admits PhD students in Psychology
- The Institute of Political Studies, ISP PAN admits PhD students in Political Science

The Director of each Institute appoints an Admissions Commission in the respective Institute, making every effort to maintain gender parity. A representative of the PhD Student Government is invited to participate in the work of the Admissions Commissions as an observer.

Pursuant to Article 200(1) of the Act of 20 July 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668, 2024, 2245) the Scientific Councils of IFiS PAN, IP PAN and IPS PAN, respectively, adopt the following resolution:

1. Eligibility. Admission to the Doctoral School is open to any candidate, irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age or country of origin, who:

- a. Holds a Master's degree or an equivalent degree,
or
- b. Holds a diploma certifying graduation from a higher education institution abroad that entitles them to continue their education or to open doctoral studies in the country whose higher education system includes the institution that awarded that diploma,
or
- c. Has achieved learning outcomes for a qualification at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework,
and
- d. Has a thorough knowledge of written and spoken English (see point 11, Required documents).

If an applicant to GSSR/SNS's Doctoral School has not yet defended their Master's thesis but submits a certificate from the home university about the expected date of defense, the Director of GSSR/SNS decides about the possibility of conditional admission, while specifying the time within which the applicant is obliged to submit the diploma of graduation from the Master's program.

A candidate's field of pre-PhD study can differ from the discipline in which they intend to pursue their doctoral degree. As part of their application, candidates indicate the discipline in which they plan to prepare a doctoral dissertation.

2. The window for submitting applications to the Doctoral School for a subsequent academic year shall be announced by GSSR's Director on the website of GSSR (<https://www.gssr.edu.pl/admissions/important-dates/>). The Director of GSSR may also announce the opening of additional application windows in the course of an academic year, in particular as part of doctoral student recruitment within the implementation of specific research projects.

3. Applications to the Doctoral School shall be submitted electronically to GSSR administration, by the deadline and following the rules detailed on GSSR's website. Candidates with disabilities are encouraged to contact the GSSR administration at an early stage of the application process to discuss any accessibility or support needs related to submitting documents or participating in the interview. Appropriate reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure equal conditions for all candidates.

GSSR and its constituent institutes safeguard the personal data of applicants in full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR/RODO) and Polish law.

To meet formal admission requirements, a candidate must submit, by **Wednesday, July 8, 2026**, a complete Application Package that includes the following documents, in English (exception is the MA thesis and/or publication, see point 7):

- 1) **Completed application form**
- 2) **Copy of Master's Degree diploma** or of an equivalent certificate of graduation or an official document from the applicant's university stating when the defense of the MA thesis is due to take place.
- 3) **Academic Curriculum Vitae**
- 4) **Letter of Intent** (800 - 1000 words) describing the applicant's experience to date in the given discipline, their academic interests, aims, and the reasons for choosing GSSR/SNS as the site for doctoral training.
- 5) **Concise description of planned research** (1200-1500 words, excluding Bibliography, Figures or Tables) that (i) describes the research problem and why it is important for the candidate's chosen discipline, (ii) states the research question(s), and, as applicable, testable hypotheses, (iii) briefly outlines the main theoretical framework(s) that the research ties to; (iv) introduces the research methods, and, as applicable, the data the candidate plans to use to address the research question(s); and (v) outlines the envisioned type(s) of data analysis (when applicable).
- 6) **Letter(s) of recommendation** – at most two letters, with at least one from the candidate's MA thesis supervisor, or a person who is familiar with their academic achievements and aptitude for conducting independent research.
- 7) **MA thesis** or a **selected (co-)authored academic publication**. Candidates must also provide a 700-words English-language summary of their MA thesis or academic publication if these studies were originally written in another language than English.
- 8) **Official transcript** issued by the candidate's university that lists all courses completed during MA studies or equivalent studies (cf. point 2) and corresponding grades.
- 9) **Photocopy of passport** (non-Polish applicants only)
- 10) **Payment Confirmation of Application Fee of 200 PLN** (the Application Fee is waived for candidates who are citizens of non-EU countries).
- 11) **Proof of English language proficiency**. Applicants who are non-native English speakers must submit one of the standardized English language test scores listed in Table 1. Candidates who take the TOEFL or IELTS should request a copy of their results to be sent directly to GSSR's Admissions Office. **The TOEFL institution code for the GSSR is 7962.**

Candidates who completed their studies in English (Bachelor's or MA degree) are exempt from providing results of a standardized tests.

- 12) In the case of recruitment of IP PAN: 1) declaration of a supervisor affiliated with IP PAS or 2) declarations of a supervisor from outside IP PAN and an auxiliary supervisor affiliated with IP PAN about readiness to take care of the doctoral student in the event of admission to the GSSR.

Table 1. Standardized English Language test results and required minimum scores

Test Type	Required Minimum Score/ CEFR level
(TOEFL) Test of English as a Foreign Language	80
(IELTS) International English Language Test	6.5
C1 Advanced, formerly (CAE) Cambridge Advanced English Test	B
B2 First, formerly (FCE) First Certificate in English	B2
C2 Proficiency, formerly (CPE) Cambridge Proficiency Test	C
Certificate from university examination	B2

4. Admission to the Doctoral School is competitive and consists of two stages, jointly accounting for 100% of the final admission score. The assessment in both stages is conducted by the Admissions Commission of the relevant Institute.

- Stage I (60% of total score): The Admissions Commissions verify the formal eligibility of applications and, if requirements are met, assess and score candidates based on academic merit, research potential, and the alignment of their proposed project with the institute's research profile.
- Stage II (40% of the total score): Candidates who qualify for this stage participate in an online interview in English, evaluating their motivation, ability to present and discuss the proposed project, and preparedness for scientific research.

Stage I.

The Admissions Commission evaluates on formal grounds the documents that constitute the Application Package (see point 3). If formal requirements are met, the Commission assesses each applicant's potential to conduct scientific activities and contribute to the Doctoral School, as reflected in the following documents:

1. Description of the planned research
2. Letter of intent
3. MA thesis or scientific publication
4. Academic CV
5. Recommendation letter(s)

Based on these documents, the Commission also evaluates the degree to which a candidate's planned research project matches the research themes and academic profile of IFiS PAN, IP PAN and IPS PAN, respectively.

Each member of the Admissions Commission evaluates eligible applications individually and assigns a score on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) points. The score each candidate receives at the end of Stage I is the arithmetic mean of all individual scores submitted by the Commission members. The Commission reviews the resulting ranking and reaches a collective decision on the list of candidates invited to Stage II of the admission process.

Stage II. Interview conducted in English

Candidates who successfully pass Stage I of the admission process are informed electronically by the Doctoral School about the date of the interview, and, if applicable, the date of the Psychology test (cf. details below).

Interviews are generally conducted online. Notification emails are sent to the email address that the candidate provides in the Application Package.

In each discipline, the interview follows a structured format. The Chairperson introduces the Commission members, after which candidates are invited to briefly introduce themselves, their academic background and achievements, and summarize the research project they propose to carry out as part of their doctoral training. The Commission asks questions to assess the project's theoretical grounding, methodology, feasibility, and innovative contribution to the field. Regardless of academic background, the Admissions Commission of the respective Institute may also test a candidate's knowledge of concepts and issues fundamental to the discipline in which the candidate seeks the PhD degree. Candidates are also given the opportunity to indicate a preferred supervisor and to ask questions about the doctoral program, GSSR and its constituent institutes.

Candidates who choose Psychology as their doctoral dissertation discipline when this is not the discipline of their previous studies must, prior to the interview, take a test about core issues in psychology. Testing details are decided by IP PAN and communicated via GSSR's and IP's websites. During the interview, the IP Admissions Commission may refer to issues covered in the test.

Candidates who fail to attend the scheduled interview without prior notification of the School and documented justification are considered to have withdrawn their application.

5. The decision process for admission to GSSR/SNS's Doctoral School

Following each interview, all members of the Admissions Commission, independently and via secret ballot, score the candidate's performance on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) points. A candidate's interview score is the arithmetic mean (average) of these individual scores.

After the individual scoring, the Admissions Commission discusses the results to ensure consistency of evaluation and reaches a collective decision confirming the final interview scores. The Commission then integrates each candidate's interview score (Stage II, weighted at 40%) with their application score from Stage I (weighted at 60%) to obtain the final overall score. Based on these weighted results, candidates are ranked in order of merit.

Using secret ballots, the Admissions Commission votes to approve the final ranking, records the outcome of the vote, and communicates the results to the GSSR administration.

On the basis of the Admissions Committee's recommendation and the minutes of the evaluation process, the Director of the relevant Institute decides whether a candidate is admitted to the Doctoral School.

Admission results will be announced after both competition stages are complete, and no later than August 21, 2026.

Candidates shall be notified of the results (protocol of admissions) by email and by post (letters of acceptance), and by means of a protocol posted on GSSR's website, in compliance with the provisions of GDPR (RODO). The administrative decision about refusal of admission to the Doctoral School is sent by post (registered mail) or by other means indicated in the Code of Administrative Procedure.

The decision of the Director of the relevant Institute to refuse admission to a doctoral program may be appealed against within 14 days of receipt of the decision. The written appeal must be submitted to GSSR/SNS's office electronically (sns@gssr.edu.pl) or in hard copy, at GSSR's office (room 261, Staszic Palace, Nowy Swiat 72, 00-330, Warsaw, Poland).

The Director of the Institute shall appoint an Appeals Committee that shall consider the candidate's appeal and make a written recommendation as to whether the original decision should be upheld or reversed. Such recommendation, to be made in writing within 15 days from the School having received the appeal, shall be submitted to the Institute's Director, who shall have the decisive voice. This decision exhausts the appeal procedure within the Doctoral School and may be challenged before the competent administrative court in accordance with Polish law.

6. The above admission rules apply to candidates who, on the date of the deadline for submitting applications to the Doctoral School, are not winners of doctoral scholarships in accepted research projects that foresee the financing of doctoral scholarships for at least 36 months.

7. Recruitment to doctoral scholarships financed from externally funded research projects (e.g., NCN, ERC, Horizon Europe) referred to in point 6 is conducted on an open and competitive basis, in accordance with the same principles of transparency, merit-based assessment, and eligibility requirements as those applied in the regular admissions process described above. Such recruitment takes place through calls announced publicly and carried out by selection commissions appointed by the Director of the relevant Institute and including the project's Principal Investigator (PI).

Winners of such competitions become students of GSSR/SNS's Doctoral School provided that the PI submits, within the specified time, all required documents, as defined in the respective call for doctoral scholarships. Among documents to be submitted to GSSR, the PI must include:

- (i) the copy of the winner's MA diploma, an equivalent certificate of graduation, or an official document from the student's university stating when the defense of the MA thesis is due to take place,
- (ii) proof of the student's English language proficiency, and
- (iii) the selection protocol prepared by the Commission that evaluated the applicants to the PI's research project.

8. These rules of admission to the Doctoral School were adopted by the Scientific Councils of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology PAN (November 26, 2025), the Institute of Psychology PAN (December 12, 2025) and the Institute of Political Studies PAN (December 5, 2025).

9. These Admission Rules have been drawn up in two language versions: Polish and English.

10. This resolution comes into force on the date of its adoption.

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