

Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI)
Doctoral Programme in Arabic and Islamic Studies
Regulations

Preamble

The Doctoral School Programme of the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies is intended primarily as a guide for scholars who will become members of an open, responsible, and highly qualified research community. The programme provides candidates with the competencies necessary to conduct high-quality research in Arabic and Islamic Studies, with the aim of promoting and supporting dialogue with Muslims throughout the world, while also contributing to global scholarship within a ‘spiritual atmosphere of research.’

The principal fields of study from which candidates may choose the subject of their dissertation are listed in both the *Ordo* and the Institute’s website. The Doctoral School is conceived as a period of advanced scientific and academic formation, centred especially on the design and development of the doctoral dissertation.

The objectives of the Doctoral School are as follows:

- participation in a shared academic pathway within a research community that brings together faculty members and students;
- systematic and critical deepening of the Institute’s distinctive field of study, together with the strengthening of appropriate scientific and methodological research skills;
- development of the ability to design and implement a research programme characterised by academic rigour;
- acquisition of the capacity to generate new knowledge within one’s field of study through the preparation of the doctoral dissertation;
- development of the ability to communicate research findings both within the scholarly community and in academic teaching or public dissemination activities.

Article 1. Classification

The Doctorate offered by the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) is a Third-Cycle degree within the framework of the **Bologna Process**.

Article 2. Admission Requirements

Admission to the Doctoral Programme is open to holders of the Licentiate degree awarded by PISAI or of an equivalent Second-Cycle qualification within the framework of the **Bologna Process** in the field of Islamic Studies.

The minimum grade required is *Magna Cum Laude* for internal students, or its equivalent (9/10 or 27/30) for external applicants. The Academic Board may award an additional percentage point to candidates who present publications related to their proposed research topic or who possess experience in academic teaching conducted in Arabic, thereby enabling them to meet the minimum grade requirement.

Upon application, all candidates must submit a *curriculum vitae* detailing previous studies, publications, teaching experience, and proficiency in foreign languages.

Candidates who obtained their Second-Cycle degree from another university must:

- submit a letter of recommendation from a faculty member of the institution where the degree was awarded;
- undertake an assessment of their Arabic language proficiency. As this is a Doctorate in Arabic and Islamic Studies, applicants must demonstrate a solid command of Arabic at least at the B2 (intermediate) level;
- provide evidence of intermediate proficiency in Italian and in one additional language chosen from English, French, Spanish, or German;
- submit a concise written proposal outlining the project they intend to develop during the three-year programme. This text should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to undertake doctoral research, presenting the proposed topic, the faculty member who may later supervise the project, and the primary sources to be employed;
- demonstrate adequate knowledge of Islamic Studies relevant to their proposed research topic. Where necessary, the Academic Board may require attendance in selected Licentiate-level courses considered essential for the candidate's programme of study.

Religious and clerical applicants must also provide a letter of recommendation from their religious superior or diocesan bishop.

For visa and residence permit purposes, and to facilitate access to libraries and research centres, PISAI may issue a certificate of ‘pre-enrolment’, valid until the beginning of the academic year in which official registration takes place.

For admission as a ‘Doctoral Candidate’, the Director of the Academic Board shall verify that all submitted documentation meets the established requirements and shall assess the applicant’s motivation, study potential, and capacity to participate in the programme. The deadline for submission of all documentation is 30 June, allowing enrolment at the beginning of October.

Article 3. Financial Support, Insurance, and Accommodation

The Institute does not provide scholarships for either Licentiate or Doctoral students. Students are responsible for securing their own financial resources, including health insurance coverage.

Article 4. Commencement of the Doctoral Programme

The Doctoral School has a duration of three years. During the first year, and in any case until approval of the research proposal, the student is academically classified as a ‘Doctoral Candidate’.

During this first year, the educational programme includes the following objectives:

- attendance at the course on learning methodology and scientific research methods;
- regular participation in research seminars coordinated by a faculty member, involving peer discussion on doctoral research practices;
- participation in the cultural initiatives promoted by the Institute;
- regular consultation with the designated faculty adviser (Tutor) assigned to assist in the development of the doctoral project;
- preparation of the final research proposal to be submitted for approval by the Commission.

These requirements are mandatory during the first year of enrolment in order to ensure continuity in study and preparation of the doctoral project.

The Institute offers particular support to Doctoral Candidates and Doctoral Students, including free access to the Reading Room and the Moodle learning platform, as well as personalised guidance from the Director of the Academic Board and the assigned Tutor.

From the second year onward, PISAI will provide a dedicated room for doctoral students to be used for study, scholarly exchange, regular meetings, and doctoral seminars.

Before the end of the first semester, the candidate shall submit to the Doctoral Board a research proposal developed in consultation with the assigned Tutor.

The research proposal (12 to 20 pages) must include:

- a clear statement of the topic and a provisional title precisely defining the subject of the dissertation;
- justification for the choice of topic and the objectives of the research;
- positioning of the project within the relevant scholarly literature;
- discussion of the original contribution and advancement of knowledge expected from the research;
- explanation of the research methodology;
- a preliminary hypothesis regarding the anticipated outcomes of the study;
- a concise outline of the dissertation structure and chapter organisation;
- a working bibliography including Arabic primary sources and relevant secondary literature.

Once the proposal has been approved by the Doctoral Board, a second adviser shall be appointed. This individual may be affiliated either with the Institute or with another institution.

Article 5. Dissertation Supervisor

As a general rule, the doctoral dissertation supervisor shall be a permanent or visiting faculty member of the Institute.

In cases where the research topic requires expertise outside PISAI, the Director of the Doctoral School reserves the right to appoint an external supervisor who will assist in evaluating and guiding the research project.

The supervisor is responsible for providing feedback to ensure the quality of the dissertation and for assisting the student in refining research objectives and methodology.

Article 6. Doctoral Programme Structure

The doctoral programme requires at least one initial year of residence at the Institute. Attendance during the first year is mandatory, except in exceptional cases assessed individually by the Academic Board.

PISAI encourages doctoral students to participate throughout the entire programme in the activities of the Institute, although residence in Rome is not required for the full duration of doctoral studies.

The programme must be completed within a minimum of three years and a maximum of five years. After this period, the student shall be classified as ‘awaiting degree’ for one additional year. If the dissertation is not submitted within that further period, the student permanently loses doctoral status.

Exceptions to these provisions may be granted only by the Doctoral Board for duly justified and documented reasons that have prevented the completion of research within the prescribed timeframe.

Article 7. Language of the Dissertation

The research proposal and doctoral dissertation may be written in Arabic, French, English, Italian, Spanish, or German, according to the student’s preference.

Article 8. Internal Seminars

During the second year of research, students are required to present a seminar intended exclusively for the PISAI academic community.

The doctoral student must submit a written presentation on the progress of the project and will be allotted one hour for presentation, discussion, and questions. During the seminar, the student must demonstrate mastery of the subject under investigation, defend the originality of the research topic, and show a clear understanding of the project’s final objectives.

A second internal seminar shall be scheduled at the beginning of the third year, likewise addressed to the academic community.

The two dissertation advisers, who will attend the seminar, shall provide an evaluation and may offer observations on both the written work and the progress of the research. This intermediate assessment is mandatory and constitutes a prerequisite for continuation of the doctoral project.

Article 9. Submission of the Dissertation

Upon completion of the research, and in any event not earlier than three years after enrolment, the student must submit four printed copies of the dissertation to the Registrar's Office, together with the anti-plagiarism documentation provided by the Secretariat.

The declaration certifying the originality of the dissertation must be attached and bound with the final version submitted for defence.

In agreement with the Doctoral Board, the Dean shall appoint a third examiner responsible for evaluating the completed dissertation. This examiner may be a regular, extraordinary, adjunct, or external faculty member selected on the basis of subject expertise. In all cases, at least one member of the final examination committee must be external to the Institute.

The third examiner shall have two months to complete the evaluation.

Article 10. Public Defence of the Dissertation

The public doctoral examination shall be scheduled by the Dean following the final submission of the dissertation. The period between final submission and the public defence may not be less than two months.

The student shall defend the dissertation before a committee composed of the supervisor and the two examiners, one of whom must be external to PISAI.

The committee shall be chaired by the Dean of PISAI, or by a delegate designated by the Dean when the Dean serves as supervisor or committee member.

The time allocated to both the student and the committee shall be established by internal regulations and communicated in advance.

The defence may be conducted in the language in which the dissertation is written, as well as in any other language authorised by the relevant regulations.

The committee shall evaluate the quality of the research as demonstrated in both the written dissertation and the oral defence.

Article 11. Publication of the Dissertation

The committee shall jointly determine the final grade and establish the conditions for the full or partial publication of the dissertation, including any revisions or additions deemed mandatory for publication.

The final grade shall be calculated as follows:

- 75% based on the written dissertation;
- 25% based on the final defence.

A document signed by the Director of Studies and the doctoral candidate shall record the principal elements of the dissertation that must be published. The student shall submit a corrected version of the dissertation incorporating the committee's recommendations, together with ten copies of the published extract for the PISAI Library.

Only after fulfilling these requirements shall the candidate be awarded the degree of **Doctor of Arabic and Islamic Studies**.