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Faculty of Political and Social Sciences Guidelines for mobility and other research expenses

Overview

The students of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences can apply for funding to carry out research activities in Italy and abroad. Funding requests are processed by the Mobility Committee which decides about the allocation of funding for off-site activities.

This note sets out the general principles that guide the decision-making of the Mobility Committee (hereafter the Committee) in allocating the mobility funds.

Students are invited to read the principles carefully in order to prioritize their research activities throughout the academic year.

Funding: what we fund and with what priority

1. PhD students

The Committee will ascertain students' funding needs based on their stage in the PhD program. Funding needs are normally higher for students in intermediate-advanced stage (II and III year PhD students) because of fieldwork activities or outreach activities related to the results/stage of their dissertation.

The Committee will **prioritize** the funding of activities that are necessary for the completion of the PhD program. **These activities include those related to the collection of interviews, documents and other material that provide support to the thesis' arguments.** The Committee's judgment will be based on the content of the dissertation as well as the motivations provided by the student and his/her supervisor.

The Committee will fund participation to **international conferences where students present papers directly connected to the PhD thesis.** The Committee's judgment will be based on the prestige and level of professionalization of the conference

The Committee will fund **visiting periods in foreign universities and research centers** based on the prestige of the hosting institution and the match between the students' PhD project and the expertise of the hosting institutions. Students are invited to provide proof of such a match in their motivation letter.

The Committee will fund participation to **summer schools and winter schools** if these organize specializing, operational courses that the Faculty is not going to offer within a reasonable timeframe. In deciding about the allocation of funds for summer and winter schools, the Committee will also take into consideration the prestige and level of professionalization of the sponsors of such schools.



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The Committee will also fund expenditures related to **English editing services** for academic articles and books. Editing services expenditures must be connected to the PhD project and reimbursement must be supported by official documents (e.g. invoice) released by the English editor.

The Committee **cannot fund** the purchase of books, software, or laptops

2. MA students

The Committee will allocate funding to the MA students with the view to allow them to develop their research skills. In this connection, the following activities will be prioritized in allocating funding:

The Committee will fund participation of the MA students to **summer schools and winter schools** provided that the courses there selected are specialized, operational courses that are not provided within the Faculty. In deciding about the allocation of funds for summer and winter schools, the Committee will also take into consideration the prestige and level of professionalization of the sponsors of such schools.

The Committee will fund participation to **national and international conferences**. The Committee's judgment will be based on the active participation of the student and the prestige and level of professionalization of the conference.

When to apply

The Committee meets monthly. Students are expected to submit their funding requests according to the procedures detailed below **at the latest** on the last day of each month (i.e. January 31; February 28; March 31; April 30 etc. etc).

Research activities should start not before the 10th day after the submission request. For instance, if you submit a funding request by the deadline of January 31, you can plan your research activity starting from February 10.

Before departure

Students should apply for authorization and financial support of the SNS to carry out off-site study and/or research activities, through the platform Ser.se.

In submitting the online form, students are also requested to include the following documents:



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1) **Motivation letter** where they detail how and why each of the activities for which they ask for funds, is relevant to their research and doctoral projects.

2) Validation by PhD coordinator/supervisor (for Phd students) o study plan advisor (for MA students).

Upon submitting your funding request through Serse, you are required to click on the button "Send to the teacher for the authorization"

- **For I year PhD students, the activity must be authorized by the Coordinator of the Ph.D. course as well as by the mentor.**
- **For II,II, and IV year PhD students the activity must be authorized by their thesis Supervisor/s (internal and external to SNS when appointed).**
- **MA students need to be authorized by the study plan advisor for their MA course.**

3) Research activity travel information.

The online application must contain the following information:

- the **place** where the activity will be carried out;
- the **length of stay** (number of days or months);
- the **purpose** (with full description of the activity to be carried out);
- an **estimate of travel expenses** (the choice of the least expensive means of transport and reduced rates will be positively evaluated);
- an **estimate of accommodation and meal costs** (to be determined separately);
- a statement specifying the amount of any **other funding** provided to the applicant by other institutions for the activity to which the application relates.

Please note that should you choose to depart/return not from/to Florence, **it is necessary to attach the screenshots to prove the economic convenience of your choice.**

4) **Because of the Covid-related situation**, you are all required to submit two further documents upon uploading your requests:

- **Declaration by your PhD coordinator/supervisor (for PhD students) or study plan advisor (for MA students) stating the importance or the urgency of activity;**
- **Acceptance of responsibility signed by the student**

Any change in the authorized off-site activity must be communicated as soon as possible to: didattica.firenze@sns.it.



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N.B. Mobilities during the Covid-19 emergency

- Students are strongly advised to read with the upmost attention the guidelines published at the page: <https://normalenews.sns.it/new-coronavirus-information-for-students-abroad>.

- It is also very helpful to monitor the rules concerning the travel from and to foreign countries through the following link:

<https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/ministero/normativaonline/decreto-iorestoacasa-domande-frequenti/focus-cittadini-italiani-in-rientro-dall-estero-e-cittadini-stranieri-in-italia.html>

How to submit funding requests

Students submit their funding requests through the Platform Ser.se, according to the following procedure.

Off-site research and study activities

After logging-in in the platform Ser.se, it is necessary to follow these steps:

- In the Italian page, click on ALLIEVO and then RICHIESTE MOBILITA'/SPESE RICERCA. In the field NUOVA RICHIESTA select ATTIVITA' DI STUDIO E RICERCA FUORI SEDE and click again on NUOVA RICHIESTA
- In the English page, click on STUDENT and then on MOBILITY REQUESTS/RESEARCH EXPENSES. In the field NEW REQUEST select OFF-SITE RESEARCH AND STUDIES ACTIVITIES and click again on NEW APPLICATION.

It is important to complete all the fields of the window that will open, as most accurately as possible, in order to avoid any possible rejections by either the student's supervisor or by the Offices. The name of the supervisor (or of the PhD coordinator, for 1st year students) will automatically appear. If a student has been appointed also an external supervisor, they need to write their name and email address and attach their email of authorization.

In case it is selected the option "The departure/return is not from/to the seat of your SNS Study Programme", it is necessary to attach the screenshots to prove the convenience, otherwise the students won't be able to submit their requests.

Once all the fields have been completed, click on "Save and continue".

After clicking on "Send to the teacher for the authorization", the request is submitted to the student's supervisor (or PhD coordinator) who can approve or reject it –in this latter case the student is expected to do all the necessary changes/integrations.



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After the supervisor's validation, the request will be submitted to the Office's attention, who can approve or reject it – in this latter case the student is expected to do all the necessary changes/integrations.

After the Office's validation, the request will be submitted to the Mobility Committee.

After the Mobility Committee has gathered, each student will receive a message to inform them about the fund allocation (approved amount, possible money advance, possible rejection) and about the necessary steps to take for the refund request.

English Editing Services

The procedure to follow in order to submit funding for English editing services is the same as the one for the off-site activities, with the difference that you need to select the option SPESE DI RICERCA/RESEARCH EXPENSES.

Please do not forget to attach the motivation letter, and to complete the "Description" and the "Expense Forecast fields".

Please remember that the research expenses for which you are entitled to apply for funding are those to support English editing services only.

Advances and reimbursements

All the costs incurred during **off-site activities lasting less than one month** are refunded at the end of the mobility period, when the student submits the request for reimbursement of expenses. In case of expensive costs to be paid before the departure (e.g. travel and/or accommodation expenses, registration fees) the student may ask for an advance of money before the departure, explaining - in a detailed written note - the reasons: this note must be attached to the authorization request addressed to the Committee.

If the off-site activity lasts more than one month, the student will receive the approved grant in monthly instalments: the first one about 10 days before the beginning of the activity, if it's possible, the last one at the end of it, if still due.

At the end of the activity, students are required to write a report on the completed activities using the appropriate form, and to provide all the original documentation necessary to claim back the expenditures, failing which the Scuola will recover all the eventual sums already advanced.

In case of expenses incurred in a foreign currency, the Offices will apply the exchange rate of the Bank of Italy on the day of the actual purchase. When the activity has been longer than 5 days, it will be applied the average rate between the first and the last day.



In any case, the reimbursement cannot exceed the maximum contribution granted.

Other funding sources are available through the SNS network (Erasmus, Exchange students programme, Fondo Giovani and other mobility funds), students should check them before asking funding to the Mobility Committee: <https://www.sns.it/en/mobility-and-internationalization/off-site-opportunities>.

In case on renunciation

Students may renounce to an activity within 3 months after the authorization has been granted by the Committee: in this case, costs incurred by students are not refundable. Renouncing becomes an obligation if the Committee authorizes the funding for participation in a conference and the student still does not have any information on whether the paper has been accepted.

Students are requested to inform the offices (didattica.firenze.sns.it), before the scheduled departure, about their renunciation.

At the end of the activity (within 30 days after the return)

At the end of the activity, students are required to submit the request for reimbursement of expenses using the appropriate form. Even when the increase of the scholarship covers all the expenses, students are required to submit the reimbursement request form and travel documents or other documentation showing the actual dates of start and end of the activity. If the reimbursement request is not received by the competent SNS office within 30 days after the end of the activity, the amounts already paid will be recovered.

The refund against receipts/invoices is done solely for expenses authorized in advance and only upon submission of the original documentation, in accordance with the reimbursement practices commonly followed by the SNS, as provided for in these guidelines.

Hence, the student requesting a refund of expenses against receipts/invoices must deliver it within 30 days from the end of the activity:

1. The report on the activity and the request for reimbursement. For this purpose, please use the form provided. It is in Excel format and consists of two sheets: one contains the request and the report, the other one the list of supporting documentation for expenditures. Please note that this form must be signed by the applicant and by the Coordinator for acknowledgment.
2. The originals of all supporting documents having fiscal validity neatly **stapled on A4 sheets and divided by date and type of expense. Any document not included in the provided Excel sheet will not be considered.**



Documentation of expenditures

The documentation of expenses must be original and allow to identify the recipient of the amount, the date, the amount paid and the purpose of the expenditure. The documentation must also be fiscally valid and can consist of invoices or receipts. Incomplete or illegible documents will not be considered. Credit card receipts are not valid.

If the original documentation is in a foreign language other than English, French, Spanish or German, the applicant must submit under their responsibility a note in Italian specifying the expenditures for which reimbursement is sought.

The submission of the original documentation is not required if it is stolen or lost, in which case it must result from a report to the competent authorities. The reimbursement of expenses is based on the criterion of coincidence with the period of the authorized activity. In case of long journeys, the day before the start and the day following the end of the activity. Any additional days will be considered only in relation to the length of the journey or in case of documented affordability or documented lack of flights on the dates set.

Only the expenses related to the applicant can be refunded. If a receipt refers to the expenses incurred by several students, only one will submit the original document and apply for the refund of one's share while others will request the payment of their shares by submitting a copy of the receipt and clearly indicating the name of the colleague who presented the original.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses are refundable if the place of departure is Florence (that is the seat of your PhD/MA programme), or other locations where the student may be for other off-site activities duly authorized, or the residence of the student, if more cost-effective: in the latter case, the student must show, through screenshots, that the trip from/to their hometown is cheaper than the one from/to Florence (same dates).

Please bear in mind that:

- The 'default' airport is always **Florence** (because you work in Florence):
- In alternative, you may depart from **Pisa, Bologna or the city of your residence**. In these three cases, we should provide the **screenshots comparing the fare of flights with the alternative fare offered by the Florence airport**. The screenshots have to show that it is **economically more convenient** to fly from Pisa, Bologna or the city of residence than to fly from Florence.
- Another alternative to Florence airport is the **airport of the city in which you are carrying out your research activity**. In this case, **the research activity must have been previously approved by the Mobility Committee**.



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It is not possible to refund flight tickets if the boarding cards are missing. Should this inconvenience happen, it is advisable that you get in touch with the airline company as soon as possible.

Economy class air tickets, second class train tickets (or upper class train tickets if the person proves that there is no additional cost compared to the second class) and local transport fares, even in the form of a pass, are refundable. Only in cases of absence of alternative means documented by the applicant, the SNS may reimburse taxi or personal vehicle expenses. Personal vehicles can be used only in Italy and a prior authorization must be requested through the appropriate form.

Reimbursement of travel costs is made upon submission of the ticket and, in the case of air travel, also of the boarding pass. Travel documents issued in electronic format according to common business practices (electronic ticket, electronic boarding pass etc...) are equivalent to the original.

In the case of travel tickets that do not show the amount paid (for example, inclusive tour rates), the invoice or receipt of the travel agency that issued the ticket must be enclosed, with details of all the services included in the price paid.

As for taxi costs, in the absence of a receipt, the proof of expenditure must contain in any case the date, the vehicle identity code, the indication of the route, the amount paid and must be signed by the taxi driver.

Costs of accommodation

The accommodation expenses (hotel or similar accommodation) are refundable, with the exception of any extra charge (e.g. telephone, minibar, special hotel services). For long stays and if anyway more cost-effective, an apartment, boarding school or residence rental expense is eligible for reimbursement, as long as documented by valid receipts. Housing costs may include, in addition to accommodation, breakfast, half board and full board. In these cases, the expenditure limits for meals are consequently reduced.

Please bear in mind that in case of room rental in private homes, it is necessary to produce a fiscal valid invoice, without which it is not possible to refund the accommodation expenses. A letter signed by a private citizen on simple paper is not a fiscal valid document. A private receipt should ideally present as many features as any other receipt - e.g. date, number of issue, information on the service offered, clarity.

In case of flat rental, a contract is accepted as long as it clearly identifies both the lessee and the tenant, it shows the stay length and the cost.



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Meals expenses

Breakfast, lunch and dinner throughout the day are refundable up to a maximum of 30,00 euros, also taking into account the possible availability of a kitchen. This limit is halved in the days when the period of activity lasts less than eight hours. Supermarkets receipts are eligible for reimbursement provided that any costs relating to products not clearly recognizable as food are clearly separated out and relate only to expenses incurred by the applicant.

Gratuities, whether they are clearly shown only in a credit card receipt or explicitly indicated by a sales receipt, cannot be refunded.

Other expenses

If approved in advance and regularly documented, specific expenses closely related to the off-site activity may also be reimbursed: both registration fees for training activities or seminars and expenses for access to cultural institutions or events which are the subject of the off-site activity fall into this type of expenditures.

Health insurance abroad

The Scuola Normale Superiore has taken out a health insurance policy covering students, PhDs, researchers and teachers during their **authorized mobility periods abroad**.

The SNS Offices managing the authorization processes will also activate the policy for each individual in mobility.

Further information can be found in the relevant page of the Scuola's website: <https://www.sns.it/en/mobility-and-internationalization/off-site-opportunities/health-insurance-for-activities-abroad>.