PhD Program Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn (SZN)
The Open University (OU), XXVIII cycle

Call for PhD students n. 1/2026

Info & Admission - General Info

PhD Program Open University - Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn

Duration of Ph.D. Thesis & Financial Support

Students are expected to complete their thesis within three years, with the possibility of a fourth year without salary, to write up the thesis (should this be necessary). The gross salary is **€18.000,00** per year for three years from which taxes (approximately 18%) will be subtracted. Students are liable to an annual registration fee to be paid to the Open University (not to the Stazione Zoologica).
The Stazione Zoologica will cover the registration fee for three years.
At first, all students are registered as candidates for an MPhil degree (Master of Philosophy). At the end of the first year, in order to be registered for a PhD degree, students are required to meet all the requirements of the "Upgrade assessment". These include the drawing up of a detailed scientific report dealing with the results obtained and the training acquired (Upgrade Report), the evaluation during an Upgrade Viva exam and the feedback report by the Supervision team and the PhD Coordinator. Students passing the Upgrade assessment are registered at the second year of the PhD program.

Admission Requirements

Applicants must hold or be in the process of receiving (within August 5th, 2026):

1. an advanced degree such as a **Master of Science (M.Sc.) or its equivalent** in a scientific area coherent with the project proposed;

and, where English is not the applicant's first language,

2. an **IELTS certificate** (dated within the last two years) with scores that meet the minimum requirements of 6.5 overall score, and no less than 6.0 in any of the four elements (reading, writing, listening and speaking).
Alternative language certificate accepted:

- a degree completed either in the UK or in one of the majority English speaking countries listed below is also considered a proof of English proficiency:

• Antigua and Barbuda
• Australia
• The Bahamas
• Barbados
• Belize
• Dominica
• Grenada
• Guyana
• Ireland
• Jamaica
• Malta
• New Zealand
• St Kitts and Nevis
• St Lucia
• St Vincent and the Grenadines
• Trinidad and Tobago
• United States of America

The PhD Program is in English. Where English is not the applicant's first language, they must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language to support successful study at research degree standard. Fluency in spoken English is assessed during the interview and is a strict requirement.

Thesis Supervision

Each student is assigned a Supervision Team before the start of the program, whose appointment is proposed by the direct supervisor (Director of Studies) and approved by the Open University. The Supervision Team is composed at least by:
- one direct supervisor (Director of Studies), who will guide the student during the whole thesis work and will supervise the student on a daily basis;
- one external supervisor, (not belonging to SZN staff), who will offer an independent assessment of the student progress annually.

It is possible to appoint additional members of the supervision team, as Internal (SZN staff), External (non-SZN staff) Supervisors or Advisors.

Courses and Training

PhD-level training is offered annually with a program including courses on scientific topics and complementary skills, and an International Seminar Program on different topics.

Attendance to courses, seminars and all PhD Program's events is mandatory, in order to qualify for the degree.

All courses, seminars and tutorials are held in English.

Selection procedure

In the application form, candidates are required to select one profile from the following:

(1) Physiological-Molecular
(2) Ecological
(3) Biotechnological

Under the selected profile, they are then requested to select one project.

Each candidate can apply to max two projects. The two projects may be under the same profile or under two different profiles.

If a candidate wishes to apply to only one project, they can repeat the same profile/project as first and second choice.

A selection Commission appointed by the President evaluates the candidates' applications in terms of: academic and professional qualifications consistent with the selected profile/project, the letters of reference and the motivation letter.

Candidates are notified of this first pre-selection and have maximum two weeks to contact the Director of Studies of the project/s related to the profile/s they indicated, to fix an interview to support their candidacy.

The Directors of Studies, at the end of the interviews with the candidates referred to in the previous paragraph, may send to the Commission a letter of interest indicating a preference ranking of the interviewed candidates, indicating the candidates they intend to pre-select for their project and who will be consequently admitted to the interview with the Commission.

Candidates must be pre-selected by at least one Director of Studies to be admitted to the oral examinations.

Within two weeks from the communication above, the Commission shall interview the candidates pre-selected by the Directors of Studies.

The interview is aimed at assessing the candidate's academic and professional experience, the motivation and the interest in the selected project/s.

The interviews are held in English and are conducted, except for restrictions for serious and/or health reasons, by the commission meeting in presence at the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn in Naples and with the participation of candidates in remote session.

After the interviews, the Commissions shall confirm or not the suitability of the candidates and draw up a merit ranking of the suitable candidates for each project. The scholarship will be awarded to the top-ranked candidate on the relevant project's list, in agreement with the Director of Studies.

In the event of a candidate's rejection, the fellowship will be awarded to the next eligible candidate in the ranking list of the relevant project.

If no candidates are assigned to one or more of the advertised projects, the Commission may consider candidates for other projects by drawing from the ranking lists, provided that there is mutual interest from both the candidate and the Director of Studies, until all available places are assigned.

The selected students, subject to the approval of the OU, are admitted to the PhD Programme by President's Decree approving the selection documents and subsequently summoned to sign the contract. The contract, signed for the Stazione Zoologica by the Director General, is in Italian and English.

Selected candidates are expected to start their internship on **October 1st 2026**.

If you have any question regarding the application process, please, contact the Higher Education Office at phdszn(at)szn.it.

Special needs

Candidates with disabilities should please detail in the application form, any eventual facility they require to participate in the interview. Every effort will be made to ensure that they can participate on an equal basis with other candidates and all reasonable arrangements requested by disabled candidates will be adopted.

Practical information

The SZN does not offer lodging or financial support for moving expenses, neither parental support. Students are offered practical support for their settling in Naples through the Higher Education & University Liaison Office that can be contacted at phdszn(at)szn.it.

DEADLINE May 21st, 2026 - h. 12:00

Interviews of selected candidates will be held in videoconference on July 14th and 15th, 2026