

Funding call: Developing the working-life relevance of doctoral training for non-academic career paths

The diversity of doctoral training offered by the University of Oulu is reflected in the employment figures of PhD graduates. On average, the employment figures for PhDs trained in Oulu are very good, but there is variation in the nature of employment, satisfaction with the degree in relation to career, and employment rates across different fields and groups.

Approximately 60% of PhD graduates from our university are employed in non-academic fields. Doctoral training and the skills developed through it provide graduates with good opportunities for employment, but support for career development during training can still be improved. Funding from the NOSTE development program will be directed towards developing the work-life relevance of doctoral training for non-academic careers. This call for applications presents example actions for development work and instructions for applying for funding.

Employment statistics, national and European development trends, and feedback from doctoral researchers highlight areas for development in the work-life relevance of doctoral training for non-academic careers:

1. Recognizing Competence
2. Work-Life Skills of PhDs
3. Support for the Employment of International Doctoral Researchers
4. Collaboration with Non-Academic Working Life

Next, examples of development actions in these areas are presented. Members of units in the University of Oulu can also propose other actions they deem useful and apply for this funding for them.

Funding can be applied for from various units (e.g., faculty, research unit, center for multidisciplinary research, separate unit, doctoral program, doctoral degree program, or research group) or for cross-unit collaboration. Read more about the funding and proposal submission at the end of the text.

1. Recognizing Competence

40% of the PhD graduates from our university report that their work primarily involves research tasks. Therefore, 60% of our PhD graduates are employed in other roles. The most typical roles include planning and development tasks, teaching or educational tasks, leadership and supervisory roles, and patient care work for doctors.

During the dissertation research, many factors influence the progress of the degree. One slowing factor highlighted in the 2024 survey of doctoral researchers conducted by the education quality group in University of Oulu is vague or uncertain career prospects. Doctoral researchers can be increasingly guided to think broadly about their career opportunities.

Example actions to develop the recognition of competence:

- Identify the relevance of a PhD's competence in various sectors (private, non-profit, public, international, etc.) and roles where the unit's PhDs are employed or could be employed.
- Identify and utilize points in doctoral training where the competence and career opportunities of PhDs in the field are communicated to doctoral researchers (supervision, follow-up group, career seminars, interaction with research groups, etc.) and support them in reflecting on their own competence.
- Develop alumni activities and other interactions between the non-academic workforce and doctoral researchers to help future PhDs better understand their employment opportunities.

2. Transitions Between Doctoral Training and Working Life

Skills essential for the employment of all doctoral researchers can be increasingly supported with courses related to work-life skills. On the other hand, the initiation of doctoral training can be facilitated with education and other means.

Example actions to support transitions:

- Develop field-specific training or events on work-life skills for doctoral researchers.
- Support the transition from other work-life to doctoral training:

- Preparatory studies for those applying for doctoral training.
- Productize the opportunities for work-life collaboration in doctoral training with the aim of enhancing the degree's recognition and appreciation in working life.
- Promote collaboration with research institutions.
- Enable/support international internships.

3. Support for the Employment of International Doctoral Researchers

In the figures measuring the placement of non-EU or non-EEA citizens one year after PhD graduation from the University of Oulu, an average of 52% have been employed in Finland. On average, 28% have moved abroad, and another 15% appear in the placement statistics under the category "other," which likely includes mostly those who have moved abroad. International doctoral researchers need more support within the university to increase the likelihood of their employment and staying in the country. A clearer picture of their future opportunities after graduation also supports the well-being of international talents and the progress of their degree.

Example actions to support the employment of international doctoral researchers:

- Develop measures through which weekly language study time is ensured in work plans and in development discussions
- Develop measures to ensure that international doctoral researchers encounter Finnish language and culture in their daily lives, considering the effects of multi-location and remote work on the amount and quality of interaction
- Develop opportunities for international doctoral researchers to prepare a language study plan ([link](#))
- Develop training or activities related to work-life knowledge in their own field for international doctoral researchers.

4. Collaboration with Non-Academic Working Life

The largest single employer of PhDs are universities, which employed 38% of the PhDs graduated from the University of Oulu who responded to the national career monitoring survey of the Aarresaari network in 2021–2023. A total of 26% of graduates were employed by private companies of various sizes, and another approximately 30% were employed by municipalities and the state.

Efforts are being made to increase the number of PhDs in Finland, and the University of Oulu has been successful in this. As the number of degrees increases, the relative proportion of PhDs employed in academia decreases, and the importance of the degree's relevance to non-academic working life grows. At the same time, the University competes more intensively for both undergraduate students and doctoral researchers, both nationally and internationally. Visible and clear work-life collaboration at the University attracts future PhDs heading towards the business world and elsewhere and supports doctoral researchers during their training and post-graduation placement.

Example actions to develop work-life collaboration:

- Improve the visibility and accessibility of existing work-life or business collaboration involving doctoral researchers by mapping these activities and communicating about them
- Create or further develop forms of work-life collaboration suitable for the field, such as:
 - Increase doctoral researchers' work-life knowledge and create networking opportunities:
 - Utilize work-life members in follow-up groups in mentoring roles
 - Develop work-life visits or internships
 - Organize joint supervision
 - Deepen business collaboration:
 - Develop joint research projects or co-funding models for degrees in business collaboration
 - Create a collaboration program with a business partner where the desired activities are repeated regularly
- Prepare funding and business collaboration applications (e.g., Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) industrial doctorates program).

Description of the funding

The funding is part of the education development program NOSTE in University of Oulu, and the funding will be transferred through the Graduate School.

A total of 217 000 € will be granted for the period of 8/2025–12/2026.

Funding will be granted based on the proposals submitted. The proposed actions can be the same as the example actions listed here or in the proposal form, or other actions deemed useful in promoting the work-life relevance of doctoral training within the unit

The amount of funding sought, and a simple budget should be presented on the proposal form.

Proposals will be evaluated based on how realistic and effective the proposed actions seem, also in relation to the proposed budget. Funding will especially be directed to pilot or development actions which will continue after the end of the funding period.

Several proposals from the same unit (e.g., faculty, research unit, center for multidisciplinary research, separate units, doctoral program, doctoral degree program, research group) may receive funding. Various development actions can also be compiled into a single proposal. The proposed actions can cross unit boundaries and utilize different partners. The proposed actions can concern the entire unit or be smaller in scale. Funding can be applied for by individual actors or groups within the units, or by entities representing the entire unit.

How to submit a proposal

1. Download and fill in this excel proposal form: [link to the form](#).
If you have questions about the funding or filling in the form, please contact uniogs@oulu.fi
2. Send the filled form to the dean of your faculty or, in other units, to the unit leader.
3. Upon reviewing and accepting the proposal, the dean/leader should send the proposal form to uniogs@oulu.fi **on April 30th 2025 at the latest.**

If necessary, the Graduate School will ask the dean/leader to prioritise proposals from the same unit.

The Graduate School management group will make the decision about granting the funding in its meeting on May 9th, 2025, based on a proposal by the Graduate School.

Funding seekers and deans/unit leaders will be notified of the decision on the week beginning on May 12th, 2025.

Further reading

CESAER (2024) Models of engagement for PhDs with non-academic partners (<https://www.cesaer.org/content/5-operations/2024/20241017-phd-report/20241017-report-models-of-engagement-for-phds-with-non-academic-partners.pdf>)

Sivista (2023) Tohtorit työelämässä – tilastokatsaus 2023 (<https://www.sivista.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Tilastokatsaus-tohtoreihin-2023-2.pdf>)

Tohtoreiden ura- ja työmarkkinaseuranta - vuonna 2020 Oulun yliopistossa tohtorin tutkinnon suorittaneiden sijoittuminen työmarkkinoille (<https://unioulu.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Liitetiedostot-Attachments/EQREKVRXFaxGi1J5d5Gk4i0BHMfHtNII9Txhr89mBtXHSQ?e=3iLPJU>)

Vipunen – Yliopistosta valmistuneiden sijoittuminen. Tietokannassa esitetty tohtoreiden sijoittumistietoja mm. yliopistoittain, aloittain ja kansalaisuuksittain jaoteltuna. (https://vipunen.fi/fi-fi/_layouts/15/xlviewer.aspx?id=/fi-fi/Raportit/Yliopistosta%20valmistuneiden%20ty%C3%B6llistyminen%20-%20koulutusaste.xlsb)

Vipunen – Tohtoreiden uraseuranta. PowerBi-esitys tohtoreiden tyytyväisyydestä tutkintoon ja sijoittumisesta sektoreittain. (<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNjkyN2EzZWEtNWQ3Yi00ZWQ3LWEzYmYtNjM3OTBIMDhjOTY5liwidCI6IjxMDczODIklTQ0YjgtNDcxNi05ZGEyLWM0ZTNhY2YwMzBkYiIsImMiOj9>)