

Call for Applications

ESTER Research Design Course

How to strengthen your dissertation project?

The **E**uropean graduate **S**chool for **T**raining in **E**conomic and **S**ocial **H**istorical **R**esearch (ESTER) is a European platform for postgraduate teaching. ESTER announces its annual Research Design Course (RDC) for economic and social historians on

23 – 26 October 2022 in Lund (Sweden)

The **ESTER** network, established in 1991, involves more than 60 universities throughout Europe and offers high-level research training for PhD candidates in an international context. This year's Research Design Course will take place at Lund and will be sponsored by Lund University, [department of Economic History, School of Economics and Management](#), and [department of History, joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology](#). This year's edition will be organised by Jaco Zuijderduijn and Christina Rothman (Lund University), Rogier van Kooten and René van Weeren (Utrecht University).

The Research Design Course (RDC) is a format promoted by ESTER since the late 1990s. The RDC assists candidates in setting up a high quality and well-designed plan for their dissertation under the guidance of a team of senior researchers and research design specialists whose task it is to provide comments and feedback.

Thus, the RDC is not a “course” in which an instructor will give a lecture or that you will discuss historical theories in a seminar setting. Instead, it is focussed on presentations of individual projects and the ensuing discussions on how to improve them.

Therefore, you will be asked to write a paper in which you discuss the design of your research. The aim of this methodological reflection is to investigate the scientific procedures that historians use to reach scientific explanations and to combine all analytical elements into a synthetic and coherent historical account. In this paper, you will also prepare a detailed work plan for the dissertation. The length of the paper should be around 25 pages, and needs to provide the structure of the remaining research, and therefore the dissertation itself. Subsequently, you will give a brief presentation during

the conference, act as reporter, chair and peer commentator for other papers, and will receive feedback from junior and senior scholars in the field.

The goal of the RDC course is to offer PhD candidates assistance in:

- Sharpening and refining their research questions;
- Strengthening the focus of their research;
- Increasing the consistency of their overall dissertation plan;
- Making explicit the various theoretical and methodological choices that have to be made in the course of the project;
- Improving the composition of the dissertation;
- Learn how to provide feedback to your peers;

The RDC course thereby aims at a better awareness of research choices that can be made.

Description and organisation of the RDC

The Research Design Course is a three-day workshop, in which the PhD candidates, divided in three to four groups, will discuss their work and that of others. Each participant will write a paper of 25 pages, according to the provided guidelines, in which they explicate their research theme and methodology. A group session will take about 70 minutes, in which all papers are presented and cross-examined by fellow PhD candidates and appointed senior commentators. This will be concluded with a general discussion. Prior to the workshop, all papers will be circulated, so the participants can prepare them in advance. On the last day of the RDC, each participant will be awarded with a certificate.

Requirements

The RDC programme is intended for PhD candidates in economic and social history, regardless of their research subject. Although this is the case, there are a couple of requirements, that should be met. At the time of the Research Design Course:

- Candidates should be (at the very least) finishing the first year of their dissertation project. The methodology and research design should not be fully crystallised.
- Participants should have been working on their research for at least six months, when they start writing their paper.
- The main language of this event is English. Therefore, all participant should be able to have mastered it at a sufficient level.

Applications and admission

PhD candidates can apply via our [online registration form](#), which should also include an abstract between 400-800 words of their dissertation project. Based on this short summary, the organisation will make a first selection. Once the candidates have been accepted, they will be asked to write their research paper conform the provided guidelines. The final admission depends upon the following criteria:

- The candidates must meet the deadline for submission of his/her paper;
- The quality of the paper: the papers must be of sufficient academic quality, and the level of the English used in the paper must be sufficient.

Dates and location

The 2022 RDC will take place at [Lund University, School of Economics and Management](#) and [Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology](#). The course will start with an informal welcome session on Sunday 23 October around 6 pm. The course will end on Wednesday 26 October around 4 pm. Candidates wishing to participate are requested to send in their application no later than **15 June 2022**, using the [online form](#).

Time path

5 April	Call for Applications
20 May	Reminder Call for Applications
15 June	Deadline application
1 July	Selection completed, applicants informed
23 September	Deadline paper submission
30 September	Papers online for reading
23-26 October	RDC Lund

Costs & Accommodation

There are no registration costs, but travel and accommodation will be at the expense of the participants. Lund University has already reserved rooms in the [University](#)

[Guesthouse](#) at a very reasonable rate. The participants (or home institutions) are also required to organise their own travel arrangements from and to Lund. Although, most of the catering will be pre-arranged, this will not be the case on Tuesday evening. Therefore, the candidates should take into account that they will have to make their own dinner arrangements. In exceptional cases, candidates may apply for a travel subsidy; this only applies to candidates who have no options for such funding at all.

Contact

For inquiries concerning this course, please contact the education programme director of ESTER: Dr Rogier van Kooten (r.vankooten@uu.nl)