Call for Applications - Extended deadline

ESTER Research Design Course

How to strengthen your dissertation project?

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

24 – 27 September 2023 in Vienna (Austria)

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 in Vienna and will be hosted by the University of Vienna, [Department of Economic and Social History](univie.ac.at) (univie.ac.at) and [Department of Economics](). The organising committee is formed by Annemarie Steidl, Kirsten Wandschneider (both University of Vienna), Rogier van Kooten and René van Weeren (both N.W. Posthumus Institute).

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 must be made during 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 into 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 read these in advance. On the final day of the RDC, each participant will be awarded a certificate.

Requirements

The RDC programme is intended for PhD candidates in Economic and Social History, regardless of their research subject. Nevertheless, a couple of requirements should be met. At the time of the Research Design Course:

- Candidates should (at the very least) be 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 participants should be able to have mastered English 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 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 the paper;
- The quality of the paper: the papers must be of sufficient academic quality, and the level of English used in the paper must be sufficient.

Dates and location

The 2023 RDC will take place at the University of Vienna, Department of Economics (univie.ac.at). The course will start with an informal welcome session on Sunday 24 September around 6 pm. The course will end on Wednesday 27 September around 4 pm. Candidates wishing to participate are requested to send in their application no later than **1 July 2023 (extended deadline),** using the [online form](#).

Time path

3 April	Call for Applications
22 May	Reminder Call for Applications
1 July	Deadline application
7 July	Selection completed; applicants informed
1 September	Deadline paper submission
4 September	Papers online for reading
25-27 September	RDC Vienna

Costs & Accommodation

There are no registration costs but travel and accommodation will be at the expense of the participants. Although most of the catering will be pre-arranged, this will not be the case on Tuesday evening. Therefore, the candidates should consider making their own dinner arrangements for Tuesday evening. 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).