KU LEUVEN

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

NAAMSESTRAAT 69

FAQ: PHD POSITIONS IN ECONOMICS – 2027-2028

ELIGIBILITY AND RESEARCH MASTER'S REQUIREMENT

AM I ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR THE PHD?

To be considered for admission to the PhD programme, you must hold a master's degree that is considered an advanced, **research-oriented master's degree** (henceforth referred to as a research master). The Department's selection committee, consisting of potential PhD supervisors, reviews applications and selects candidates for PhD positions. Candidates selected by the Department must subsequently complete the Faculty's formal admission procedure and meet the doctoral programme's formal admission requirements. Depending on your academic background, you may be asked to complete the Master of Advanced Studies in Economics (MASE) at KU Leuven before beginning the four-year PhD programme.

If your degree meets the research master's requirement and you are selected by the Department, you may be offered a funded PhD position.

WHAT IF MY DEGREE DOES NOT FULLY MEET THE RESEARCH MASTER'S REQUIREMENT?

Admission to the programme is assessed through the official application procedure, case-by-case. As such, we are unable to provide a preliminary assessment of your eligibility by email. The Department's selection committee may consider one of the following options:

1. DIRECT ENTRY WITH ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

If you receive exemptions for at least three courses in the MASE programme (of which at least two must be core courses), you may be considered for direct admission to the PhD programme. The remaining MASE courses will be included in your doctoral training programme as an individual Doctum Colloquium. The decision to proceed directly to the PhD or first complete the remaining MASE courses is made in consultation with the departmental selection committee. The Faculty Board and the Programme Director determine which courses count towards an exemption.

Please note that even if you are eligible for direct entry, this may not be your best option, as additional coursework may substantially reduce the time available for research during your first year.

2. MASE PROGRAMME WITH DEPARTMENTAL FUNDING

For the most promising candidates, the Department offers a limited number of MASE fellowships. If the selection committee considers your application strong but determines that you first need additional research training, you may be offered a MASE fellowship instead of direct admission to the PhD programme.

3. MASE PROGRAMME WITHOUT DEPARTMENTAL FUNDING

You may also enroll in the MASE as a self-supporting student, subject to the programme's admission procedure. Please consult the MASE programme website for information about the programme and its admission requirements.

For options 2 and 3, successfully completing the MASE with at least honours meets the degree requirement for admission to the PhD programme. However, this does not guarantee that you will be offered a PhD position. As with any PhD admission, you must still be selected for a position and have a faculty member willing and able to supervise and fund your PhD. You must also complete the Faculty's formal admission procedure.

THE MASE

WHAT IS THE MASE?

The Master of Advanced Studies in Economics (MASE) is an advanced master's programme designed for students with a strong background in economics and a keen interest in recent analytical developments in the field. It provides excellent preparation for a PhD in economics, among other career paths. For the most promising candidates, a limited number of MASE fellowships are available.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE MASE FELLOWSHIP?

Applications for a MASE fellowship are submitted through the same vacancy as PhD applications. There is no separate application procedure. If the Department's selection committee considers your application strong but determines that you first need additional research training, it may offer you a MASE fellowship instead of a PhD position.

WHEN IS THE DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR THE MASE?

- 1 May 2027 for applicants from outside the European Economic Area (EEA)
- 1 July 2027 for applicants from the EEA

Applications submitted after the relevant deadline will not be evaluated.

REFERENCE LETTERS

HOW SHOULD REFERENCE LETTERS BE SENT?

Reference letters must be sent to econresearch@kuleuven.be **directly by the referee or supervisor**. Letters submitted by the applicant will not be accepted.

HOW MANY REFERENCE LETTERS ARE REQUIRED?

There is no fixed number of reference letters required. You may submit as many as you consider relevant to your application, but the quality and relevance of the letters matter more than the quantity.

WHEN IS THE DEADLINE FOR REFERENCE LETTERS?

Ideally, reference letters should be submitted before the PhD application deadline of 31 January 2027. However, letters arriving shortly after the deadline can still be considered. The first assessment of applications begins shortly after the deadline, and shortlisted candidates will be contacted mid-February. If you expect your reference letters to arrive late, please contact econresearch@kuleuven.be.

RESEARCH STATEMENT

WHAT SHOULD THE RESEARCH STATEMENT INCLUDE? IS THERE A SPECIFIC FORMAT?

There are no strict requirements for the format of the research statement. The following guidelines may help:

- Discuss your personal motivation and research interests.
- Explain how your academic background and skills have prepared you to undertake a PhD project.
- Highlight the skills and competencies you have already developed, and identify areas in which you would like to grow as a researcher.
- Briefly describe a research topic you would be interested in pursuing during the PhD and how it connects to the research interests of our faculty.

TEST SCORES

DO I NEED TO SUBMIT TEST SCORES?

GRE or GMAT scores and proof of English-language proficiency (e.g. TOEFL or IELTS) are recommended, but are not mandatory at the application stage.

- These scores are optional but can strengthen your application by demonstrating your academic aptitude and English-language proficiency.
- As PhD positions are competitive, a strong application package, including test scores where available, can help demonstrate your suitability.

Please note that this only applies to the Department's annual PhD call. If you are selected for a PhD position, you will subsequently need to complete the Faculty's formal admission procedure and meet the doctoral programme's official admission requirements, including language requirements and additional credentials. These are outlined here.

CONTACTING POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS

SHOULD I CONTACT POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS BEFORE APPLYING?

No, contacting a potential supervisor before applying is not necessary and will not give your application an advantage. Applications must be submitted directly through the PhD vacancy, and there is no need to contact potential supervisors beforehand. The Department's selection committee, consisting of potential PhD supervisors, reviews all applications and contacts shortlisted candidates to schedule an online interview. Candidates selected by the Department must subsequently complete the Faculty's formal admission procedure for the doctoral programme.

TIMELINE

18 November 2026	PhD Call opens
31 January 2027	Application deadline
Early to mid-February 2027	Initial assessment of applications
Mid-February to late March 2027	Online interviews for shortlisted candidates
By the end of March 2027	Applicants are informed about the outcome of their application
20 September 2027	Start of the academic year and expected start of the PhD programme

WHEN WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE BEEN SELECTED?

The Department's selection committee reviews applications from February onwards and contacts shortlisted candidates for online interviews. All candidates will be informed about the outcome of their application by the end of March 2027 at the latest.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Research Advisors of the Department of Economics at **econresearch@kuleuven.be.**