

Public competition announcement for admission to the PhD programme in Agro-Food
System at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – XLI cycle – Piacenza Campus

Art. 1
Opening

For each PhD programme, for which an open competition is announced, the coordinator, duration, number of places on the course, number of scholarships, affiliated institutions, sites and calendar of competition examinations are indicated.

The number of scholarships may increase as a result of funding from public and private institutions, provided that the related agreement is signed within the date of expiration of the public announcement.

An increase in the number of available scholarships may result in an increase in the number of positions opened for public competition. Any further changes and / or additional information to the competition will be published on the website <https://dottorati.unicatt.it/concorsi>

The activation of the PhD programme and the related selection procedures are subjected to the accreditation and the verification of the maintenance of requirements by the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR).

Coordinator: Professor Paolo AJMONE MARSAN

Duration: 3 years

Positions: 24

Scholarship-based positions: 18

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Innovative approaches for the control of Alternaria toxins in the tomato production chain”, financed by Regione Emilia-Romagna within the framework of the completion of the program for rural development under the 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plan, EU Regulation (EU) No 2021/2115 of 02/12/21, intervention SRG01, support to PEI AGRI Operational Groups INNOPOM Project – Innovative systems for Alternaria control and related mycotoxins in tomatoes, CUP: E47F23002390007;

of which no.1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Strategies to improve the health, welfare and sustainability of dairy cows”, financed by Regione Emilia-Romagna (DGR n. 315 of 10/03/2025), within the 41st-cycle research-training programme - Advanced skills for the resilience of territories and communities.- submitted following the Avviso approved by DGR n. 2072/2024. PR FSE+ 2021/2027. Priority 2 - Education and Training - Specific objective e)”, CUP J33C25000250008;



of which no.1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Development of a forecasting model for the acid-rot complex in viticulture: the role of Drosophila as vector and metabolic mediator”, financed by Regione Emilia-Romagna (DGR n. 732 of 19/05/2025) within the 41st-cycle research-training programme “Advanced skills to meet the challenges of the technological, cultural, economic and social transition towards sustainability.”- submitted following the Avviso approved by DGR n. 344/2025. PR FSE+ 2021/2027. Priority 2 - Education and Training - Specific objective e)”, CUP J33C25000580002;

of which no.1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Survey and pilot interventions for the promotion of integrated rural development in Low-Income Countries”, financed by Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi Foundation, Research Center C3S “Production of proper food: sufficient, safe and sustainable”;

of which no. 2 places with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “The genomic and system biology of heat stress in livestock” financed by Romeo ed Enrica Invernizzi Foundation, Nutrigenomic and Proteomic Research Center – PRONUTRIGEN and Research Center on Sustainable Dairy Production – CREI;

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Food consumption, psychology and planetary health: among consumers’ perceptions, communication practices and behavioral change” financed by Invernizzi Reference Center on Agri-Food - IRCAF;

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Mitigation strategies for methane and ammonia emissions in dairy cattle” financed by Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi, Research Center on Sustainable Dairy Production – CREI;

of which no.1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Reduction of Clostridium spp. contamination and improvement of feed quality in livestock farms”, financed by Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi, Research Center on Sustainable Dairy Production – CREI;

of which no.1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “The role of dairy products in promoting healthy and sustainable diets: new perspectives for integrating nutritional aspects into life cycle assessment” financed by Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi Foundation;

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Use of SNP markers and whole genome sequences to investigate livestock and fish biodiversity” financed by Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi Foundation;

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Risk assessment of antimicrobial resistance in the food system: the role of microbiomes in the spread of AMR bacteria and genes”, financed by Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi Foundation;



of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Innovative Food Biotechnologies for microbiological food safety”, financed by the European project ELEVATE - Empowering HEIs for Sustainable Entrepreneurship & Interdisciplinary Innovation, Proposal Number 24585, CUP J33C25000400006;

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Innovations in the management of wine-making processes and by-products”;

of which no. 1 place with scholarship for the implementation of the research project “Processing Foods to Design Structures for Optimal Functionality and Performance”;

of which no.1 place with scholarship, named after Eugenio and Germana Parizzi Foundation, for the implementation of the research project “Development of new protocols for precision viticulture”;

For the 41st cycle, in addition to the no. 16 finalised scholarships, the University provides no. 2 scholarships in the Economic-Legal area.

Places without a scholarship:

- no. 1 place for the Economic-Legal area;
- no. 5 place for the Biological-Agricultural area.

Information : <https://dottorati.unicatt.it/agrisystem>

Calendar of examinations:

Evaluations of qualifications to access the oral exam:

Economic-Legal area panel:
Tuesday, September 23rd, 2025

Biological-Agricultural area panel:
Wednesday, September 24th, 2025

Oral exam:

Economic-Legal area panel:
Friday, September 26th, 2025 - 10:00 a.m. (Law department meeting room).

Biological-Agricultural area panel:
Monday, September 29th, 2025 – 9:00 a.m. (sala Consiglio);
Tuesday, September 30th, 2025 – 9:00 a.m. (sala Consiglio).



Art. 2 Admission requirements

PhD programmes are open, without age or nationality restrictions, to those who hold a Master of Science degree, or a degree awarded in accordance with the educational regulations prior to the entry into force of Italian Ministerial Decree, of 3 November 1999, No 509, as amended and supplemented, or a suitable foreign qualification.

Applications may also be submitted by those who will obtain the abovementioned qualification, in Italy or abroad, referred to in the first paragraph of the present article by October 31st, 2025.

Art. 3 Application form

Candidates who intend to participate in the competition must submit an application to the Rector of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore **by Wednesday, September 10th, 2025.**

The application form is available online at <https://dottorati.unicatt.it/concorsi> until 12 p.m. (local time) on the closing date of this notice.

In the application form, to be filled in online only, available in Italian and English, candidates shall precisely declare under their responsibility:

- which finalised scholarship or research area they intend to compete for;
- the intention to compete only for a place without a scholarship;
- their personal information: surname, first name, fiscal code (for Italian nationals only), date and place of birth, citizenship, residence and domicile elected for the purposes of the competition;
- for graduate students: university degree, date it was obtained and name of the conferring university;
- for undergraduate students: university degree, candidates are studying towards, expected date it will be obtained and name of the conferring university (whether in Italy or abroad);
- foreign languages known.

On pain of exclusion, candidates must complete their application with the following documents upload format *.pdf* or *.jpg*:

- detailed *curriculum vitae* (only English version);
- for graduate students: a copy of the Master of Science degree document with final mark and exam transcripts, and exam transcripts (Italian or English version);
- for students about to graduate: a certified proof of enrolment a Master's degree programmes with exam transcripts (Italian or English version);
- a motivational letter, only English version (max. 30 lines), indicating reasons for application, expectations and fields of interest;
- a research project, only English version (max. 2,000 words), indicating topic, hypotheses and methodology deemed most suitable to the finalised scholarship or research area they intend to compete.

The project must be countersigned by a university professor or researcher in national or international scientific institutions.



In the absence of countersignature, a letter of introduction, only English version, by university professors or researchers in national or international scientific institutions has to be included in the application;

- copy of an identification document, duly signed;
- card-size photograph;
- for students with a qualification obtained or to be obtained abroad in NON-EU countries: translation, legalisation and Declaration of Value required at the offices of the Italian Consulate/Embassy in the country where the qualification was obtained or will be obtained. EU students may submit the Diploma Supplement of their home university as an alternative to the Declaration of Value. Pursuant to Article 8 of Ministerial Decree 226/21, the suitability of the foreign qualification is ascertained by the Commission for admission to the PhD course, in compliance with the legislation in force in Italy and in the country where the qualification was awarded, as well as with international treaties or agreements on the recognition of qualifications for the pursuit of studies;
- additional documentation specifically required for each individual PhD programme.

Applications may further contain – upload format .pdf or .jpg:

- certification of any other qualification, such as postgraduate and specialisation degrees, obtained in Italy or abroad, with exam transcripts;
- a copy of any other qualification deemed useful for the purposes of assessment, and a list thereof on unstamped paper;
- a list, on unstamped paper, of publications deemed relevant for the purposes of assessment, and a copy of the publications that candidates intend to make known to the Panel.

Applications may further contain any of the following certificates attesting English language knowledge:

- BEC (*Business English Certificates*);
- CAE (*Certificate in Advanced English*);
- CPE (*Certificate of Proficiency in English*);
- IELTS (*International English Language Testing System*);
- TOEFL (*Test of English as a Foreign Language*).

The application will only be complete and valid after:

- having uploaded all mandatory documents and any optional documents;
- having paid the selection fee of € 50.00 (non-refundable) to be paid *online*;
- downloading the application file, which will be generated automatically by the system;
- uploading the .pdf file of the application itself on the portal.

Applicants are asked to confirm what they have submitted at each step by clicking on the 'continue' icon, at the bottom right corner.

As proof of the validity of the application, the candidate will receive a confirmation *email* from the PhD Office.



In the event of non-receipt of the *email*, the candidate will have to log back into the portal to complete the procedure and finalise the application.

The University reserves the right to adopt, even after the competition examinations have been held, measures for the exclusion of candidates who do not meet the requirements or who have not complied with the provisions of the notice of competition.

Applicants with disabilities, for the purposes of the competition, must specify in their application the aid required in relation to their disability, pursuant to Italian Law No. 104 of 5 February 1992.

Art. 4 **Admission to the PhD programme**

The admission examinations consist in the assessment of candidates' qualifications and an oral examination.

In relation to the qualities ascertained, the Panels assign each candidate max. 60 points for each of the two examinations.

Only candidates obtaining a minimum score of 40/60 in the assessment of qualifications are admitted to the oral examination.

For this purpose, the following elements will be evaluated:

- degree relevant to the areas relating to the doctorate, degree mark or average marks for undergraduates at the time of evaluation of qualifications, achievement of masters degrees, participation in higher education university courses, internships and traineeships consistent with the chosen research address, research grants and scholarships, publications in national and international journals relating to the agro- food sector, work and collaboration experiences in applied research at universities and public or private bodies (score up to 30/60);
- research project, motivational letter and certifications related to the knowledge of the English language as per the previous art. 4 (score up to 30/60).

The oral examination consists in the assessment of candidates' knowledge of the general aspects of the topics of interest of the PhD Programme and research area chosen, as well as aptitude to scientific research. The oral examination is passed with a minimum score of 40/60.

The interview in English will take place in person at the Piacenza campus of Università Cattolica in Via Emilia Parmense 84.

Candidates unable to take the oral exam at the Piacenza campus may request, by the deadline of the competition, to sit the oral exam through *Microsoft Teams*, by sending an e-mail to agrisystem-pc@unicatt.it explaining the request.

The candidate can be excluded if not available found on the agreed day and time. Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore shall bear no responsibility if any technical reasons prevent the effective conduction of the interview.



Candidates are admitted to the PhD Programme according to the two final merit-based ranking lists of each Research Area, until coverage of the number of positions opened has been completed, with the exclusion of the positions funded by «finalised scholarships» for which dedicated merit-based ranking lists shall be drawn.

Candidates applying for a «finalised scholarship» who result to be eligible but do not win the competition, will be inserted, based on their scoring, in the general ranking list of their reference area, so as to compete for other scholarships or for a position without scholarship.

The "finalised scholarships" may not be assigned to candidates competing for positions different from those related to the finalised scholarship.

The non-finalised scholarships and the positions without scholarship that, for lack of eligible candidates or due to forfeiture, are not assigned in a Research Area, may be assigned to candidates of the other Research Area based on their ranking.

In order to be allowed to take the examinations, candidates must show a valid identification document pursuant to Art. 35, second Paragraph, of Presidential Decree no. 445 of December 28th, 2000 (identity card, driving license, passport).

Art. 5

Examination Panels

Two Examination Panels for admission to the PhD Programme in Agro-Food System shall be appointed: one for the Biological-Agricultural Area and one for the Economic-Legal Area. Each Examination Panel will consist of three tenured academics, to whom no more than two (also foreign) experts from institutions and public and private research institutes may be added. The Examination Panels shall be appointed by the Rector, upon the proposal of the Teaching Panel.

The composition of the Panels will be published, after the expiration date of the present public announcement, at <https://dottorati.unicatt.it/examination-board>

Art. 6

Results of the competition

The Examination Panels shall arrange separate comparative evaluations of qualifications and separate final merit rankings. Specific comparative evaluations and merit rankings shall be arranged for each “finalised scholarship”.

The results of the evaluation of the qualifications for admission to the oral exam shall be notified to participants, on the dates in Art. 1, via online publication at:

<https://dottorati.unicatt.it/results>

<https://dottorati.unicatt.it/agrisystem>



Art. 7
Admission to the PhD Programme

Candidates are admitted to the PhD Programme according to their ranking until coverage of the number of positions has been completed. Should successful candidates withdraw before the beginning of the Programme, the positions will be covered by the candidates next in line in the ranking.

Provided that they are successful in the admission examinations, research fellows holding grants may be admitted to a PhD Programme as supernumerary in the positions without scholarship, retaining their grant, upon condition that the PhD Programme in which they enroll refers to the same scientific area of research for which they are enjoying their grants.

By virtue of the signed agreement, the doctoral students in the Ph.D. Programme will have the opportunity to join the “Double Doctorate Degree” in Agro-Food System organized by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, and in *Ciencias de Recursos Naturales* organized by Universidad de La Frontera (*Temuco, Chile*). Students admitted to the “Double Doctorate Degree” will receive advanced training through the teaching programme of Dottorado y Magíster en Ciencias de Recursos Naturales of *Universidad de La Frontera*, and they will have to spend at least six months at this university.

Art. 8
Enrolment

The winners of the competition must complete enrolment within 3 days starting from the day following the one in which the related email with the invitation will be received, by accessing the following website: <https://iscrizioni.unicatt.it/iscrizioni/>

To obtain a Visa, applicants, after completing the registration procedure, must register on the following website: www.universitaly.it and follow the indicated procedure.

Art. 9
Scholarships and contributions

Tuition fees for the Programme at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore are set out annually by the Board of Directors.

PhD students enrolled in the 41st cycle are required to pay annually the contributions for access to the doctoral courses in the amount of € 836.00, to be paid in no. 2 installments, the first, of € 536.00, upon enrollment or renewal of registration, and the second, of € 300.00, by April 30th of each year.

For Italian Law, the enjoyment of a scholarship to attend the PhD Programme is compatible with other income earned, also on a regular basis, in the calendar year of the scholarship, provided that such income does not exceed the amount of the scholarship itself. Should these income limits be surpassed, the scholarship shall be revoked for the year in question. For the verification of the income limits, scholarship assignees shall annually declare the income earned and notify exceeding of the prescribed limit.



Scholarships are awarded for one year and are renewed on condition that the PhD student has completed the programme of activities planned for the previous year.

The amount of the scholarship, paid in monthly instalments, is € 16,243.00 per year, before social security charges.

The scholarship is subjected to the payment of social security contributions (INPS separate management) pursuant to Art. 2, Paragraph 26, of the Italian Law 335 dated of August 8th, 1995, and subsequent amendments.

The scholarship is exempt from local income tax and personal income tax (IRPEF). The scholarship amount shall be increased by max. 50 percent, for a period not over 12 months, if the PhD student is authorised by the Teaching Panel to conduct research abroad.

Starting from the first year, to each PhD student, with or without a scholarship, is granted a sum covering research activities in Italy and abroad amounting to 10% of the annual gross amount of the scholarship, equal to € 1,624.30.

Those who have previously, even partially for another PhD course, benefited from it may not be eligible for a doctorate scholarship.

Art. 10

Public employees

Current legislation on leave of absence or special leave applies to public employees admitted to the PhD Programme.

Art. 11

Rights and duties of PhD students

PhD students are required to regularly follow the activities envisaged for their training and to devote themselves with full commitment to individual and guided study programmes and to carrying out the research activities assigned by the Board of Professors. PhD students are also required to read the Code of Ethics of Università Cattolica and to respect its principles and aims.

Art. 12

Public disclosure

This public announcement is published on the website of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore at <https://dottorati.unicatt.it/concorsi> on the Euraxess European website and on the Ministry of Universities and Research website.

Art. 13

Final provisions

This public announcement was originally written in Italian and has been translated into English for easy reference only. The Italian version will be considered definitive for any questions of interpretation. For all matters not expressly provided for in this notice, the provisions of



Rector's Decree No.1098 of 26 February 2025 shall apply: «Amendments to the “Regulations for PhD programmes and PhD schools at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore”» and current regulations.

Further information can be obtained from the PhD Programmes Secretariat (office hours: Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 12.30 pm), phone no. + 39 0523 599.476 / 493, or at agrisystem-pc@unicatt.it or at <https://dottorati.unicatt.it/agrisystem>.

The person in charge of the procedure for this call for applications is Dr Roberto BRAMBILLA, Director of Postgraduate Education and Research Partnership, Via Carducci 28/30, Milan (Italy).

