

FIRST OFFICIAL CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

FIRST CALL – FIRST COHORT – FIRST STAGE

CRISSS Project (CRISSS: Capacity Building for Research and Innovation at the University of Holguín: Accelerating National Development through the Engineering of Smart Service Solutions)

Joint Doctoral School in Engineering Development between the University of Holguín and Flemish Universities (KU Leuven, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Hasselt University and Ghent University)

Reference number: IUC-JDS-ED-2026-01

Date of publication	25 may 2026
Application deadline	25 June 2026, 23:59 EST
Number of PhD positions	30
Expected start date	September 2026
Preliminary PhD duration (first stage)	6 months

1 Programme overview

The Joint Doctoral School in Engineering Development (JDS-ED) is a collaborative initiative between the University of Holguín and Flemish Universities (KU Leuven, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Hasselt University and Ghent University), established under the framework of the CRISSS Project (*CRISSS: Capacity Building for Research and Innovation at the University of Holguín: Accelerating National Development through the Engineering of Smart Service Solutions*) with funding from the Flemish Inter-University Council (VLIR UOS) of Belgium. The JDS-EDS aims to become a reference model that facilitates the convergence between the creation of new scientific knowledge and the comprehensive resolution of local challenges in smart agriculture, governance, and energy, supported by capacity-building in ICT platforms and tools.

1.1 Key features of the programme (Final stage)

Feature	Description
Joint supervision	Each PhD candidate will be supervised by one academic advisor from the University of Holguín and one (at least) from a Flemish Universities
International mobility	Candidates are required to spend a minimum period of 3 months at the partner university every year (5)
Transdisciplinary training	The Doctoral School offers a structured training programme including transferable skills, ethics, and research methodology

Living Lab Methodology	Research is embedded in real-world contexts, ensuring direct engagement with end-users and stakeholders
Degree awarded	Upon successful completion, candidates will receive a Joint Diploma / Double Diploma issued by both universities

2. Research areas and available projects

Applications are invited within the following research pillars. Each candidate must select one primary pillar, to develop and propose a research project aligned with its objectives (PhD trajectory).

2.1 Research Pillars

Pillar	Thematic focus
SP01 - Smart Electricity	Renewable energy systems, energy efficiency, off-grid solutions, energy policy
SP02 - Smart Agriculture	Sustainable farming, precision agriculture, climate-resilient crops, agri-tech solutions
SP03 - Smart Governance	Smart Socio-Technical Governance in Disconnected Environments, KBS ¹ for Resource Sovereignty and Resilience, Co-Creation of Sustainable Human Habitats via Living Labs, Intelligent Agent Ecosystems for Social Architecture
SP04 – Software Services Center	Data management systems, IoT applications, AI for development, digital infrastructure
SP05 - Doctoral School in Engineering Development	New knowledge by integrating AI ² , MBSE ³ , and model-based software development into a unified conceptual modelling framework for all SPs

3. Admission requirements

Candidates must fulfil the following eligibility criteria:

Requirement	Specifications
MANDATORY	
Academic degree	A Master's degree (or equivalent) in a relevant field (e.g., agriculture, engineering, computer science, public policy, energy systems, or related disciplines), obtained before December 2026 (for the first cohort); and the master's degree cannot be more than 10 years old
Minimum grade	A minimum final grade of 4.5 points

¹ Knowledge-Based Engineering

² Artificial Intelligence

³ Model-Based Systems Engineering

Research draft	Preliminary proposal and/or approach to the topic in a general format, regarding what you would aspire to investigate within the selected pillar
Previous PhD study	Candidates must be enrolled in one the following Doctoral Programs of the University of Holguín (until December 2026, for the first cohort): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engineering Development [Desarrollo de las Ingenierías] or - Organizational Management [Gestión Organizacional]. Organizational Management with an engineering profile [Gestión Organizacional con perfil ingenieril] Candidates currently enrolled in another PhD programme are not eligible unless they provide official proof of withdrawal or interruption
Applicants	This call is open only to full-time faculty members of the University of Holguín
NOT MANDATORY IN THE FIRST STAGE	
Language proficiency	English proficiency
Age limit	None

4. Application package

All applications must be submitted as a single PDF file (unless otherwise specified) named according to the convention: **Lastname_Firstname_JDS-ED2026.pdf**

The application must include the following documents in the order listed below:

Document	Format requirements
1 Completed application form (mandatory)	2026 - FIRST CALL - First Stage - Application Form.docx Download from [https://surl.li/zfzmad]; completed and signed
2 Research draft (mandatory)	Maximum 2 pages
3 Curriculum Vitae (mandatory)	Maximum 4 pages; include education, work experience, publications, skills, and any awards
4 Motivation letter (mandatory)	Maximum 2 pages; explain your interest in the Joint Doctoral School in Engineering Development, your chosen research pillar, and your long-term career goals
5 Certified copies of degrees (mandatory)	Bachelor's and Master's diplomas (or the proof of being in the process of completing the master's degree in science)

6 Language proficiency certificate (assuming you have, not mandatory)	Valid IELTS, TOEFL, or equivalent
7 Personal Identification Document, (Mandatory)	Identification page with photograph

Important: Incomplete applications (mandatory items) or those failing to meet the naming convention will be rejected without review.

5. Selection process

The selection process follows a multi-stage, multi-factor evaluation conducted by the Steering Committee (SC) of JDS-ED (Local Team) at the University of Holguín in the first stage.

5.1 Selection stages

Stage	Activity	Timeline
Stage 1	Eligibility check (administrative verification of documents)	July 2026
Stage 2	Scoring of applications against published criteria	July 2026
Stage 3	Shortlisted candidates invited for onsite / virtual interview (30-45 minutes)	September 2026
Stage 4	Final ranking and selection by SC	September 2026
Stage 5	Evaluation criteria and weightings	September 2026
Stage 6	Offer letters sent to successful candidates	September 2026

5.2 Evaluation criteria and weightings for the first stage

Criterion	Weight	Evaluation method
Research draft proposal alignment (with selected pillar)	25 %	Document review
Academic excellence (Degree, publications)	20 %	Transcripts review
Language proficiency	30 %	Document review
Interview performance (clarity, critical thinking, motivation)	15 %	Interview
Relevance of prior experience (skills match to project requirements)	10 %	CV + Interview

5.3 Interview format

- Duration: 30-45 minutes

- Panel: 3-4 members of the JDS-ED (Local Team UHo in the first stage)
- Language: Spanish in the first stage
- Topics: Research proposal presentation (5-7 minutes), methodology questions, motivation for joint programme, career aspirations

6. Submission instructions

Element	Instruction
Submission method	Online by email: criss.phd@uho.edu.cu
File format	PDF/A (no password protection)
Maximum file size	15 MB per application
Naming convention	Lastname_Firstname_JDS-ED2026.pdf
Confirmation	An automatic confirmation email will be sent within 24 hours. If not received, contact criss.phd@uho.edu.cu
Deadline strictness	Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances

7. Key dates (summary)

Activity	Date
Call publication	25 May 2026
Application deadline	25 June 2026, 23:59 EST
Eligibility notification	July 2026
Interviews conducted	September 2026
Final decision notification	September 2026
Programme start date	September 2026

8. Legal and compliance information

8.1 Data protection

Personal data provided in the application will be processed in accordance with the national data protection laws of Cuba. Data will be used exclusively for the selection process and will be deleted within 6 months of the final decision, unless the candidate enrolls in the programme.

8.2 Non-Discrimination statement

The Joint Doctoral School in Engineering Development is committed to **equality of opportunity** (Leave No One Behind) and does not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or disability.

8.3 Conflict of interest

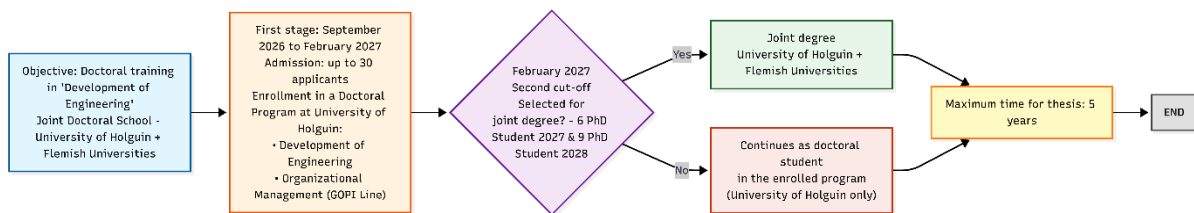
Any evaluator (SC JDS-ED) with a personal or professional relationship to an applicant must declare this in writing and recuse themselves from the evaluation of that application.

9. Contact information

Administrative inquiries	(submission, documents, deadlines) criss.phd@uho.edu.cu
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Please include the reference number IUC-DS-ED-2026-01 in the subject line of all correspondence.

10. Flow



Issued by:

Steering Committee – Doctoral School in Engineering Development (TEAM UHo)

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