



**UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY**

**UNU-IAS**

Institute for the Advanced Study  
of Sustainability

**Doctor of Philosophy in Sustainability Science**

**United Nations University**

**Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability**

## **APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2023**

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# I. Outline of the Doctoral of Philosophy in Sustainability Science

UNU-IAS offers doctoral degree programme focused on sustainability science. The programme aims to produce the policymakers and researchers of tomorrow, who will be at the forefront of global efforts towards a more sustainable future. The programme takes an transdisciplinary approach to providing the analytical and technical skills needed to advance creative solutions to issues of sustainability. Studying at UNU-IAS brings the unique benefits of:

- Collaborative research & practical experience,
- A global university within the UN system, and
- An international and interactive learning environment in central Tokyo.

The Master of Science in Sustainability programme is a two-year programme, which provides students with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to contribute to solving challenges of sustainability. Drawing on an innovative, interdisciplinary approach, the programme integrates methods and resources from the natural and social sciences, as well as the humanities.

The PhD programme in Sustainability Science is a three-year programme that aims to produce scholars who will become key researchers in the field of sustainability science. The programme takes an innovative approach to sustainability, seeking to promote a better understanding of the issues by incorporating global change perspectives.

The programme will equip graduates with comprehensive, multidisciplinary knowledge of sustainability problems, and deepen their understanding of the role of environmental sustainability in addressing current issues related to global change. The programme provides students with unique opportunities to interact with leading scholars and policymakers through lectures, international conferences, and workshops. Students undertake problem-oriented research by playing an active role in UNU-IAS research projects, and acquire the quantitative and qualitative analytical skills necessary to understand the underlying principles of various systems involved in sustainability issues and debates. Through coursework and research, PhD students gain critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as the technical literacy required to address sustainability problems.

The programme starts in September. By July of their third-year students are expected to complete all of the course requirements, obtaining at least 14 credits and completing a doctoral dissertation. Students can select courses from those offered by UNU-IAS, while also enjoying the opportunity to take courses at other leading universities in Japan such as the University of Tokyo, Sophia University, and International Christian University.

## A Focus on Sustainability: Our Thematic Areas and Research Opportunities

The UNU-IAS postgraduate programme is closely interconnected with institute's research activities. Students have opportunities to gain practical experience by engaging actively in the research projects in UNU-IAS thematic areas. The Courses offered correspond to these thematic areas under the overarching theme of sustainability.

- Governance for Climate Change and Sustainable Development (GSD)
- Biodiversity and Society (BDS)
- Water & Resource Management (WRM)
- Innovation & Education (IVE)

Applicants are required to choose one of these thematic areas and propose relevant research to conduct at UNU-IAS. A description of each area is available on the [thematic areas](#) page.

Student research is expected to contribute to the project with which the student chooses to be affiliated. Students hone skills learned in the classroom by conducting research in the field alongside experts and

experienced practitioners.

## Faculty

The programme is taught by an expert teaching faculty comprising both UNU-IAS academic staff and invited distinguished scholars and practitioners. Please see the list of faculties members [here](#).

## Programme Programme Structure & Language

The programme is offered on a full-time basis only. The standard period to complete the degree requirements is 36 months or six academic semesters, excluding time spent on study leave of absence from the university. The PhD in Sustainability Science degree is awarded upon satisfactory completion of 14 credits and a doctoral dissertation project.

The language of instruction is in the **English**.

## Joint Diploma Programmes

Students of the UNU-IAS master's degree programme are also encouraged to pursue one of two joint diplomas in sustainability science, which are offered in partnership with the University of Tokyo Graduate School of Frontier Sciences (UT-GSFS), and with Sophia University. These diploma programmes require students to gain 18 credits, of which eight must be from courses specified by UNU-IAS and the partner university under the respective joint diploma programme. A joint diploma can only be awarded to students who successfully complete the two-year UNU-IAS master's degree programme.

## Learning Environment

UNU-IAS is a global university located in Tokyo, with all classes conducted in English. Sharing a building with many UN agencies, it offers a unique learning environment for its diverse and international student body. The master's degree programme includes courses featuring more than 15 international guest lecturers from leading agencies and institutions, providing students with opportunities to learn from their unique expertise and experience. The class sizes are sufficiently small and students benefit from interactive and personalized teaching.

## Facilities

The [UNU Library](#) offers access to over 27,000 academic books and a range of electronic resources including eBooks, e-Journals, and UN related materials. All students are provided with a comprehensive library orientation session at the beginning of the course. Students also have access to the libraries of International Christian University, Ochanomizu University, Sophia University, Temple University Japan, and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

## Academic Calendar

The [Academic Calendar](#) shows important dates and university holidays for the academic year.

## II. Admissions Policy and Requirements

### 1. Admissions Policy

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The UNU-IAS Doctoral of Philosophy in Sustainability Science Programme seeks students with the following qualities:

1. Students who possess a firm academic interest in the pressing global issues on the UN agenda, in particular those of sustainability, and a strong desire to contribute to the solving of problems concerning global environment and society through a transdisciplinary approach;
2. Students who have adequate research skills and clear questions related to global issues as well as a strong desire to engage in research in UNU-IAS thematic areas, with the potential and motivation to succeed in our programme;
3. Students who have the intention to proactively apply academic research findings to policymaking, and aim to pursue careers in international fields in public service or private organisations, including United Nations, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organisations as well as research academic institutions.

### 2. Admissions Requirements

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Applicants for the Doctor of Philosophy in Sustainability Science Programme are required to have met the following requirements by the application deadline in order to be considered.

- A completed Master's degree (or equivalent) from a recognised university or institution of higher education in a field related to sustainability and a minimum of 2 years of professional field experience related to UNU-IAS research themes which was acquired after obtaining a university degree (full-time equivalent);  
OR
- Two completed Master's degrees, at least one of which must be in a discipline related to sustainability studies (those who expect to receive a second Master's degree before the entrance period of September 2023 may also apply);
- A GPA of 2.8 or above on a 4.0 scale (equivalent to 70 % on a 100 % scale) for at least one of the master's degrees earned; and
- English language proficiency (\*).
  - 600 on TOEFL – Paper-Based Testing (PBT) OR
  - 100 on TOEFL – Internet-Based Testing (IBT) OR
  - 7.0 on IELTS – Academic format

*(\*) Please note that TOEFL and IELTS test scores are valid for two years. Invalid test scores will not be accepted. IELTS Indicator (7.0 and above) and TOEFL iBT Home Edition (100 and above) may be accepted*

*for those who reside in a country where either IELTS or TOEFL test services are not provided due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

UNU-IAS requires original TOEFL/IELTS score reports (no photocopies accepted).

- TOEFL: Please order an official score report using the institution code 6991. For more information on TOEFL, please visit <http://www.ets.org/toefl/>
- IELTS: Please request that an official report be sent directly to UNU-IAS. For more information on IELTS, please visit <http://www.ielts.org/>
- IELTS Indicator (7.0 and above) and TOEFL iBT Home Edition (100 and above) may be accepted for those who reside in a country where either IELTS or TOEFL test services are not provided due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### III. Application Procedure

#### 1. How To Apply

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All applicants:

1. Review the checklist below and prepare the application materials.
2. Register Online <https://forms.office.com/r/9axRahVPrx>
3. Receive an email from UNU-IAS Admissions Office with a link to the Application Form.
4. Submit the Application Form by the deadline\* **(17 February 2023)**.
5. Receive an automatic email to confirm that the Admissions Office has received your application.

Applicants who have been shortlisted for an interview:

6. Receive an email regarding when and how to submit the required supporting documents.
7. Submit the supporting documents via email by the deadline **(Expected to be mid-late April 2023)**.
8. Referees will receive an e-mail from the Admission Office with a request to provide the reference by the deadline\* **(Expected to be mid-late April 2023)**.

\*After the applicant submits the Application Form, referees will receive an email from the Admissions Office to notify that they have been registered as referees. Only in case the applicant has been shortlisted for an interview, referees will be directly contacted by the Admissions Office regarding the request for providing reference by the deadline **(Expected to be mid-late April 2023)**. **Applicants are not allowed to send reference letters to the Admissions Office. Please ensure that the referees send reference letters directly to the Admissions Office.**

#### 2. Application Checklist

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The Application Form may take you at least 120 minutes to fill in and it must be completed in English. The Application Form is composed of 12 sections of questions and essays. There are back/next buttons at the bottom of each section in the Form, which enable you to go back to previous sections to edit the answered boxes **before** you click the submit button at the end of the form.

**The application must be done in one sitting – you cannot save your application and continue it later.** Before you start filling out your Application Form, please gather all necessary materials listed below and make sure to have all of them ready to fill in the Form.

##### **Section 1. Applicant Details**

- Personal details (name, gender, birth date, email, telephone, address etc)
- Number of your personal identification document (Passport number, national identification number etc)

Note: For the nationality and county of residence should be filled in using the list at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/cp/searchcp.aspx>.

## **Section 2. Educational Background**

- Qualifications (Primary, secondary, and higher education, years of education, years of attendance)
- Undergraduate and postgraduate education (institution, department, subjects, start and end dates, abstract of thesis (if applicable), degree awarded, grades on a 4.0 or 100% scale, other grades)
- Lists of principal publications and practical accomplishments  
Please list articles, books, conference proceedings, or other material published under your name, if any, with the name and address of the publisher and the date of publication, starting with the most recent. You may also provide a link of your publication(s) wherever possible.
- Recent conference presentations (if any)  
Please present your experiences of conference presentations, starting with the most recent. (Name, year and location of the conference; title, format, modality of the presentation; role at the conference)
- Contribution to professional community  
Please provide the major professional achievements, starting with the most recent.

## **Section 3. Essays**

- Choose one of the UNU-IAS thematic areas of study and research that you wish to conduct at the doctoral degree programme at UNU-IAS  
Note: Please carefully review and choose if that thematic area is the most suitable area for your application and research interest. Irrelevancy may be regarded as an uncompleted application.
- Reasons why you have chosen to apply for the MSc Programme in Sustainability. (Word limit: 500)  
Please relate the reasons to your background and explain your career goals.
- Research Proposal (Word limit: 1,500)  
Please explain as concretely as possible the research plan that you would like to undertake in the PhD Programme, including research questions, objectives, methodology, data resources and how you would like to take a transdisciplinary approach to the issue. Please also indicate policy relevance of your proposed research and how you plan to incorporate gender perspectives.
- Abstract of Research Proposal (Word limit: 300)
- Personal achievements (Word limit: 500)  
Please describe your personal achievements including extracurricular activities, volunteer work, leadership experience, awards you have received as well as why you think they are important.

## **Section 4. Professional Background**

- Years of **full-time** working experiences
- Three of the most recent employer's details (name, email, address and type of organisations)\*
- Start and end dates, position and name of supervisor
- Summary of job description including main responsibilities



\*If you have more than three employers, you may include them in Section 10.

### **Section 5. English Language Proficiency**

- Type of Proof of English language proficiency with valid score within 2 years (See page 3-4 on [requirements](#))  
e.g. IELTS, IELTS Indicator\*, TOEFL PBT, TOEFL iBT or TOEFL iBT Home Edition\*; If you have not taken the exam yet, your plan to take an exam to submit the report by the deadline around late March 2023.
- Test result, date, and examination number of TOEFL or IELTS
- Knowledge of other languages than English  
\*IELTS Indicator (7.0 and above) and TOEFL iBT Home Edition (100 and above) may be accepted for those who reside in a country where either IELTS or TOEFL test services are not provided due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Section 6. References (Three Letters of Recommendations)**

- Three referees' details (Type of reference – academic or professional, name, position, organisation, email, address, telephone) \*

\* Your referees will be required to submit reference letters only in case you have been shortlisted for an interview. Register three referees who are familiar with your character and academic/professional performance to assess your competency in pursuing the PhD Programme. At least one letter must be from a faculty member at universities. Referees should not be family members or friends.

**UNU-IAS reserves the right to contact your referees.** After you submit the Application Form, referees will receive an email from the Admissions Office to notify that they have been registered as referees. They will also be informed of when and how to submit references for your application. Please note that your referees will NOT have access to view your Application Form. In case you have been shortlisted for an interview, **please ensure that the referees send reference letters directly to the Admissions Office only when requested.** Applicants are NOT allowed to send reference letters to the Admissions Office. **Before you apply, please make sure to contact your referees to ask for their approval of providing references at the time UNU-IAS requests.**

### **Section 7. Funding**

- Would you be able to fund your studies and living in Tokyo for three years?
- Do you wish to apply for a scholarship and are you eligible for it?
- Type of scholarships that you wish to apply for (If applicable; Either choose the scholarship that can be applied through UNU-IAS or indicate the name of scholarships if you are applying for scholarships provided by other organisations.) \*
- Justification essay for applying for a scholarship under UNU-IAS (If applicable; Word limit: 500) \*

\* **There is no separate application for the scholarship through UNU-IAS at the time of application.**

- \* There are eligibility requirements to become a candidate of each scholarship and applicants must submit several additional documents for the scholarship when shortlisted for an interview.
- \* **The scholarships available at UNU-IAS are very competitive and limited.**  
Only highly qualified candidates from developing countries who can demonstrate the need for financial assistance will be considered for financial support. **In the case the scholarship is not available, an applicant must find own funding to be enrolled.**
- \* If you are applying for any other scholarships provided by other organizations on your own, there is no need to submit the justification essay.

### **Section 8. Financial Declaration**

- Declaration of family members (applicable if you wish to apply for scholarships)  
Number of people in your family and/or household members other than yourself  
Name, relation to you, occupation, and annual income  
Total family income in USD (yearly)
- Declaration of yourself  
How will you be financing your studies at UNU-IAS? (Personal resources, family resources, scholarships, employer, sponsorship, loan, others)  
Personal resources/Income in USD  
Support from individual donor(s) (including family or guardian) in USD  
Support from sponsors – governments, sponsoring agencies, and companies (Awarded, haven't applied, applying, or none)  
Date to be notified of result and amount of sponsorship (applicable if you are applying)  
Other financial sources and amount, total financial resources in USD

### **Section 9. Health Declaration**

- Your medical conditions, illness, and special needs (If applicable)
- Have you received medical treatment for a serious illness or condition within the past 12 months period?
- I declare I am in good health and fit to enroll in the three-year degree programme in Japan.

### **Section 10. Additional Information**

Any other additional information for your application

### **Section 11. Other Details (For administrative purposes only)**

- If you have applied for the Degree Programme within UNU before, please specify the programme and year of your previous application.
- If you are not a Japanese national, please list your previous stays in Japan.
- If you have any relatives or acquaintances who are currently working at UNU please provide their names.
- How did you learn about the Degree Programme at UNU-IAS?
- Have you ever been arrested, indicted, or summoned into court as a defendant in

criminal proceedings, or convicted, fined or imprisoned for the violation of any law (excluding minor traffic violations)?

### **Section 12: Submit Application**

- Confirmation of acknowledgement of a list of the supporting documents to submit in case you have been shortlisted for an interview

### **3. Supporting Documents (Shortlisted applicants only)**

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**Only applicants who have been shortlisted for interviews will be required to submit the following supporting documents by email.** The deadline for the submission of supporting documents will be set out **within less than one week** after shortlisted applicants receive the announcement emails from the Admissions office. Please ensure all documents are prepared and collected at the time of submitting the Application Form. Any documents that are not written in English must be accompanied by an official or certified translation in English. The translation may be provided by a school, public notary, or professional translation services.

#### **1) Personal Identification Document**

The document must be issued by the national government such as passports, birth certificates, Japanese residence card (if applicable) which validates your legal name, nationality, and residential status.

#### **2) Transcript(s)**

The transcripts must set out the list of courses/modules studied as well as grades obtained at all undergraduate and postgraduate education and include the institutional seal or signature. For those who have transferred between institutions, transcripts from both institutions must be submitted.

#### **3) Proof of Awarded Degree**

The degree certificate must certify the awarded degree and the conferred date (Bachelor's and master's degrees).

#### **4) Proof of Expected Graduation and Student Registration Certificate (if applicable)**

If the applicants expect to earn a master's degree or higher by mid-August 2023, the official letter/certificate must be issued by the institution stating that the applicant's enrolment (registration) status in the degree programme and the date of expected graduation. It is the applicant's responsibility to check that the expected graduation date on the letter is accurate and is by mid-August 2023.

#### **5) Additional Documents for Scholarship Application, or a Letter from the Sponsor (if applicable)**

All applicants who wish to apply for scholarships are required to submit CV. Please check other required documents at the [website](#).

#### **6) Proof of English Language Proficiency \***

- IELTS, TOEFL PBT, TOEFL iBT, TOEFL iBT Home Edition: Official score report
- IELTS Indicator: Screenshot of the applicant's account page or the email from IELTS Indicator that indicates the score result and the 15-digit Indicator Score ID.

\* Please see the requirements stated in **page 3 and 4**.

Official scores of required test must be directly reported to UNU-IAS by the testing centres. Only valid score of each test is acceptable; the validity of both TOEFL and IELTS is for two years. Expired scores will not be accepted.

IELTS Indicator (7.0 and above) and TOEFL iBT Home Edition (100 and above) may be accepted for those who reside in a country where either IELTS or TOEFL test services are not provided due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **7) Three Letters of Recommendation**

Referees will be contacted directly by UNU-IAS to provide reference. Applicants are not allowed to send reference letters to the Admissions Office.

## 4. Application Deadline

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**17 February 2023 (23:59 Japan Standard Time)**

Any inquiries after the deadline regarding unsuccessful submissions due to any personal circumstances including the technical difficulties will not be accepted. Please ensure that you start your application ahead of time.

## 5. Key Dates \*

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**17 February 2023:** Deadline for applications

**Mid-Late April 2023:** Invitation to an interview and requests for submitting supporting documents by email only to the shortlisted applicants

**Late April-Mid May 2023:** Interviews (Shortlisted applicants only)

**June 2023 onwards:** Announcement of application results only to the successful applicants

\* The above timelines are subject to change.

## 6. Receipt of Application

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Applicants will receive an automatic email from the Admissions Office within 24 hours to confirm the receipt of Application Form. The Admissions Office may at any time require applicants to provide verification of the information and documents provided as part of Application Forms and/or interviews.

## 7. Selection and Announcement of Results

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After the deadline, only shortlisted applicants will be contacted by email regarding the invitation to an interview. Please ensure that you do not contact the Admissions Office to inquire about the status of your application unless you have been individually contacted by the Admissions Office.

- The successful applicants who are offered a place for the doctoral degree programme **will be notified by email** to the address provided on Application Form. Necessary documents for the admission procedure will be sent together with a letter of acceptance. **To secure admission, successful applicants will be required to submit those necessary documents** stated under the Conditions of Acceptance in page 12, and to pay **at least 50% of the tuition fees** for the first academic year **(5,000 USD, non-refundable) within 10 UNU working days** after result announcement and prior to enrolment. **Please see further information in the next section of IV. Enrolment Procedures.**
- **Unsuccessful applicants for will NOT be individually notified via email nor telephone by the Admissions Office. If you do not receive any emails from the Admissions Office regarding your application by the end of June 2023, your application has been unsuccessful. The Admissions Office does not provide individual feedback on unsuccessful applications.**
- Emails will be the primary method of contact. Therefore, it is essential for all applicants to list a valid e-mail address in the Application Form and regularly check their e-mail. Please ensure that e-mails from UNU-IAS ([ias.admissions@unu.edu](mailto:ias.admissions@unu.edu)) are not filtered into the spam or junk folder. UNU-IAS will not be held responsible for unread e-mail communication.

#### IV. Enrolment Procedures (Successful applicants only)

##### 1. Date of Enrolment

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Date of Enrolment: 1 September 2023

The date of enrolment cannot be extended, regardless of any special circumstances of the student.

##### 2. Conditions of Admission

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Successful applicants will be requested to submit the following documents by post:

- Sealed transcript
- Certified copies of degree certificate(s)  
Successful applicants who have not yet graduated from their current universities at the time of result announcement should submit the transcript and the degree certificate by the deadline that will be notified by the Admissions Office.
- Medical report  
The format will be provided by the Admissions Office.

In addition, the following documents will be required to submit:

- Signed Student Contract and Student Conduct Document
- Signed document of the term of reference for the scholarship (if applicable)

Successful applicants must submit all the necessary official documents to Admissions Office **by the matriculation deadline (Early August) prior to the enrolment.** Without submission of those documents include above-listed documents as well as other requested official university documents of

contract and conduct, an offer will not be completed, and applicants are not permitted to enroll in the UNU-IAS.

### 3. Fees

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Application Processing Fee: **None**  
Tuition Fee: **USD 10,000 per year** <sup>(\*1)</sup>

To secure admission, successful applicants will be required to pay at least 50% of the tuition fee for the first academic year (**USD 5,000, non-refundable**) **within 10 UNU working days**<sup>\*2</sup> after the result announcement and prior to enrolment. Students who choose to pay annually must make a full one-year tuition payment before the commencement of the academic year. Successful applicants are required to submit all documents and pay the tuition fees by the deadline.

The estimated total expenses for living and studying in Tokyo for three years are approximately **USD 84,000**, including tuition fees. Applicants must ensure adequate financial resources to meet the full costs of educational and living expenses.

\*1 The fee is subject to change.

\*2 UNU holidays are listed in the [UNU-IAS Academic Calendar](#).

## V. Important Notes

### 1. Important Notes for Application Procedures

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- All Application Forms must be typed and filled out in English. No handwritten or incomplete application documents will be considered.
- All materials and documents submitted as part of an application become the property of UNU-IAS and cannot be returned.
- If any falsification is discovered in any of the documents presented for application, admission will be revoked.
- Unsuccessful applicants from previous years who reapply for admission must submit a completely new set of application documents, including letters of reference. No previous application materials will act as a supporting document.
- Please ensure that the Application Form only once. If multiple Application Forms are submitted by one applicant, the latest form received will be considered the application. Earlier versions will be disregarded.
- Those who wish to withdraw from the application process must immediately contact the Admissions Office via the [Inquiry Form](#).

### 2. Inquiries

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Before contacting Admissions Office, please read through the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to see if your question has been answered. For any unanswered questions, please use the [Inquiry Form](#).