

PhD student position at the Institute of Public Health, Faculty of Biomedical Sciences at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Public Health (IPH) is an interfaculty institute dedicated to teaching, research, and service activities in public health sciences and related disciplines, acting as a central hub for public health within USI. It brings together expertise from fields such as epidemiology, psychology, economics, and communication sciences to advance health promotion, disease prevention, and evidence-based public health practice.

The Institute invites applications for a research and teaching PhD position (100%, 3 years). The PhD candidate will develop his or her dissertation project within the field of public health.

The project

Within the SNSF-funded project *Education, Work and Cognitive Stimulation across the Life Course: Evidence from Natural Policy Experiments*, the PhD candidate will contribute to advancing knowledge on the causal effects of education, work and retirement policies on cognitive ageing and dementia risk. The project examines how education policies (compulsory schooling, tracking, free-education reforms) and retirement policies shape exposure to cognitively stimulating environments across the life course, cognitive function and dementia risk in later life. It relies on causal inference methods and on harmonised international ageing cohorts (SHARE, ELSA, HRS, etc.) linked to policy data from the Gateway to Global Aging (<https://g2aging.org/>). The project is led by Prof. Mauricio Avendano (Unisanté/University of Lausanne), in collaboration with Prof. Emiliano Albanese (Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano) and international partners (University of Southern California, University of Luxembourg).

The project aims to generate robust, policy-relevant evidence through high-quality scientific publications and synthesis outputs, informing national and international strategies for brain health and dementia prevention.

The PhD Position

The doctoral student will be enrolled in the PhD programme at the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences. The doctoral student will work under the scientific supervision of Prof. Emiliano Albanese (<http://usi.to/r8p>). The successful candidate will be offered the possibility to work in a dynamic research team and in a multidisciplinary and international scientific environment.

The PhD candidate will collaborate on the development of the institute research agenda. He or she will have the task of assemble, harmonise and analyse data from international ageing cohorts and policy databases for his or her dissertation, while at the same time participating in a variety of tasks related to the research streams in which he/she is involved.

On the teaching side, he/she will work as teaching assistant in courses at either bachelor or master level, helping in the preparation of teaching materials and tutoring students.

The PhD candidate is also asked to present papers at scientific conferences and produce publications for scientific journals.

Candidates' profile

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- A Master's degree (or equivalent degree) in Epidemiology, Public Health, Biostatistics, Statistics, Health Economics, Sociology, Social Sciences, Data Science, or a related discipline.
- Expertise in quantitative data analysis, including the analysis of longitudinal population-based datasets, and experience with R, Stata and/or Python.
- Previous experience in, or knowledge of, cognitive ageing, dementia, life-course epidemiology is considered an asset.
- Motivation and willingness to acquire advanced skills in causal inference, microsimulation, population modelling, and other quantitative methods bridging epidemiology and policy analysis.
- Good oral and written English (official language of the PhD programme). Knowledge of one or more Swiss national languages is preferred; good command of French is considered an asset.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively, plan and manage research activities, engage in scientific dialogue, and contribute to teaching and tutoring.
- Experience in scientific writing and dissemination of research findings through peer-reviewed publications is considered an advantage.

Contract terms

Admission to the PhD programme is highly competitive. Admission decisions are based on the candidate's background, interests, attitude and potential for academic achievement. Successful enrolment in the PhD programme and the position as doctoral researcher are not compatible with a further professional activity.

The position is fully financed and the salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for PhD researchers.

The successful candidate will work as research assistant at the Institute of Public Health, and will have the possibility to interact with an international network of collaborators.

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland. Availability to travel to other parts of Switzerland and abroad (for purposes of collaboration and research) is required.

Starting date is 01.11.2026 (at the earliest). However, the position will be kept open until a suitable candidate has been found.

The Application

Applications may be submitted upon acceptance of the Applicant Personal Data Processing Notice found at the following **LINK**. In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.

Applications should contain: (1) a letter in which the applicants describe their research interests and the motivation to apply, (2) a complete CV, (3) copies of relevant diplomas, certificates as well as the full transcript of records that prove the candidates' eligibility for doctoral studies in Biomedical Sciences, specialization in Public Health, (4) an electronic version of a research work (Master thesis or other scientific publication). The latter must be accompanied by a short summary in English (1 page maximum). A support letter written by the Master thesis supervisor (or another Professor who knows the candidate well) is equally welcome.

Applications must be submitted ONLINE by filling out the form accessible through the following link: **APPLY**. You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

Requests for further information may be addressed to iph@usi.ch.

Applications received by 15 September 2026 will receive full consideration. Applications will continue to be accepted until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 17.07.2026