

DOCTORAL  
PROGRAMME IN  
A NON-ACADEMIC  
ENVIRONMENT

APPLICATIONS  
OPEN

# PHD IN FOR DESIGN REGIONAL INNOVATION

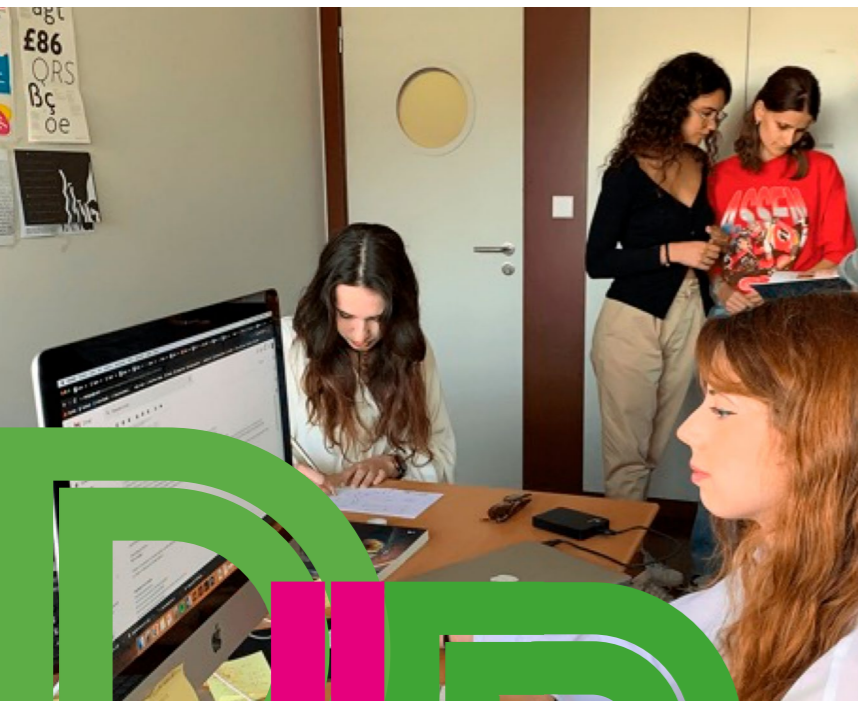
# PHD IN DESIGN FOR REGIONAL INNOVATION

The PhD in Design for Regional Innovation is a third-cycle programme that focuses on addressing real-world challenges of innovation and territorial development through research and knowledge production in non-academic environments (namely companies, entities of the scientific and technological system, public administration bodies, and third-sector organisations). The solutions developed are intended to be transferable and to contribute to environmental, social, economic and organisational sustainability across diverse territories, including urban, peri-urban, rural, low-density and peripheral contexts.



The programme explicitly defines its epistemological position by recognising Design as a situated knowledge-production practice, whose object is not limited to the final artefact, but also encompasses the processes of conception, mediation, implementation and evaluation within complex territorial systems. In this sense, the research undertaken is multidisciplinary in nature and is grounded in the articulation between project-based experimentation, robust theoretical framing and empirical validation, ensuring that results obtained in real-world contexts can be systematised, abstracted and transferred. This configuration is aligned with international trends that value Design doctorates oriented towards the integration of practice, critical reflection, and scientific and societal impact.

Research within this study cycle is conducted under a rigorous scientific framework, with formal academic supervision and assessment according to the standards of third-cycle education, ensuring epistemological rigour, methodological consistency and the production of original knowledge. Doctoral candidates undertake research in real organisational environments, articulating situated practice and critical reflection, structuring processes of experimentation and validation, and carrying out the systematic evaluation of the social, economic and environmental impacts of interventions over the medium and long term. In doing so, they contribute simultaneously to the resolution of concrete problems and to the advancement of Design as a discipline. The explicit definition of these criteria is aligned with international quality standards for research through design in applied contexts, making transparent the parameters of originality and methodological rigour. The structured assessment framework, organised around clearly defined domains, ensures consistency and full equivalence with the academic standards required for the award of the doctoral degree.



# OBJECTIVES

The PhD in Design for Regional Innovation (DRI) aims to educate researchers capable of producing original scientific knowledge in Design, articulated with Environmental Sciences, within complex territorial contexts and non-academic environments, namely companies, entities of the scientific and technological system, public administration bodies and third-sector organisations.

The study cycle consolidates a distinctive doctoral profile, oriented towards research through design as a situated knowledge-production practice, in which territory is understood as a complex and multi-scalar socio-ecological system, constituting an epistemological axis, a methodological context and a space for the experimentation and validation of knowledge.

Within this framework, the programme aims to develop scientific, methodological, ethical and operational competences oriented towards impact, enabling doctoral candidates to:

- > Produce original scientific knowledge in Design through research through design and practice-based approaches, articulating tacit and explicit knowledge and ensuring its systematisation, abstraction, scientific validation and transferability;
- > Conceive and implement research projects in complex territorial systems, including contexts of institutional fragility, territorial inequalities and power asymmetries, developing models of contextualised innovation;
- > Integrate scientific and situated knowledge, including local knowledge systems, articulating theory, project-based experimentation and validation in real-world contexts;
- > Apply participatory, collaborative and co-design methodologies, involving multiple stakeholders and promoting multi-sector innovation processes;
- > Develop iterative processes of experimentation, validation and learning, integrating foresight approaches and scenario-building methodologies;
- > Ensure ethical reflection in research conducted in real-world contexts, including the mediation of interests within multi-actor ecosystems, the social responsibility of interventions and compliance with the principles of scientific integrity;
- > Monitor and evaluate the social, economic and environmental impacts of interventions, with a focus on medium- and long-term effects, societal relevance, alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, and the transferability of results;
- > Contribute to the theoretical and methodological advancement of Design through the production of disciplinary knowledge derived from practice and its application to processes of territorial innovation and sustainable development, including multi-level governance contexts.

The DRI combines scientific rigour, methodological consistency and situated practice, educating researchers capable of operating in non-academic contexts and contributing to territorial transformation, innovation and sustainable development across different scales and contexts, articulating local and global dynamics.



# CURRICULUM

COURSE UNIT	ECTS
<b>Year 1 – Semester 1</b>	
Design for Regional Development	12
Applied Research Methodologies	9
Seminars in Design for Regional Innovation	9
<b>Year 1 – Semester 2</b>	
Design and Regional Innovation Ecosystems	12
Applied Research Laboratory	9
Elective Options	9
Option - Territorial Identity and Branding	
Option - Laboratory Research in Non-Academic Environments	
Option - Sustainability, Innovation and Competitiveness	
<b>Year 2 – Semester 1</b>	
Applied Research I	30
<b>Year 2 – Semester 2</b>	
Applied Research II	30
<b>Year 3 – Semester 1</b>	
Applied Research III	30
<b>Year 3 – Semester 2</b>	
Thesis	30

# ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The study cycle will be delivered in Portuguese and English. Applicants must demonstrate English language proficiency at the functional level required for reading, understanding and using scientific literature, corresponding, indicatively, to level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

## Eligible candidates:

- Holders of a master's degree or legal equivalent in the area of the study cycle;
- Holders of a bachelor's degree with a particularly relevant academic or scientific curriculum, which is recognized as attesting the capacity to undertake this study cycle by the legally and statutorily competent scientific body of the higher education institution where they intend to be admitted;
- Individuals with an academic, scientific, or professional curriculum that is recognized as attesting the capacity to undertake this study cycle by the legally and statutorily competent scientific body of the higher education institution where they intend to be admitted.

**Number of Credits:** 180 ECTS

**Duration of the Study Cycle:** 3 years

**Number of Places:** 15

**Mode of Delivery:** On-site

**Study Regime:** Full-time, daytime attendance

**Location:** The programme is scheduled to commence in the 2026/27 academic year, with the first edition taking place at the School of Applied Arts of IPCB, in Castelo Branco. Subsequent editions will alternate between IPVC and IPCB. The second and third years of the doctoral programme are dedicated to the development of applied research in non-academic contexts, with continuous scientific supervision and integration into research and innovation projects and networks.

**More information:** <https://www.ipcb.pt/estudar/cursos/doutoramento/doutoramento-em-design-para-a-inovacao-regional/>