

## **Letter of the ISS Direction on assistantship and teaching**

### **Preamble**

In order to answer many questions about recruitment and the various tasks assigned to assistants, this document summarises the usual practices of the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS). It is aimed primarily at ISS graduate assistants funded by the UNIL budget, as well as doctoral students funded by the SNSF or other external funds. The document specifies in each case what concerns assistants and/or doctoral students. Some of the elements of this document, particularly those concerning teaching duties, may apply to all members of the ISS, including teachers.

This document is in no way intended to replace the relevant legal texts, i.e. the regulations governing assistants at the University of Lausanne<sup>[1]</sup>, the UNIL Doctoral Charter<sup>[2]</sup>, Directive 1.34<sup>[3]</sup> of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the UNIL HR directives. It is intended solely as a reminder and clarification of a number of principles relating to the life of the ISS.

### **Recruitment of graduate assistants**

Graduate assistant posts are allocated to the Institutes by the Dean's Office, which determines the number of posts - normally, at ISS, 100% of a full-time post - in the light of the needs expressed by the ISS Direction, in consultation with the Chair of the Social Science Teaching Commission.

Except in emergencies, vacancies are advertised at least three months before the person is due to take up the post, together with a proposed specification.

Each assistantship is advertised publicly, *at least* via the UNIL website. The advertisement specifies the unit to which the position is attached, the skills required, the teaching specifications and the workload. It is published for a minimum of 14 days.

Applications are examined by at least two members of the teaching staff, including the ISS Director (or, in exceptional cases, a delegated member of the Board) and one of the members of the unit to which the candidate belongs (in principle, the thesis director), who make up the Nominations Committee.

After examining all the applications received, the Nominations Committee invites a selection of candidates to attend a hearing. Candidates are responsible for their own travel expenses to the hearings, but in the event of long journeys, hearings by videoconference should be preferred. At the end of the hearings, the Committee proposes a ranking and mandates the ISS Direction to proceed with the hiring of the person ranked *primo loco*.

In the absence of applications meeting the selection criteria, the Nominations Committee may decide, with the agreement of the Dean's Office, to put the post back out to tender.

Unsuccessful candidates are informed in writing of the closure of the recruitment procedure. Candidates who have been interviewed may request feedback on their interview from one of the members of the Appointments Committee.

### **Terms of employment («Cahier des charges »)**

In order to ensure fair treatment for all ISS assistants and doctoral students, the terms of employment are drawn up by the ISS Management, in consultation with the heads of the unit and/or the thesis director.

Save in exceptional circumstances, the terms of employment for graduate assistants comply with the following conditions, bearing in mind that all the percentages mentioned are on an annualised basis:

- A minimum of 50% of the working time is reserved for the completion of a doctoral thesis (including 5% dedicated to doctoral and language training).
- A maximum of 35% of working time is reserved for teaching-related tasks (including teacher training), with a proportion dedicated to exam supervision and marking examination papers for courses not included in the terms of employment. For example, a seminar of 3 ECTS credits accounts for 6% of the terms of employment, and a course of 3 ECTS credits accounts for 4% of the terms of employment.
- Teaching loads are determined according to the needs of the ISS. Where possible, adjustments may be made in consultation with the assistant and his/her thesis supervisor.
- A minimum of 5% of working time is set aside for participation in collective scientific activities, particularly within the home unit (seminars, laboratory study days, data collection or analysis, writing articles or collaborative papers, etc.).

As far as SNSF doctoral candidates are concerned, the terms of employment normally comply with the following conditions:

- The contract is always offered at 100% (85% for the thesis and 15% for indemnity 1).
- The 15% for indemnity 1 may exceptionally be removed from the terms of reference, but only at the doctoral student's request.
- Allowance 1 normally consists of a teaching assignment, but for those with insufficient command of French, it may be replaced by a research-related assignment.
- In the event of teaching or research needs expressed by the ISS, a second allowance may be allocated to a doctoral student for one semester. A list of the ISS's needs is drawn up twice a year, then allocated among the doctoral students concerned, and finally submitted to the Dean's Office for approval and funding. This indemnity 2 is in

no way a due, and cannot be obtained by a person who has voluntarily waived indemnity 1.

The terms of employment can be updated following the "How are you doing" ("Comment ça va?") interviews (see below).

As stated in the terms of employment, attendance at all 3 examination sessions (January, June and August) is compulsory. This enables you to supervise exams and help mark them. Unless an exemption is granted by the ISS management, it is not permitted to be absent during these periods, either for scientific or private reasons. Exemption may be granted for scientific reasons in particular. All requests for exemption must be sent to the ISS management no later than one month after the last academic year (September academic year for the January examination session, and February academic year for the June and August examination sessions).

The terms of employment are used as a reference document when drawing up the employment certificate that everyone is required to receive at the end of their period of employment.

### **Teaching assistants**

Teaching assignments take into account the disciplinary, thematic and methodological knowledge and skills of the SNSF assistant or doctoral student.

As far as possible, teaching loads are stable over time, allowing a person to teach the same course several times. This does not apply in the case of new or withdrawn courses.

The teaching duties assigned to assistants and doctoral candidates consist of supporting the teacher in charge. This involves preparing content, taking part in sessions, marking exams or reports, assessment, oral exam appraisal, student support and administrative duties. The creation of teaching content and the management of sessions are the sole responsibility of the lecturer. The assistant or doctoral student may contribute occasionally, depending on his/her area of expertise, under the direct supervision of the lecturer and in agreement with him/her. The assistant or doctoral student is therefore not required to create teaching content independently, nor to take charge of a significant proportion of the sessions. This also applies in the event of the absence of the teacher in charge: the assistant or doctoral student is not required to replace him or her.

The total number of teaching tasks performed may not exceed the annual volume of hours corresponding to the percentage set out in the terms of employment.

### **Working conditions**

Each SNSF assistant or doctoral student is provided with a workspace (shared office) and basic IT equipment.

Within eight months of taking up their post, each assistant or doctoral student must work with their supervisor to draw up a thesis proposal (typically 40,000 characters in length, with a tolerance of 35,000 to 50,000<sup>[4]</sup>). The first renewal of a graduate assistant's contract depends on the approval of this project by the Faculty Research Committee. In addition, the assistant or doctoral student must be registered as a thesis student from the start of their contract.

During the five years of their appointment, each graduate assistant may request a semester off administrative and teaching duties, in order to concentrate on the progress of their thesis (fieldwork, final drafting of the thesis manuscript, etc.). The thesis supervisor must support the application. All assistants wishing to benefit from a reduction in their workload must submit a request (in writing) to the ISS Direction, with a copy to their thesis supervisor. Since assistantships are planned by academic year, the request should ideally be made in February preceding the academic year in question. After receiving the opinion of the thesis director, the ISS Board decides whether to grant this discharge, ensuring that its decisions are fair (by discipline, by unit, etc.) and that the ISS operates smoothly.

Like all UNIL employees, assistants and doctoral students are entitled to five weeks' annual holiday. They are also entitled to maternity leave (four months, and an additional month if breast-feeding), paternity leave (twenty days) and parental leave (between six and twelve months but unpaid). The assistant's contract may be extended in the event of maternity leave, adoption leave, extended absence due to illness, accident, military service, civilian service or in cases of force majeure. The maximum duration of the extension is one year.<sup>[5]</sup>

If you have any questions about your working conditions, you may at any time request a confidential meeting with the ISS Direction. You may also contact the ACISSP (Association du Corps Intermédiaire de la Faculté des Sciences Sociales et Politiques) and/or the CASSIS (Corps des Assistant-es de l'ISS).

The amount of money potentially available to assistants is adjusted each year by the ISS Board in the light of the previous year's financial statement and the overall budget available for the current year. Any changes are communicated in writing to the assistants and are also available on the ISS website.

At present, each ISS assistant is entitled to a sum of CHF 5,000 over the duration of the 5-year contract, or pro rata if the contract is shorter, to cover the acquisition of data and the completion of the thesis (fieldwork, survey, transcription, correction, printing costs, etc.). In addition, CHF 1,000 per calendar year is also allocated to finance personal research activities (e.g. costs of attending conferences and symposia, etc.). These expenses are covered by expense claims to be sent to the research unit secretariat. Assistants may apply for additional funding for various expenses, such as summer or winter schools, by contacting the ISS management.

For SNSF doctoral students, only the costs associated with the winter and summer schools are covered by the ISS; other costs must be budgeted for as part of the SNSF funding.

At the beginning of the second and fourth years of their contract, SNSF assistants and doctoral candidates are invited by the ISS to a "How are you doing" ("Comment ça va?") interview with

two members of the ISS of their choice, at least one of whom must hold a doctorate. These interviews are in no way an evaluation, but an opportunity to have a constructive discussion about teaching, research, the start of one's career, career prospects, integration, and so on. Deliberately kept away from contract renewal periods, these interviews should help to identify and resolve any difficulties encountered by the assistant in the course of his/her work. If, at the end of the interview, problems that the assistant considers to be significant are brought to light, he or she may decide to inform the ISS Direction. Steps will then be taken to find a solution. If the assistant does not wish management to be informed, the content of the interview will remain confidential.

ISS Direction, September 2024

<sup>[1]</sup> [https://wp.unil.ch/acil/files/2010/09/Reglement\\_assistants\\_UNIL.pdf](https://wp.unil.ch/acil/files/2010/09/Reglement_assistants_UNIL.pdf)

<sup>[2]</sup> [https://www.unil.ch/files/live/sites/graduatecampus/files/Charte\\_doctorat.pdf](https://www.unil.ch/files/live/sites/graduatecampus/files/Charte_doctorat.pdf)

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://www.unil.ch/files/live/sites/central/files/textes-leg/1-ress-hum/dir1-34-engagement-assist.pdf>

<sup>[4]</sup> [https://www.unil.ch/ssp/files/live/sites/ssp/files/shared/reglements/directives/4\\_5\\_Depot\\_projet\\_these\\_VF2\\_4042018.pdf](https://www.unil.ch/ssp/files/live/sites/ssp/files/shared/reglements/directives/4_5_Depot_projet_these_VF2_4042018.pdf)

<sup>[5]</sup> <https://www.unil.ch/familles/fr/home/menuinst/travailetudes---conges/vous-travaillez-a-lunil/conges-pour-raisons-familiales/effect-of-leave-on-contract.html>