

Petition: Towards a fairer IHEID for PhD researchers

As we prepare to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Institute, we, the undersigned PhD researchers, believe that the road ahead must necessarily lead towards a fairer IHEID.

The IHEID should not be reduced to a mere professionalisation hub. It must continue to cultivate critical thinkers, independent researchers, and future leaders—precisely what Geneva and the Institute are historically known for. We PhD researchers speak from a position of precarity, where many of us are currently living below the Swiss poverty line, despite contributing fundamentally to the Institute's teaching, research, and reputation. Institutionally, it is feasible to bring all PhD researchers above this threshold. Ensuring fair working conditions is a matter of welfare and dignity; and also a prerequisite for academic excellence and an expression of institutional responsibility.

Thus, we, PhD researchers of the IHEID, call on the Foundation Board and the Direction to take all necessary steps in this direction, and we demand, at a minimum, that:

- 1) All PhD researchers be brought above the Swiss poverty line by raising PhD scholarships to 30,000 CHF per year;
- 2) PhD researchers with an employment contract at the Institute as teaching assistants (or equivalent roles) be fairly remunerated by bringing their income to 58,000 CHF per year along with a fair contribution to social security (similar to UNIGE)¹;
- 3) At least 60 positions as teaching assistants (or equivalent roles) per year continue to be assigned to PhD researchers, with priority given to third-, fourth-, and fifth-year PhD researchers.

We urge the Foundation Board and the Direction to reaffirm their commitment to the wellbeing of PhD researchers and the quality of research at the institute by implementing these measures without delay, in coordination with the representatives of PhD researchers.

Signed: 137 PhD researchers at the IHEID
(as of 9/02/2026)

¹ Working conditions for doctoral assistants at UNIGE: Doctoral assistant contracts are either full-time, i.e. 100% (40 hours/week) or part-time, generally not lower than 70% (28 hours/week). Employment contracts stipulate that a minimum of 50% of this time must be devoted to the PhD researchers' thesis work (i.e. 20 hours per week for a 100% contract and 14 hours per week for a 70% contract). The starting salary for a 100% contract is 64.630 CHF (and thus 58.167 CHF for a 90% contract – 45% research and 45% assistants' tasks). Sources: <https://ge.ch/grandconseil/data/texte/PL13630.pdf>; https://memento.unige.ch/application/files/3917/0419/3611/Echelle_Traitement_2024.pdf.