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Notice of competition for the Doctoral Dissertation Award in Artificial Intelligence in Entrepreneurship and Management (AIEM) Third Edition - 2026

PREAMBLE

The Award is conceived and promoted by the Research Group on Management and Entrepreneurship of the Department of Industrial Engineering of the University of Padua. The Research Group is also responsible for the periodic review and updating of the Award's framework and contents in order to ensure its relevance and alignment with evolving scientific and technological trends.

The Award is fully funded by the Research Group, with the aim of promoting innovation and research excellence in the fields of management and entrepreneurship.

The Award is issued annually, providing a coherent and prestigious platform for the recognition of outstanding contributions in this field.

ART. 1 – PURPOSE

The primary objective of the Award is to encourage and support studies and research in the field of artificial intelligence applied to management and entrepreneurship. In addition to promoting intellectual and technological progress, the Award aims to foster a dynamic and collaborative network among all participants, including applicants and finalists, serving as a platform for knowledge exchange, professional growth, and future collaborations.

ART. 2 – ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The Award is open to PhD graduates who have successfully submitted and defended their doctoral dissertation **between 1 January 2025 and the closing date of this call.**

Applicants may be Italian, EU, or non-EU citizens.

Art. 3 - THEMES

Doctoral dissertations may address the relationship and impact of Artificial Intelligence on Entrepreneurship and Management and in particular, by way of example, on:

AI-Enhanced Strategies and Decision-Making Processes

- Strategic planning through AI-driven simulations and modelling
- Human–AI collaboration in strategy formulation
- Predictive analytics
- Predictive modelling of market trends and consumer behaviour
- AI-based analysis of human cognitive biases
- Impact of AI biases on human decision-making processes

Operational Efficiency, Productivity and Performance Management

- Productivity improvements
- Role of AI in reducing inefficiencies in business operations
- Performance analysis and improvement
- AI-based metrics for evaluating individual and organisational performance
- Functional integration and operational optimisation

AI-Enabled Management Models and Organizational Transformation

- New management methodologies
- Agile management systems enhanced by AI tools
- Management of organisational change
- Role of AI in digital transformation strategies

Human Resource Management and Workforce Development

- Ethical implications of AI in employee monitoring and productivity assessment
- AI-based personalised training and development programmes

Innovation Management and AI-Driven Creativity

- Innovation processes
- AI as a co-creator in product and service innovation
- Accelerating the innovation pipeline with AI
- Intellectual Property analysis

Entrepreneurship, Business Creation and Startups

- Business creation
- AI supported business model generation
- Generative AI tools for ideation and concept development in startups
- Building startup based on AI
- AI-supported analysis of startup failures

Investment, Finance and Risk Management

- Investment processes
- AI in venture capital decision-making and funding allocation
- Portfolio management optimisation through AI-driven analytics
- Risk management
- AI for detecting and mitigating operational and financial risks

Ethics, Sustainability and Societal Impact of AI

- Sustainability strategies
- AI for designing sustainable business practices and models
- Role of AI in achieving environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals
- Business ethics
- Ethical frameworks for AI in entrepreneurship and management
- Employment impacts and new jobs
- Job displacement vs. creation: AI's dual role in the labor market

Dissertations may be interdisciplinary and must provide an independent and original contribution within the above-mentioned themes, generating scientific and/or practical impacts for companies or other public or private organisations.

ART. 4 – APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND DEADLINE

Applications addressed to the Director of the Department of Industrial Engineering and drafted according to the template attached to this call must be submitted no later than

- **1 PM (Central European Time) on June, 3 2026.**

Applications must be submitted by e-mail to:

- **direzione.dii@unipd.it**

Documents must be submitted

- in static, non-editable formats, free from macros or executable code, preferably in PDF format.

The e-mail subject line must include the wording:

- **“Doctoral Dissertation Award in Artificial Intelligence in Entrepreneurship and Management (AIEM) – Third Edition – 2026”.**

Applications received after the deadline, for any reason, will not be considered.

Applicants must declare under their own responsibility:

- full name, place and date of birth, citizenship, tax code, residence, and contact address (including postal code, telephone number and e-mail);
- that they defended a doctoral dissertation between 1 January 2025 and the deadline of this call, indicating the awarding University;
- any changes to the contact details provided in the application;
- acknowledgement of and compliance with all provisions contained in this call.

The application must include:

- curriculum vitae, with specific reference to continuity of research activity, academic qualifications, specialisations, publications and awards;
- a description in English (maximum 6,000 characters excluding spaces) of the doctoral dissertation, the applicant's personal contribution, the main results achieved, and the scientific and/or practical impact;
- the doctoral dissertation (in English) in PDF format;
- a valid identity document.

Applications not fully meeting the required conditions will not be considered. Participation in the competition implies full acceptance of this call. False declarations or document falsifications shall result in exclusion from the procedure or recovery of the prize if already awarded.

ART. 5 – EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS AND AWARD PROCEDURE

Applications will be evaluated by a committee composed of three experts in the themes referred to in Article 3 (“Themes”).

The committee may include professors from Italian and international universities and will be appointed by the Director of the Department.

The committee, at its sole discretion, will select the winner and, if deemed appropriate, up to four applicants to receive an honourable mention.

Evaluation criteria are:

- applicant's curriculum vitae (continuity of research activity, qualifications, publications, awards, projects);
- originality of the applicant's contribution to the doctoral research;
- degree of innovation and impact at national and international level.

The Committee reserves the right not to assign the Award if none of the submitted applications are considered suitable

ART. 6 – AMOUNT OF THE AWARD AND PAYMENT PROCEDURE

The prize amounts to € 5,000.00, inclusive of all charges borne by the Institution (IRAP), and shall be paid by the Department of Industrial Engineering in a single instalment.

Up to four additional applicants may receive an honourable mention certificate.

Awarded candidates will be listed on the website of the promoting research group:

<https://research.dii.unipd.it/me/apply-for-awards/>

ART. 7 – ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS

The winner and the recipients of honourable mentions will be announced by September 2026.

Winners will be notified by e-mail using the contact details provided in their application.

ART. 8 – PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Pursuant to Article 4 of Italian Law No. 241 of 7 August 1990 (New provisions concerning administrative procedures and the right of access to administrative documents), Prof. Fabrizio Dughiero, Director of the Department of Industrial Engineering, is appointed as the person responsible for the administrative procedure.

Applicants shall have the right to access the documents related to the selection procedure in accordance with the provisions set out in the “Regulations implementing Law No. 241 of 7 August 1990 and subsequent amendments concerning administrative procedures and the right of access to administrative documents of the University of Padua”, Decree Rep. No. 1105/2014 of 23/04/2014.

ART. 9 – PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The processing of personal data collected for the purposes identified in this call shall be carried out in compliance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR).

The University of Padua, Via 8 Febbraio 2, 35122 Padua, Italy, is the Data Controller.

The full privacy notice is available at: www.unipd.it/privacy

ART. 10 – GENERAL INFORMATION

This call for applications, together with the application template, is available on the University of Padua website: <https://www.unipd.it/premi-studio-laureati> and on the website of the Department of Industrial Engineering (section "Calls"): <https://www.dii.unipd.it/>

Further information may be requested from the Department of Industrial Engineering (Tel. +39 049 8277558 – 7577 – e-mail: direzione.dii@unipd.it).

Attached to this notice:

- Application Form

The Head of Department

Prof. Fabrizio Dughiero