

## JOB OFFER

### PhD position in Leadership and the Design of Organizational Routines

Department of Economics, Management and Leadership

In collaboration with KU Leuven (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences) and  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Faculty of Social Sciences & Solvay Business School)

### Project LEAP-1

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## OFFER DESCRIPTION

A fully funded, four-year doctoral position in leadership research (Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior) is jointly offered by the [Royal Military Academy](#) (RMA), [KU Leuven](#) (KUL), and [Vrije Universiteit Brussel](#) (VUB). Each university brings its unique expertise to the project with strengths in organizational behavior, research in the defence and security domains, and advanced research methods. Starting in September 2025, this role is ideal for those passionate about leadership research and eager to contribute to this field.

## Your position

This position is open to a First Stage Researcher and provides an opportunity to pursue a joint PhD between the **RMA (Project Lead: Sten Delvaux)**, **KUL (Promotor: Prof. Jeroen Stouten)**, and **VUB (Promotor: Prof. Bert Schreurs)**. As a PhD student, you will explore the role of leaders in the formation and contextual adaptation of organizational routines, focusing on designing, conducting, and publishing research projects. The research process typically involves the conceptualization of the research questions and ideas, data collection, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and the writing and presentation of academic papers. The aim is to publish these projects in high-quality academic journals. Funding is available for conference participation and presenting your work.

## The project

Military operations rely on organizational routines—shared patterns of action that guide teams in dynamic and high-stakes environments. Effective leadership goes beyond simply adhering to procedures; it involves refining and redesigning routines to adapt to shifting operational demands. Yet, how leaders shape routines to enable adaptive performance remains unclear.

This project challenges the traditional view of leadership as reactive, where leaders are seen as passive implementers. Instead, it redefines leaders as proactive agents who actively shape team routines. The project objectives are: (1) to examine how leaders form routines for operational execution, (2) to explore their role in routine dynamics, and (3) to develop a multilevel theory of leadership and routines, connecting individual and organizational factors. Although part of the broader LEAP project (see below), the specific focus of the doctoral dissertation remains flexible and can be developed in collaboration with the PhD promotors.

The position offers a unique opportunity to gain expertise in diverse research methods through a mixed-methods approach. This includes systematic literature review, empirical fieldwork using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and theory-building. The goal is to advance scholarly understanding of leadership-as-design while delivering actionable guidance for military leadership practice.

## Context

The doctoral candidate will be employed by the **RMA-Patrimony** - a recognized university with a strong international research culture that conducts scientific studies for the Belgian Defense department and external partners - but will work across the three universities (RMA, KUL, VUB). The specific working arrangement will be structured to optimize collaboration and support research progress. Further, by joining this project, you will help establish the **Research Unit on Leadership** (RU-LEAD) at the RMA. RU-LEAD is launching a research initiative called **“Leadership Enhancement and Performance” (LEAP)**, focusing on two main research objectives related to adaptive military leadership: **(1) shaping adaptive routines (LEAP-1)** and **(2) developing adaptive leaders (LEAP-2)**. To achieve these goals, two PhD students will be recruited—one for each research objective. This job offer pertains to the first research objective (i.e., shaping adaptive routines).

## REQUIREMENTS

### Your profile

1. An academic Master's or Research Master's degree in relevant disciplines, such as psychology, management/business, applied economic sciences. Research Masters are highly valued. Please note that final-year Master's students are also welcome to apply, provided they obtain their Master's degree before the position begins.
2. Completed the previous degree with an excellent GPA.
3. Passion for scientific research and a strong interest in advancing the science of leadership and organizational routines.
4. Proficiency in English. Knowledge of French or Dutch is an added value.
5. A solid basis in research skills and academic writing, with enthusiasm for developing skills, applying qualitative and quantitative methods, and adopting open science practices.
6. Proactive, curious with strong planning and communication skills.
7. Interest in disseminating research to scholars and professionals.
8. Prepared to work in a military environment.

### Specific requirements

- The researcher may be exposed to classified information and will therefore have to obtain the required security clearance. The candidate must consent with the background check required to obtain this clearance, which will be executed by Belgian Defense.
- Employment with the Patrimony requires living in Belgium for the duration of the study.

## WHAT DO WE OFFER?

### Contract

- Starting date: **September 2025**.
- **Full-time employment** (38 hours / week) at the Royal Military Academy based on an **open-ended contract** with the Patrimony of the RMA. Please note that while your contract will be open-ended, the financing of the contract will be tied to the funding project (4 years).
- PhD project with a four-year horizon: the PhD position is for one year initially, with the possibility of extension for up to three more years following positive annual evaluations.

- Wage scale class A1. Note: RMA-Patrimony applies a merit-based research career track, allowing researchers to advance in wage scale based upon personal evaluations.
- Holiday pay.

## Extra-legal benefits

- Possibility to benefit from a bilingualism allowance (Dutch/French) following a SELOR test;
- End-of-year bonus;
- Free DKK hospitalization insurance. Possibility of additional affiliation for one or more persons living under the same roof: spouse, child(ren) (50% of the price per additional member);
- Bike allowance / Free public transport (home-work commute);
- Meal vouchers (6€ / day);
- Free access to campus sports facilities outside working hours;
- On-campus restaurant and cafeteria with democratic prices (discount on the daily menu);
- Flexible working hours within the 38-hour week;
- Teleworking possible with allowance (2 days / week max);
- Holidays:
  - 29 days holiday / year from the 1st year of contract (then from 45 years: +1 day holiday every 5 years)
  - 1 week OFF every year between Christmas and New Year's Eve (independent of the annual balance of holidays).
- Advantages and interesting offers thanks to the Benefits@work card (discounts, vouchers...);
- Entitlement to services offered by the 'Office Central d'Action Sociale et Culturelle de la Défense' (OCASC): among others holiday centres, discount on travel organised by the tour operator...;
- Possibility to benefit from the nursery funded by Belgian Defence (subject to availability).

## SELECTION PROCESS

**Application deadline: 9 June 2025**

**Please send by email:**



- CV
- Scan of your ID card (both sides)
- Letter of motivation
- Official copy of your grades (full transcripts of BSc and MSc)
- Contact details of at least one reference

To Sten Delvaux ([sten.delvaux@mil.be](mailto:sten.delvaux@mil.be)), Prof. Jeroen Stouten ([jeroen.stouten@kuleuven.be](mailto:jeroen.stouten@kuleuven.be)), Prof. Bert Schreurs ([Bert.Schreurs@vub.be](mailto:Bert.Schreurs@vub.be)), with [erm-deao-rsw@mil.be](mailto:erm-deao-rsw@mil.be) in Cc.

**Please ensure that the project reference "LEAP-1" is clearly stated in the subject line of your email.**

We will review applications starting 9 June 2025. Interviews are expected to follow in late June, with preselected candidates notified in advance of their interview date and time.

If you have any further questions about this position, feel free to reach out to us.

 Excited to hear from you: Take the LEAP with Us! 

## WORK LOCATIONS

1. **Royal Military Academy**, Avenue de la Renaissance 30, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.
2. **KU Leuven**, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Dekenstraat 2, 3000 Leuven
3. **Vrije Universiteit Brussel**, Faculty of Social Sciences & Solvay Business School, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels