



Call for Applications for the Ph.D. Thesis “*AIROYOUNG Dissertation Award*” 2026

[AIROYOUNG](#) (AY) announces the “*AIROYOUNG Dissertation Award*” 2026 for the best doctoral thesis discussed in Operations Research at an Italian university during the period June 1, 2025 – May 31, 2026.

PROCESS OF SELECTION, EVALUATION, AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINALIST THESES

To evaluate the applications received, AY will identify jurors external to its current board.

In particular, the selection process will be divided into the following three phases:

- 1) A **first committee of reviewers** will conduct a **preliminary evaluation** of the doctoral theses. For each thesis, two reviewers will each create a report justifying a score of up to 85 points according to the criteria indicated below:
 - a) Pertinence of the thesis topic(s) (maximum 15 points)
 - b) Scientific contribution (maximum 35 points)
 - c) Impact and interdisciplinarity (maximum 25 points)
 - d) Writing quality (maximum 10 points)
- 2) Based on the same criteria, a **second committee** will receive the reviewers’ reports to **compare all the theses overall** and provide a comparative score for the publications taken from the thesis (with a 15-point maximum), thus obtaining a **definitive evaluation** and a **ranking**. At most, the first four theses in the ranking will be named finalists and will access the special session to be held during the next edition of the International Conference on Optimization and Decision Science (ODS 2026).
- 3) During the special session at ODS 2026, a **third committee** will evaluate the **presentations** of the finalist theses, awarding **up to 10 points** to each candidate, also considering its presentation and communication skills.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WINNING THESIS

The thesis receiving the highest overall score will be declared the winner and will be announced during ODS 2026.

In case of a tie, the winning thesis will be the one that obtained the highest score at the end of the second round. In case of a further tie, there will be an *ex aequo*, and the prize will be divided.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

To be able to participate, you must:

- Have discussed, or are expected to discuss, a doctoral thesis on Operations Research topics within the period 01/06/2025–31/05/2026 at an Italian university.
- Be an AIRO member for the calendar year 2026 or 2027. Having participated in ODS 2025 or being registered to ODS 2026 grants automatic AIRO membership for the year 2026 or 2027, respectively.

Not being registered for ODS 2026 at the time of submitting the application does not represent an exclusion criterion for the call. However, presenting during the AYDA session at ODS 2026 will be mandatory. To ensure proper organisation of the session, finalists who are not yet registered for ODS 2026 will be contacted directly by the AIROYoung board.

HOW TO APPLY

The application form must be submitted by filling in the following form:

[Application Form for the “AIROYoung Dissertation Award” 2026](#)

Deadline to participate: April 30, 2026.

Specifically, in addition to personal data and a contact address, anyone wishing to apply must attach the following documents (all in PDF format):

- A copy of the **doctoral thesis**;
- A **summary** of the thesis (in English; font-size: 11pt; maximum length: 5 pages, bibliographical references excluded);
- A copy of their **curriculum vitae** (in English);
- A certificate of successful thesis defense, or a document from (at least) one supervisor indicating the scheduled defense date, which must be no later than May 31, 2026.
- If any, a copy of each publication taken from the thesis (publications that do not pertain to the thesis content will not be taken into consideration by the reviewers);
- A **proof of the AIRO membership** for the calendar year 2026 or 2027, such as:
 - the certificate of participation in the ODS 2025 conference (the registration fee for the conference included the AIRO membership fee for 2026);
 - the registration receipt for the ODS 2026 conference (the registration fee for the conference includes the AIRO membership fee for 2027);
 - the receipt of the payment made to AIRO to become a member in 2026.

AWARD

Each finalist will receive a certificate. The winning person will also receive a cash prize of € 500. In case of an *ex aequo*, the prize will be divided in half.

For more information, contact the AY board: ayda_airoyoung@outlook.com