



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA  
DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE GIURIDICHE

## Description of the Research Scholarships

*A/B Testing: what it is, its applications and GELSI (Governance, Ethical, Legal, Social Implications)*

### Outline

The research scholarship will enable a candidate, who already hold the equivalent of a PhD in Philosophy, to research the new challenges posed by A/B Testing and its GELSI (Governance, Ethical, Legal, Social Implications).

### Topic

Online controlled experiments, also known as A/B tests, have become ubiquitous. For this reason, practical challenges in running experiments at scale have been discussed for some time. However, the GELSI (Governance, Ethical, Legal, Social Implications) of A/B testing has been neglected. This research will address this gap by investigating socio-legal-ethical frameworks that focus on the rise of an A/B experimentation in the digital industry. The goal will be to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon and a set of principles that may support ethical and responsible experimentation to protect users, customers, and society. The approach will be multidisciplinary and in terms of “soft ethics”, i.e. post-compliance. The analysis will consider the relevance and effectiveness of several mechanisms and policies in educating, governing, and incentivizing companies conducting online controlled experiments. And it is hoped that a methodology for A/B testing will become available.

### Deliverables

The research will deliver an article to be published in an international, peer-reviewed journal.