



How to apply to the Doctoral Program in Contemporary and Comparative History (The post-1914 period)

A Practical Guide for International Applicants

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In this document, we provide step-by-step guidelines and practical advice to international students who wish to apply to our Doctoral Program.

The application process can be summarized in six steps.

1. Make sure you meet the requirements of our Doctoral Program.
2. Find a funding opportunity (and make sure you meet any further requirements set by the scholarship program you are applying for).
3. Write a convincing research proposal.
4. Choose a potential supervisor from among the faculty members of our Doctoral Program.
5. Contact your potential supervisor to ask for supervision and discuss your research topic.
6. Finalize your research proposal, prepare and submit your application.

In the sections below, you can read detailed information and useful tips on how to fulfill each of these steps.

1. Who can apply?

You are welcome to apply to our Doctoral Program if you meet the following requirements:

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must have a master's degree (or equivalent) in a related field from a recognized university or institution of higher education, or provide documentation indicating that they will earn such a degree before enrollment in our Doctoral Program.

Students enrolled in our Doctoral Program must not be simultaneously enrolled in other institutions of higher education.

Language Requirements

The language of instruction for non-Hungarian speaking international students in our Doctoral Program is English. International students are expected to complete their dissertation in English. Therefore, applicants must demonstrate proficiency in English.

Please keep in mind that you may have to meet further application criteria and specific requirements, depending on the scholarship you are applying for to fund your studies at our Doctoral Program. (See the next point.)

2. How to fund your doctoral studies?

You can apply to our Doctoral Program through the following **international scholarship programs**:

- Stipendium Hungaricum
- Scholarship Program for the Hungarian Diaspora

You can read in detail about each of these scholarship programs on the website of the Tempus Public Foundation: <https://tka.hu/english>

Besides these scholarship programs, international students interested in doing a PhD in our Doctoral Program can apply for a **self-financed** place as well.

Important to know:

If you choose to apply to our Doctoral Program through any of the international scholarship programs above, you will have to submit your application on the website of the **Tempus Public Foundation**: <https://tka.hu/english>. But before doing so, you will need to contact our Doctoral Program to find a potential supervisor and discuss your research topic with them. You will also need a statement from your future supervisor declaring that they agree to supervise your doctoral research.

3. How to write a convincing research proposal?

Before contacting your potential supervisor, you need to write a research proposal that you will attach to your letter. This research proposal will be of a preliminary sort to help your potential supervisor decide whether they can undertake your supervision and provide material for further discussion with you on the topic of your doctoral research. After you have come to an agreement with your supervisor about your thesis supervision and research topic, you may finalize your research proposal and submit your application.

While preparing your research proposal, remember that you do not need to have done great research yet, but you should be able to show that you have the capability of doing great research.

Even at this early stage, you are expected to address the most important issues regarding your

potential research. Your proposal has to cover the following points:

- the major **questions** driving your research;
- how your research will make **an original contribution** to the selected field, and how you will achieve this;
- how your research project will provide **new knowledge, or reinterpret existing ideas in an original way**;
- how you intend to carry out your research, i.e. the methodology you will use and how you will structure your work;
- how the University of Szeged can promote your research and what you want to study here.

A convincing research proposal therefore

- suggests a precise, stimulating and significant research question;
- establishes the relevance and value of the suggested research question in the context of current academic thinking;
- describes the historical sources the research requires;
- sets out a clear and feasible methodology, which will enable you to answer the research question;
- explains what results the project might lead to and what new perspectives might open up.

Obviously, the particular content and structure of your research proposal will depend on your field and methodology.

Length: up to 2,000 words including bibliography.

Your research proposal should include the following sections:

Title, your name and affiliation

You must provide a working title for your research. This is likely to change over time, but provides a point of departure for your proposal. The title should be clear and specific about geographical coverage and the time span of the project. It is more useful to stick to a matter-of-fact title as a working title; you can always change the title of your dissertation at a later stage.

Introduction

You should introduce the questions and issues central to your research and identify the field of study in broad terms. Give a preliminary indication of how your research will contribute to and advance the area of research you have chosen. Keep in mind that your research should make an original contribution to your field and provide new knowledge, or reinterpret existing knowledge in an original way.

Research background and questions

In this section you are expected to place your project in the context of the existing scholarship on

the field. Expand on the points you have made in the introduction and try to address:

- what the key texts and approaches already existing in your field are;
- how your proposed research differs from existing research;
- how your project will contribute to existing work in the field;
- how your project extends our understanding and knowledge of the subject.

Research methods and sources

This section should set out how you will achieve what you outlined to do in Research background and questions. Give details how you plan to carry out your research, including:

- what the theoretical resources you intend to use are;
- possible interdisciplinary connections;
- what specific methods, such as comparisons, you are planning to make use of;
- the archives, particular databases, or specialist libraries your project involves;
- how you will set out answering your research questions.

Work schedule

Outline the time schedule for completing your study. You should consider dividing your research into sections and indicate how you plan to write up each unit.

Bibliography

Conclude the proposal with a bibliography, including the books and articles to which you refer in the proposal. The bibliography is expected to follow one of the standard formats, preferably *The Chicago Manual of Style*: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

The professors who read your proposal are aware of the fact that it is not a final document, but a provisional statement, and that your ideas and approaches will develop during the course of your research. You should consider the proposal as an opportunity to demonstrate that you have begun to explore an important area of study, and that you have a question, or questions, that challenge and advance that area. It also serves to demonstrate that you can formulate your ideas in clear and precise English.

The above guidelines are based on the guide available on the website of University of Sussex: <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/phd/apply/tips-research-degrees/research-proposal>

4. How to choose a potential supervisor?

As a first step, please check out the **list of potential supervisors and their areas of expertise** on the Doctoral Program's website ('Thesis Supervisors and Topics').
<http://hist.bibl.u-szeged.hu/en/alprogramok/contemporary-history/>

Please pick from the above list a supervisor whose areas of expertise **best match with the research**

project that you are planning to propose in your application to our Doctoral Program

The project you are planning needs to fit the research profile of the Department of Contemporary History. Our faculty members can only supervise doctoral projects that are related to their specializations. Please make sure the project you have in mind actually falls within our faculty members' areas of expertise.

Please also keep in mind that the areas of expertise that are indicated on our website under each supervisor's names are NOT topics for potential doctoral projects. Your research topic has to be a **specific segment of or otherwise related to** these broad areas. Your doctoral project needs to yield original research results and be based on appropriate sources. As a result, your topic should not be too broad.

After you have picked your potential supervisor from our list of supervisors, please do some on-line research and **get familiar with their work**. Look at their CV, learn about the research projects they have participated in, and check out their publications.

Once you are sure that indeed they are the most appropriate choice for you, prepare to contact your potential supervisor for the first time. For this purpose, please write an email to the **secretary of our Doctoral Program** who will put you in touch with your potential supervisor. In this email, please let the secretary know that you are planning to apply to our doctoral program and name the supervisor you wish to contact.

The secretary of the Doctoral Program:

Dr. Ágnes Tamás: tagnes83@yaho.com

5. How to contact your potential supervisor for the first time?

Before contacting your potential supervisor, take your time to **check all available online information and material** that are relevant to your prospective doctoral studies. Please keep in mind that it is not your potential supervisor's job to inform you about what you should read. Showing that you are well informed and prepared will certainly help you make a good first impression.

The first contact should not appear to be spam, that is, a letter that you could easily have sent to several faculty members worldwide. Please make sure that the way you address the professor and the content of your letter is **concrete and personalized**.

We recommend that you address your letter to "Dear Professor X [family name of your potential supervisor]".

The letter should be **concise and clear**.

Start your letter by **introducing yourself briefly**. Let the professor know which university you have graduated from, and what your major was. Tell her or him about your previous studies, student competitions, research projects, workshops, and conferences you may have participated in, and your most significant professional experiences and accomplishments. In this section of your letter,

it is enough if you stick to the basic and most relevant information (3-5 sentences). You can further elaborate on your educational and professional background in the full CV that you will attach to your letter.

Please **be clear and straightforward about the purpose** of your letter, that is, that you are planning to apply to our Doctoral Program and looking for a potential supervisor. Avoid vague phrases such as “I am interested in your research” or “I’d like to become involved”, etc.

Show that you are familiar with the professor’s work. Let them know why you thought that they would be a suitable supervisor for you and **how the project you have in mind for your doctoral research fits the professor’s area of expertise**. If you are not entirely sure that the professor is the right supervisor for you, you can absolutely say so. (For instance: “Your work on xxx and yyy led me to think you might be a suitable supervisor. I’d like to discuss my work so far with you with a view to potential supervision.”)

Make your **funding situation** clear. Please let the professor know which scholarship program you are planning to apply to in order to fund your studies in our Doctoral Program. (“Once I’ve found a supervisor, I’m hoping to apply for a scholarship through the Stipendium Hungaricum Programme.”)

Attach to your letter your **research proposal**, a full **CV**, and a single **work you have had published**.

Please sign your letter with your **full name**.

Please respect the professor’s time and wait patiently until they get back to you. If it seems necessary, you can **send a reminder after a week** (but not sooner) in the same thread to make sure that your letter has not somehow missed the professor’s attention.

6. How to submit your application?

After your supervisor has approved your research proposal, you will need to ask for a **statement from your supervisor** declaring that they agree to supervise your doctoral research.

You will have to submit your research proposal, the statement of the supervisor and all other application material on the website of the **Tempus Public Foundation** (<https://tka.hu/english>). This website might direct you to the own website of the international scholarship program you choose to apply for.

On these websites you will find detailed guidelines on how to submit your application and what other documentations you might need.

Please make sure you submit all necessary application documents (online application form, motivation letter, school certificates etc.) required by the scholarship program you are applying for.

For further information on the **structure and requirements of the doctoral training** in our Doctoral Program, see this detailed guideline:

<https://jelenkor.bibl.u-szeged.hu/guide-for-doctoral-students-and-applicants/>