AHRC Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership Funding Applications 2019

Guidance Notes

Contents

Introduction

The Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership (M4C) is an AHRC-funded collaboration between the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University, the University of Warwick, Coventry University, De Montfort University, the University of Leicester, Nottingham Trent University, and the University of Nottingham. M4C provides combined research expertise for the personal and professional development of the next generation of arts and humanities doctoral researchers. Through the partnership, M4C aims to deliver excellence in all aspects of research supervision and training, providing access to a wide range of facilities and support networks across eight campuses and to a diverse range of partners in the cultural, creative and heritage sectors. These guidance notes are designed to help you make your application so please read thoroughly.

Eligibility and Application Process

AHRC funding is open to all **UK and EU students**, who meet the academic and residency eligibility criteria as detailed in the [AHRC Training Grant Funding Guide](#) You should read this to ensure that you meet the scheme, subject, residency and academic eligibility requirements.

You should either hold a Masters qualification at the time of application or be able to state that you will have completed one by the time your PhD begins (even though the result may not be known and the final examination board may not yet have taken place). You can also apply on the basis of having equivalent relevant professional experience in lieu of a Masters qualification.

For EU applicants, unless you have been living in the UK for 3 years previous to the start of your studentship, EU applicants are awarded an EU fees-only studentship. This is in line with UK Research and Innovation rules. Depending on M4C funds available, however, EU applicants may be offered studentships comprising fees and full stipend. This is not guaranteed but offered wherever possible. EU applicants should therefore submit an application and, if successful, you will be informed of the funding level you have been awarded.

[UKCISA](#) provides information on tuition fees to help you assess your fee status. This guide should give you a clear idea of whether you have UK or EU student status.

Please note that this scheme is not open to international applicants.

Additional Eligibility Points to Note:

Applications

1. If you are already in receipt of a doctoral level qualification you are *ineligible* to apply for funding from the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership.

2. If you are currently a member of academic staff at one of the M4C partner universities, and intend to remain in employment, then you are *ineligible* to apply for funding from the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. Academic staff who are employed in universities either full- or part-time in permanent or long-term fixed appointments are eligible to undertake PhDs as identified through the staff development procedures at their own institution. Please contact the M4C Site Directors of your university if you have any further questions.

3. If you have already commenced doctoral study you are *eligible* to apply for AHRC funding provided that, at the start of the AHRC award, you will have at least 50% of your period of study remaining (excluding any 'writing up' period).

4. You are only able to make an application for funding to M4C on two separate occasions. Applications submitted for a third time (i.e. in three successive years) will be *ineligible* and will not be considered.

Employment

5. If you are currently employed full-time and intend to remain employed full-time whilst undertaking your PhD studies, you will be *ineligible* to apply for funding. Only those students employed on a part-time basis whilst undertaking their doctoral studies will be eligible, in this case for a part-time award. You must make your employment position clear on the application form.

6. If an M4C student takes up a salaried position at a university, Midlands4Cities and the AHRC will not continue funding (even for part-time study). If employment is for a fixed short-term appointment, it may be possible to take a leave of absence from AHRC-funded M4C PhD study and suspend the studentship for the relevant period.

7. **Duration and location**
   You are allowed to apply for Midlands4Cities funding if you have already started your PhD. However, you should not have completed more than 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time.

As an M4C DTP student you will be expected to live within reasonable travel time of your designated home University to ensure that you are able to maintain regular contact with your department and supervisors. This is to ensure that you are not isolated and get the full support, mentoring, training and access to the facilities you will need to complete your research successfully and to a high standard. The only exceptions to this are

periods of absence that are an essential part of your study e.g. fieldwork, study visits or conference attendance.

The Application Process

There are a number of selection stages within the Doctoral Training Partnership so make sure that you allow yourself sufficient time to complete your funding application form online by the deadline. You should apply to the appropriate deadline (i.e. 14th January 2019 for entry in September 2019). Awards cannot be deferred other than in exceptional circumstances.

The deadline for applications for 2019 entry is 14th January 2019 – noon

Once you have chosen to apply for either the Open Doctoral Award (using the supervisor search to build your supervisory team) or an advertised Collaborative Doctoral Award project you are ready to start your funding application. For both doctoral routes there are two stages to the application process once you have read these guidance notes.

Step one: Apply for a place to study at an M4C University

You will need to have applied for a place to study at one of the eight M4C universities before you can apply for funding. It is not necessary for you to have received written confirmation that you have been offered a place at your selected university in order to *apply* for funding, **but** your application to study at a Midlands4Cities university must be in process with an ID number which will be required for final submission of your online funding application.

As such, apply to a university first *for a place* and then apply for *funding*.

The offer of a place to study can be either conditional on your results, or unconditional. In order for this to happen, the Admissions Office at your home university must have received your application for a place and **two references** by noon on **14 January 2019.**

To support both your application for a place to study and your funding application to Midlands4Cities it is essential that two references are submitted via the online reference form by the deadline above (**14 January 2019)**. You need to nominate and provide details of two referees via the M4C online application portal so that they can be contacted to provide your reference. Your referee will be sent an automated request to complete the M4C reference form. **Please ensure the information included in this section is accurate** (see page 13 of the guidance notes for selecting your referees).

(NB. *You can go into the M4C application portal to submit your reference request before you begin your funding application. Please allow sufficient time for your referees to complete their reference*).

Step two: Apply for M4C Funding

Once you have submitted an application to an M4C University (and received an applicant ID), you will be able to begin your application for Midlands4Cities studentship funding. Applications for both doctoral routes, Open Doctoral Awards and Collaborative Doctoral Awards, should be completed on the M4C online application form.

We recommend that you work with your prospective supervisors to discuss and refine your application for funding. For **Open Doctoral Awards**, The 'Supervisor Search' facility on the [M4C website](#) will help you to identify the academics whose research expertise are closest to your research project, and to find the team that will best facilitate your studies. Please remember that you will be working with a team of at least two academic supervisors and that they can be academic members of staff at different universities. Therefore, although you apply to a single home University, your supervisory team can be made up of academics from other universities across Midlands4Cities when this provides the best fit of expertise for your project. Start the search process early by sending an outline of your PhD topic to the supervisors with whom you might like to work as a postgraduate researcher. It may take a number of iterations to refine your funding proposal and your potential supervisors will be the best people to help with this process before you submit your application.

For **Collaborative Doctoral Awards** read the project description and contact the named lead academic supervisor to find out more information. The university at which the lead supervisor is based will become your home University.

Along with at least two academic supervisors in Midlands4Cities universities, we welcome proposals that include a named external partner where this will benefit the research project. For example, you can suggest a non-university partner as a supervisor on your team (details of M4C partners are listed on the [Midlands4Cities website](#)). If you have already identified an external partner organisation for collaborative research, provide details in your application. If you envisage a collaboration may be possible - either with a member of an organisation as a supervisor or by spending time at an organisation for research purposes - indicate this in your application. Whether or not you anticipate any partner links will not influence any final decision about your funding application.

Students who submit an application for a Collaborative Doctoral Award are *also eligible* to apply to the Open Doctoral Award competition.

Completing the Online Application Form

To start your application please visit: https://midlands4cities.smapply.io/

We advise that you develop your proposal offline and transfer it to the online form when you are satisfied. You should aim to make the best case possible for your doctoral application, proof-read before submission to avoid careless spelling or grammatical errors and pay due attention to the word limits where applicable.

There are **four tasks** to complete the application process:

- Eligibility Questions

- Application Form

- Equal Opportunities Form

- Reference Request

We recommend that you submit your reference request as soon as possible. This can be completed in advance of submitting your full application form.

Once you have completed the four tasks, and are ready to submit your completed application, click 'Review & Submit'.

Before you can proceed with your application your eligibility for funding will be checked.

This section must be completed fully because it will be used to confirm your residency eligibility for AHRC Funding, **which is limited to UK and EU Citizens only**. EU applicants will normally receive a 'Fees Only' award, and should indicate that they are a Fees Only applicant on the form. If it can be confirmed that you have been resident in the UK for a minimum of 3 years prior to applying for funding, you **may be eligible** for a full award.

Clarification on your fee status for funding can be found on the UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs website:

Section 1: Personal details

Please ensure that all your contact details are correct, as this is how we will undertake any communication with you.

Section 2: Your doctoral route and mode of study

Please select your doctoral route, Open Doctoral Award or Collaborative Doctoral Award.

If you have already started your PhD, please include the date on which your studies commenced and whether you have been studying part-time or full-time.

Section 3: Your supervision team

Please provide details of your proposed supervisory team with whom you have communicated in developing your research proposal.

Please provide the name of the Academic Unit in which you intend to study (the terminology may differ between Midlands4Cities universities but this refers to the smallest unit, e.g. department, school or subject area).

Include here the names of your potential supervisors and their universities in each case **(minimum of 2 and no more than 3 academic supervisors**).

Do you anticipate any links to M4C partners in terms of training or co-supervision? If yes, please provide details. Note this is for information only. Whether or not you anticipate any links at this stage will not influence any final decision about your funding application.

Section 4: Your career in higher education to date

Please provide details of the institutions you have attended (or are attending), and the courses you have taken at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. You should enter one undergraduate and one Masters level degree, but there is also space to add other qualifications at the same level or other relevant qualifications.

If your qualification was completed outside the UK, please tell us the name of your qualification in the original language (e.g. Maîtrise, and not the English equivalent). If you studied in or outside the UK, please confirm that your Masters degree is 180 credits even if not all of those credits were at Masters level (e.g. a language or professional module may not have been at Masters level) and list the modules that you have taken along with their credit weighting if known.

Section 5: Professional experience

Please provide information about any employment, work or professional experience that is **relevant to your proposed programme of study**. This is of particular importance if your programme is practice-led, if your Masters qualification was completed sometime ago, or if you have had no Masters level training but you have substantial professional experience relevant to the subject of your proposed research. You should use this space to give details of professional experience that you wish the assessors to take into account.

Employment Status: If you are currently employed full-time and intend to remain employed full-time whilst undertaking your PhD studies, you will be *ineligible* according to AHRC rules to apply for funding. Only those students who will be employed on a part-time basis whilst undertaking their doctoral studies will be eligible, in this case for a part-time award. Employment for part-time students should not exceed more than 20 hours in any week.

Section 6: Project proposal

It is important to organise the information you provide about your proposed research project carefully.

Please provide a draft title for your proposed programme of research. Failure to do so will make the project seem less coherent.

(maximum 400 words per question)

The **project proposal** plays a key part in the assessment of your application. That is why we recommend that you discuss the content of this section in good time with your proposed supervisors. The assessors are looking for evidence of high quality research and strong potential for postgraduate study. You need to present your case clearly and concisely. The subheadings below may help as a guide to structure your proposal:

> **Intellectual purpose and originality:** Make sure you provide a synopsis of your proposed research project. In describing your project, address the key **research questions, research context** (i.e. the debates or secondary literature your project engages with) and **research methodology** (how you plan to go about your research). How you present your project proposal is crucial, so you should use clear and concise language, avoiding jargon. Bear in mind that some of the assessors may not work precisely in your particular specialism but that all of them will be able to assess whether a project is coherent and clearly explained, and can be realised within the timeframe of your studies. As part of your proposal, make clear the particular contribution to knowledge and understanding that you hope to make and explain why the research is important. Outline the potential application of your project within the research field and, where relevant, the potential of your research for social and cultural impact. *In the case of a Collaborative Doctoral Award application, you should explain how your research develops in the overall context of the collaborative project, and make clear how the methods and critical approaches help address the research questions of the collaborative project.*

Your reasons for undertaking this project: What is the purpose of the research? How does it develop your intellectual trajectory (i.e. how does it relate to what you have studied)? Where there is an overlap between your Masters dissertation (if you completed one) and your doctoral study, you should demonstrate how the project extends previous work and state clearly the added value of continuing to pursue research in this area. If it is an entirely new direction for you, make sure that assessors can see that you have sufficient experience to conduct research in this area. Explain why the Academic Unit(s) and the supervisory team are a strong fit to your project. *In the case of a CDA application, how will the collaborative nature of the project benefit your study?* How will your doctoral study relate to your career aims?

Preparation and previous experience: you should provide a brief indication of any previous experience or preparation that is relevant to your proposed doctoral study. For example, you may wish to highlight key areas of your Masters study or professional experience. Where applicable, you should also include training and preparation additional to formal undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications that is relevant to your proposed study (e.g. if you have additional degrees, qualifications or relevant skills that you have not included elsewhere on the form). If you are aware of additional training - for example foreign language skills or IT training - that you will require in order to complete your PhD study, please include it in this section. The fact that you require further training will not be regarded by the assessors as a sign of weakness in your application. *In the case of a CDA application, outline how your preparation and previous experience will contribute to the successful delivery of the proposed project*. Where appropriate to your project, state where sources and materials necessary for the research are located and how these will be accessed.

If you have already begun your doctoral study it is important that you indicate the extent of the work you have undertaken to date, e.g. information on the chapters you have completed. Your referees/supervisors should comment on these.

Ethical and Intellectual Property Issues

You should identify and address any ethical issues relating to your research project as far as you can. Please detail the approval mechanisms in place within your Academic Unit (and chosen home University) for this project, including any difficulties in gaining ethical approval within the timescale necessary. Your potential supervisors will help with this. If the project will be undertaken with an external organisation, please explain the arrangements regarding disclosure of results. Will there be any restrictions on making

the results public? Contractual arrangements with external organisations must be in place before the PhD research programme commences, covering any financial, intellectual property and confidentiality arrangements.

If there are no ethical issues related to your proposed research, then make a statement to indicate that here.

Section 7: Fieldwork and study visits

If you need to carry out study visits or fieldwork trips during the period of your award, you must state your planned destination(s), the expected duration and purpose of each visit, and indicate how they are integral to your research.

Section 8: Extended funding

M4C is committed to ensuring that funding supports projects of scale and ambition, offers the specialist training that may be required, and provides time for wider development opportunities. **The baseline duration for Open Doctoral Awards is 3.5 years** (42 months full-time or 84 months part-time). This baseline has been established to include the time for students to undertake placements and engagement opportunities as part of their doctoral experience.

M4C has the flexibility to extend the duration of an Open Doctoral Award to meet particular research requirements, up to a maximum of 4 years. It is expected that the research project will be designed in such a way that students are able to submit their thesis within the funded period *as defined at the outset of the project*. This section of the form enables you to make a case to extend the award beyond 3.5 years in cases where projects have research requirements that may need an additional period of support. If the nature of a specific PhD requires extended training (see below) or an extended placement opportunity has been identified that would take the duration of the award beyond 3.5 years, the case should be made in this section.

The period of funding for Collaborative Doctoral Awards is set at the outset at 4 years.

Applicants to the Open Doctoral Award may apply for more than 3.5 years full-time or 7 years part-time funding. An award can be extended up to a maximum of 6 months full-time or 12 months part-time. Requests for extended funding can be made where there is a rationale for complex or extended training, skills acquisition, extended archival visits, fieldwork or placement needs. For example:

- the research cannot be undertaken in full without the acquisition of specific language skills.

- the research cannot be undertaken in full without learning specific new, high-level methodological skills, for example, complex quantitative skills.
- the research cannot be undertaken in full without the development of very significant and demanding new discipline-specific skills, for example, palaeographical, papyrological or epigraphical skills, or where a high degree of collaboration with other disciplines necessitates a significant period of additional time to develop the requisite knowledge of other areas.
- the research cannot be undertaken in full without fieldwork being undertaken which presents significant challenges, for example, of a methodological or practical nature.
- The research would benefit from an extended placement opportunity that has already been identified.

This is not an exhaustive list but if you need to carry out any of the above or similar during the period of your award, you **must** make a case for the need and explain how it is integral to your research.

You should include details of the training or skills development required and the planned destinations and purpose of visits for fieldwork or placements. You should indicate the length of additional time you will require. *This information will be considered at the Selection Panels, and if the Panel members do not have the exact information to hand, it makes it difficult to assess the application for additional time.*

Section 9: Applicant ID

As part of the application process for a place to study at your home university you will be issued with an applicant ID. You will need to provide this before you will be permitted to submit your application for AHRC funding to M4C DTP. If you have already started your PhD please use your institutional ID number.

Section 10: Source of enquiry

To assist with future marketing and recruitment we would appreciate your feedback on how you found out about Midlands4Cities studentships.

IN SUMMARY
- You are only allowed to submit **ONE** application to either of the Midlands4Cities doctoral route competitions (students who submit an application for a Collaborative Doctoral Award are eligible to apply to the Open Doctoral Award competition).

- You need to have applied for a place to study at your home University and ensured that two references have been submitted on the correct **Midlands4Cities online reference form** in order for your funding application to be considered. We recommend that you give your referees the correct link to the reference form and explain that the reference has to be submitted on *this* form by the deadline or your application will be ineligible.
- You apply for funding by completing the **Midlands4Cities online application form and submitting at https://midlands4cities.smapply.io/**

Reference Request

To support your application to Midlands4Cities it is essential that two references are submitted via the online reference form by the deadline of **14 January 2019 (noon)**. You need to nominate and provide details of two referees here so that they can be contacted to provide your reference. Your referee will be sent an automated request to complete the M4C reference form. **Please ensure the information included in this section is accurate.**

These references will be used to support both your application for a place to study at your home university and your application for M4C funding. If the reference is not submitted here and/or is not received by the stated deadline your application will be ruled as incomplete and will not be put forward for consideration for an award.

Make sure that you contact your referees in advance. It is essential that you select referees who have the detailed knowledge required to appraise your recent intellectual development and preparedness for the programme of study you will be undertaking. Make sure that your referees have all the information they require (e.g. a copy of your project proposal, and all your marks from both undergraduate and Masters if you have them). Referees will need to write in detail about your previous high performance, with evidence.

Please ensure:

- your referees understand that the references they write will be used as part of your *funding application*, and not solely for a place to study. They do ***not*** need to write two separate references. **Your referees will be supplied with an auto reference request. It is essential that you provide a current and accurate email address for your referees in your application**.
- your referees are aware of the application deadline that you need to meet.
- your referees understand that they will be expected to include detailed answers to each of the questions on the form, in relation to your proposed research and your academic background and qualifications.

- **your referees use the correct Midlands4Cities online reference form. If this form is not used, your application will be ineligible.**

When selecting your referees, ask a potential supervisor **only** if that person has taught you already (ideally at Masters rather than undergraduate levels), knows your academic record, and can comment on the proposed PhD research. If that is the case, a potential supervisor can (and should) act as a referee. If a potential supervisor has **not** taught you before and can only comment on the PhD research proposal that you have shared with them, that potential supervisor should **not** be a referee.

If you are already undertaking a PhD (whether full- or part-time) and are applying for funding for the remaining period (21 months minimum of full-time funding or the part-time equivalent), you should ensure that at least **one of your referees is a current supervisor of your PhD** and can therefore comment in detail on the quality and the quantity of the work you have completed to date.

If you already hold an offer of a place or are currently a first year PhD student who is applying for AHRC funding and would like to arrange for updated references to be considered, please make sure that your referees submit their updated references on the online Midlands4Cities reference form.

Applicants who have not been in education for a period of time may choose to select a referee who is, for example, an employer or a partner in the creative industries. In this case, you should ensure that referees are aware that they will need to comment in detail on the research proposal as well as you as a person and professional.

Equal Opportunities

Applicants to Midlands4Cities are considered solely on the basis of their merits, ability and potential, regardless of gender, ethnic or national origin, age (subject to the University regulations on minimum age), disability, religion, sexual orientation or any other characteristic. Whilst we require you to complete this section it will not be used to assess your application.

Additional Information

Midlands4Cities Assessment Criteria

Evidence of the quality of the applicant: this will be based on the case made by the student in support of their application, and evidence provided by the referees and Academic Unit about the student's performance at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and in terms of any relevant professional experience. It is important to note that performance does not refer only to final degree results but also to any marks received to

date. These should be made available to assessors via referees or the Institutional Support and Authorisation form where appropriate. Assessors are seeking evidence of the applicant's ability to articulate a research project, a coherent and well thought-out plan for doctoral study and for timely completion, and an awareness of the place of their research within the current field.

Evidence that the applicant is suitably prepared for their proposed study and future career: this will be based on the applicant's description of how previous experience (academic and professional) has prepared them for postgraduate study, and the applicant's description of how the programme of study will contribute to long-term career aims. Assessors consider the full application in all its parts, to include supporting evidence provided by referees and by the Academic Unit in the Institutional Support and Authorisation Form, including the interview with the applicant. They seek evidence of the applicant's ability to complete high quality programme of study, and to complete it to time.

Evidence of the quality and feasibility of the proposed study: this will be based on the applicant's account including their rationale for pursuing the proposed programme of study. Assessors will also consider the supporting information provided by the Academic Unit about the programme of study and how it relates to the student's current and long-term goals.

Evidence of the quality and appropriateness of Academic Unit's support and resource: this will be based on the Academic Unit's account of the preparation and training that will be provided to meet the student's needs, in terms of their doctoral study and future career. The assessors will consider information about the resources and support that will enable the student to complete a high quality thesis as available in the Academic Unit and within the Midlands4Cities research environment. Assessors are seeking evidence that there is appropriate research expertise within an Academic Unit in a single university or in more than one university, and that the supervisory team *represents the best support and fit to the student available within the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership*. They need evidence that each supervisor's expertise is relevant to the proposed study. Assessors will also need to be assured that appropriate procedures and processes have been put in place in relation to research ethics, health and safety and academic misconduct.

Appendix 1: Contact Information

For any enquiries about applying for a place to study please use the following contacts (note: in some cases the addresses below refer to 'M3C' but these are still current and active)

Institution	E-mail address
University of Birmingham	AHRCapplications@contacts.bham.ac.uk
Birmingham City University	M4C@bcu.ac.uk
University of Warwick	m4C@warwick.ac.uk
Coventry University	m4c.fah@coventry.ac.uk
De Montfort University	m3c@dmu.ac.uk
University of Leicester	ahrcdtp@leicester.ac.uk
Nottingham Trent University	AHRCDTPApplications@ntu.ac.uk
University of Nottingham	m3c@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Key dates in the application process

14 January 2019 noon	**Deadline for M4C DTP funding applications** *You should have already applied (pending acceptance) for a PhD **before** submitting your M4C DTP funding application.* Your full and complete funding application should include: • M4C online application form • 2 M4C online reference forms submitted by your chosen referees
January 2019	**Application shortlisting and interviews by Academic Units**. All applicants who are put forward for funding have to be interviewed and this will take place in January if you haven't already been interviewed prior to the submission of your funding application. Applicants who have not been shortlisted will be notified.
February 2019	**M4C selection and grading process starts**. This will be dependent on your acceptance for a PhD at your chosen M4C university.
Early-mid March 2019	M4C Selection Panels and committees take place to decide which applications are successful.
	Studentships ratified by Student Selection Panel and M4C management committee.
	You will be notified of the outcome of your application.
	Deadline for accepting the offer.
	M4C Welcome event for successful applicants.