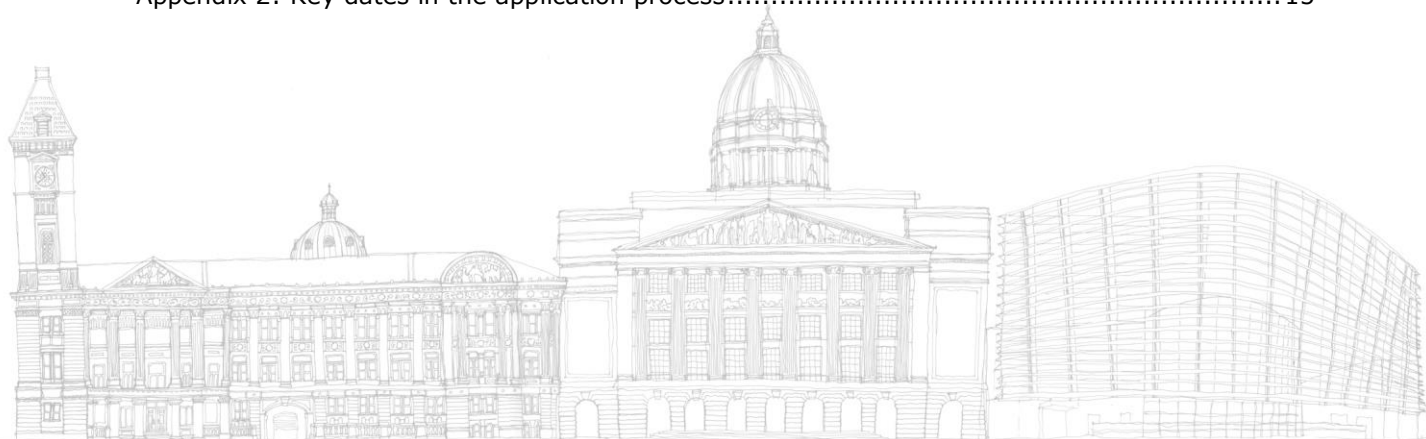


Guidance notes for AHRC

Midlands3Cities AHRC funding applications 2018

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Introduction

Your application for a place to study is made to the university you select as your Home University and is where your first supervisor is based. Your application for funding is made online directly to the Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. **The deadline for applications for October 2018 entry is midnight (GMT) 15 January 2018.**

There are a number of selection stages within the Doctoral Training Partnership so make sure that you apply by the deadline. It is important that you allow yourself sufficient time to read these Guidance Notes before you complete your funding application form online. You should apply to the appropriate deadline, i.e. January 2018 for entry in October 2018. Awards cannot be deferred other than in exceptional circumstances.

Working with your prospective supervisors

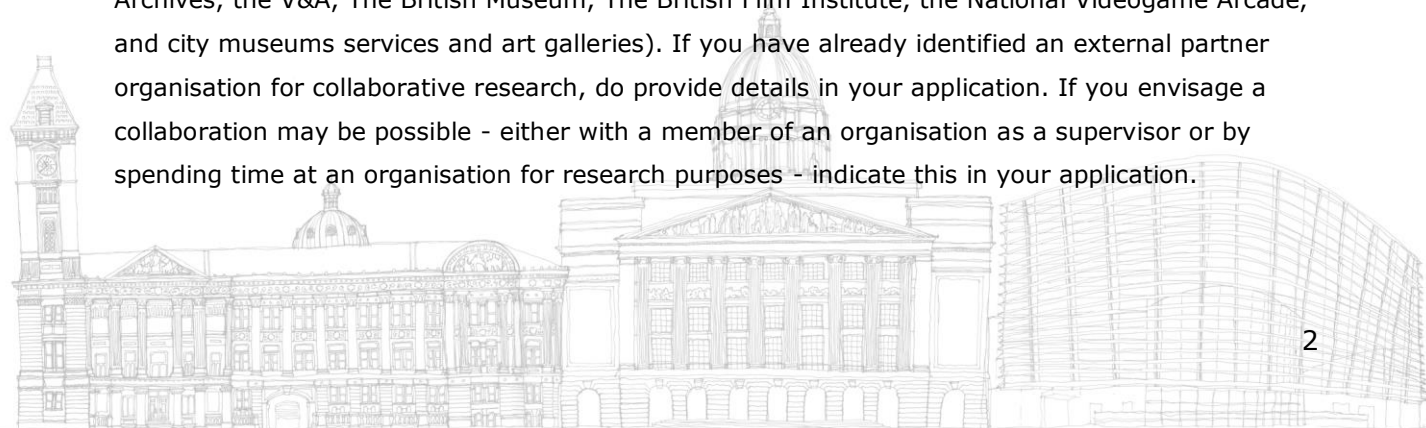
For the Doctoral Open Competition please use the Supervisor Search facility on the Midlands3Cities website to ensure that you have the best fit of supervisors to your project.

<http://www.midlands3cities.ac.uk/midlands-3-cities/research-opportunities/supervisors.aspx>

For a Collaborative Doctoral application 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.

The Supervisor Search will help you to identify the academics whose published work and 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 Midlands3Cities 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.

Along with at least two academic supervisors in Midlands3Cities 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 M3C partners are listed on the online application form, and include such as The National Archives, the V&A, The British Museum, The British Film Institute, the National Videogame Arcade, and city museums services and art galleries). If you have already identified an external partner organisation for collaborative research, do 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.



Applying for a place to study at a Midlands3Cities University

You will need to have applied for a place to study at one of the 6 universities before you can apply for funding and ensured that both of your referees provide two references (on the correct M3C reference form found at www.midlands3cities.ac.uk/funding) in order for your M3C AHRC funding application to be considered. 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 Midlands3Cities university must be in process with an ID number which will be required for final submission of your online application.

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

The offer 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 midnight (GMT) **15 January 2018** (NB. Your application for Midlands3Cities AHRC funding is made separately online at the M3C website and you will be able to save and return to that application before final submission).

Do not attempt to complete the M3C online application form for funding until you have read the AHRC Guide to Student Funding to ensure that you meet the scheme, subject, residency and academic eligibility requirements. The Guide is here:

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/training-grant-funding-guide-2015-16-v1-1/>

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.

Additional Eligibility Points to Note:

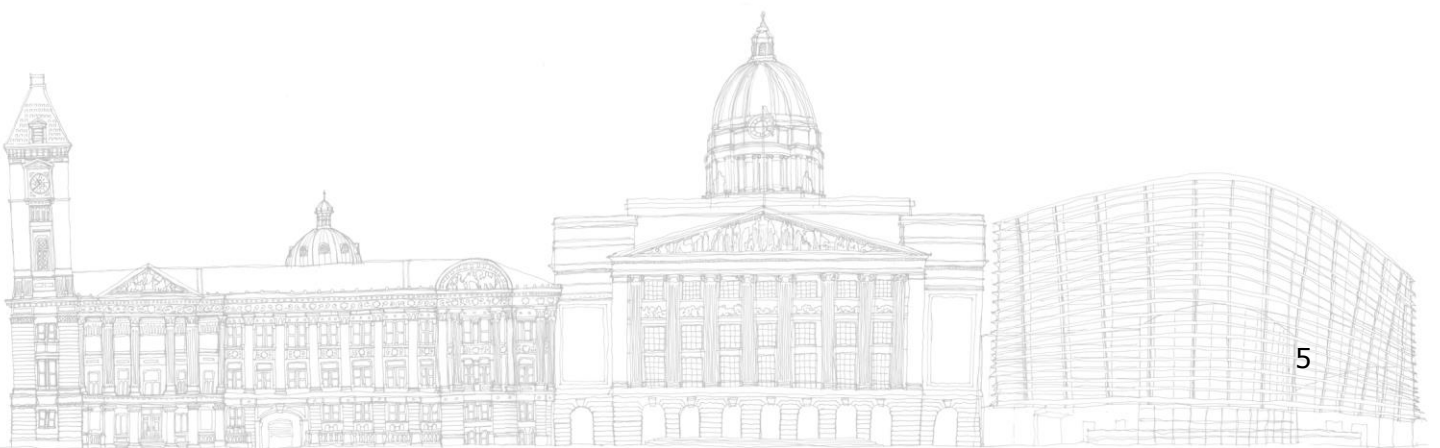
1. If you are already in receipt of a doctoral level qualification then you are *ineligible* to apply for funding from the Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership.
2. If you are currently a member of academic staff at one of the M3C partner universities, and intend to remain in employment, then you are *ineligible* to apply for funding from the Midlands3Cities 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 M3C Site Directors in your university if you have any further questions.
3. Students who have already commenced doctoral study are *eligible* to apply for AHRC funding provided that, at the start of the AHRC award, they will have at least 50% of their period of study remaining (excluding the 'writing up' period).

4. 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* 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.
5. If an M3C student takes up a salaried position at a University, Midlands3Cities 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 M3C PhD study and suspend the studentship for the relevant period.
6. If you intend to study full-time, the end date of your proposed study needs to be two years minimum full-time, and no more than three years, from the start date of your studies. If you intend to study part-time, the end date should be no less than 48 months remaining and no more than six years from the start date of your studies.
7. As an M3C 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.
8. Students who submit an application for a Collaborative Doctoral Award are also eligible to apply to the Doctoral Open competition.

IN SUMMARY

- You are only allowed to submit **ONE** application to study at one of the member universities in the Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership; this will become your Home University.
- 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 **Midlands3Cities reference form** in order for your funding application to be considered. We recommend that you give your referees the correct form and explain that the reference has to be submitted on *this* form and sent to the relevant email address at the top of the form for your application to be eligible. Download the form from www.midlands3cities.ac.uk/funding
- You apply for *funding* by completing the **M3C DTP AHRC funding application and submitting online at www.midlands3cities.ac.uk/apply**

For general enquiries see *Appendix 1: General enquiry email addresses for M3C DTP Partner institutions*. **If the correct documentation is not used, your application will be ineligible.**



Applying for AHRC M3C DTP funding (online application form)

Aim to make the best case possible for your doctoral application. Make sure that you proof-read your application before submission to avoid careless spelling or grammatical errors. We advise that you develop your proposal offline and transfer it to the online form when you are satisfied, paying due attention to the character limits **which include spaces**.

Section 1: Personal details

Questions 1-2

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

Section 2: Residency

Questions 3 - 7

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.

Please note that EU applicants may be considered for a stipend in addition to a Fees Only award, and that we would hope to award stipends whenever possible. If you are unsure about your eligibility, check the AHRC funding guide:

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/training-grant-funding-guide-2015-16-v1-1/>

Section 3: Your supervision team

Questions 8 - 12

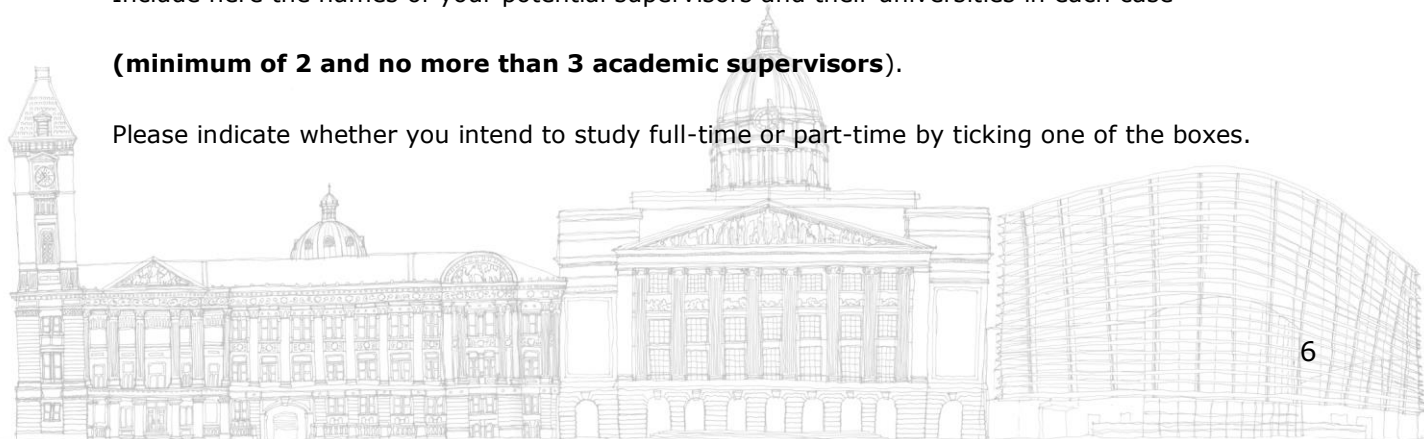
Please provide details of your proposed supervisory team with whom you will have communicated on developing your research proposal.

Please provide the name of the Academic Unit in which you intend to study (the terminology may differ between Midlands3Cities 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).

Please indicate whether you intend to study full-time or part-time by ticking one of the boxes.



Section 4: Your references and referees

Question 13

Make sure that you contact your referees in advance. You will need to ensure that two references have been submitted on the correct **Midlands3Cities reference form** to your Home University's admissions office as part of your application for a place to study.

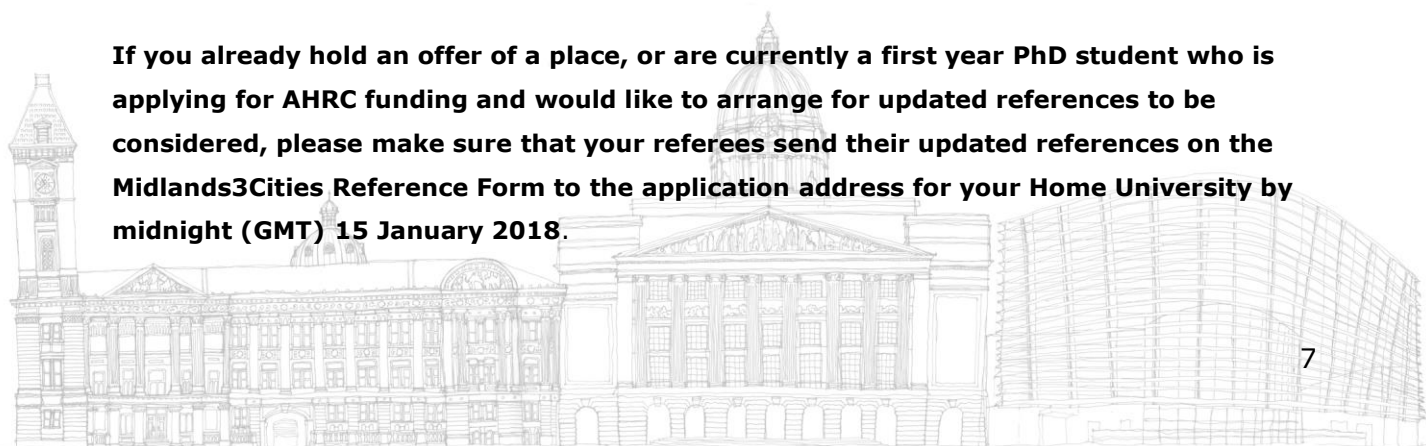
It is essential that you select referees who have the detailed knowledge required to appraise your recent intellectual development and preparedness for the programme of study you will be undertaking. Make sure that your referees have all the information they require (e.g. a copy of your project proposal,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

- 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 are aware of the application deadline that you need to meet.
- you provide your referees with this year's 'Midlands3Cities Reference Form' (rather than a University Admissions Office reference form). Download the form from www.midlands3cities.ac.uk/funding. **If the correct M3C form is not used, your application will be ineligible.**
- 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.

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 years (2 years 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 send their updated references on the Midlands3Cities Reference Form to the application address for your Home University by midnight (GMT) 15 January 2018.



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.

Your referees should be requested by you to send their references to your Home University address which is in the list below: The Admissions office at your Home University must have received two references for you by Midnight (GMT) on **15 January 2018**.

All references **must** be on the M3C Reference Form and **must be received** by the deadline of **15 January 2018**. If the reference is not on the M3C form 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.

Section 5: Your career in higher education to date

Questions 14 – 17

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 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.

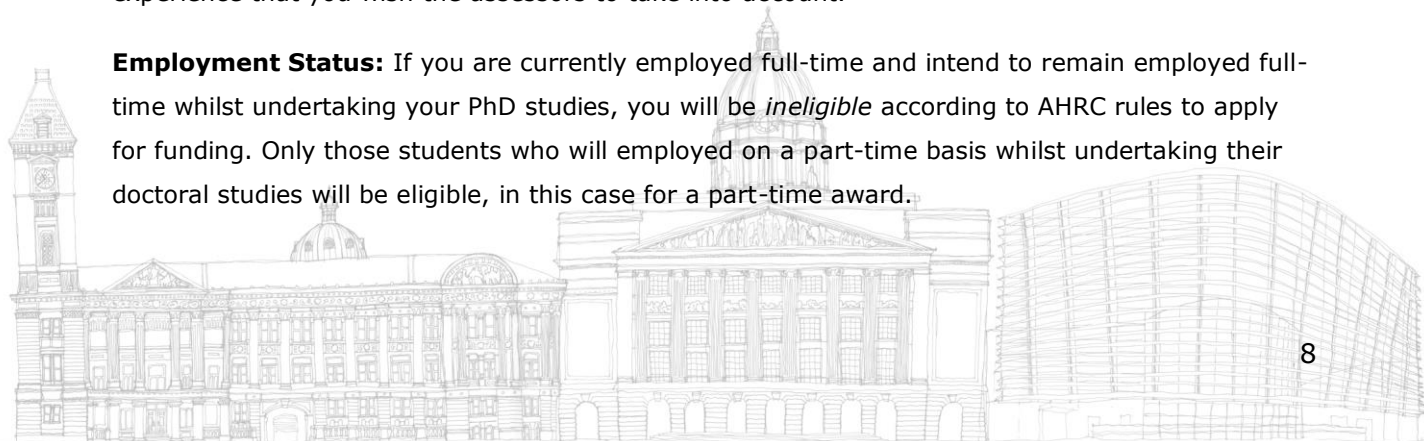
If your qualification was completed outside the UK, please tell us the name of your qualification in the original language (e.g. Maîtrise, and not the English equivalent). If you studied in or outside the UK, please confirm that your Masters degree is 180 credits even if not all of those credits were 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 6: Professional experience

Questions 18 - 21

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.



Do you anticipate any links to M3C 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 7: Proposed study

Questions 22 – 25

It is important to organise the information you provide about your proposed research project carefully: the character counts are set for this section and includes spaces.

Question 22: (maximum 120 characters)

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

Question 23 and 24: (maximum 2000 characters including spaces per question)

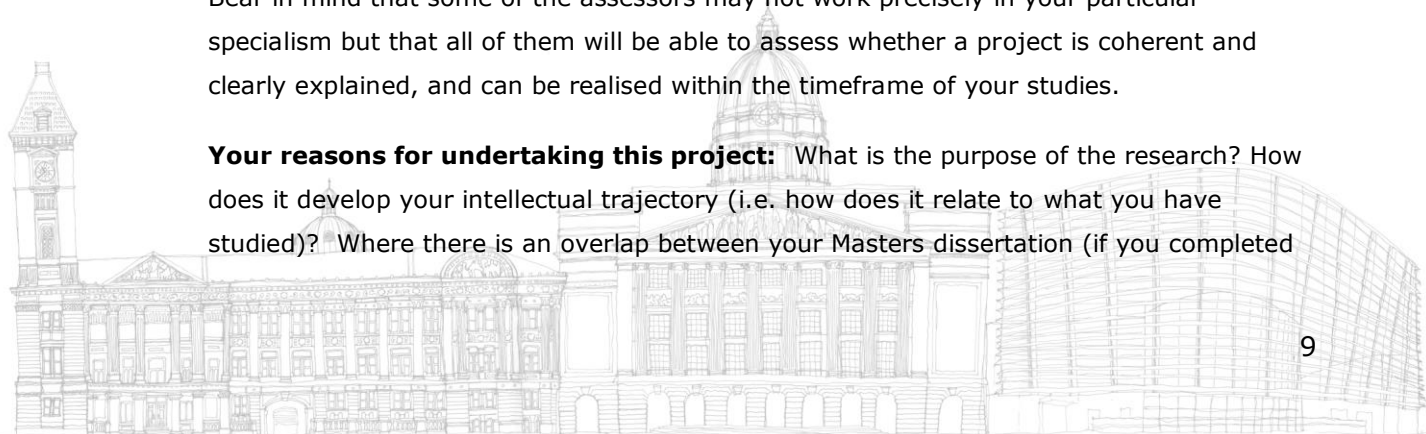
The **Case for Support** plays a key part in the assessment of your application. That is why we recommend that you discuss the content of this section in good time with your proposed supervisors. The assessors are looking for evidence of high quality research and strong potential for postgraduate study. Enthusiasm and interest are important, but assessors especially seek evidence of:

- intellectual purpose and originality. What are your key research questions? How will your research project intervene in your chosen field? *For applicants to the Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) competition, how do you see your research developing in the overall context of the collaborative project?*
- your reasons for undertaking this specific project, your approach and methodology
- a keen awareness of the research context (i.e. with which debates or secondary literature does your project engage?).

You need to present your case clearly and concisely. Use the subheadings below as a guide to help you structure your case.

Intellectual purpose and originality: Make sure you provide a synopsis of your proposed research project or, *in the case of a CDA application, how your research develops in the overall context of the collaborative project.* In describing your project, address the key research questions, research context and research methodology. How you make your case for support 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.

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

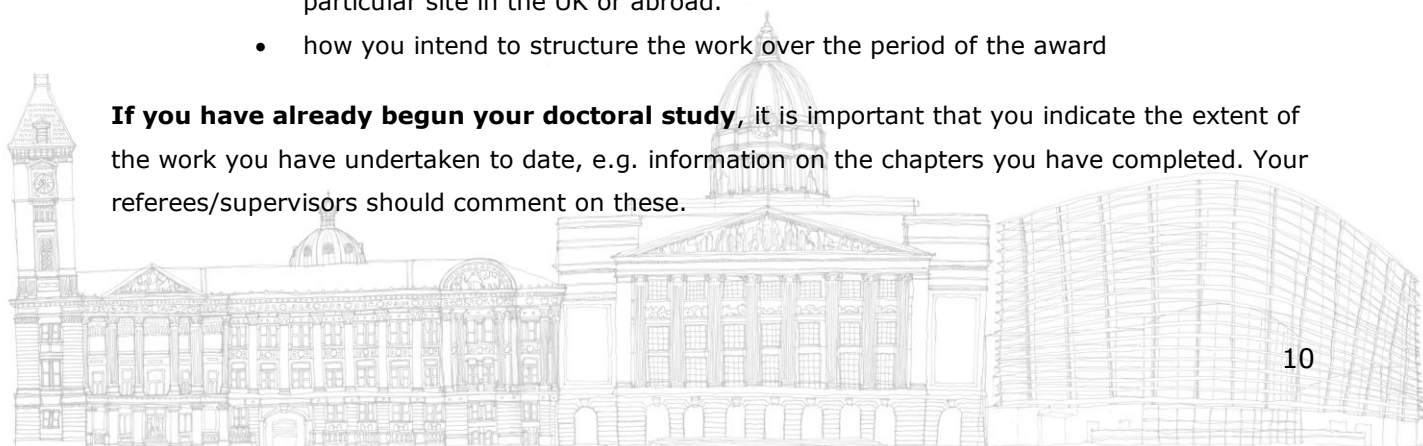


one) and your doctoral study, you should demonstrate how the project extends previous work and state clearly the added value of continuing to pursue research in this area. If it is an entirely new direction for you, make sure that assessors can see that you have sufficient experience to conduct research 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?

The main thrust of this section should be the **research questions** that you intend to address in your doctoral study. These should be clearly defined in your proposal. You should describe:

- the research questions you intend to investigate. *In the case of a CDA application, make clear how you are formulating your research project to respond to and deliver on the aims of the collaborative project.*
- the research context in which those problems or questions are located- e.g. critical, history or practice-led. You should refer to the current state of knowledge and debates on the subject in your chosen field to evidence that you know your chosen field.
- the particular contribution to knowledge and understanding that you hope to make. You should explain why the research is important. The fact that an area has not been previously studied is not, in itself, a case for the work to be supported. Assessors are also seeking a description of relevance beyond the development of your own skills or experience (although these are important too).
- the methods and critical approaches that you plan to use to address the research questions you have set. Assessors need to know what you are going to work on but also how you plan to go about your research. *In the case of a CDA application, make clear how the methods and critical approaches help address the research questions of the collaborative project.*
- the potential application and impact of your project within the research field that you are entering and potentially with different audiences and groups where your project findings may have social and cultural impact, interest and may create debate.
- the sources that you will use, if appropriate. You will need to state where these sources and materials are located and how these will be accessed. For example, your research may be underpinned by archival work and/or collaboration with one of Midlands3Cities' creative or industry partners, or another museum or art gallery. If you are undertaking an archaeological project, you may need to access a particular site in the UK or abroad.
- how you intend to structure the work over the period of the award

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.



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 successful delivery of the proposed project?

Question 25: 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 that statement here.

Section 8: Fieldwork and study visits

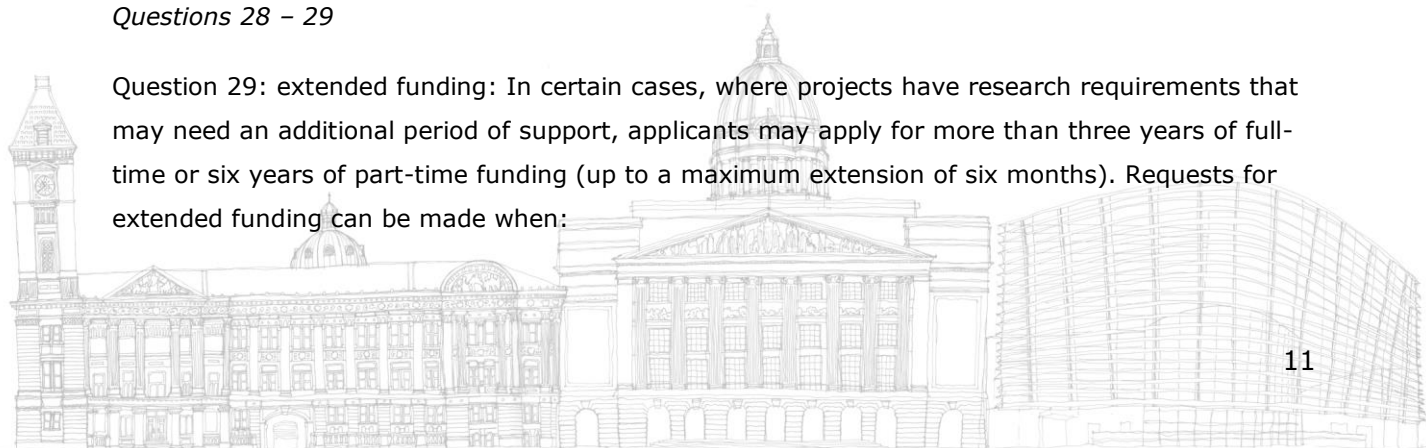
Questions 26 - 27

If you need to carry out a study or archive 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. If you do not mention an essential visit at this stage or fail to estimate the duration of your visit(s), funding to support this activity may not be available to you. *This information is considered at the Selection Panel, and if the Panel members do not have the exact information to hand, it makes it difficult to assess the contribution that the proposed trips can make to your proposed project.*

Section 9: Extended and previous funding

Questions 28 - 29

Question 29: extended funding: In certain cases, where projects have research requirements that may need an additional period of support, applicants may apply for more than three years of full-time or six years of part-time funding (up to a maximum extension of six months). Requests for extended funding can be made when:



- 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.

Where **requests for extended funding** are made, you must provide a justification for the additional period of support. This justification should be made under the separate heading in your case for support and the character count is set so be precise. A justification should:

- demonstrate why the additional time is needed, including why the research cannot be completed in three years (full-time) or six years (part-time), and why it was not possible to acquire the relevant skills and knowledge as part of a research preparation Masters programme of study.
- provide details of how the additional time would be used and demonstrate how the acquisition of the relevant skills and knowledge is integral to the proposed doctoral study.

While this section may not apply to many applicants, assessors will need full details in order to decide if extended funding may be necessary.

Section10: Equal Opportunities

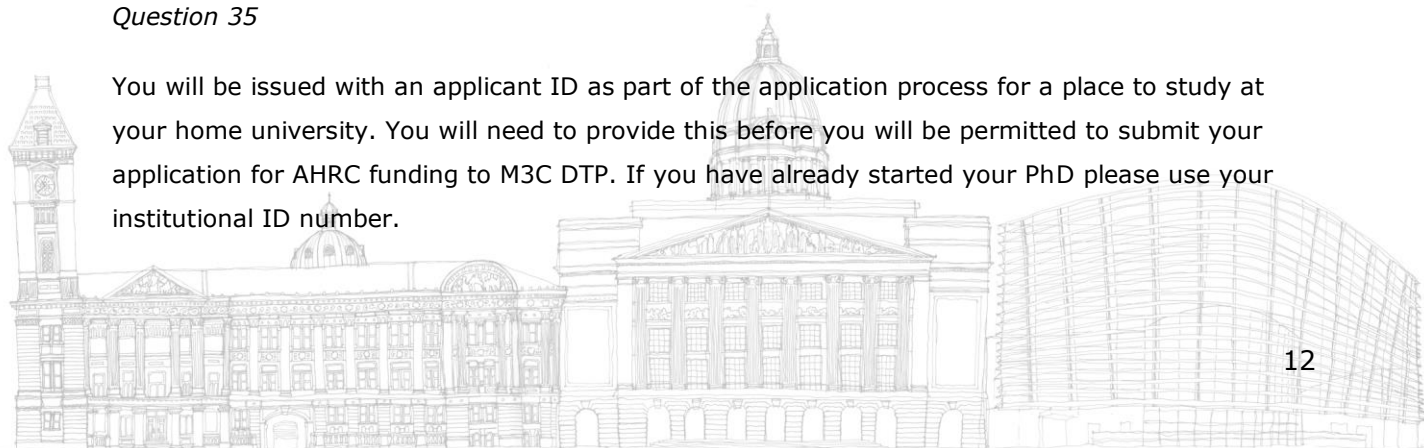
Questions 30 - 34

Applicants to the Midlands3Cities 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 irrelevant distinction. Whilst we require you to complete this section it will not be used to assess your application.

Section 11: Applicant ID

Question 35

You will be issued with an applicant ID as part of the application process for a place to study at your home university. You will need to provide this before you will be permitted to submit your application for AHRC funding to M3C DTP. If you have already started your PhD please use your institutional ID number.



Section 12: Source of enquiry

Question 36 - 38

To assist with future marketing and recruitment we would appreciate your feedback on how you found out about Midlands3Cities studentships.

Midlands3Cities Assessment Criteria

Evidence of the quality of the student: this will be based on the case made by the student in support of his/her 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 her/his research within the current field.

Evidence that the student is suitably prepared for her/his proposed study and future career: this will be based on the applicant's description of how previous experience (academic and professional) has prepared him/her 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 her/his 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 Midlands3Cities 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 Midlands3Cities 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.

Checklist

Please ensure that you have:

Applied for a place to study at the Home University of your choice and acquired an Applicant ID	
Arranged for two references to be provided on the Midlands3Cities Reference Form to the Home University via its admissions system email	
Completed all the sections of the online form as fully as possible	

Appendix 1: General enquiry email addresses for M3C DTP partner institutions

Use the following email addresses to make an enquiry with your Home University,

Institution	Enquiries
Birmingham City University	m3c@bcu.ac.uk
De Montfort University	m3c@dmu.ac.uk
Nottingham Trent University	AHRCDTApplications@ntu.ac.uk
The University of Birmingham	AHRCApplications@contacts.bham.ac.uk
The University of Leicester	AHRC3cities@le.ac.uk
The University of Nottingham	m3c@nottingham.ac.uk



Appendix 2: Key dates in the application process

Midnight (GMT) 15 January 2018	<p>Deadline for M3C DTP funding applications</p> <p><i>You should have already applied (pending acceptance) for a PhD before submitting your M3C DTP funding application.</i></p> <p>Your full and complete funding application should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M3C Online Application Online Form submitted at the M3C website • 2 M3C Reference forms sent to your Home University address
January 2018	<p>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.</p> <p>Applicants who have not been short-listed will be notified.</p>
15 February 2018	<p>M3C selection and grading process starts.</p> <p>This will be dependent on your acceptance for a PhD at your chosen M3C university.</p>
Early-mid March 2018	<p>M3C Selection Panels and committees take place to decide which applications are successful.</p> <p>You will not be required at this stage.</p>
End of March 2018	<p>Studentships ratified by Student Selection Panel and M3C management committee.</p>
Early April 2018	<p>You will be notified of the outcome of your application.</p>
23 April 2018	<p>Deadline for accepting the offer.</p>
23 May 2018	<p>M3C Welcome event for successful applicants.</p>

