



## Applying for a PhD in the arts, humanities and social sciences

By Stephan Schmitt

Applying for a PhD in the arts, humanities and social sciences takes several steps. Firstly you need to think up a project. It must make a substantial and original contribution to the research field. Then you need to research the best university for you to study at. Importantly there needs to be a relevant department and a likely supervisor - an academic with complementary research interests to your own. You then need to discuss the PhD idea with the likely supervisor and work up the final research proposal which is formally submitted to the university. Successful applicants are initially registered for an MPhil.

Finding funding in arts, humanities and social sciences is competitive and most people look to apply for a studentship either from the relevant university department or research council (AHRC or ESRC). There will be more applicants than studentships available. As a result many PhD students are self-funding. Some paid teaching work could be available in the university department to supplement this. In addition charitable organisations offer small grants and pots of money but they need to be thought of in terms of several hundreds of pounds not thousands.

### Key messages for a would be PhD applicant:

- Think of an original idea
- Research the university and department you would like to work in
  - Make sure their research interests complement your own
- Identify a suitable supervisor and start a conversation with them as early as possible
  - Ask the university/would be supervisor about possible funding sources.

**A good resource:** *PhD Application Handbook* by Peter Bentley