

**Writing a Research Proposal for
the MA in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies
(one-year)**



**and MA in Comparative History: Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance
Studies (two-year)**

Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies

The one-year MA program is designed for students who come with a background in any aspect of medieval or historical studies and a minimum of four years of undergraduate/previous studies. The two-year program is primarily recommended to applicants who come from an academic background other than medieval/historical studies or have fewer than four years of undergraduate/previous studies.

Both program entails producing an MA thesis. An MA thesis is a genre of academic writing in which the MA candidate demonstrates that he/she is capable of handling primary source material with a relevant methodology, reviewing past scholarship, and presenting the results in a scholarly manner. The Department of Medieval Studies advocates the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach in the thesis.

This initial difference between applications for the two programs is evident in the Research Proposal submitted as part of the application process.

Applicants for the **one-year MA program** are required to write a Research Proposal specific to the thesis they are planning to submit at the end of their studies, preferably with a working title and a summary of sources and methodologies they are proposing to work on.

Applicants for the **two-year MA program** are not expected to include a detailed plan of the proposed thesis itself, however, the proposal should contain their fields of interest, previous experience with the field, their ideas about topic and methodology and sources.

Applicants who wish to be considered for both programs are recommended to aim for a higher level of specific detail (one-year MA) in their Research Proposal.

The main purpose of the Research Proposal in both programs is to make a convincing case that your project is worth doing and that you understand its context in current scholarship.

In practical terms, a Research Proposal is a **500-word description of the applicant's field of interest** (time period, geographical area, particular subject areas) including the reasons for which he or she wishes to pursue further studies in it.

It is recommended that the research proposal contains a very brief introduction to the **general theme**, followed by a **statement of your topic** within the general picture, a brief summary of your **primary source materials** (if known), a discussion of the **methodology** you propose for the

analysis, and a conclusion about the **potential value** of this research to the field and **potential interdisciplinary aspects** of the research, if applicable. The research proposal will be assessed and evaluated even if certain sections are not fully elaborated.

The **title** of the research proposal is not necessarily the final title of the proposed thesis project, but it should give the selection committee an idea about the proposed research project. It is recommended to visit the list of our alumni/ae on the departmental website to see the breadth and scope of current and previous research, as well as the titles of successfully defended theses.

Important: The title of the research proposal must be entered in the relevant section of the online application form.

Although the research proposal is an essential part of the application and the selection committee places great emphasis on its merits as part of the evaluation process, it is not vital for the proposed research to be a fully operative plan at the time of the application, especially in applications for the two-year MA program. A student may be accepted if he or she has an excellent background even if the proposed thesis topic is thought to be impractical at the time.

The department reserves the right to ask a student to adapt or change the proposed topic during the evaluation phase if it cannot be supported for any reason, for example, in cases of a lack of departmental expertise in the topic, foreseeably unavailable source material, and/or an inappropriate time frame (too early or too late historical period), and so on. Accepted students are required to further refine their area of study in informal planning meetings with their departmental advisors.