



berlin graduate school
muslim cultures and societies

Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (BGS MCS)

Call for Applications
(see: Guidelines below)

The Graduate School is a joint project by Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO). As a part of Freie Universität Berlin's Department of History and Cultural Studies, our offices are situated on its campus in Berlin Dahlem.

Programme

The **BGS MCS** supports doctoral candidates who develop academically well-founded and relevant answers to questions arising in various research areas under the thematical umbrella of Muslim cultures and societies. The BGS MCS also provides its fellows with access to a broad academic network. The program is ideal for highly qualified and socially engaged junior scholars with a global outlook. For further information, see: <https://www.bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de>.

Scholarships

For admission in October 2026, the BGS MCS will award two scholarships from the Gerda Henkel Foundation to projects with a historical focus. These scholarships include a monthly stipend for living expenses, as well as travel and research funds. Additionally, the BGS MCS will select eight candidates who will be guaranteed a place at the graduate school on the condition that they raise their own external funding (private funding is not permitted). The selected candidates will be supported by the BGS MCS in applying for external funding, for example from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Avicenna-Studienwerk, the Gerda Henkel Foundation, or the Elsa Neumann Foundation.

Application Requirements

Applications must contain the following documents:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV / Resume) and motivation letter
- Selection of a supervisor from the list of supervisors in the application portal
- An outline of the dissertation project., incl. time table
- One letter of recommendation
- Proof of relevant language skills
- Original and certified copies of degrees

The **attached guidelines** will help you to prepare your application.

The application package, complete with all documents, needs to be submitted via the application platform: <https://www.drs.fu-berlin.de>. The platform only accepts PDF documents as uploads. The documents must not be in read-only format.

Deadline

The application deadline is **1 November 2025, 12:00 noon (CET)**.

Prospective applicants are invited to join our live Q&A session on 23 September 2025, at 2pm CET via Webex: <https://tinyurl.com/jhkfhry4> (Password: graduate).

If you have further questions that are not addressed in the guidelines or in the FAQ on our website, please write to us at the following email address: application@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de.

We look forward to receiving your application!
Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies

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Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (BGS MCS)
Application Guidelines for Admission to the Doctoral Programme in 2026

Thank you for your interest in the doctoral programme at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies. These guidelines will help you to prepare your application. Please take some time and read the guidelines carefully.

BGS MCS-Platform: <https://www.drs.fu-berlin.de>

- The platform only accepts PDF documents as uploads. They must also *not* be in read-only format.
- If for any justified reason you are unable to upload a required document, please upload a PDF-file with an explanation about the unavailability of the required document.
- Please do not send any other materials except those listed in the call for applications.
- We do not offer a pre-submission check of your application package.

→ Do not forget to formally submit your application once your application package is completed!
We will only consider your application if it is complete.

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1. Curriculum Vitae (CV / Resume) and Motivation Letter

Please upload your CV as a PDF file. It should detail your educational career and list any relevant work experience. If you wish, you may add a list of publications. Your motivation letter should discuss why the BGS MCS is the ideal institution to host your doctoral research project and explain your choice of supervisors and discipline (see below, supervisors and disciplines).

2. Supervisors and Disciplines, Eligibility

Doctoral fellows at the BGS MCS are concurrently enrolled in a university department, either at Freie Universität Berlin or at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, depending on the discipline and your 1st supervisor's affiliation. This means that the supervisors can only accept doctoral researchers pursuing a degree in the discipline that they are currently working in. This means, for example, that a professor in Islamic Studies can usually not supervise a doctoral fellow pursuing a degree in Political Science.

Please understand that we cannot determine your eligibility for admission for a specific discipline before you have submitted your application package. It is important that the choice of discipline (which is connected to your preferred supervisor) should relate to your previous academic achievements AND to your planned doctoral research.

The consideration of the following points can help you to better assess your eligibility for a specific discipline:

- Check if you have acquired the relevant methodological and theoretical skills to pursue a doctoral degree in the discipline of your choice.
- Consider the research that our supervisors are engaged in to determine whether your planned doctoral research falls within their area of interest and expertise.
- Consider the departmental websites for information about the courses our supervisors teach on the BA and MA level.
- Check the list of publications on our website to see if graduate school fellows have published research relevant to your topic (<https://www.bgs mcs.fu-berlin.de/publications/index.html>).

If you conclude that no potential supervisors are working in your research area, that your discipline does not match any of the disciplines in our list, or that no one at the Graduate School has ever published research that is relevant for your work, it is highly unlikely that your proposed research can be supervised, and your application can therefore in all probability not be considered. This means that even if you fulfil the formal application criteria, it may be the case that your application will not be considered if your proposed research does not match the Graduate School's research profile.

Therefore, we recommend that you only submit your application if you are sure that your proposed research fulfils the above-mentioned criteria.

A team of 2-3 supervisors supervises each doctoral fellow. Please make sure that the discipline of your 1st supervisor corresponds with the discipline of your dissertation project (i.e., Islamic Studies, Political Science, etc.). Your 1st supervisor must be a member of the graduate school. Your 2nd supervisor should be officially affiliated with the BGSMCS – please select their names from the dropdown menu to indicate your preferred choices.

This selection is not binding. All supervisors affiliated with the BGSMCS are listed on our homepage: <https://www.bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de/about/supervisors/index.html>.

Please do not contact any potential supervisors prior to submitting your application, since obtaining their formal consent to supervise you is not a formal requirement.

3. Outline of Your Dissertation Project

The outline of your proposed dissertation project should be a maximum of 6 pages and include the following points:

- Summary (max. ½ page)
- Research questions and objectives of your project
- Current state of research/your project's envisioned contribution to it
- Tentative theoretical framework and research methods
- Source material
- Time schedule (separate document)

Please note that you can upload an outline for one project only. Please format the outline properly and include your name and page numbers.

4. Letter of Recommendation

One letter of recommendation by an academic scholar (usually teaching at a university or college) is required. It is advisable to choose scholars who are familiar with your previous academic performance and/or your dissertation project. **Your referee should upload the recommendations directly to the application platform as a signed electronic letter (a scan of the signed letter in PDF format) until 30 November 2025. We do not accept emails as recommendation letters!** Please make sure that the letters of recommendation arrive in good time. There are no formal requirements for the issues to be addressed in the letters. We will accept recommendation letters that have been written to support more than one application.

5. Language skills

As **English** is the primary language of instruction and communication at BGSMCS, you are expected to have advanced English-language proficiency. A proof of your proficiency in English is a formal requirement for admission for PhD studies at Freie Universität Berlin and at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Please note that only native speakers or applicants who have graduated from an English-speaking university in a country where English is an official language are exempt from this requirement.

There are no other exemptions, and this requirement is non-negotiable.

Please upload one of the following certificates as proof of proficiency in English:

- C1 CEFR (Common European Reference Frame)
- ETS TOEFL certificate (minimum score of 95)
- Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English, CPE (any grade)
- Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English, CAE (grade A or B)
- IELTS test (minimum level 7.0)

If you cannot submit the test results with your application package because you have not received your score report yet, please inform us about the results as soon as possible. If you are invited for an interview, the last deadline for handing in the certificate is 5 January 2026.

In addition, we ask you to list the **language(s) relevant to your dissertation project** (e.g., Arabic, Turkish, Urdu etc.). As proof of your proficiency, you may hand in a transcript of records from your university or a certificate from a language school, or you may indicate to us that you are proficient in your language of research as a native speaker.

6. Original and Certified Copies of Degrees

You should submit original and certified scans of the following degrees:

- High school diploma (Abiturzeugnis, A-level, Baccalauréat or IB) or your country's equivalent document, qualifying you for admission to university study. A high school diploma is the last non-academic degree before a bachelor's degree.
- Bachelor's certificate
- Master's certificate – if you cannot submit your MA degree with your application package either because you have not received the document yet but expect it to arrive shortly or because you are in the final stage of your exams or thesis, you may hand in your application anyway.

Please upload an official confirmation from your university that indicates the expected date of completion of your MA studies.

The admission and grants committee will decide whether your (incomplete) application can be assessed as qualified. It is not possible to do a PhD in our programme without an MA degree.

Certified copies of your degrees can be issued by your university. If your certificates are issued in languages other than English or German, please submit English or German translations.

7. Submission of Application

The application package, complete with all documents, needs to be submitted via the application platform.

→ Please do not forget to **submit your application, when you have completed your application package – it is not sufficient to upload all required documents, but you also have to click on a submit button once your application package is complete.**

The application deadline is **1 November 2025, 12:00 noon Central European Time.**

Late applications will not be considered. If you are facing technical difficulties, for example because of an unstable internet connection, please make sure to upload your application package ahead of the deadline. We do not grant deadline extensions.

Please also note that we are not able to handle a large number of requests shortly before the deadline. We highly recommend that you submit your application at least one day before the deadline.

8. Schedule

Please understand that we are unable to provide information on the application process or provide you with an individual review of your application before the admissions committee has nominated applicants for admission.

Interviews will be scheduled between 19 - 30 January 2026.

The interviews will be organised via Videolink.

The admission process will be completed by mid-February 2026. All applicants will be informed about the result of their application.

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Prospective applicants are invited to join our live Q&A session!

It takes place on 23 September 2025, 2pm (CET) via Webex:

<https://tinyurl.com/jhkfhy4> (Password: graduate)

If you have additional questions that are not addressed in these guidelines, the FAQ on our website, or our live Q&A session, please contact us exclusively at **application@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de**.

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We look forward to receiving your application!

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