

CfA for a PhD project proposal writing

The [BCDSS](#) is a Cluster of Excellence funded by the German Excellence Strategy and investigates profound social dependencies such as slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, and other forms of permanent dependency across epochs, regions, and cultures.

The overall aim during the BCDSS' first (2019–2025) and second (2026–2032) funding phases is to overcome the concept of “slavery versus freedom” established as a binary. Instead, we propose the new key concept of “strong asymmetrical dependency” to explore all durable forms of bondage across time and space.

During our [second funding phase](#) (2026–2032), the BCDSS will focus on investigating the underlying causes and mechanisms that contribute to the persistence of Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies (SADs) across historical and contemporary contexts. We aim to anchor Historically Informed Dependency Studies (HIDS) as a key interdisciplinary field in the humanities, encouraging scholars across the humanities and social sciences to systematically integrate the analysis of SADs into the study of societies, economies, and cultures.

The BCDSS calls for applications for five Fellowships that allow recent MA graduates to write a project proposal for a PhD project.

Applicants must show proof that they have submitted their MA thesis by the application deadline (1 October 2025). In their application they should detail how they will develop a PhD project proposal that aligns with the research themes of the second funding phase of the BCDSS:

- Transitions and Transformations,
- Economies of SAD,
- Power – Violence – Trauma,
- Cultural Heritage – Transitional Justice – Memory Cultures,
- Alternative Archives and Life Writing

(See further information on [Research Areas](#)).

The Fellowships are funded for nine months from 1 January until 30 September 2026. At the end of the 9 months it is expected that candidates have a complete PhD proposal that can be submitted to funding bodies of their choice.

Applications must include:

1. An outline of a project idea (approx. 1600 characters excl. spaces);
2. curriculum vitae;
3. the funding line/program the PhD proposal will be prepared for;
4. MA certificate or official proof of submission of MA thesis;
5. statement of supervisor (sent separately to Sarah Dusend: dependency@uni-bonn.de).

The fellowship comprises:

- A monthly stipend of € 1,700;
- a working space including a desktop computer at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies;
- support in organizational matters before and upon arrival;
- participation in all BCDSS events;
- mentoring for proposal writing.

Deadline:

Please send your complete application documents combined into one single PDF file to Sarah Dusend (application@dependency.uni-bonn.de) by 1 October 2025.

For further inquiries, please contact Laura Hartmann (l.hartmann@dependency.uni-bonn.de).