

## Information for Applicants 98

### Opus Magnum

**Deadline:**  
**1 February 2020**

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## I. Objectives

This funding initiative aims at providing established professors of the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences at German universities with the opportunity to concentrate full-time on the writing of an extensive scholarly treatise – an Opus Magnum with an outreach beyond their own specific academic field. This funding opportunity entails release from their official teaching and administrative duties. Since the funding is mainly to cover the costs of a substitute professorship, the initiative serves at the same time to provide a career perspective for young academics, who are given the opportunity to temporarily assume responsibility for an established and renowned professorship.

## II. Funding Opportunities

The funding offer consists of leave of absence from 6 to a maximum of 18 months, which is granted in addition to the regular sabbatical semester. The Opus Magnum is to be completed within this period.

### What is an Opus Magnum?

Under Opus Magnum, we understand a book of fundamental significance, which owing to its special quality, originality and outreach sets itself apart from a regular academic book. For example, a work that

- constitutes a first comprehensive review of a research field that refers in detail to the state of research in neighboring disciplines,
- sheds completely new light on a subject area via a critical examination of common interpretation patterns and thereby opens up a new field of research,
- innovatively links up preparatory research of different kinds and provenance, generating new insights via such a synthesis.

Funding is not available for editing volumes, translations, textbooks, manuals, commentaries, and advice literature.

## III. General Conditions

### Who can apply?

This program addresses all full professors in the humanities, cultural studies, and (theoretical) social sciences at German universities. In exceptional cases, interested professors may also be considered from other disciplines. (Please first contact the Foundation before submitting an application.) Applying professors should be at least three years before retirement at the time of application. Extraordinary professors (apl. Prof.) are not eligible for applying.

### Funding period

As a rule, the leave of absence can be granted for periods ranging from 6 to a maximum of 18 months. It is assumed that applicants will be released from their duties by their university and continue to draw their salaries. The foundation will finance a substitute professorship for the respective period of leave. The fellowship is to be understood as an additional funding and may not be taken into account when granting regular leaves of absence according to the terms of the applicant's regular contract. Once a project is granted, it is not possible to apply for additional funds.

It is expected that the Opus Magnum will be completed within the funding period and that it will only remain to have the work prepared for printing. With this in mind, it is only possible to fund projects that are at a very advanced stage, with extensive preparatory work already in place. The data collection, archive and research work must be largely completed.

### **Substitute Professorship**

The Opus Magnum grant also serves to promote early-career academics. For this reason, the substitute professor must be a suitably qualified young researcher who has not yet been offered a permanent position and who has a realistic prospect of an academic career. The parties shall wait until confirmation that funding has been granted before entering into negotiations concerning a substitute professorship with the Foundation. The following selection criteria will apply:

- The substitute professor is not to be recruited from among the grantee's close institutional or personal circles. It is therefore preferred that the "Opus Magnum" teaching substitute undertakes a change of location.
- Not more than two or three years may have elapsed after the substitute professor's last qualification stage (mainly Habilitation or junior professorship).

The substitute professor will be given the opportunity to participate in measures of further training for early career academics offered by the Foundation. Moreover, it is expected that the "Opus Magnum" grantee will mentor the substitute professor and support to his/her best ability their embedment in the respective institution's structures and training measures for early career academics.

### **Funding Amount**

Depending on the basic salary in the respective classification (W3/W2), up to 55,000 euros can be allocated for the substitute professorship per semester, and a lump sum of 5,000 euros for (student/research) assistants as well as recurring non-personnel and non-recurrent expenses.

The maximum sum that can be allocated is therefore 180,000 euros over three semesters.

## **IV. Application and Selection Procedure**

Online applications can be submitted either in German or in English.

Applications are reviewed by a committee of experienced international representatives drawn from different disciplines. The reviewers are appointed with regard to the applications' disciplines. If necessary, additional written assessments by external experts are considered. Decisions will be made each year approximately six months after the deadline for application so that the period of leave can already start in the following winter semester. The project should be commenced within three semesters after the granting decision. Funding is available for up to ten successful candidates per year.

### **Selection is based on the following criteria:**

1. Is the applicant considered to be outstanding in his/her field?
2. How to assess the scientific quality of the planned publication project and its relevance and significance for the field?

3. Will the planned publication actually have the character of an Opus Magnum and possibly also be perceived beyond the specialist scientific community?
4. Is it (still) necessary to write this book in view of the preparatory work already done? Is the writing of the publication realistically planned in relation to the preparatory work?

In the event of a positive evaluation, applicants will receive a basic commitment to funding; the definite grant is subject to official notification of leave of absence and after the proposed substitute professor is named and has been approved by the Foundation.

Following a negative decision, a new application will only be possible relating to a completely different project.

## V. Application Checklist

Please submit your application using the Foundation's electronic Application Portal ([portal.volkswagenstiftung.de](http://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de)). Forms must be filled out with details on the applicant, the institution (recipient of funds) as well as the project (title, duration, and total funding amount) and budget plan. Additional information must be submitted in the form of "attachments" (pdf). A guide to the application portal can be found online (<https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/tipps.do>).

### The following should be attached as PDF documents:

1. Cover letter
2. Project outline in English and German (each maximum 1 page)
3. A detailed project description (not more than 12 pages in total: Times New Roman, font size 12 pt, 1.5 spaced)
  - Project description with grounds and details of objectives, innovation potential in respect of the current state of research, and the methods to be employed
  - Description of the preliminary/preparatory work Including reference list
4. Applicant's CV and list of publications (max. 10 pages)
5. Time and work plan
6. An explanation of costs with indication of the applicant's W-classification (as basis for the remuneration of the substitute professor) as well as the proposed use of the lump sum in an amount of 5,000 euros per semester (e.g. student/research assistants).
7. Other attachments: [Self assessment sheet](#)
8. Other enclosure: Letter of interest by a publishing company

Project descriptions of more than 12 pages will not be considered. The Foundation must reject applications which have been submitted at the same time in the same or similar form to other funding organizations.

## VI. Information

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### Additional Information

- [Self-assessment sheet](#)
- [Application FAQs](#)
- [Information for Applicants from Abroad](#)
- [Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)
- [Webpage Opus Magnum](#)