



Department of  
Methodology

MPhil / PhD Programme in  
Social Research Methods

2016-2017

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

## TERM DATES FOR 2016-2017

From <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/diaryAndEvents/termDates/Home.aspx>:

### **Michaelmas Term (MT)**

Thursday 22 September - Friday 9 December 2016

### **Lent Term (LT)**

Monday 9 January - Friday 24 March 2017

### **Summer Term (ST)**

Monday 24 April - Friday 9 June 2017

**The School will also be closed on English public holidays\*. In 2016/17 these will be:**

Christmas Closure	Thursday 22 December 2016 – Monday 2 January 2017
Easter Closure	Thursday 13 April – Wednesday 19 April 2017
May Bank Holiday	Monday 1 May 2017
Spring Bank Holiday	Monday 29 May 2017
Summer Bank Holiday	Monday 28 August 2017

*\*Some facilities, such as the Library, may open on some of these dates. The School will issue updates throughout the year.*

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## IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE METHODOLOGY PhD PROGRAMME

### **12 May 2017**

- Deadline for first-year students to submit the 10,000-word first-year progress review document. Please send an electronic copy (as a pdf file) to your supervisor by 5pm, with a copy to the Doctoral Programme Director and to the Departmental Manager.
- Deadline for second-year students to submit the materials for their upgrade to PhD status. Please send an electronic copy (as a pdf file) to your supervisor by 5pm, with a copy to the Doctoral Programme Director and to the Departmental Manager.
- Deadline for third-year students to submit the materials for their progress review. Please send an electronic copy (as a pdf file) to your supervisor by 5pm, with a copy to the Doctoral Programme Director and to the Departmental Manager.

### **9 June 2017 (tentative, date to be confirmed)**

- Department of Methodology PhD Day, where every student must present their work.

## IMPORTANT PEOPLE FOR THE METHODOLOGY PhD PROGRAMME

- Doctoral Programme Administrator: Esther Sidley ([methodology.admini@lse.ac.uk](mailto:methodology.admini@lse.ac.uk))
- Doctoral Programme Director: Benjamin Lauderdale ([B.E.Lauderdale@lse.ac.uk](mailto:B.E.Lauderdale@lse.ac.uk))
- Department Manager: Gillian Urquhart ([G.Urquhart@lse.ac.uk](mailto:G.Urquhart@lse.ac.uk))
- Head of Department: Ken Benoit ([K.Benoit@lse.ac.uk](mailto:K.Benoit@lse.ac.uk))

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## 1. About LSE and the Department of Methodology

### 1.1 Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Methodology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. We hope your time here will be both rewarding and stimulating. The Department of Methodology is one of Europe's leading centres in the study and development of social research methods. The Department owes much of its distinctive character to its commitment to both quantitative and qualitative methodology and its interdisciplinary staff from political science, sociology, social psychology, criminology and statistics, among other disciplines. LSE is an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) recognised Doctoral Training Centre, and the Department is central to the provision of methods training for MSc and PhD students from across the School. The Department of Methodology has 10 full-time members of academic staff. The Head of Department in 2016/17 is Prof Ken Benoit. For more about the Department and its activities, please see its website at

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/methodology/Home.aspx>

and for a list of the staff, their contact details and areas of interest, please see

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/methodology/whosWho/Whos-Who.aspx>

In a given year there are approximately 25 Masters students and 10 MPhil/PhD students.

This handbook aims to provide you with all the vital information you need to settle into LSE and Department and then progress through the PhD. We require all students to familiarise themselves with this handbook as it provides vital information which will be of considerable use to you. It will also be assumed that you familiarise yourself with LSE regulations that are relevant to research students. These can be found at

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/research.htm>

These general regulations are not replicated in this handbook.

### 1.2 LSE

LSE is a major world centre of research and teaching in the social sciences. It has an outstanding reputation, not only in Economics (where twelve former staff members have won Nobel Prizes), but also in all the Social Sciences and closely related subjects such as History, Law and Philosophy. LSE's location in central London is central to its identity. Its buildings form part of the skyline of a cosmopolitan capital city, crowded and bustling, rather than part of a peaceful rural campus. There is a

constant interchange of ideas and knowledge between teachers and students, and between the School and the world of many of its studies. Many LSE students and staff come from outside the UK; over half of the students are postgraduates, making LSE one of the largest concentrations of advanced study in its various fields. In its lively variety, LSE thrives on an atmosphere of openness to new ideas, discussion and debate. The LSE Library is one of the world's major collections of social science material – over 3 million items are on open access.

You can find out more about the School through its website at

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/home.aspx>

We strongly recommend that all new MPhil / PhD students attend the **School Welcome Presentations for new research students** at the beginning of Michaelmas Term. The session provides an important introduction to how the School functions and what the academic experience of a research student looks like at LSE. For information about the time and location of this event, please see here:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/yourFirstWeeks/welcomeWeek/welcomeWeekEvents.aspx>

and/or here:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TLC/TLCPhD/Home.aspx>.

### 1.3 Department of Methodology

The Department of Methodology was in large measure founded in response to the ESRC's concerns about the quality of methodological training for social scientists in Britain. This concern was first voiced in the early 1990s, and while the School took steps to improve the so-called 'methodology gap' identified by the ESRC, worries about training in research methods in Britain as a whole have not been allayed, leading most recently to the introduction of the ESRC Doctoral Training Centres, one of which is LSE.

The Department of Methodology's teaching has evolved in six phases, as follows:

- Training in research methods for PhD students in various departments of LSE (1992).
- Training in research methods for MSc programmes carrying the ESRC's RT weighting, i.e. for mode A entrance to PhD programmes (1993)
- Training for MSc programmes that required a skills component, in particular the Government Department (1994)
- MSc in Social Research Methods (1994)
- MPhil/PhD in Social Research Methods (2006)

- Contribution to the training under the ESRC's Doctoral Training Centre (2012)

Since there is not a well-established pedagogical tradition for the teaching of research methods in an interdisciplinary context, the following sections set out what lies behind the aims and objectives for our teaching. Research methodology is not an end in itself, but a means to the end of supporting and improving the quality of empirical research in substantive areas of the social sciences. To this extent the Department of Methodology has had an outward- looking approach and actively sought to avoid the 'ghettoisation' of research methodology. Most of the Department of Methodology staff would not define themselves purely as methodologists but as social scientists of varying disciplinary enthusiasms whose claims about social phenomena are warranted on the basis of empirical evidence. The staff teach and conduct research in one of the social sciences and their research output is submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment via some other academic department rather than Department of Methodology.

Our commitment to high quality teaching is more than rhetorical. Understanding research methodology is not merely the accumulation and critical evaluation of knowledge from library sources. To gain a practical and useful knowledge of research methods, what might be called a researcher's way of thinking, requires a combination of lecturing, worked examples, engagement in class activities and individual academic advise and support. The Department of Methodology has a continuing commitment to course evaluation and improvement.

The Department of Methodology takes the view that social scientific research methods comprise what are generally known as the quantitative and qualitative approaches and that a well-trained social scientist will be well versed in both traditions. This is exemplified in our MSc Social Research Methods, in which the compulsory courses cover methods for the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence.

## 1.4 Quick contacts

<b>Doctoral Programme Administrator</b>	<b>Esther Sidley</b> Room COL 8.07 Tel: 020 7955 6947 <a href="mailto:methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk">methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk</a>
<b>Doctoral Programme Director</b>	<b>Dr Benjamin Lauderdale</b> Room COL 8.10 Tel: 020 7107 5439 <a href="mailto:B.E.Lauderdale@lse.ac.uk">B.E.Lauderdale@lse.ac.uk</a>
<b>Department Manager</b>	<b>Gillian Urquhart</b> Room COL 8.08 Tel: 020 7955 7639 <a href="mailto:G.Urquhart@lse.ac.uk">G.Urquhart@lse.ac.uk</a>
<b>LSE Dean of Graduate Studies</b>	<b>Dr Sunil Kumar</b>  For appointment, contact <b>Giovanni Graglia</b> , Executive Assistant. Tel: 020 7955 7574 <a href="mailto:G.Graglia@lse.ac.uk">G.Graglia@lse.ac.uk</a>
<b>LSE PhD Academy (PhD Administration – Formerly known as Research Degrees Unit)</b>	For information and contacts, see <a href="http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/PhDAcademy/home.aspx">http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/PhDAcademy/home.aspx</a>
<b>LSE Teaching and Learning Centre</b>	<b>Dr Sarabajaya Kumar</b> Adviser to PhD and Postdoctoral Researchers Tel: 020 7955 6079 <a href="mailto:S.Kumar3@lse.ac.uk">S.Kumar3@lse.ac.uk</a>
<b>LSE Careers Service</b>	Careers Adviser for PhD Students. For information and contacts, see <a href="http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/PhDsResearchStaff/Home.aspx">http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/PhDsResearchStaff/Home.aspx</a>

## 2 Overview of the doctoral programme

### 2.1 Introduction

A PhD in Social Research Methods emphasises original research in any discipline that is either methodologically innovative or substantively important (and preferably both). This means, at the very least, the application of a technique or methodology not previously applied to a particular body of substantive research, or the improvement of methodology within a body of substantive research. Apart from the methodological innovation, the research may cover any substantive area of the social sciences. The final thesis should build a coherent argument that addresses one research problem or a small number of connected research problems.

The MPhil/PhD is designed to produce sophisticated empirical researchers from a number of different disciplines. Individuals who receive an MPhil or PhD in Social Research Methods will therefore have demonstrated strong methodological skills in the social sciences, and have contributed methodologically and/or substantively to a particular research literature. This will enable students to go directly into both academic careers as teachers and researchers, and non-academic careers (e. g. government, the voluntary sector, international organisations, business and media), and to become articulate, clear-thinking individuals who are able to analyse complex bodies of material critically and with imagination.

The major milestones and targets for progress during the programme are the following:

**Year 1:** First-year progress review and presentation at the PhD day

**Year 2:** Upgrade from MPhil to PhD status

**Year 3:** Third-year progress review

**Year 4:** Completion

These will be discussed in more detail in Section 4 below. The rest of this section describes other elements of your life as a research student.

### 2.2 Being a research student

As a relatively small department, we aim to foster an informal, friendly and supportive atmosphere that encourages a lively intellectual culture in which creative ideas from many perspectives can be discussed. Research flourishes in such an atmosphere. The arrangements for the MPhil/PhD programme are correspondingly aimed towards

- providing a sound environment that is conducive to research
- encouraging students to take full advantage of the range of advice and specialist knowledge available in the Department and in the School as a whole
- monitoring and assisting student progress in a regular way so as to help students to complete their theses within reasonable time.

In return, we expect students to do their part. Conducting research is a collaborative venture, with rights and responsibilities on both sides.

The key to your completing your research successfully is the network of support and advice available to you. On the informal side, probably the most important support resource is other research students; students who have experienced the same challenges that you face, who work in the same area or with the same methodologies, can provide



invaluable advice on how to avoid pitfalls, how to respond to obstacles, and so on. The staff of the Department, both academic and administrative, can also provide informal support and advice.

## 2.3 The student-supervisor relationship

More formally, your central support will be provided by your supervisors whose task it is to oversee your academic and personal welfare. The single most critical element in conducting successful MPhil/PhD research is the relationship between student and supervisors. Each student has two supervisors, but the relative sizes of their roles may vary from being nearly evenly divided between the two supervisors to a situation where the day-to-day supervision is conducted by the primary supervisor alone and the secondary one has mostly an advisory and oversight role.

The initial allocation of supervisors to student is based on ensuring that the supervisors have the requisite knowledge in the student's chosen field, though this is also subject to the supervisors' consent. The supervisors will help to define the area of research, advice on sources and choice of materials and methods and on attendance at courses and seminars. Later on, the supervisors will discuss the preparation and writing of the student's thesis.

It should be understood that potential supervisors are entitled to decide what subjects they can usefully supervise, so the School cannot guarantee that students will be able to work with any particular supervisor they choose. The Department of Methodology accepts the responsibility for a student's supervision once admitted, and it will do everything possible to ensure the best possible outcome in cases of difficulty.

The principal supervisor's role is both academic and pastoral, providing support that ranges from the intellectual through the practical to the personal. This relationship can take different forms for different students and supervisors, and also different forms for a single pairing over time.

It is important that the relationship that you develop with your supervisors is the right kind of relationship for the way that you and the supervisors work, and for the subject matter of your research. In managing this relationship, there are certain issues that you might usefully bear in mind:

- You should be proactive in the relationship – supervision is a joint responsibility. So, be active in arranging meetings and frame ideas and issues for discussion so as to ensure that you derive maximum benefit from the meetings.
- Always go into a meeting with your supervisors with a clear idea of what you want to gain from that meeting (a formal or informal agenda), and leave it with an equally clear idea of whether you have achieved what you wanted to do.
- Soon after each meeting with your supervisors, you should write notes about what was discussed and agreed for further action, and share them with your supervisors. These notes serve both as a reminder to you and the supervisors, and as record of your discussions. You are **required** to make and share these notes through the **PhD Log feature of the LSE for You** system (accessible from <https://lfy.lse.ac.uk/>). You should familiarise yourself with this system, and discuss the use of it with your supervisor at the start of the year.
- The style of working that you adopt with your supervisors should be made as explicit as possible – try to be clear about what you can expect from them, and what they can expect from you.
- The type of feedback that you receive will also depend on the nature of your relationship with your supervisors. Remember that criticism is a vital part of developing research and that the value of a discussion may not be evident until

some time later.

- The communication between you and your supervisors will depend on the specifics of your relationship. It is important to establish ground rules for communication with your supervisors at the outset. Further, the flow of information between you and your supervisors is crucial to a fruitful working relationship. Please let your supervisors know of any problems that might impact on your research (e.g., financial, health or other difficulties) or difficulties in carrying out an aspect of research.
- If your research field touches on areas outside the supervisors' sphere of competence, they can help to put you in touch with specialists who could help you. Reciprocally, if you do receive advice and feedback from someone other than your supervisors, you should let the supervisors know about this, and discuss lines of demarcation of responsibility for advice.

The PhD Academy of LSE runs various workshops under its Academic and professional development programme, that you might find useful. For more information, please see here:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/PhDAcademy/academicAndProfessionalDevelopment/coaching.aspx>

If you feel that the feedback or direction that you are receiving from your supervisors does not meet your expectations, then it is vital to raise this with your supervisors. They may decide to alter their approach or they may put you in touch with someone else whose approach more closely mirrors your expectations.

If it is too difficult to raise these matters directly with your supervisor, or if you wish to transfer from one supervisor to another, you should consult the Doctoral Programme Director. He has a general tutorial role to all research students and can offer an independent view of your progress or advice on any difficulties that you might experience, including uncertainties about supervision.

## **2.4 Staff-Student Liaison Committee**

The Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) for MPhil/PhD is an official forum for participation and feedback from students, for purposes of quality assurance of the programme. It consists of the Doctoral Programme Director, the Doctoral Programme Administrator and all registered MPhil / PhD students. SSLC meets once a term. The Programme Director will circulate an agenda for each meeting, but any student can also add items to the agenda or raise them under Any Other Business. Any student or group of students can of course discuss any matters of concern with the Programme Director or any other member of staff also outside the SSLC.

Research students can also elect a representative to the Research Students' Consultative Forum of the School, which meets once a term.

## **2.5 PhD day and Department seminars**

Each MPhil / PhD student must give a presentation at the Department PhD day in every year of their registration. The PhD day takes place in the Summer Term.

MPhil/PhD students are also expected to attend Department research seminars and other specialist workshops and seminars related to their interests.

## 2.6 Part-time teaching

Teaching experience is increasingly important for those who wish to pursue an academic career, and is an additional source of income. The Department strongly encourages MPhil/PhD students engage in teaching, and offers a number of opportunities as part-time teachers on a variety of different methodology courses.

Students in receipt of an LSE PhD scholarship are required to do some work for the Department (for no additional pay), normally from their second year onwards. This typically takes the form of teaching. Details regarding teaching assignments will be agreed with each PhD student individually at the beginning of each academic year.

Research students can certify their teaching experience through the LSE Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCertHE) offered by the Teaching and Learning Centre:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TLC/graduateTeachingAssistants/PGCertHEforGTAs.aspx>

## 2.7 Financial support

The best source of information about financial support available to research students at LSE is the School's Financial Support Office. For up-to-date and authoritative information on this area, please consult their website at

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/moneyMatters/financialSupport/Home.aspx>

Broadly, financial support can be divided into two types. The first is the main funding for your studies (including the fees and/or living expenses), typically for a period of 3 or 4 years. The main sources are

- LSE PhD scholarships
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) studentships
- Scholarships from non-LSE sources

The selection of students for LSE and ESRC scholarships is based on the PhD application to the School, so no separate application is required. These scholarships can only be awarded before a student starts his/her first year. For more information on external funding sources, please see

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/moneyMatters/financialSupport/grantMakingBodies.aspx>

The second type of financial support is the smaller-scale kind, either limited amounts of general support for short periods or support for specific purposes such as conference attendance. The main examples of this are:

- Postgraduate Travel Fund (School)
- In-course financial support for final-stage PhD students (School)
- Research Training Support Grant (ESRC, for its scholarship holders only)

Please ask the Doctoral Programme Director or Doctoral Programme Administrator for more on these if needed.

## 2.8 PhD Studentship Obligations

Students receiving LSE studentships through the School's PhD admissions and funding process are obligated to "contribute to their academic department as part of their research training, in the form of providing teaching or other work in their department, usually from year two onwards."<sup>1</sup> For the Methodology Department, these contributions typically involve teaching and/or research assistance, but may also involve support for conferences, staffing the Methodology Surgery, and other similar tasks. Our goal, wherever possible, is for these contributions to provide experience that our PhD students will find valuable when they seek jobs upon completion of the degree.

The guidance provided by the School is that the student should do an amount of work for the Department that is equivalent to 14% of the stipend each year, excluding the first year. We have made a departmental decision to also protect the fourth year from teaching obligations, to facilitate timely completion of the PhD. While our calculation of the obligation is based on service in years 2 and 3, students may choose to complete some of their obligations in the first and fourth year, subject to approval of their supervisor and the Doctoral Programme Director. Our translation of two years of this 14% requirement into work hours indicates an obligation of 265 hours of service to the Department over the four year degree.

Broadly speaking, there are four main types of work that PhD students can do for the Department.

**1. Teaching.** Teaching experience is valuable both in itself as well as for securing postdoctoral fellowships and faculty positions. Every year, the Department recruits a large number of Graduate Teaching Assistants for the introductory quantitative methods courses MY451, MY452, and MY465. The total number of hours depends on the teaching roles in these courses, which vary across and within courses. Based on a typical mix of these roles, teaching about 10 classes over the course of the PhD is sufficient to reach 250 hours. This could be met by teaching, for example, 3 classes in each of the two teaching terms of year 2 and 2 classes in each of the two teaching terms of year 3. The Department does not currently have teaching opportunities in its qualitative methods courses.

**2. Research.** Faculty in the Department have ongoing research projects that can benefit from research assistance, and providing research assistance is a good way to get involved in the intellectual life of the Department. PhD students who are interested in arranging a research assistantship should discuss potential projects with both their supervisor and the faculty member whose research is being assisted (if the latter is not the supervisor).<sup>2</sup> The faculty member whose research is being assisted must get approval for the overall number of hours and general aims of the assistance from the Doctoral Programme Director.

**3. Methods Surgeries.** The Department runs a walk-in "surgery" where members of the School community (students at the BSc, MSc, and PhD levels, as well as staff) can walk in and ask for methodology advice on their research. These are staffed partly by faculty and partly by PhD students in the Department. The number of hours available is limited to 2-4 per term, and so will constitute a small component of the total hours.

**4. Administration.** At certain times of year, there are opportunities to assist with the

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/moneyMatters/financialSupport/ScholarshipsLSE/PhDApp/LSEPhDStudentships.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Supervisors do not have a particular entitlement to the research assistance of their supervisees, however the necessary overlap in research interests implies that they are likely to be a good match for research assistance work.

administration of the Department (Moodle updates, data checking, web-based research, etc.) or to assist with conference/event organization.

We anticipate that most students will fulfill most of their obligations through teaching and research assistance. The Doctoral Programme Administrator will maintain a record of all contributions towards this requirement, based on activities approved by Doctoral Programme Director. The Doctoral Programme Administrator will advise PhD students of their progress towards the completion of the requirement at the beginning and end of each academic year.

## 3 Rules and regulations

### 3.1 Introduction

The LSE Calendar is the authoritative collection of the School's regulations, policies and codes of conduct. The part of the Calendar that is relevant to MPhil / PhD students can be found here:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/research.htm>.

Apart from the regulations that govern research degrees, these rules cover such issues as editorial help, research ethics, plagiarism and other assessment offences, appeals, complaints and disciplinary procedures.

You are very strongly advised to read these regulations thoroughly. Please see also the webpages of the PhD Academy for additional information:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/PhDAcademy/home.aspx>

The information on the PhD Academy pages covers such important topics as changes between full-time and part-time study, interruptions of study, extensions of the maximum period of registration, and procedures for submitting the PhD thesis.

The rest of this section expands on these general School regulations for research degrees to give some further information on the specific procedures in the Department for key stages of the MPhil/PhD programme.

### 3.2 First year: The first progress review

In the first year, students will typically spend a large portion of their time taking a range of methods and specialist courses. These are selected in discussion with their supervisors and dependent on their needs. The courses will normally be some of those taught by the Department of Methodology (course code MY) but may also include ones from other departments at LSE. The supervisors may advise or require that the student be formally assessed for such courses, and **the results of these assessments may be included as part of the conditions for progression to the second year**. Any such conditions will be communicated to the student in writing early in the Michaelmas term of the first year.

In the first year, students will typically spend their remaining time developing plans for and beginning work on their thesis. Once a plan for data collection has been formulated **and before data collection has begun**, students will need to submit a completed Research Ethics Checklist (and if necessary, the longer Research Ethics Review Questionnaire). These forms can be found alongside the LSE Ethics Code at:

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/researchAndDevelopment/researchPolicy/ethicsGuidanceAndForms.aspx>

In the Summer Term of their first year<sup>1</sup>, students will produce a **10,000-word first-year review document** that outlines the aims, methods and theoretical motivation

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this handbook, deadlines are stated for full-time students who begin their registration in Michaelmas Term. These should be translated in obvious ways for part-time students and for students who

of their thesis, and provides a plan for the programme of work leading to the final thesis. In essence, this document is the extended, in-depth research proposal for the PhD research, in a form which takes into account the student's work in the first year. The review document should be submitted by the deadline in the Summer Term which is published in the PhD handbook each year. The Research Ethics Checklist must be attached, if it has not already been submitted earlier.

Students will also give an **oral presentation** of this proposal at the PhD day. The presentation is an official part of the requirements of the first-year review.

The written proposal and oral presentation will be assessed by a review panel of two academics who are not on the supervisory team, normally members of the Department staff. **This work has to reach an acceptable standard to enable the student to progress to the second year.** If the panel deems the first-year review to be not adequate, they will give the candidate up to a month to revise it. This decision will be taken a maximum of one week after the end of the Summer Term. If the revised review document is still judged to be unsatisfactory, the review panel will organise an additional oral examination where the student will be asked to defend his/her proposal. The final decision will then be continued registration to the second year, with or without additional conditions, or termination of registration.

In general, a satisfactory first-year research proposal should provide a convincing argument for why the PhD research can be expected to produce work which will meet the requirements of a PhD thesis, as stated in the LSE regulations (see <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TQARO/Calendar/RegulationsForResearchDegrees.pdf>). In particular, it should include the following elements:

- A general introduction and statement of the problem or question under investigation, and of the reasons why this is theoretically and/or empirically important and interesting.
- A comprehensive literature review of relevant previous empirical and theoretical work. This should also motivate the specific research questions, highlight gaps in the literature, and explain the planned contributions of the thesis.
- Statement of the specific research questions of the PhD research.
- Explanation of the theoretical concepts and frameworks that will be employed.
- Statement of a clear, appropriate and feasible research design for empirical work which will be used to answer the research questions. This should include a description of the types and sources of empirical data to be collected, and of the methods to be used for their analysis.
- A general timetable and project management plan, showing the major tasks to be completed and a schedule for their completion.
- A general plan for the structure and format of the PhD thesis.

An unsatisfactory first-year review document is one which fails to provide this information. Examples of unsatisfactory work include (but are not limited to):

- A first-year review that does not state clear research questions;
- A first-year review that does not adequately review the specific literatures that the empirical work is contributing to;

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begin in another term. So, for example, 'Summer Term of their first year' should be read more generally as 'their third term of full-time equivalent registration'.



- A first-year review that does not give enough methodological detail, showing how the design will produce data that allows the candidate to address the research questions in a systematic and rigorous way.

### 3.3 Second year: Upgrading from MPhil to PhD status

After the first year candidates will spend more time on independent study under the guidance of their supervisors. This will include collection, organization and analysis of empirical data to address the research questions, and writing up of the results. In the Summer Term of their second year of registration, they will submit a document for consideration for an upgrade from the MPhil to the PhD programme. This document should consist of a minimum of three draft chapters of their thesis, plus a detailed plan and timetable for the completion of the thesis and a short introduction which links together the other parts of the document. The three draft chapters will typically include a detailed literature review with a specification of the research questions, and two empirical chapters (or two empirical papers in a draft form, if the student is pursuing a paper-based thesis).

The upgrade materials will be evaluated by an upgrade panel which will consist of two academics, not necessarily from the Department of Methodology or even LSE. The student's supervisors will not be members of the upgrade panel. The panel will conduct an oral examination where the student will have an opportunity to defend the upgrade materials. The panel will then recommend transfer to PhD registration if in their judgement the student's progress and plans for the remaining work are of a sufficient quality and quantity that the work can reasonably be expected to lead, by the end of the student's fourth year of registration, to a thesis which will meet the requirements of a PhD thesis as stated in the LSE regulations (see <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TQARO/Calendar/RegulationsForResearchDegreees.pdf> ).

Students who, at the viva, fail to satisfy the upgrading panel that they have reached the required standard will be permitted to revise and resubmit the upgrade document. The supervisors and the student will agree a fixed deadline for the resubmission, which will be within 6 months of the first oral examination. The revised document will be examined normally by the same upgrade panel, who will also conduct a new oral examination.

A student who fails to upgrade on resubmission, or who fails to submit an upgrade document by the end of the Summer Term of their second year of registration without an extended deadline approved by the Doctoral Programme Director, will normally be permitted to continue in registration and submit for the degree of MPhil if he/she so wishes.

### 3.4 Third year: The second progress review

The standard maximum period of registration of a PhD student at LSE is four years (full-time). The focus of the third-year progress review is not the academic quality and feasibility of the PhD project (these have been assessed in the PhD upgrade) but whether the student is making timely progress towards the goal of finishing the work and submitting the PhD thesis by the end of those four years. The decision of the progress review will be termination of registration if the student has not made adequate progress and does not have sufficient reasons for any delays. If progress is judged to be adequate, the student will be allowed to continue to the fourth year, possibly with additional



conditions.

In some cases, progress may have been delayed due to exceptional and unforeseen circumstances which have affected the student's work. It is then possible to submit a request to the Chair of the School's Research Degrees Subcommittee for an extension of the thesis submission deadline beyond the normal maximum of four years. It should be clearly understood that such an extension will be granted only in exceptional cases and is likely to be denied otherwise. If the request is denied, the student will be expected to submit the thesis by the end of the standard four-year registration period. If the thesis is not submitted by the end of the (standard or extended) registration period, registration will lapse without any degree being obtained.

The best time to submit a request for an extension is during the third year, in cases where the request refers to any circumstances which have occurred by then. One role of the third-year progress review is to assess whether this may be necessary, and to instruct the student and the supervisors to prepare an extension request immediately if it is.

The following materials should be submitted for the third-year progress report:

- A copy of the detailed plan and timetable for the completion of the thesis which was included in the PhD upgrade document.
- A copy of the report of the PhD upgrade panel.
- A statement of how the student has taken into account the comments of the upgrade panel (up to 1 page).
- Report of the progress of the work since the PhD upgrade, explicitly matched against the plan and timetable given in the upgrade document (up to 1 page).
- A detailed plan and timetable for the completion of the thesis (up to 1 page).
- A summary statement of the progress of the work so far, including comments on any changes of plans and differences between the plans stated in the upgrade document and subsequent progress of the work (1-2 pages).

These should be submitted by the deadline in the Summer Term which is published in the PhD handbook each year. The progress report will be assessed by a review panel which consists of one of the supervisors, the Doctoral Programme Director (replaced by another member of DoM staff if the programme director is also a supervisor), and possibly one other member of DoM staff. They will also conduct an interview with the student, and may invite further clarification from him or her. The panel will then make their final decision about the result of the third-year progress review by the end of the Summer Term.

### **3.5 Fourth year: Submission and examination of the PhD thesis**

(For an MPhil thesis, these requirements should be adjusted where appropriate. Please consult the LSE regulations and the Doctoral Programme Director for more information.)

The PhD thesis may be a traditional monograph thesis or a series of papers with supporting material, as prescribed by LSE regulations.

For a paper-based thesis, we encourage a short introduction and conclusion (2,000-4,000 words), a literature review (8,000-10,000 words), somewhere between 3 and 5 empirical papers (8,000-12,000 words each), and linking material between papers. The

introduction, conclusion, literature review, linking material and at least **two** empirical papers must be single-authored. Other papers can be co-authored.

Please note that the very definition of the word 'thesis' implies an (extended) argument. Students are encouraged to present coherent material which addresses one or a small number of linked research problems. This is good scholarship. It is also what examiners will be looking for, and what they are familiar with.

Before you submit your thesis, it is advisable to produce one or more draft versions, for discussion with your Supervisor, so that the structure of the argument can be clarified, the flow of your narrative smoothed, and the phrasing made as felicitous as possible. The precise way in which this is achieved should be discussed with your Supervisor.

Please consult the webpages of the PhD Academy at

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/PhDAcademy/PhD-Overview-Year-by-Year.aspx>

for information on the submission procedures. Note, in particular, that the [Examination Entry Form](#) on which, among other things, the examiners are proposed, should normally be submitted at least **two months before the thesis itself**.

### Selecting the examiners

The thesis is examined by two examiners. Final choice of the examiners is made by your supervisors, but they will ask for your views and you should discuss the choice carefully with them. Both examiners should be specialists in your field of research, and at most one of them may be from LSE. You may well know them both, but you should not have collaborated with them on research or received substantial advice from them on your PhD work. Members of the first-review panel and the upgrade panel should not be used as examiners of the final thesis. For more on the selection and appointment of the examiners, please see the LSE regulations for research degrees, at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TQARO/Calendar/RegulationsForResearchDegrees.pdf> and the webpages of the PhD Academy.

### Final Viva Voce Examination

Your two Examiners will read your thesis and then you will be examined by an oral (*viva voce*) examination. The *viva voce* is designed to test your ability not only to express your ideas on the specifics of your research, and to defend the viewpoints that you advance in your thesis, but also to debate the implications and scope for future development of those ideas, and to consider where and in what form the ideas might be published. It can be an arduous experience, but and it can also be enjoyable – often both, at the same time! You should discuss your preparations for the viva voce with your Supervisor well in advance of it taking place.

Useful suggestions to prepare for the *viva voce* include:

- Prepare brief oral summaries of your key arguments beforehand;
- Try to look over the thesis with a dispassionate eye, and note what might appear to others to be weak links or vagueness in your argumentation;
- Be ready to defend your ideas;
- But also be prepared to be flexible: think in advance about which aspects of your argument are essential to your view, and which might be modified after discussion;

- Think about theoretical and empirical alternatives to the view you have developed both within your particular field and in other fields;
- Think about the theoretical and empirical implications of your work;
- Bear in mind that the Examiners may not share your view of the field.

### The outcome of the examination

The outcome of the *viva voce* will be a judgement by the Examiners, who compile a final examiners' report and make one of several recommendations, as detailed in the School regulations.

## 3.6 Guidance on academic conduct

It is very important that the way you work in your research and the outputs of that research conform to the rules of correct academic conduct and the LSE regulations about research degrees. These regulations can be found at

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/research.htm>.

In particular, here we want to draw your attention to the following areas:

- **Guidelines on research ethics:**

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/researchAndDevelopment/researchPolicy/ethicsGuidanceAndForms.aspx>

A completed Research Ethics Checklist (and if necessary, the longer Research Ethics Review Questionnaire) **is required at the time of the first year progress review or before any new data collection is carried out, whichever is earlier.** In addition, where the body of data, intended research population or data collection strategy change significantly over the course of the research, the checklist, and if necessary the questionnaire, should be filled in again and resubmitted. If new researchers are added to the team who will have access to personal or sensitive data, the section on data protection and confidentiality should be updated and resubmitted.

- **Guidelines on plagiarism in written work:**

[http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TQARO/Calendar/RegulationsAssessmentOffences\\_Plagiarism.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TQARO/Calendar/RegulationsAssessmentOffences_Plagiarism.pdf)

for definitions and information on the procedures which will be followed if plagiarism is suspected.

- Guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable editorial help for written work:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TQARO/Calendar/StatementOnEditorialHelp.pdf>

These may need to be considered at any stage of the research process, including (but not limited to) the selection of the research topic, research design, research execution, conducting interviews, data collection and analysis, and the literature review. PhD students are encouraged to seek advice on the different aspects of their research in the form of 'peer review' (for example, by presenting at conferences). It is also legitimate for a student to seek outside help with particular aspects of their research, for example, in using research organisations to facilitate fieldwork trips. But it is important that external input of this kind is not excessive. Also, there will be aspects of research that students are expected to conduct themselves, within the context that their eventual thesis is expected to be their own original work. To ensure that any outside help that you might seek is within acceptable norms, it is very important that

- you should discuss with your supervisor(s) any help that you are considering using with any aspect of the research process;
- you should discuss with your supervisor(s) any advice that you are seeking from other departments at the School or from sources outside of the School; and
- any help you have received should be credited appropriately within your work.