

# Department of Social Policy

## Major Review 2017/18

Within the Department of Social Policy, research students registered for the MPhil programme are required to undertake a Major Review with a view to being upgraded to PhD status at the end of the first year (second year for part-time students).

### **The Major Review is a formal examination.**

Students are required to submit a document for Major Review which will form the basis for a discussion with a panel consisting of two members of the Department, not including the supervisor (although the supervisor may be present if the student (and supervisor) so wish). Any student unable to submit by the due deadline is expected to produce an independent document, such as a doctor's letter, giving the reason for non-submission.

The written work should be of a standard expected for a chapter of the final thesis.

### **Major Review document**

The document should include:

- An introduction that states why the topic or topics to be addressed are of interest, and provides an indication as to the main debates around it: in other words, provides the reader with a clear statement of your 'problematic' (the puzzle you are trying to solve or problem you are seeking to address);
- A literature review: this should **not** be a synthesis of **all** the related literature, but rather should focus on the research that is relevant to your topic. You should identify the gaps – substantive and/or theoretical – in the literature and show how you have derived your research question(s).
- A clear statement of the research question(s) and any subsidiary research questions.
- A detailed plan of the proposed research including:
  - details of proposed methods and reasons why the method(s) have been chosen;
  - a statement of how the data will be accessed/collected and how they relate to the research question(s) (you must be able to answer your question(s) using the methods you specify);
  - a statement as to how they will be analysed and why the method of analysis has been chosen;
  - an indication of how the analysis is intended to relate to the research question(s);
  - draft versions of research instruments (interview schedules/guides/questionnaires) (if relevant);
  - a clear timetable; and
  - chapter headings (as in a Table of Contents).
- For a thesis by publishable papers the Major Review document should provide material relevant to the four headings above for each paper, but greater emphasis and detail may be given to the one or two papers among three (or more) proposed.
- Length: 10,000 words, excluding footnotes, appendices and bibliography. Draft questionnaires/schedules should be included in an Appendix. Other appendices may not be read by the reviewers.

- A paragraph outlining individual training needs identified (with the supervisor(s)) and training that is being/has been undertaken (e.g. courses audited) to meet these needs should also be provided.

Basic guidance on formatting is given in the PhD handbook. The PhD Style Guide published on the Department's website also provides guidance on formatting and the layout of the

Major Review document as well as the final thesis. This might prove helpful.

See: [PhD Style Guide](#)

## Pre- Major Review Presentations

All full-time MPhil students will be required to present their research at the SA550 seminars in the Lent Term in preparation for their major review in June. This is intended to be a useful exercise and supervisors are also invited to attend. The presentation should last around 25 - 30 minutes and should broadly cover the following points within the rough time allocation given in brackets. An additional 25 - 30 minutes is allowed for questions and discussion.

- Introduction. Justification - why is the topic of interest? What is the subject of debate? What is your problematic? **(up to 5 mins)**
- Literature review focusing on the literature that is relevant to your problematic. You should identify the gaps – substantive and/or theoretical – in the literature and show how you have derived your research questions **(up to 10 minutes)**
- Clear statement as to your main research question(s) and subsidiary research questions **(up to 5 mins)**
- Your attempt to answer the research question(s). The methodology and data you plan to use. Methods of data collection (quantitative or qualitative). Methods of analysis. Timetable **(up to 10 mins)**

PowerPoint can be used at the presentation if desired (but this is not a requirement).

**Please provide a handout that gives the key points you are going to make:**

- **why the topic is interesting;**
- **key literature you build on;**
- **your research question(s) and methods you will adopt to answer these; analysis; timetable.**

## Timetable

The timetable for the Major Review process is as follows:

- End of March/ early April- dates of Major Review Panels sent out by email.
- **Wednesday 2nd May** - submission of Major Review documents.
- Early June - confirmation of Major Review panels by email.
- June - Major Review panels normally meet.
- Late June/early July – notification of the outcome of the Major Review by email.

## Submission of Major Review documents

Two printed copies should be handed in to room OLD 2.48 on **Wednesday 2nd May** by 12.00 noon and an electronic version should be emailed as a pdf to the programme administrator at [s.helias@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.helias@lse.ac.uk)

The Major Review document should carry the following details on the front page:

### Submission for PhD Major Review

Department of Social Policy  
May 2018

Name: xxx xxxxx

Name of supervisors: xxxx xxxx

Title of research topic: xxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxx xxxxxx

Number of words: xxxxxx

The document should be bound. The Students Union Copy Shop located in the New Academic Building, usually offers very competitive rates.

## Previous major review documents

A small number of previous Major Review documents are available to students from Sarah Helias. The authors have given permission for them to be lent out to current MPhil students, but on the understanding that the documents will be kept within the limited circulation of the Department of Social Policy only, as the research in the documents will not have been published. A list of available titles will be circulated earlier in the term and will be available upon request.

## Outcomes:

- The outcome of a **first attempt at Major Review** results in one of the following decisions:
  1. Pass, with comments and suggestions.
  2. Requires submission of additional material and/or minor amendments to the Major Review document (a second viva might be held and will be determined by the Panel).
  3. Fail, requiring resubmission and additional viva.

Passing Major Review will lead to upgrade to PhD status.

For all decisions, the outcome and any comments will be provided to the student and supervisors, within two weeks of the viva.

- **Second attempt at Major Review**

In the case of a decision taken under **Point 3** above (i.e. the student has failed the first attempt), he or she must revise and resubmit his or her Major Review document in full within the time frame specified by the panel (no more than six months after the first attempt). No extension will be granted other than for exceptional and documented medical or personal reasons (see below). Students should prepare their resubmission in close contact with their supervisor(s) and in relation to the comments provided following the first major review.

In the case of a decision taken under the **Point 2** above, the student is required to submit the additional and/or amended material within the timeframe specified by the Panel. No extension will be granted other than where exceptional and documented medical or personal reasons apply (see below). The Panel will indicate whether or not a further viva is also required.

If a student fails to meet the requirements specified under **Points 2 or 3** (i.e. additional material/minor amendments **or** resubmission/viva respectively), the student normally has the option of continuing as an MPhil student and submitting for an MPhil degree.

- **A third attempt to upgrade will not be allowed.**

In making their recommendations the members of the panel will take account of the submission date and any other information of relevance (such as supervisor's reports and the student's justification of his/her Major Review document).

Students have the right of appeal against a final decision not to upgrade to PhD. Appeals procedures are available ([Appeals Regulations for Research Students](#)).

An MPhil is a substantial and valid qualification in its own right. A PhD registration is a significant step and the Department needs to be sure, before students transfer to PhD status, that they have a viable research topic, research question(s) and methodology that are 'fit for purpose' and will meet the required standard for achieving a PhD. Any upgrading to PhD will be backdated to the time of the original registration for the MPhil/PhD programme.

See: [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) (Sections 22-25)

## Queries

If you wish to discuss any points raised above, please email the programme administrator at [s.helias@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.helias@lse.ac.uk). Any points relating to the content of the Major Review document will be forwarded to Anne West

