



THE FACULTY OF LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**Department of Economics and Department of
Development Studies**

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE DEGREES OF MPHIL AND PHD
IN
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Background

The PhD in International Development is the research degree part of the PhD pathway within the Bloomsbury Doctoral Training Centre that is one of the few such Centres recognised by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and which thereby receives financial support for MSc and research students. But the pathway is open to applicants whether eligible for or in receipt of ESRC funding or not, with ESRC funded-students expected to form a small minority overall. The pathway may be entered directly at the first-year of the MPhil/PhD, subject to prior suitable postgraduate qualification, usually MSc at suitable level, or through a dedicated SOAS MSc that qualifies for admission subject to level of achievement and other requirements.

Departments

The PhD is hosted by the Department of Economics and the Department of Development Studies within the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. Additional partners in the PhD pathway are the Institute of Education (IOE) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). The provision of research training will be shared between Development Studies and Economics, while additional training will come in the form of an interdisciplinary research seminar in International Development topics coordinated by the London International Development Centre (LIDC).

Schedule

The research degree embodies a core of training in research methods combined with a clear structure of progression thereafter. The training components are explained below. The duration and structure of the research degree will be as follows:

- **Full Time** Research Degree: 3 years plus 1 year writing up.
 - o YEAR 1: **Research Training**: research students will take one or more 'Research Methods' courses in the Economics and/or Development Studies departments, for their their research topics
 - o YEAR 1: **Upgrade**: Students will normally be expected to pass an upgrade from MPhil to PhD status within 9 months of commencing the degree.
 - o YEAR 2-3: **Research**: Core research undertaken: primary and secondary data collection as appropriate, thesis chapters finalised.
 - o YEAR 4: **Write Up**: If necessary a 4th year can be taken to write the final thesis. **Examination** of the thesis will take place after submission within the 4th year.
- **Part Time** Research Degree: 6 years plus 1 year writing up.

- The research degree can be undertaken over 6 years; Research Methods courses can be taken over the first 2 years, but at least one has to be taken in year 1.
- **Upgrade** will take place within the 24 months after initial registration.
- **Examination:** this will take place after submission within the writing-up year (year 7) at the latest.

Research Training

The following programme of research training will be completed in the first year of study (if full time), or over the first 2 years (if Part Time) in part fulfillment of the PhD in International Development.

Courses and seminars: All *MPhil/PhD in International Development* research students will participate in (research methods and subject-specific) coursework and attend research student seminars in the college and department where they are registered for the MPhil/PhD, as advised by their supervisor(s). Each department has seminar series associated with the particular discipline and subjects, and students will be expected to join and participate in the work of relevant research clusters within each department.

Seminar in International Development Issues: All *MPhil/PhD in International Development* research students will be required to attend a cross-college interdisciplinary seminar series/module in international development hosted by the London International Development Centre (LIDC). Topics in International Development will be presented by a range of academics and practitioners. Contributors to the seminar will be drawn from both within the Bloomsbury institutions that constitute founding members of the LIDC and from outside.

Research proposal/upgrade paper: At the same time, students work with their supervisor(s) and departmental research tutor(s) to develop a detailed research proposal/upgrade paper, undertake the first stages of research and write some draft sections to outline the main themes and hypotheses of the thesis.

Together these components represent the ‘core’ training for the PhD in International Development. It is designed to provide the analytical tools required by students in gaining an advanced understanding of recent developments in Research Methods and International Development more generally, and to enable the carrying out of high-level research for the purposes of the thesis and in wider application.

SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION

A central feature of PhD work is the close relationship between research students and supervisors. Supervisors and students are expected to meet regularly and consult closely as laid out in the SOAS Code of Practice.

Admission into the programme at the MPhil/PhD level is made on the basis of the ability and expressed willingness of at least one member of staff to serve as the main supervisor for the student's PhD thesis. Thus, from the student's entry in the first year of the MPhil/PhD programme, the supervisor assumes primary responsibility for monitoring and enhancing the student's progress towards the completion of the degree. This relationship is supported and strengthened in various ways.

Students will be supervised by a panel of three academics consisting of a lead supervisor and two 'second' supervisors. Lead supervisors will be located in the Departments of Economics or Development Studies, while second supervisors can be located in any of the SOAS Departments or Centres, or in the Institute of Education or London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Beyond this, the Department research tutor has overall responsibility for SOAS research students, being available to discuss general problems.

Most SOAS research students spend some time doing fieldwork in the regions of their research. The Faculty of Law and Social Sciences and the School as a whole, through their various connections with individuals and institutions in the universities and governments of Asia and Africa, can where possible facilitate this work with personal contacts and introductions.

Upgrade Procedure

In Term 3 of Year 1 (within 24 months) for full-time (part-time), students submit a Research Proposal/Upgrade Paper (of about 10,000 words), typically including the following elements: 1) Research rationale and context of proposed research; 2) Main research questions; 3) Literature review; 4) Theoretical and methodological framework & considerations; 5) Proposed research methods; 6) Ethical issues (where applicable); 7) Work Plan and Budget, 8) Bibliography. Adjustments to one or more of these sections, including additions or deletions where appropriate, are possible by prior arrangement between the student and supervisory committee.

This research proposal/upgrade paper is assessed by the student's supervisory committee in a viva voce. Prior to the viva voce, the student will have presented an earlier version of the research proposal/upgrade paper in a departmental research seminar, involving: a 20-30 minute oral presentation, followed by a discussion, also open to other staff and students. On successful completion of the viva, students are formally upgraded to PhD and proceed to the second year. If the assessors consider there to be shortcomings in the research proposal /upgrade paper, a student will be asked to revise it to their satisfaction before the upgrade to PhD status can be confirmed. Students are not permitted to proceed to the second year or to fieldwork until the upgrade process has been completed.

Students studying part time take the MPhil training seminar in the first year and write the Research Proposal/Upgrade Paper (see above) in the second year. The length of time for field or research and material collection, and writing up, are adjusted accordingly.

Final Examination

Examination is by assessment of the thesis and an oral examination (viva voce) concerning the thesis and the research upon which it is based, as specified in the SOAS PhD Regulations. Students may not submit after four years of full time registration (7 years for part time).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors and the supervisory committee, as well as the School, Faculty and Departments, are laid out in the document entitled 'Code of Practice for Research Degrees' (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/pgresearch/pgrstudents/file62234.pdf>); regulations for the PhD programme are included in the University of London's *REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREES OF MPhil AND PHD with effect from September 2007* (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/pgresearch/staff/file54045.pdf>)

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Academic

As indicated successful applicants will normally have a good Masters degree in a relevant subject if entering directly into the MPhil/Phd pathway. In some cases, prior knowledge of a foreign language may be necessary or advisable. Entrants to the pathway through first taking a SOAS MSc will normally be expected to have a 2:1 undergraduate degree in an appropriate discipline or equivalent.

Any queries about the application process should be addressed to researchadmissions@soas.ac.uk.

English language requirements

In order to ensure that SOAS students have a sufficient standard of English to study effectively, we require overseas students to submit evidence, during the application process, of their current level of proficiency. Full details of [English language requirements](#) can be found here:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/international/englishrequirements/>