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INTRODUCTION TO THE PhD PROGRAMME

The primary aim of the PhD programme in the Department of Politics and International Studies at SOAS is to train research students to design, research and write a successful doctoral thesis. Those who have completed the doctorate should be qualified as experts in their subfield. They should also be familiar with the conceptual and methodological aspects of political research. As a result they should be equipped to enter academic or other fields of advanced political research if they so choose.

Entry Requirements

Students are considered for entry into the programme if they possess a good advanced degree in Politics equivalent in level and content to the Department’s MSc, although applications from individuals with related degrees in cognate disciplines will also be considered. Applicants should include a synopsis (approximately five pages) outlining their proposed research topic. This synopsis should begin with a concise (75 word) summary of the central intellectual problem to be addressed by the proposed research; it should (i) explain the relevance of the proposed research to the advancement of current debates in the academic field of politics; (ii) defend the focus of the study in light of the existing theoretical and empirical knowledge in the subfield of interest, and (iii) specify the methodological approach (i.e. research design and technique) of the project and justify why such an approach is chosen over alternative approaches extant in the subfield. A bibliography of relevant theoretical, comparative and case literature also should be provided. Guidelines for the preparation of proposals can be found below.

In keeping with School regulations, and regardless of any prior supervisory arrangement, no student admitted to a PhD programme in another department or centre will be allowed to transfer into the Politics Department without a separate MPhil/PhD application approved by (a) a departmental supervisor and (b) the Politics Research Tutor.

General Programme Structure

The MPhil/PhD programme at SOAS follows a three-year model, with the possibility to extend into a fourth year. The programme consists of research training and coursework in the first year, after which students must pass an upgrade from MPhil to PhD status through submission of an ‘Upgrade Paper’, examined by a viva. This is followed by primary research/fieldwork undertaken in the second year, and the writing up of their thesis in the subsequent year. Students should aim to be ready for submission by the end of the third year and must submit by the end of the fourth year at the latest.
SUPERVISORY STRUCTURE

The Supervisor - Students are admitted on the basis of the 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. Supervisors are an important source of advice on reading, sources of documentation, and on the development of research design and methodology. Supervisors will also read and comment upon draft chapters, and make recommendations for additional training. To ensure a productive working relationship, it is important for students and supervisors to be clear about and agree on their respective expectations (including timelines for the completion of assignments). Supervisors have a responsibility to keep the Registry informed about students’ progress. Supervisors are also responsible for arranging the details of the thesis submission and the viva.

You are asked to arrange to meet your supervisor in registration week and at regular intervals thereafter. Members of staff have office hours, which are posted, by their offices. Supervision meetings at SOAS normally take place every fortnight (for full-time students) during their first year, but at some stages more frequent meetings or meetings at monthly intervals may be appropriate. Please ensure that you are receiving adequate supervision by remaining in touch with your supervisor, providing timely and complete pieces of writing in ways that leave sufficient time for his/her reading and evaluation, and by managing your mutual relationship via cordial contact and collegial relations.

The Associate Supervisor serves on the student's research committee. S/he is also available as a source of academic advice and may sometimes assume primary responsibility for supervision (for instance when the main supervisor is on leave). The Associate Supervisor assists in the assessment of the upgrade paper at the end of the first year, and can offer advice on PhD seminar presentations. When agreed with the main supervisor, the Associate Supervisor can also be the penultimate reader of a PhD thesis draft. In consultation with the lead supervisor, the student should identify and approach a potential Associate Supervisor within six weeks of arriving at SOAS. The Associate Supervisor must be in place by the end of the first term.

The Supervisory Committee - Each new student is placed under the overall charge of a three-person Supervisory Committee consisting of Supervisor, Associate Supervisor, and the Departmental Research Tutor or another staff member identified by the student and
approved by the lead supervisor. This committee is designed to offer advice and guidance, and to monitor the student's progress towards the completion of the degree. The Supervisory Committee evaluates the upgrade paper at the end of the first year and determines the suitability of the student for upgrading to full PhD status. The Supervisory Committee has a particular responsibility in relation to requests of transfer to Continuation status after the third year.

The Research Tutor is the key liaison between Research Students and the Department for issues that cannot be solved directly with the supervisor or with the Faculty Office. If a student is experiencing problems with a supervisor or wishes to switch to a new supervisor, the Research Tutor and the Head of Department will make the necessary arrangements as they see fit. If a supervisor is on study leave or for other reasons becomes unavailable, the Research Tutor, in co-ordination with the Head of Department, will likewise work to find temporary or long-term alternative supervision as deemed appropriate.

Research Tutor 2016/17: Dr Alastair Fraser. Rm 4404. af22@soas.ac.uk. Office hours (drop in – no appointments necessary) Fridays 4-6pm.

**ACTIVITIES UPON ARRIVAL (TERM 1)**

Within three weeks of your arrival at SOAS, you should aim to check off the following milestones to ensure that your year gets off to a strong start.

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Become familiar with the Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE). Set up your Electronic Logbook and sign up for the ‘POMPHIL’ class on BLE, the home of ‘Introduction to Research for MPhil Students’.</td>
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<td>From Week 1, attend the ‘Introduction to Research for MPhil Students’.</td>
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<td>Work out a schedule of meetings with your supervisor for Terms 1, 2, and 3 (typically, students will meet their lead supervisors twice per month.)</td>
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<td>Discuss language-training requirements with your supervisor and prepare an application to fund relevant training if required.</td>
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<td>Discuss supplementary training options with your supervisor (e.g., auditing MSc courses in Politics, or other Departments at SOAS, courses offered by ‘Learning and Teaching Development’ Services, language courses, etc.)</td>
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<td>Register with relevant SOAS Research Centres (see below) to ensure that you are kept aware of their events.</td>
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<td>Get to know facilities and services of SOAS library and the SOAS Doctoral School at 53 Gordon Square.</td>
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MONITORING OF PROGRESS

Student progress will be monitored through annual reports. Reports will evaluate the quality of the work submitted and the pace of progress. **Annual report forms** are supplied by the Registry to each supervisor. The forms are filled in by supervisors in coordination with the student. Annual report forms are used by the Registry and the Associate Dean Research as an overall guide to students’ progress and should be used for signalling any difficulties either student or supervisor may be experiencing.

A necessary foundation for research is a **manageable research plan**, which should be worked out and in draft form and agreed jointly by both student and supervisor in the first term. It can then be expanded and updated throughout the PhD to ensure that all parties understand progress with the project. It should include: a statement of the main research question; a provisional title for the thesis; a brief bibliography of the relevant literature; a rough division of the intended thesis by chapters and/or topic; a brief account of the proposed methodology; a time schedule for the different stages of research all the way to submission. Obviously, the research plan is only a plan and in many cases key elements will need to be extensively revised as the research and writing progresses, but it is an essential tool in enabling student and supervisor alike to plan ahead, to identify difficulties before they arise, and to have an agreed basis for the future progress of the research work.

At the start of the PhD programme, students will be issued a **personal logbook**. The logbook is electronic and students can access it via the BLE system (Bloomsbury Learning Environment). The logbook provides a record of the frequency of supervisions, and the student’s plans and achievements. Research students are responsible for completing the first few pages before the first meeting with their supervisor, outlining what the supervisor may need to know about skills, future training, etc. It is advisable to write summary entries of each supervision meeting for the record of both the student and the supervisor. **It is the student’s responsibility to keep the logbook up to date** and to make sure that all agreed aims and deadlines are noted in the book.

The supervisor and the student should meet regularly after each piece of submitted work and at the start and the end of each term at least. Most research students go through a phase of feeling that the work is not progressing well enough or quickly enough and so seek to avoid meeting the supervisor. But it is vital that contact is maintained (by phone or e-mail, if not directly in person), that such difficulties are talked through and that the agreed schedule of work is not allowed to slip too far.
DEPARTMENTAL AND ACADEMIC LIFE AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Although the supervisory structure is designed to ensure researchers are being supported and monitored, are receiving feedback and being inspired, undertaking a research degree involves becoming an independent scholar and a vital skill for such scholars is the ability to take ownership and responsibility for their project. This means seeking out support, feedback and inspiration from the wider academic world – at SOAS and well beyond. Balancing time spent reading, writing and researching your project with contributing to and benefiting from relationships with other scholars and engagement with scholarly networks is a vital skill.

Departmental Seminar

The Politics Department Research Seminar meets fortnightly, on Wednesdays 15:00-17:00 and is a crucial element of the shared intellectual life of staff and postgraduate students. It is a forum where invited speakers will present and discuss work in progress. A seminar schedule will be circulated at the beginning of the year, followed by regular announcements. There is often an opportunity following the seminar to meet and socialise with the visiting speaker (occasionally over drinks and dinner). Research students are strongly encouraged to attend this seminar on a regular basis and may be invited to act as discussants. Please contact the organiser of the research seminar series for more information (for 2016/17: Dr Matthew Eagleton-Pierce, me7@soas.ac.uk).

Centres, Networks, etc.

Research Students are encouraged to take advantage of the various resources available at SOAS and become actively involved with the many regional centres, and research networks and to attend speaker series organized throughout the School (see the SOAS website https://www.soas.ac.uk/centres/ for more information). Faculty members within the Politics Department are associated with the following centres and associations:

Thematic Centres
- Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy (CISD)
- Centre for the International Politics of Conflict, Rights, and Justice (CCRJ)
- Centre for Comparative Political Thought (CCPT)
- Asia-Pacific Centre for Social Science
- Centre for the Politics of Energy Security
- Centre for Gender Studies
- Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies
- Centre for Media and Film Studies
Area Studies Centres
London Middle East Institute (LMEI)
Centre for South Asian Studies
Centre for African Studies
Centre for Southeast Asian Studies
Centre for Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucuses
Centre for Iranian Studies
Centre for Contemporary Pakistan Studies
Centre for Korean Studies
SOAS China Institute
Centre for Taiwan Studies
Japan Research Centre

Professional Associations beyond SOAS
Political Studies Association (PSA) - www.psa.ac.uk/
International Studies Association (ISA) - www.isanet.org/
British International Studies Association (BISA) - www.bisa.ac.uk/
European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) - http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/
European International Studies Association (EISA) - http://www.eisa-net.org/
American Political Science Association (APSA) - www.apsanet.org/

Associations dedicated to the study of particular themes:
Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN) - http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/ASEN/
The Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) - http://www.aswadiaspora.org/
Development Studies Association - http://www.devstud.org.uk/
The British Society for Middle East Studies – http://www.brismes.ac.uk
African Studies Association - www.africanstudies.org/
The African Studies Association of the UK - www.asauk.net/
The Association for Asian Studies - www.asianst.org/
British Association of South Asian Studies – http://www.basas.ac.uk
Middle East Studies Association (MESA) - www.mesa.arizona.edu/

The British Academy website lists resources available to researchers in a number of disciplinary and geographic areas.
Academic Discussion Lists
H-net (on a wide range of themes and areas) – www.h-net.org
There are also lists operating about all sorts of topics on, for instance, Yahoo Groups and sometimes around particular themes (nationalism for example).

Representation of Research Students within the Department
Research Students elect three individuals to form a committee for each academic year. The committee is encouraged to organize social and intellectual events to facilitate the integration of a cohort of researchers, and is intended to serve as a forum for Research Students in the Department to discuss issues raised by fellow students concerning the programme, and to channel concerns to the Research Tutor, the Faculty Office, and the Department as a whole where appropriate. Two members of the committee should be Research Students in their first or second year, one should be an advanced Research Student (that is, in their third year). Elections should be organised by Research Students themselves, and held by the end of October (this usually takes place in the context of the ‘Introduction to Research’ course). Elected students should ensure that the Departmental Manager in the Faculty Office is aware of their position as representatives so that they are included in all relevant announcements.

Departmental PGR Consultation
Two members of the Research Student Committee must be formally designated as Research Student Representatives and are invited to attend Departmental meetings. In addition, representatives will participate in consultation meetings with members of staff to discuss all aspects of the Department's work of concern to Research Students. Meetings take place once a term and may also include additional interested students from the MPhil and PhD cohorts. Elected Research Student Representatives should initiate consultation with their peers to bring forward relevant issues.
RESEARCH TRAINING YEAR 1

Students are expected to upgrade from MPhil to PhD student status within twelve months of their registration. This transfer is NOT automatic. Successful completion of the WHOLE training programme is a requirement for progression from MPhil to PhD. This means students MUST attend all courses and complete ALL written assignments. Those failing to do this will be deemed to have failed to satisfy the requirements for upgrading.

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<th>COURSES</th>
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<td>• Introduction to Research for MPhil Students (Terms 1 and 2) <em>compulsory</em></td>
<td>• Literature Review</td>
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<td>• Course on Quantitative Methods (optional)</td>
<td>Due start of second term</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Upgrade Paper Workshop (Term 2) <em>compulsory</em></td>
<td>• Preliminary Upgrade Paper</td>
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<td>Due end of second term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible:</td>
<td>• Final Upgrade Paper</td>
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<td>• MSc course or language course as specified/approved by supervisor (NB: Language training requirements should be decided early on to enhance the possibility of securing appropriate funding within SOAS)</td>
<td>Department deadline for submitting upgrade paper to supervisory committee: Fri 12 May</td>
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<td>➔ Upgrade Viva</td>
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<td>Department deadline for having viva completed: Fri 9 June 2016</td>
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<td>• MPhil Research Projects Conference</td>
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<td>End of third term (early June), date TBA</td>
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<td>• If applicable: Revised Upgrade Paper and Second Viva</td>
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<td>School deadline: Fri 1 September 2016</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Fieldwork Form</td>
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<td>Six weeks before fieldwork begins</td>
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Introduction to Research for MPhil Students (Terms 1 and 2)
This course provides Research Students with the basic ‘tools’ needed to successfully design and conduct a research project. It consists of weekly seminars (Thursdays, 3-5pm) lead by members of staff from the Politics Department based on core readings, student presentations and group discussions. The first part of the course addresses debates in philosophy of social science research, aspects of research design and how to construct a literature review. The sessions in the second part introduce a variety of qualitative methodological approaches, including comparison, ethnography, interviews and discourse analyses. Course conveners 2016/17: Dr Alastair Fraser and Dr Rochana Bajpai.

Students wishing to learn or improve their skills in quantitative data analysis are strongly encouraged to attend a parallel course on descriptive and inferential statistics, SPSS and regression analysis. This course involves lectures accompanied by practical sessions/tutorials suitable for both introductory and advanced levels. For details contact the convener: Professor Lawrence Saez.

Upgrade Paper Workshop (Term 2)
This one-term seminar is designed to complement the above course(s) and gives students the opportunity to present their doctoral research projects (drafts of their preliminary upgrade paper, essentially) in an informal setting. This will allow students to discuss challenges they face in devising their own research design and choosing a methodological approach and to discuss issues of fieldwork and project management with peers and a member of staff. Course conveners 2016/17: Dr Alastair Fraser and Dr Rochana Bajpai

Research Projects Conference (Term 3)
First Year research students will present their doctoral research projects (their upgrade paper, essentially) at a one-day conference during Term Three (Date TBA, usually held in early June). This conference is organized by a committee of students, and will be organized via the Upgrade Workshop. Students will form panels consisting of 3-4 participants working on similar subject areas, plus a panel chair and discussant drawn from the Department/SOAS faculty. The setting will allow students to practice their presentation skills in a panel format and receive critical feedback. Attendance will be open to SOAS staff and postgraduate students (and, potentially, external invitees). The conference is usually the last event of the academic year and thus a nice occasion to ‘wrap up’ the MPhil experience. There is usually a party afterwards.
Further Coursework

Students may need to attend appropriate MSc level and language courses as advised by the Supervisory Committee to build up their overall grasp of a certain subject or language. This will entail weekly attendance of, and positive contribution to (including presentations), the course as required (for course descriptions, see the Department Postgraduate Handbook). (Registration in MSc-level courses is subject to approval by the respective course convener.) Please note: Language training requirements should be decided in consultation with the Supervisor early in Term 1 to increase the likelihood of securing funding for this training within the School. Funding decisions are made on a first-come-first-served basis. When the relevant language course is not offered in the SOAS Faculty of Languages and Cultures students can apply (with a supporting statement from their supervisor) for funding to support their training. Students should look out for relevant announcements or contact Elaine Jakeman (ej7@soas.ac.uk) for information.
FIRST YEAR ASSIGNMENTS AND THE UPGRADE PROCESS

Research students are expected to submit a copy of their Literature Review to their supervisor (and, usually, to the second member of the supervisory committee) at the beginning of Term 2. Students then present drafts of their Upgrade Paper to the Upgrade Paper Writing Workshop throughout Term 2. They are then expected to submit a completed draft of their Upgrade Paper to their supervisors by the end of Term 2. Students are strongly encouraged to establish clear and sensible deadlines for handing in these drafts. This is vital for ensuring that supervisors will know when to expect drafts and for students to receive timely (and, ideally, written) feedback.

Unless another arrangement has been made with the supervisory committee, students are then asked to submit three hard copies of the final upgrade paper to the LSS Faculty Office by 12 May 2017. The final upgrade paper will be assessed by the Supervisory Committee through a viva, during which Research Students will be asked to present their paper and to respond to comments and critique from the committee. Students should liaise with their supervisor(s) to identify a suitable viva date. The upgrade viva should be completed by 9 June 2017. Following the viva, students may either have their upgrade approved immediately or be asked to make either minor or major revisions to their upgrade paper over the summer and submit a new version to the supervisory committee and, if applicable, attend a second viva by 1 September 2017. The Supervisory Committee will reach a collective decision and submit a written report to the Registry and the Associate Dean for Research by 15 September 2017. Any late submissions must be supported by the supervisor and approved by the Research Tutor.

Written Report on the PhD Upgrade paper

The Supervisory Committee drafts a report after each submission on the viva/upgrade paper, a copy of which should be kept on file by the lead supervisor, the Research Tutor, and Registry/the Doctoral School. All or parts of the report will be made available to the student. The report will include (i) a brief summary of the submission; (ii) strengths and weaknesses of the submission; (iii) suggestions for improvement; (iv) a recommendation (with rationale). At the end of the process, the committee will recommend one of the following outcomes:

- Upgrading to PhD status,
- Not proceeding beyond the MPhil degree,
- Termination of the research project.

No student is given permission to leave for fieldwork until a decision has been made about upgrading. No student will be permitted to enrol for a second full-time year, or part-time equivalent, unless the transfer to PhD has taken place or a written dispensation from the Associate Dean Research (ADR) is on their Registry file.
ONE APPROACH TO PREPARING OF AN UPGRADE PAPER

A research plan is a living document that evolves with your project, typically beginning from the original research proposal (see below). Elements of this proposal can be developed into an upgrade paper, which itself then typically serves as an early version of the introduction to a doctoral thesis. It typically starts as an explanation for and guide to the work that will be done in the future, and evolves into an explanation of and description of work already done. The upgrade exam enables an assessment, by scholars other than just the candidate’s own supervisor, of progress in this process by the end of one year, assessing whether the candidate has been able to specify a valuable, manageable, sensible and ethical project that will make an original contribution to knowledge in their chosen field.

The upgrade paper will typically include the following:

1. An elaboration of the principal question and sub-questions addressed;
2. A literature review;
3. A discussion of methodological frameworks;
4. An outline of a fieldwork plan;
5. A timetable for completion within three (maximum four) years.

At the point of writing an Upgrade Paper there’s something odd about knowing what it is you want to argue, though an introduction in a finished dissertation includes an abstract of the overall argument made, elements 1-3, a description of the fieldwork done in place of 4 and a chapter by chapter guide to the findings in place of 5.

1. Framing your topic in the form of a question.

In the first section of a plan, readers will want to know what your question is, and understand why you have chosen it. The question normally takes the form of a single sentence and aims to specify itself (in terms for example of naming events, dates and locations) as closely as possible. It could emerge from a real-world problem or event that practitioners, commentators and/or academic analysts have struggled to understand or characterise, or from a more abstract academic debate - ideally, both. But it needs to be an interesting question, and a puzzle. In other words, it won’t do for the answer to be obvious (to you or to everyone else) or trite, or for there to be a well-established consensus on the question (unless you also have grounds for suggesting that this consensus is false). You need to be able to explain to an informed audience of people trained in your broad discipline but not obsessed with the same issue as you why finding an answer might matter to them. This
might involve very briefly summarising a debate in the literature that you go into in much
greater detail in the literature review.

2. The literature review.
(NB. There is a week of the methods course, and a reading list, on literature reviews).
Most questions of social science have been approached in some form already by ‘the
literature’. Often the best way to start answering a question is to consider what others have
said. There is usually a range of influential answers offered to questions somewhat similar to
yours. In some cases the way that people frame their questions specifically reference the
phrases and concepts introduced by particular thinkers. These phrases and concepts are
almost always subject to debate and critical appraisal by other authors.

You should not think that if some article or author has already answered your question, even
with reference to your case, that’s a reason to avoid the question: quite the opposite. An
original contribution to knowledge does not imply an original question, only an original
answer. Others’ work can be a kick-off point for a critical engagement with their claims and
methods. However, it might well be that nobody has tried to answer ‘the question’ through
your case, in your time period, or in some more narrow but strategic way that you identify
and specify in your question. Readers still need to know whether other people have relied on
an implied answer to your question as an aspect of some broader theory, or have answered
a similar question in relation to other cases. We then need to understand your assessment of
how justifiable the answers they provide are. This helps the reader to understand why you
then chose the method and case that you do.

Ideally before beginning the PhD, or at least as part of your research plan, you will have
developed a bibliography. You should have used googlescholar, jstor, ebscohost, the library
catalogue and other library and bibliographic databases, and the citations from relevant texts
to identify whether there is sufficient academic literature and / or primary data / policy-
oriented literature out there for you to be able to engage the question in the way that you
have framed it. This bibliography will obviously grow as you work and particularly in relation
to advice from your supervisor and other scholars.

A literature review introduces the reader to the main issues raised by this literature. It should
demonstrate that you have read and understood the core arguments made by other authors,
and can re-present them fairly and elegantly, in summary. This means giving the key
theories room to breathe, to make their case. In other words you don’t need, initially, to
respond to everything that others say – just explain what they say and why. At the same
time, when finished, a literature review should not just read; ‘x says this, y says this, z says this’. You also need to provide a critical commentary on the ideas, drawing out similarities and contrasts between them, putting the authors and arguments 'in contact' with each other, even if they don’t write directly about each other.

In reading each of the authors you are seeking then to establish both what their argument is on the surface, but also to draw out in a commentary in your own ‘voice’ what ideas and assumptions underpin it, and how adequate the evidence deployed to support the claims is. As you read more authors, you can compare whether these assumptions, or approaches to evidence are shared. If so, why do authors reach different conclusions? If not, why not?

The questions then arise; what are you going to say about their similarities and differences? Are you starting to identify common ‘schools of thought’? How might we be able to judge between accounts? Sometimes you can resolve a debate purely logically. But if one can ‘resolve’ a debate thus, it is unclear why further empirical work or a case study might deepen our understanding. So, if you aim to develop your argument through close study of particular cases, or by sourcing primary evidence rather than simply considering the extant literature, you need a justification; What dilemmas are left behind once we’ve considered the extant literature? What are the unresolved questions that emerge from the literature? How might cases contribute to our understanding/help to resolve them? By the end of a literature review, we’re looking to have identified a tension or confusion that you genuinely feel confused or undecided about. That is the most reliable basis for convincing others that the issue is worthy of further study and motivating interesting research. You may well have a sense of what you think the best answer to the question is likely to be, but if you don’t have on the table any other plausible explanations that you feel need investigation or testing, even disproving, it’s more likely you will make a ‘defense’ of an author or position that you can already sketch out. This way lies uninteresting work for the researcher and the reader!

3. A Methodology
As part of the literature review it is likely that you will have explained to the reader how other researchers came to the conclusions they did. We should have a sense of what kinds of methods have resulted in their findings, and how your assessment of them helps us understand your approach. Were others’ methods adequate? If so, are you trying to replicate their studies but using a new case? Is this a way of testing or expanding the evidence base? Is there something wrong with their methods? How will you remedy this?
You need to establish that you are able to take our knowledge forward and have a systematic approach to gathering evidence. This is likely to include a discussion of other methods that you could have chosen to adopt, or that you can see others would adopt in trying to answer similar questions, and an explanation of the choices you have made to include or exclude the range of methods that could be used. We also need here an explanation of case selection. Be aware that that case-study(s) might not necessarily be in the unit of a country; it could be cities, particular policy processes, institutions, media products or even individuals. You will also need an awareness of how grand/generalisable a claim it is possible to stand up on the kinds of cases/evidence you plan to deploy as a test. You should discuss the acknowledged weaknesses of the method you choose and what you might be able to do to mitigate predictable problems.

4. The fieldwork plan
The most fundamental questions are: are there enough sources available to you to answer this question with a reasonable volume of fieldwork. Does your chosen method suggest a way of gathering and analysing it? Whatever the technique/method you adopt, you need to find a way to explain what it is you will do to test plausible answers to the question, and how you will gather and analyse evidence. This might involve statistical analysis. In which case you need to tell use about the datasets you will consider. It might involve archives. In which case, we need to know where they are, what it is possible to know about them without visiting, and whether others have already looked at them. It might involve interviews or questionnaires. In which case we need to know how you will approach your subjects, if and how you will sample and select them. The fieldwork plan should include a discussion of visa and access issues; funding applications needed and timelines for them; whether you will be hosted for the research by an institution; ethical issues and any in country processes of approval that you will need to go through. If you can develop and share interview frameworks or questionnaire/s developed ahead of time, do so.

5. Research Ethics and Safety
All upgrade papers, and particularly those whose field research includes work with live subjects, require a reflection on the ethical implications and complications of the research. Students are required to take a SOAS-wide ethics and risk assessment workshop that engages with the ethical issues involved in conducting research as well as issues of safety during fieldwork (dates TBA, look our for announcement). The student’s supervisory committee will assess questions of ethics and safety during the upgrade process and the student, together with the lead supervisor, need to fill out a corresponding form that has to be submitted to the School following the viva. Should the subject of one’s research be
ethically complex (for example dealing with questions of sexual violence, interviews with perpetrators of violence, or work with populations especially vulnerable to violence or repression), the student will need to specify in writing how these issues are addressed and further approval from the ADR may be sought as well.

6. A timetable for completion
This usually takes the form of a table. It is smart to think about completing a second chapter before going on fieldwork. This might well be a chapter chosen strategically because it is, for example, a historical background chapter, largely researchable on the basis of secondary sources available from the UK, or chosen because it will give the researcher valuable background knowledge that will make it easier to settle into empirical work. It is also smart to consider how much data processing (transcription, coding etc.) and writing can occur during fieldwork.
AFTER UPGRADE

Fieldwork Procedures
Students undertaking fieldwork will generally do so in their second year. A maximum of three terms’ fieldwork is usually permitted in a full-time PhD programme. Fieldwork of longer than 12 months has to be approved by the Associate Dean for Research. During their first year, students are expected to locate and apply to any relevant sources of funding for fieldwork. Discussion of how to locate funding sources occurs within the Research Training Seminar and the Generic Research Training Day run by the School. The Careers office can also help locate sources of funding to support fieldwork.

After the student has been upgraded to PhD status, the student and supervisor must fill in the Application for Approval to Undertake Overseas Fieldwork Research form available at the Doctoral School website. Research plans, including overseas University contacts and a description of arrangements for supervision while in the field need to be outlined in the form. At least monthly contact is expected. Confirmation that a risk assessment has been undertaken must be given on the Fieldwork Application Form. It is the student's responsibility to assess the risk and discuss it as necessary with the supervisor and others. Students should submit the fieldwork application form to Registry at least six weeks before their departure. Similarly, on returning from fieldwork students should contact Registry as well as their supervisory committee. Students can use the library and other School facilities as usual during their fieldwork year.

Training Beyond Year 1
Throughout the process of research design, fieldwork, and writing, students are expected to maintain regular contact with their supervisors. The work of writing the PhD dissertation is the student’s alone, supported, of course, by regular meetings with the supervisor. PhD students are expected to present one or two draft chapters of their dissertation at a seminar during their third and/or final year. This is an excellent opportunity to receive feedback on core aspects of their unfolding thesis in the write-up phase from members of staff and fellow PhD students. The seminars are coordinated by an academic member of staff (for 2015/16: Dr Michael Buehler) and organised together with participating Research Students (ideally the PhD Student Representative).

Advanced PhD Students are strongly encouraged to participate in workshops offered outside SOAS and to attend and present at annual conferences organised by the major
research associations in the field, as well as various thematic and area-studies conferences (for a selection see list below). These are excellent opportunities for networking, receiving constructive feedback, and for making a start in publishing. Especially for students wishing to pursue an academic career **the importance of participating in conferences and workshops cannot be emphasized enough.** Students accepted to present at these or similar conferences may apply to the Doctoral School for funding (see below). Some Associations also offer travel stipends, as do institutions like the British Academy.

Students should bear in mind that fieldwork in the second year can take up to nine months whilst final redrafting of the dissertation usually takes at least three to four months. This leaves approximately two years for the substantive chapters to be written in the intervening period. The 100,000-word limit should be treated as a maximum, a more realistic total is around 80-90,000 words. Although the writing up is usually weighted towards the end of the process, it is important to start writing as soon as possible, and not to think that ‘preparing’, ‘researching’ and ‘writing’ are three separate process that will not overlap. In nine terms, this suggests around 10,000 words per term, with each chapter going through several drafts and revisions following feedback. The schedule is tight, especially as PhD students may also be doing some teaching in their third year.

**Teaching** is an important part of doctoral training for PhD Students considering an academic career. The Department aims to regularly offer advanced Research Students the possibility to work as a Tutor (or Graduate Teaching Assistant, GTA) on one of the courses offered in the Department (for a **maximum** of two years). Tutorial duties involve seminar teaching, holding office hours, and marking. Research Students taking on a Tutor post are expected to have completed a GTA training module offered by the *Academic Development Directorate* (usually offered in September, see ADD website). Those doing teaching will be expected to organize their time appropriately. Teaching must not be used as an excuse for failure to submit chapters or meet the formal requirements. Please consult the **Department's GTA Handbook** for more information.
THESIS SUBMISSION

PhD students are generally expected to produce the first complete draft of their thesis by the end of the third year. Many students then seek a fourth year of study, or Continuation. Continuation status is only intended for students who have completed their research, finished first drafts of all or most chapters, and are in the final stages of revising the thesis for submission. Under Continuation status students will continue to have access to School facilities, including use of the SOAS Library, but are entitled to receive only a reduced level of supervision. Move to Continuation status requires the recommendation of the supervisory committee and completion of the appropriate form obtainable from the Registry.

When the thesis is nearing completion, both student and supervisor must begin to plan for the final stages – the submission and examination of the thesis. The student will need to collect an Entry Form from the Registry and submit it no later than two months before planned submission. The student will need to prepare an abstract for the Entry Form. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to recommend examiners (at least one of whom should be familiar with examination requirements at SOAS). While a student may have had contact with their examiners, it is normally expected that the examiners have not read large parts of the dissertation nor had extended discussions of the thesis with the student beforehand. Your supervisor will contact your examiners and arrange the day, time and place of the examination. When the thesis is complete, you will need to submit three copies. It is your responsibility to see that the thesis is prepared in the approved format. It can be initially bound in soft covers, to be replaced by hard cover binding after the successful examination.

The examiners of a PhD thesis have a number of options open to them: they can deem the candidate as having fully met the requirements of a PhD (or ask for only minor amendments to be made); they can require more substantial changes to be made and the revised thesis represented within 18 months (usually this is done without a second viva); they can decide that the candidate has failed to meet the standard required for a PhD but may be offered an MPhil degree instead; or they may fail the candidate entirely. [NOTE: This information should be read in conjunction with the SOAS Postgraduate Research Student Handbook, as well as the SOAS Regulations printed below.]

Statement on Plagiarism

Research Students are reminded that all work submitted as part of the requirement for any examination of the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) must be expressed in their own words and incorporate their own ideas and judgments. Plagiarism - that is, the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as though they were the
student's own – is an examination offence and must be avoided. Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of others must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in proper form. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism just as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if students summarise another persons' ideas and judgments, they must refer to that person in their text as the source of the ideas and judgments, and include the work referred to in their bibliography. Failure to observe these rules may result in an allegation of cheating. Students should therefore consult their tutor or supervisor if they are in any doubt about what is permissible. Where students draw on their own previous written work, whether submitted as coursework for their current degree, or for a previous degree or qualification, this must be clearly stated.
FUNDING AND FURTHER RESEARCH SUPPORT
Living in London is expensive and it can be difficult for Research Students to finance their studies, especially if they do not hold a scholarship. It therefore is important that students undertake a realistic assessment of their financial resources for the first year and beyond and discuss potential issues with their supervisor. While SOAS and the Politics Department are continually looking to improve funding opportunities for its PhD students, it is important for students to be pro-active and seek funding opportunities externally.

There are a number of bodies, ranging from the major research foundations in the UK such as the British Academy or the Economic Social and Research Council (ESRC), professional Associations (see list below for a selection) and other national and international institutions where you can apply for travel and conference grants. Registry also compiled a list of scholarships (http://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/scholarships/research/) and further funding sources and useful links are provided by the Student Advice and Wellbeing Office http://www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/money/pg-funding/. Other universities have similar websites and often doing a bit of research pays off. It all cases, it is important to be aware of eligibility criteria and application deadlines.

SOAS Funding for Conference Participation
SOAS maintains a fund for doctoral students who present papers at conferences. The Doctoral School provides a single award of up to £500 to (currently) for PhD students in their third or fourth year (or part-time equivalent) who has been accepted to make a presentation at a significant conference. Calls for applications will be send out in due time, but students are encouraged to visit the Doctoral School website for more information and the application process: http://www.soas.ac.uk/doctoralschool/conference-funding/. Additional funding opportunities for students in other years may be available from the Department and students are asked to look out for relevant announcements throughout the year.

Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (Syracuse University)
Each year the Department provides two to three scholarships for members of the Politics Department (Research Students and Academic Staff) to cover the cost of attendance at the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Methods Research (IQMR) at Syracuse University in the U.S. This highly regarded two-week course provides a comprehensive introduction to qualitative and multi-method research with a special emphasis on applications. The scholarships are competitive and deadline for applications is typically in late January or early February and will be announced in due time. For details regarding the course see:
Further Research Support

A collection of “how to write a PhD” books located in the SOAS library discuss the process of doctoral research. Some are general guides (e.g. *The Research Student’s Guide to Success* or *The Postgraduate Research Handbook*), while others address more specific themes such as coping mechanisms, writing, etc. Research students are also encouraged to consult the offerings listed on SOAS’ Research Students Portal (http://www.soas.ac.uk/research/rsp/) as well as the Politics Department Moodle site for Research Students.

The Academic Development Directorate (ADD), part of the Learning and Teaching Development section at SOAS, provides research students with learning support and workshops throughout the year on various topics such as writing skills, writing blocks, presentation skills, or time-management. Drop-in sessions will also be held for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to answer queries you may have related to your teaching. For more information please visit the website: www.soas.ac.uk/add. Alternatively, visit the ADD in room RG01 (opposite the main staircase), or email them: add@soas.ac.uk. In addition, the Doctoral School has a Doctoral Training Advisor (Yenn Lee: yl22@soas.ac.uk) who can be contacted for tips about School-wide research skills training courses for PhD candidates on offer.

Many research students have benefited from *in-sessional English-language support* provided by SOAS. Courses include Academic Essay Writing, Reading and Note-taking, Seminar and Presentation Skills or Academic Vocabulary and Style. Also available to research students are one-to-one tutorials, where individual English language or study skills concerns can be addressed with an English language expert. All courses and tutorials are available free of charge, though as they tend to be popular it is advisable to register for a course as early as possible. For more information see www.soas.ac.uk/insessionalenglish

The Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network has been created by UCL for sharing best practice in generic and transferable skills training for graduate research students in the Bloomsbury area. The purpose is to allow students in participating institutions to expand their generic research skills and personal transferable skills through attending training courses and workshops at other member institutions. Registration for courses is via the website: http://www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury/
The Department collaborates with the Department of Politics at Birkbeck as a cluster within the Bloomsbury Doctoral Training Centre (DTC). Together, we select three fully-funded (1+3 or +3) PhD students each year, which are then also eligible to apply for further small grants (to support training and external collaboration). Additional short courses are provided by other (non-Bloomsbury) Doctoral Training Centres (e.g. UCL). For a list of courses please refer to the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) website: http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/training/

Full-time SOAS PGR students from an EU or EEA country are eligible to participate in the ERASMUS Exchange programme, which involves more than 30 European Universities (including Sciences Po, Freie Universitaet Berlin, Universiteit Leiden, Bogazici Universitesi in Turkey, and so on). PGR students pay the regular SOAS fees, but no additional fees to the host institution. Applications must be made during Term 1 in the year before you want to travel. For information please visit: http://www.soas.ac.uk/erasmus/outgoingerasmus/
GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal is a vital part of the application and will be studied in detail by the academic selectors. The proposal should be around 2,000 words (plus bibliography) and include an outline of your proposed research topic, the research method, and the source materials you intend to use. It is beneficial if you have made contact with an academic who shares your research interests prior to the submission of your application.

The title should offer a concise and accurate description of your research project.

The following points should be developed in the proposal:

1. Your main thesis or research question: explain in one paragraph what you will be exploring and what you will try to establish.

2. How original is your project and how significant: give your assessment of the existing literature on your topic and explain in what ways your own research will enrich the topic’s scholarly knowledge. If that applies, explain what contribution to the general theoretical field you intend to bring through your specific research.

3. What theoretical view will inform your research: explain how you locate yourself in the theoretical field – both the field of social theory in general and the specific field to which your topic pertains – and what set of conceptual tools will inform your research.

4. How you will develop your thesis: how you plan to apply your theoretical and methodological approach, i.e. the main sections of the thesis that you envisage to write and the stages of your investigation:
   a. the theoretical investigation (what literature you plan to survey and discuss)
   b. the fieldwork: where, and how, i.e. what research methodology you intend to use, and how you will use it concretely (depending on your kind of research: archival and data resources, interviews, ethnography, etc.)

5. Your work schedule: explain how you intend to research and write your thesis within the three-year period allocated for a full-time PhD research (six years part-time).

Explain how you intend to fund your PhD years, whether through private funding or particular scholarship (clarify whether you have one, have applied, or intend to apply).

Finally, attach a bibliography focused on what is most relevant to your specific research topic and your theoretical and methodological approach.

For (information about) applying to pursue a Research Degree in the Politics Department please visit [https://www.soas.ac.uk/politics/programmes/phd/](https://www.soas.ac.uk/politics/programmes/phd/) and contact the Research Admissions Tutor (2015/16: Dr Bhavna Dave).
SOAS REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES (MPHIL/PHD)

1 Criteria
1.1 PhD SOAS PhD degrees are awarded to students who have completed relevant research training, devised and implemented a research project within the degree requirements, and demonstrated that the work examined forms a significant, distinct and original contribution to the knowledge of the subject.

1.2 MPhil SOAS MPhil degrees are awarded to students who have completed relevant research training, devised and implemented a research project within the degree requirements, and demonstrated that the work examined demonstrates a thorough understanding and critical assessment of knowledge within the subject.

2 Research Degrees Programmes at SOAS
2.1 The SOAS PhD Programme is of three years full-time study or six years part-time equivalent.

2.2 The SOAS MPhil Programme is of two years full-time study or four years part-time equivalent.

2.3 Research Degree Programmes at SOAS must normally extend over at least two years of full time study or part-time equivalent.

2.4 Research Degree registrations are subject to the framework and requirements outlined in the SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees, published in August each year.

2.5 Research degrees at SOAS must be pursued continuously except where an Interruption of Studies has been approved by the School authorities.

2.6 All research students are required to use the Online Research Students Logbook.

2.7 These regulations, the SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees, and the departmental/faculty programme and training specifications set out the minimum requirements of the School.

2.8 Students enrolled on the MPhil/PhD degree programme are considered for upgrade to PhD enrolment within 9 months of full-time enrolment or part-time equivalent.

2.9 Students must submit a thesis for examination no later than four years from enrolment (seven years part-time) or within the deadline prescribed by the School where students are admitted with credit from other institutions.

2.10 PhD Candidates will be examined in accordance with the procedures and the requirements of a thesis outlined Item 6 of these regulations.
3 Admission to Research Degree Programmes
3.1 Applications must be made in accordance with the requirements outlined in the SOAS Prospectus and on the SOAS Website.
3.2 The normal minimum entrance requirement for registration for a research degree at SOAS is an Upper Second Class Honours degree and a taught Master’s degree awarded by a UK university institution or a degree of equivalent standard from an overseas institution in a subject appropriate to the degree to be followed.
3.3 An applicant may, in certain fields and subjects, be required to meet additional qualifications for admission as determined by the School
3.4 Applicants must satisfy the School’s English Language Requirements

4 Registration, Attendance, Upgrade, and Progression
4.1 Students must attend an enrolment appointment with Registry upon initial registration and at the start of each academic session for the period of the enrolment except where Registry has approved fieldwork for the Student during the period of enrolment.
4.2 All SOAS Research Students are appointed a three person supervisory committee to support them in their research project.
4.3 Students are initially registered as MPhil/PhD candidates and considered for upgrade to PhD enrolment during the first year of study. If the outcome of this is unsuccessful student may be required to withdraw from the degree programme or to continue on the MPhil degree and be assessed for the award of MPhil within the requirements outlined in the SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees.
4.4 Research Degree Students are required to pursue a regular course of study at the School under the direction of their supervisors.
4.5 Students, whether full-time or part-time, are required to undertake research for their degree based at SOAS in London. Students should ensure that they are able to attend SOAS in person for teaching and meetings as required.
4.6 Following completion of the consideration for upgrade to PhD, students may be granted permission for fieldwork away from SOAS subject to relevant provisions of the SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees and applicable Departmental requirements.
4.7 Annual progression is subject to satisfactory annual report from the Supervisor being approved by Registry and the Faculty Associate Dean (Research).

5 Writing up
5.1 Students on a full-time enrolment are normally expected to undertake writing up of the thesis during the third year of study following completion of fieldwork and/or data collection in year two. This timetable is adjusted accordingly for part-time enrolment.
5.2 Students are permitted the maximum of one additional year at the conclusion of their normal period of full-time or part-time study for completion of the writing-up of their thesis on Extension of Writing-up status.

5.3 Conditions and requirements for the additional year of enrolment are outlined in the SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

6 Examination

6.1 A successful thesis for PhD Award must
a) Not exceed 100,000 words, excluding bibliography and appendices. Appendices must only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis but to which they may refer if they wish;
b) be written in English;
c) consist of the candidate's own account of his/her investigations, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of registration at the School;
d) form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power;
e) be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;
f) demonstrate research skills relevant to the thesis being presented;
g) satisfy the examiners with regard to literary presentation; and
h) merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form.

6.2 A successful thesis for MPhil Award must:
a) Not exceed 60,000 words excluding bibliography and appendices. Appendices must only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis but to which they may refer if they wish;
b) be written in English;
c) consist of the candidate's own account of his/her investigations, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of registration at the School;
d) be a record either of original work or of an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge and shall provide evidence that the field has been surveyed thoroughly;
e) give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings and include a discussion on those findings;
f) be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument; and

g) satisfy the examiners with regard to literary presentation.

6.3 Candidates must complete entry to examination by submitting the required paperwork to the Postgraduate Research Section of the Registry no later than two months before
submission of the thesis for examination.

6.4 The School will nominate examiners following a candidate’s entry to examination. The examination will be undertaken by at least two examiners, at least one of whom will be external to SOAS.

6.5 Submission forms and two soft-bound copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Postgraduate Research Section of the Registry by the candidate’s deadline for submission.

6.6 The supervisor will arrange a date for the student to undertake a viva as part of the examination and will notify the candidate, examiners and the Postgraduate Research Section of Registry.

6.7 At the first **viva for PhD**, eight possible outcomes are possible
a) Pass.
b) Pass with minor corrections within 3 months of the release of the result.
c) Not pass, but with major corrections within 12 months of the release of the result.
d) Not pass, but with recommendation of award of MPhil.
e) Not pass, with a recommendation of MPhil to be awarded upon satisfactory completion of minor corrections.
f) Not pass, with a recommendation of MPhil to be awarded upon satisfactory completion of major corrections within 12 months of the release of the result.
g) Fail.

6.8 At the first **viva for MPhil** four possible outcomes are possible
a) Pass.
b) Pass with minor corrections within 3 months of the release of the result.
c) Not pass, but with major corrections within 12 months of the release of the result.
d) Fail.

6.9 Candidates for MPhil or PhD who are ‘Not pass, but with major corrections’ are permitted one re-entry to examination. There are three possible outcomes for candidates re-entered for examination:
a) Pass.
b) Pass with minor corrections within 3 months of the release of the result.
c) Fail.

6.10 Advice and instruction may be given by the Examiners at or following the viva, but results are not confirmed until they are released by Registry.

6.11 Should the outcome be ‘Fail’, a candidate is not permitted to re-enter for examination.
6.12 Candidates who are ‘Not pass, but with major corrections’ are required to submit re-entry forms and pay the relevant fee two months before the date of re-submission.

6.13 Candidates will be awarded the degree only when they have satisfied the examiners, and submitted to Registry one hard-bound copy for SOAS Library (in accordance with the SOAS Binding Notes for Research Degree Theses) along with one electronic copy and a completed E-thesis Access Agreement Form.

6.14 Candidates have the right to appeal against the decision of the examiners within the Procedure for Consideration of Appeals by Candidates for Research Degrees available from the SOAS website and the Postgraduate Research Section of Registry.
POINTS OF CONTACT FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS

In the Department (apart from supervisory committee)

(a) Academic

- Research Tutor: Dr Alastair Fraser
- Research Training Coordinator: Dr Alastair Fraser and Dr Rochana Bajpai
- Research Admission Tutor: Dr Bhavna Dave
- Head of Department: Dr Mark Laffey

(b) Administration

The Politics Department is administered via the Office of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences (LSS) located in Room 201.

- Postgraduate Student Support Officer: Yvonne Henry
- Departmental Manager: Caroline Strickson

For general rules, regulations and important forms please contact the Doctoral School Section at Registry via pgresearch@soas.ac.uk

- Doctoral School Manager: Marcus Cerny
- Doctoral School Deputy Manager: Lauren Malley
- Doctoral School Officer: Zuleyka Shahin
- Doctoral Training Advisor: Yenn Lee

For questions regarding facilities and resources provided by the Doctoral School (located in 53 Gordon Square) please email doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk or ask their staff in person.

Note

This booklet was updated in September 2016. Every effort was made to ensure that the information was correct at the time of publication. The rules given in this document do NOT take precedence over those published in the SOAS Postgraduate Research Handbook. Please do feel free to let us know through the student representatives what sort of changes would help make this handbook more useful for you.