LSE Media and Communications

Key information for your first year

A reference guide for your MPhil year

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2023-24

https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/study/secure/Doctoral-Hub

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

Deadlines:

Course choice deadline
Friday 6 October (AT Week 2)

Draft theories chapter deadline
Monday 4 March (WT Week 8)

Draft methods chapter deadline
Monday 29 April (ST Week 1)

MPhil thesis proposal deadline
Monday 20 May (ST Week 4)

MPhil upgrade vivas
Tuesday 29 May to Thursday 13 June (ST Weeks 5-6)

Seminars:

MC501 (3rd years+)
Weekly term time meetings on Wednesday from 13:00 – 14:30

PhD 'Mixer' (all years)
Coffee and a chance to socialise with other PhDs - 14:30 - 15:00

MC500 (1st and 2nd years)
Weekly term time seminars on Wednesdays from 15:00 – 16:30

Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings:

AT SSLC Thursday 26 October (AT Week 5)
WT SSLC Thursday 15 February 7 March (WT Week 5)
ST SSLC Wednesday 29 May (ST Week 5)

Socials and Formals (all cohorts):

- **MPhil Welcome reception** Wednesday 27 September *18:00 - 19:30*
- **Phub** (Pub socials) - Wednesdays AT4 & WT4
- **Celebrate! Media and Communications PhD Alumni event:** Wednesday 29 November 2023 (AT10)
- MC500/MC501 Poster **Mini-Conference**: Wednesday 28 March (WT11)
- **Phicnic** - Wednesday 22 May (ST4)

MPHIL STRUCTURE AND REGULATIONS

All year 1 students are MPhil students until they pass their upgrade, at which point they will become PhD candidates.

Theories and concepts training

MC500 Doctoral Seminar and **One full unit or two half units of theory courses, chosen from the School's <u>graduate course provision</u>.** Courses are to be chosen in liaison with the primary supervisor/co-supervisors and will be approved by the Doctoral Programme Director. For MPhil students who have no background in the field, it is strongly advised that they select at least one-half unit in the Department of Media and Communications.

This training prepares you for the formative assignment in WT which requires you to submit a draft theory chapter.

Research methodology training

MPhil candidates will take MC5M2 Advanced Methods of Research in Media & Communications (including Qualitative & Quantitative Analysis). MC5M2 is composed of three sections. Section 3 is adjusted based on the level of quantitative or qualitative analysis skills training you wish to acquire (all have to take at least basic quantitative analysis).

Make sure you go to the first lecture on Tuesday from 16:00 to 17:00 in the Old Theatre. Detailed information about methods training can be found in the methods handbook which you will be given during the welcome session and can find on the MC500 website.

This training prepares you for the formative assignment in ST which requires you to submit a draft methods chapter.

COURSE SELECTION

We encourage our MPhil and PhD candidates to continue their capacitation to become scholars in the field by taking additional courses in the Department and elsewhere. Subject to availability, courses may be of interest to MPhil and PhD candidates to take as **per agreement with their supervisors**, the Doctoral Programme Director and the course convenor. Availability of courses is not guaranteed, and you should always consult the course webpage and your supervisor before attending a course.

If you are taking any courses throughout your programme, you can choose them using LSE for You (LFY), LSE's web-based self-service student administration system. Full information on course selection, including the deadline and how to make your selections can be found here (https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/services/course-choice).

The LSE Calendar is an online resource that, among other things, contains programme regulations and course descriptions for all courses taught at LSE.

You may also find our MSc course choice pages useful which include videos and slides on selecting and auditing courses. There you can also find a PG guide to course choice selections (https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/services/assets/documents/PG-Student-Guide.pdf).

If you are attending a course and not taking the assessment for it please submit an enquiry before the examinations take place.

Students will be able to browse (but not select) courses from 10am on Monday 18th September 2023. Course selection will open from 10am on Thursday 21 September until 5pm on Friday 6 October 2023.

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESSION

Theories assessment

As an MPhil student, your theoretical progress will be assessed during the year through the submission of a draft theoretical chapter (literature review, theoretical framework and bibliography) of your thesis proposal.

The draft chapter will be marked by your supervisors and will receive one of the following grades: Distinction (70-100%), Merit (60-69%) Pass (50-59%) or Fail (0-49%).

Word limit: The chapter should be no more than 3,500 words.

Deadline: The deadline for the chapter is Monday 4 March 2024 (Winter Term, Week 8). The chapter should be uploaded to the MC500 Moodle page by 12.00 (midday UK time) and sent directly to your supervisors.

Feedback: Feedback will normally be received by the end of Winter Term, this can be in person or in written form.

Methods assessment

As an MPhil student, you will be assessed in the following two ways on your methodological learning:

Methods exam(s)

Students will have to sit the exam for MY464 Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Media and Communications in Winter Term week 0.

Students who have taken (and passed) MY464 or who have evidence that they have completed and passed equivalent course will be exempt from the examination for MC5M2 but are encouraged to take more advanced quantitative analysis training if they want to up the game in their quantitative analysis training.

Exams for methodology department courses are administered and marked the Department of Methodology, and will take place during the examination periods in either Winter or Spring Term. Please do not arrange to leave the country during examination periods until your exam dates have been confirmed.

Draft methodological chapter

This draft chapter should contain – a research question, the design of the study, including a description of the sample/justification of material selection, and a justification of the design of the data collection tools used (e.g. interview guides, questionnaires, annotation method) and the analytical method (e.g. statistical procedures, thematic, critical discourse, semantic analysis), as well as a description of any pilot study conducted.

The draft chapter will be marked by your supervisors and will receive one of the following grades: Distinction (70-100%), Merit (60-69%) Pass (50-59%) or Fail (0-49%).

Word limit: The chapter should be no more than 3,500 words (excluding appendices).

Deadline: The deadline for the draft chapter is Monday 29 April 2024 (Spring Term, Week 1). The chapter should be uploaded to the MC500 Moodle page by 12.00 (midday UK time) and sent to the supervisor.

Feedback: Feedback will normally be received by the beginning of Week 3 of Spring Term.

What does a fail in any of these assessments mean?

The assessments are formative and do not formally impact your progress. If you fail for the quantitative methods exam (in the methodology department) but pass the upgrade, you will receive a 'conditional upgrade'. This means you will be upgraded on the condition that you receive a mark of at least 50% in the resit of the failed piece of work.

UPGRADE ASSESSMENT

All year 1 students are MPhil candidates until they pass their upgrade, at which point they will become PhD candidates. Students cannot proceed unless they have passed their upgrade. To upgrade from MPhil to PhD, you submit a thesis proposal and take part in an upgrade viva with your supervisors and a department faculty member.

The PhD Board determines the Department's criteria for upgrading to MPhil candidates to PhD. Together with any examination/s for methodological courses, the thesis proposal will form part of the evaluation process, and, together with an upgrade viva, will determine whether students are permitted to upgrade from MPhil to PhD and continue into their second year.

You are expected to ensure that these criteria are fully discussed with your supervisors during your first year of study. The PhD programme director can also be consulted for further guidance and there will be a dedicated MC500 session to discuss the upgrade process.

The upgrade is conducted by the last week of spring term.

Deadline: Full-time students must submit a thesis proposal to the Department by Monday 20 May 2024 (Spring Term, Week 4). This should be uploaded to the MC500 Moodle page by 12.00 (midday UK time).

Word limit: Your thesis proposal should be no more than 10,000 words and should include: a substantive statement of the aims (i.e. contribution to academic debates); theories and methods proposed for the thesis; a tentative chapter outline, a bibliography; and a timetable for completion.

Feedback: You will receive oral feedback during your upgrade viva and written feedback from your committee before the PhD board in Spring Term (Thursday ST7).

BEING A MPHIL/PHD CANDIDATE

Supervision is at the heart of your academic experience and intellectual development as a MPhil/PhD student. Your supervision in the department will take one of two forms:

(a) Primary and secondary supervisors.

(b) Co-supervision, i.e. joint supervisors with broadly similar responsibilities.

Your supervisor(s) will help to define your area of research, offer advice on sources and the choice of materials and methods and on attendance at courses and seminars. Later on, your supervisor(s) will discuss the preparation and writing of your thesis.

Your primary supervisor's role is both academic and pastoral, providing support that ranges from the intellectual through the practical to the personal. It is important that the relationship you develop with your supervisor(s) is the right kind of relationship for the way that you and the supervisor(s) 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 to ensure that you derive maximum benefit from the meetings.

Our supervision culture values positive feedback and encouragement, but please remember that constructive criticism is a vital part of developing research and that the value of a discussion may not be evident until sometime later.

It is important that you let your supervisor(s) know in good time 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. Also inform supervisor(s) of any work you are taking on, they will aim to support you in managing a healthy work-life balance.

Supervision hours

Full-time students should meet with their primary supervisor at least three times a term in the first year (e.g. biweekly) and twice a term thereafter. Supervision is normally not to be expected outside of term time.

Part-time students should meet with their supervisor at least twice a term in the first year and once a term thereafter.

These are general guidelines; in practice, the intensity of the supervisory relationship tends to vary over time. For example, less supervision may be needed during data collection compared to the writing-up stage.

Seeking advice from other academics

As a student at LSE, you are welcome to meet with any member of faculty to discuss your research, including faculty within the Department of Media and Communications but also in other Departments. Please use the studenthub to book an office hour, https://admin.studenthub.lse.ac.uk/. Do not use the studenthub to make appointments with your supervisors, supervisions should be agreed in person/via email.

If your research field touches on areas outside the supervisor(s)' sphere of competence, your supervisor(s) can help to put you in touch with specialists who might advise you. Reciprocally, if you do receive advice and feedback from someone other than your supervisor(s), you should let your supervisor(s) know about this, so they are aware of the advice you receive. The same is true if you have separate meetings with individual supervisors, inform both supervisors that you have had meetings and what will be or was discussed.

The PhD Log

We are required to keep PhD logs by the LSE. It is important that you get into the habit of making detailed entries into the log soon after each meeting with your supervisors. The log provides a method of recording what has been discussed and agreed between you and your supervisor/s and allows you and your supervisor/s to provide further comments if required.

The PhD Log can be accessed via LSE for You. Please note that it is compulsory for supervisors and PhD candidates to use the PhD Log. www.lse.ac.uk/lseforyou.

Issues with supervisors

We make every effort to match our MPhil and PhD candidates with supervisors who are best placed to guide and support a thesis through until its completion. However, we do understand that issues between candidates and their supervisors can arise and we do not want you to suffer in silence if this is happening to you. Please flag up issues as early as possible.

If you feel that the feedback or guidance which you are receiving from your supervisor(s) does not meet your expectations, then it is vital to raise this first with your supervisor(s). They may decide to alter their approach or they may put you in touch with someone else whose approach more closely meets your needs.

If it is 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 (Prof. Ellen Helsper). Please remember that such discussions are fully confidential and are treated with absolute discretion by the director. If your supervisor happens to be the doctoral programme director, you can raise your concerns with the Head of Department (Prof. Bart Cammaerts) or the PhD Academy (https://info.lse.ac.uk/Current-Students/PhD-Academy).

The Department of Media and Communications 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 thesis committee

You will be assigned a thesis committee consisting of your supervisors and another senior member of the Department as Chair. This committee will act as the review panel for your upgrade examination, at the end of the first year of registration, which assesses your readiness to upgrade from MPhil to PhD. The thesis committee remains responsible for monitoring your progress in subsequent years.

The PhD Board

The Department of Media and Communications PhD Board, consisting of all supervisors and chaired by the Doctoral Programme Director, is the body responsible for academic standards relating to MPhil/PhD candidates within the programmes and particularly for reviewing their progress towards completion of their degrees.

The progress of all MPhil/PhD candidates is reviewed annually at the PhD Board, which meets once a year near the end of the Spring Term. The Department will subsequently report to the PhD Academy with its approval for each PhD student's re-registration for the following academic year or any condition which must be fulfilled before re-registration. Each student will receive an end of year letter from the Director of the PhD programme and the PhD board informing them of the recommendations made by the PhD board. The upgrade viva (1st year MPhil candidates) and end of year reflection documents (post upgrade PhD candidates) will be used by supervisors to gage progress and issues encountered and will be reported on by the PhD Board to make these recommendations.