



Media and
Communications

Key information for your MPhil / PhD

A reference guide

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2024-25

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

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

Deadlines:

Course choice deadline

Friday 11 October, 5pm (AT Week 2)

Exam MY464 (MC5M1) / MY465 (MC5M2)
(WT Week 0)

Draft theories chapter deadline

Monday 10 March (WT Week 8)

Draft methods chapter deadline

Tuesday 6 May (ST Week 1)

MPhil thesis proposal deadline

Monday 26 May (ST Week 4)

Reflection document deadline (2+ years)

Monday 26 May (ST Week 4)

MPhil upgrade vivas

Monday 2 to Thursday 12 June (ST Weeks 5-6)

Seminars:

MC501 (3+ years)

Weekly term time meetings on Wednesday from 13:00 – 14:30

PhD 'Mixer' (all years)

Coffee, tea and biscuits - 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 – 17:00

Key to abbreviations: AT= Autumn Term, WT = Winter Term, ST= Spring Term.

KEY MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings

10:00 - 12:00, Silverstone Room

AT SSLC Thursday 31 October (AT Week 5)

WT SSLC Thursday 20 February (WT Week 5)

ST SSLC Thursday 5 June (ST Week 5)

Socials and Formals (all cohorts):

MPhil Welcome reception - Wednesday 2 October (AT Week 1) 17:00 - 19:30

Phub & Phicnic (Pub & Park socials) - Wednesdays AT4, WT4 & ST4

Celebrate! Media and Communications PhD Alumni event: Wednesday 4 December 2024 (AT10)

MC500/MC501 Poster Mini-Conference: Wednesday 2 April (WT11)

London PhD symposium: End of Summer Term (TBC)

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 graduate course provision**. 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 you 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 take either **MC5M1** or **MC5M2 Advanced Methods of Qualitative and Quantitative Research in Media & Communications**, depending on your methodological orientation and scholarship requirements. Both courses have a quantitative analysis component; MC5M1 (Qualitative specialisation) students take MY464: Critical Data Literacy for Media and Communications and MC5M2 (Quantitative specialisation) students take MY465: Intermediate Quantitative Analysis.

Lectures and seminars for MY464 and MY465 take place in AT. **Students should not sign up separately for MY464 or MY465, these are automatically included in your registration for MC5M1 or MC5M2.**

All MPhil candidates are required to take the **Seminars in Advanced Research Methods** taking place from 15:00 to 17:00 on Tuesdays in WT.

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 [MC5M1/M2 moodle page](#).

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 your supervisors**, the Doctoral Programme Director and the course convenor. Availability of courses is not guaranteed, and you should always consult the course webpage, course convenor and your supervisor before attending a course.

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

Taught course requirements are listed in your [programme regulations](#).

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.

You need to register for your courses (modules) using Course Selection via [LSE for You \(LfY\)](#), LSE's web-based self-service student administration system. Full information on course selection, including deadlines and guidance on using the system can be found [here](#). Note that if you wish to audit a course (i.e., if you don't want to enter for examination), you **must** tick the **audit-only** box.

If you are attending a course and not taking the assessment for it, please [submit an enquiry](#) before the examinations take place. Please make sure that you discuss this with your supervisors before submitting your request.

Students will be able to browse (but not select) courses from 10am on Monday 23 September 2024. Course selection will open from 10am on Thursday 26 September until 5pm on Friday 11 October 2024. Course selection will reopen from 10am on Monday 20 January until 5pm on Friday 31 January 2025 to allow changes to be made to Winter Term half unit courses.

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 10 March 2025 (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:

Quantitative analysis exam(s)

MC5M1 (qualitative specialisation) students must sit the exam for MY464 Critical Data Literacy in Winter Term week 0.

MC5M2 (quantitative specialisation) students must sit the exam for MY465 Intermediate Quantitative Analysis in Winter Term week 0.

Students who have taken (and passed) MY464 or MY465 or who have evidence that they have completed and passed an equivalent course will be exempt from these examinations but are encouraged to take more advanced quantitative analysis training if they want to up their game in quantitative analysis.

MC5M1 students are required to take another half unit course on qualitative methods taught by the Methodology Department

Please read the Methods Handbook on the [MC5M1/M2 moodle page](#) for more detailed information.

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), including 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 Tuesday 6 May 2025 (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 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 before Week 7 in Spring Term.

Deadline: Full-time students must submit a thesis proposal to the Department by Monday 26 May 2025 (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 timetable for completion, and a bibliography.

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.

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. Please note that it is compulsory for supervisors and PhD candidates to use the PhD Log.

The PhD Log can be accessed via [LSE for You](#). You can find further details about the PhD Log [here](#). If you have any further questions about the PhD Log, feel free to ask the PhD Academy team.

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. Myria Georgiou) 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 gauge progress and issues encountered and will be reported on by the PhD Board to make these recommendations.

KEY MILESTONES AFTER UPGRADE

Please check the Department [Doctoral Hub](#) and [PhD academy website](#) for details, forms and the most up to date information

FIELDWORK, ETHICS AND PROGRESS

PhD candidates who have passed their upgrade must hand in an **end of year reflection document** by Monday 26 May (ST Week 4) which details the progress you have made since upgrade, what support you might need to progress to submission and general points to be considered by the PhD board.

Make sure that you have received [ethics approval](#) before starting fieldwork and completed the [health and safety risk assessment](#) at least a month before travelling anywhere for fieldwork.

THESIS SUBMISSION

PhD candidates in their 3rd or 4th year and are working towards **submission** should keep the following in mind:

Make sure you discuss your **timetable** for submission with your supervisors and hand in work when agreed, flag up when you are not clear on what to do with feedback and notify them early when it is difficult for you to meet a deadline.

Supervisors should have enough time to read and give **feedback on the full draft** of the thesis at least once and you need to have enough time to incorporate this feedback into your thesis.

At least **three months before submission** your supervisors should discuss examiners with you, and you should prepare the exam entry form, including the 300-word abstract of your thesis.