

Undergraduate Research Assistantship Programme (UGRA), 2023-24



Clockwise: Claire Oh (Department of International Relations Research Assistant), Maryam Auwalu, Freya Blackmore, Pranjali Goradia, Khushi Vajpeyi, Evelyne Ong, Ayush Das, Tali-Aisha Bourhis, Georgia McKerracher, Carmen Peges, Marta Grzana

2023-24 At a Glance



12 UGRAs



175 Applications

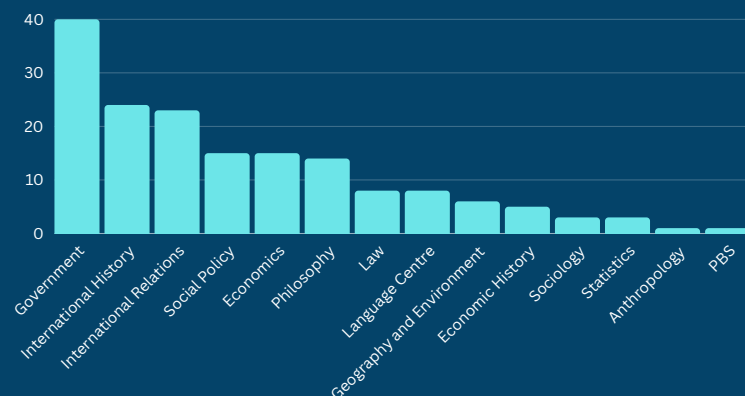
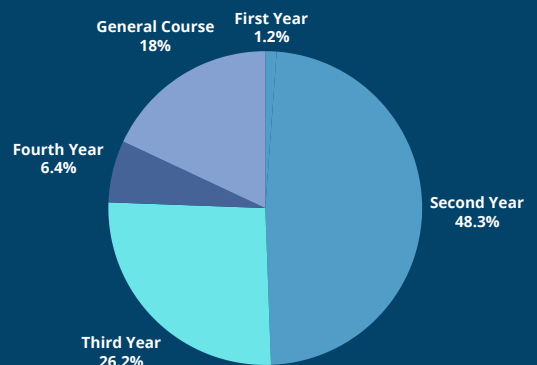


Applications received from 15 academic departments at LSE



+10k impressions generated on social media

Applications by academic year



Applications by academic department

Project Summaries



Anglo-American Financial Cooperation in the 20th Century

Faculty: Dr James Morrison, Department of International Relations

Research Assistant: Marta Grzana, Department of Management

"My role as a research assistant was to go through archival materials collected by Dr. Morrison and his PhD students, read through them, summarise and classify them, as well as flag anything I found interesting."

Democratic Difference, Decline, and Authoritarianism

Faculty: Dr Rohan Mukherjee, Department of International Relations

Research Assistant: Pranjali Goradia, Department of International History and Department of International Relations

"I constructed two timelines, one focusing on key events in the US-India relationship between 1965 and 1985, and the other focusing on key events in the US-Philippines relationship between 1960 and 1989. For the Philippines, I also researched earlier bilateral events that were relevant to the project, such as the signing of the Mutual Defence Treaty."



How US Political and Economic Geography Shapes US Foreign Policy

Faculty: Professor Peter Trubowitz, Department of International Relations and Phelan US Centre

Research Assistant: Ahmed Zeerak Rana, Department of Government

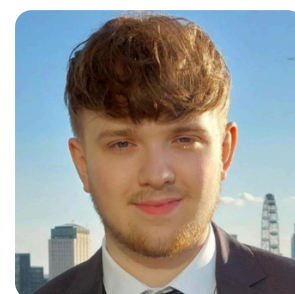
"The aim of the project was to look at recent academic literature, congressional voting behaviour and the economic geography of corresponding regions to give a holistic understanding of how regional diversity translates into policy choices in Congress and government."

The State of the States

Faculty: Professor Peter Trubowitz and Chris Gilson, Phelan US Centre

Research Assistant: Jason Clark, Department of International History

"The chance to work on an academic platform with an aim to democratise nonpartisan knowledge and heighten opportunities for policymakers has helped me to approach and understand the industry of academia in a unique manner.... My personal interests and desire to situate academic research with a plan to improve political systems for societal good coincided with this project."



The Gender and Racial Dynamics of Night and Micro Work in the UK and US

Faculty: Professor Paul Apostolodis, Department of Government

Research Assistant: Cármen Pegas, Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method

"I collected empirical data published by government agencies and academic researchers to establish the main empirical trends in night work since the 1990s, primarily within the UK and the US."

Project Summaries

The Nuclear Revolution and Great Power Competition

Faculty: Professor Jeff Legro

Research Assistant: Ayush Das, Department of International Relations

"This study offers valuable insights into the methods and sources of nuclear learning in leaders, providing policymakers... a suite of tools to use to manage strategic decisions that could quite possibly, literally, transform the world."



Research Assistant: Evelyne Ong, Department of Statistics

"As Research Assistant, my role was to create monitoring lists on published sources in order to create a dynamic picture of the dominant strands of Utah opinion and trace their evolution through the months, November 2021 to June 2022."



Nuclear Guarantees and US Alliance Politics

Faculty: Dr Lauren Sukin, Department of International Relations

Research Assistant: Khushi Vajpeyi, Department of Government

"I worked on an annotated bibliography focused on British motivations for developing an independent nuclear programme against the backdrop of evolving Anglo-American relations. I also contributed to a dataset by collecting treaty texts of French and Russian nuclear cooperation agreements."



Research Assistant: Georgia McKerracher, Department of International Relations

"My work mainly included perusing archives available online (such as those of NATO, the French government, and presidential archives), as well as keeping a record of other non-virtual archives which Dr Sukin would be able to visit in person at a later date."



Imagining 'Progress' in the Chicago Police Department, 1865-2023

Faculty: Dr Johann Koehler, Department of Social Policy

Research Assistant: Maryam Auwalu, Department of Geography & Environment

"I was tasked with coding the annual reports the Chicago Police Department published over the past 158 years for keywords of progress, and sourcing and coding other police publications for their overarching themes."



Project Summaries



From Engagement to Strategic Competition: US-China Relations, 1972-2023

Faculty: Dr Elizabeth Ingleson, Department of International History

Research Assistant: Tali-Aisha Bourhis, LSE Law School

"My main tasks involved assessing primary sources - namely declassified White House archives - and critically contrasting articles and books written by leading US-China relations experts."

Incumbency and Infrastructure for Climate Change Adaptation in the Coastal United States

Faculty: Dr Rebecca Elliott, Department of Social Policy

Research Assistant: Freya Blackmore, Department of Government

"I dedicated a majority of my time to compiling the various Charleston flood projects, and working to determine what stage of the infrastructure process they were in, how they were funded, and what communities they sought to protect. In order to help keep track of and illustrate the locations of these projects more effectively, I created an ArcGIS map consisting of the most prominent projects currently under work."



Programme Highlight: The British Conference of Undergraduate Research at LSE

In April 2024, five Undergraduate Research Assistants from the 2023-24 cohort presented their projects at the British Conference of Undergraduate Research at LSE.



Evelyne Ong said that "One of the highlights of the programme was the opportunity to present my ongoing work at the British Conference of Undergraduate Research. Transitioning from having no prior academic research experience... to presenting at a conference has been incredibly beneficial."

Clockwise: 2023-24 UGRAs Ahmed Zeerak Rana, Jason Clarke, Evelyne Ong, and Marta Grzana, presenting their work at the British Conference of Undergraduate Research in April 2024.

Jason Clarke said that "My experience as an Undergraduate Research Assistant was brought together with the chance to present my research at the BCUR. Whilst daunting, the support provided from the Phelan US Centre... helped this become the most enriching part of the overall experience."

Q&A With Our Research Assistants

How do you feel you have benefited from the UGRA programme?

"The programme helped me refine my research methodology, improve my epistemic ethics, and work on my writing style."

"The ability to interact with my professor almost weekly was immensely beneficial. The conversations we had were often far beyond the scope of the research we were doing and truly allowed me to have deep, meaningful conversations about social sciences with an established academic in the field."

"The UGRA programme has been one of the most inspiring experiences I have had at the LSE... Best of all, I have been able to develop a real understanding of what academic life is like while working closely with Dr Sukin and receiving feedback on my work."

What was your favourite aspect of the programme?

"I really enjoyed discussing my findings with Professor Apostolidis. He encouraged me to share ideas, not simply perform the tasks as instructed, which made the experience much more engaging."

"My favourite aspect was working with Dr Koehler and Dr Cheng - I looked forward to our weekly Zoom meetings to learn more about their work in general and talk over ideas with them."

"The level of engagement of Professor Legro with the work I had done was extremely motivating, he was always interested to hear about what I had worked on that week and listened to my ideas for potential directions to explore."

What are your plans for the future? And do you feel the programme has in any way helped shape them?

"I am orienting myself towards a career in political analysis for the French Government, and am enrolled in the Public Politics Master at Sciences Po, in Paris. This experience definitely confirmed by interest in analysing international relations."

"Over the summer, I will be interning in the Climate and Health Policy Department at the Wellcome Trust and I am confident that the skills I've picked up in the programme will be an asset during my time there."

Is there anything you would like to say to the donor who made the programme possible?

"I enjoyed the programme from start to finish, and hope that others can also benefit from it the way I did. Thank you!"

"Thank you for this amazing and transformative experience. I truly value the opportunity that the UGRA programme has afforded me; it is an experience that will stay with me for years to come. Thank you for making the UGRA programme possible!"

"Your thoughtful and generous support has allowed me to get involved in an incredibly rewarding experience, explore my interests, and develop essential research skills."