

PhD Programme Handbook

**For: All PhD Students, Supervisors and
Research Tutors**

Advisory

This handbook is provided to clarify roles, timescales and Regulations from first enrolment to the award of the MPhil/PhD.

The information given here has been collated and summarised from the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#), [Academic Regulations](#) and Doctoral School online guides.

If at any stage either you or your supervisor are uncertain about what to do, please contact the Doctoral School: doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk

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1. Welcome

Dear colleagues, MPhil students and doctoral candidates,

I am happy to introduce our new PhD programme handbook to you, which has been updated for 2018/19. We have worked on the handbook over the past year in order to provide you with an easy to use guide on how research degree programmes work at SOAS with links to relevant regulations, such as the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students. In this handbook you will find we have agreed on a list of annual deadlines that will make it easier for doctoral candidates, supervisors as well as Departments to plan ahead and to know when specific steps need to be taken and processed.

As many of you might already know, we offer twenty-four specialized doctoral research programmes, supported both by our (inter) disciplinary Departments, Centres and Schools, and by the SOAS Doctoral School that coordinates the development of the entire body of around 750 doctoral researchers, providing them with research training and advice and careers guidance. The Doctoral School also works closely with the Research Student Association (RSA), which has a fantastic committee with lots of ideas and plans for the next academic year.

The Doctoral School's main hub is a beautiful, listed Bloomsbury townhouse (53 Gordon Square). It offers 100 workstations, kitchen and common room where doctoral researchers can work and socialize. There are other workspaces in the main College Building. The RSA also have their headquarters in the building and is organizing meetings and social events in the Doctoral School, which is a great way to meet fellow research students.

During this academic year, we will be introducing software called "PhD manager" that will allow us to communicate with you much more efficiently. The PhD manager will allow us all to use one on-line system for log books, annual monitoring forms, progress reports as well as keeping track of the preparations for the viva examination. You will receive detailed information and instructions in due time.

Finally, I would like to welcome our new PhD students. The Doctoral School works with you to improve your research experience whether providing guidance on regulations, research training or careers advice. To that end, we encourage you to take full advantage of the facilities at 53 Gordon Square and manage your own research effectively. The RSA (Research Students' Association) is also actively working to improve your SOAS experience. To find the most up-to-date information on all our Programmes, please visit the SOAS website. If you need further information please contact doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk.

I wish you all a healthy, interesting and productive academic year!

Professor Alfredo Saad Filho
Head of Doctoral School and Professor of Development Studies

2. Registration, Term Dates and Attendance

2.1 Registration

Students registered for research degrees at SOAS are formally registered for degrees of SOAS, University of London and subject to the [Regulations](#) of the School which are revised and updated annually. **It is the responsibility of all research tutors, supervisors and students to be aware of the regulations and procedures applicable to their degree registration.**

2.2 Term Dates

SOAS research degrees are continuous programmes with the enrolment running from the first day of the academic session until the day preceding the first day of the next academic session, so September to September each year. The School's convention is to use academic terms and calendar years for enrolment periods.

The summer vacation period counts as an extension of the summer term and does not in itself count as a separate enrolment period.

It should be noted that taught course term time dates **do not apply** to research degrees.

2017/18	25 September 2017 until 23 September 2018
2018/19	24 September 2018 until 22 September 2019
2019/20	23 September 2019 until 27 September 2020
2020/21	28 September 2020 until 26 September 2021

Students whose programmes begin in January or April will have their upgrade and submission deadlines amended accordingly.

2.3 Annual (Re-)Enrolment

All students including postgraduate researchers are required to enrol on an annual basis in September for the beginning of the new academic year; this includes those on fieldwork. Registry will email all students regarding online enrolment **from late June until late August** each year.

All students must enrol online and in person at the beginning of each academic year and enrolment must be completed by the end of September.

Students on approved overseas fieldwork in September should complete online enrolment by the end of September as normal and complete a document check in person at the Doctoral School within one week of their return from fieldwork. Full instructions will be emailed to you when you are given permission to travel. It is very important that these instructions are followed and enrolment is completed, including payment of fees by the **end of September**.

It is particularly important for postgraduate researchers to ensure they complete enrolment in good time. Failure to complete enrolment by the required date may result in students not being covered by SOAS insurance, not being eligible for benefits such as council tax concessions, having their student travel card cancelled and being withdrawn from the School.

Tuition fees are listed on the SOAS website, but doctoral researchers should note that any permitted extensions to enrolment beyond the Continuation Year do incur a higher tuition fee.

Enjoy it as much as you can: being able to access all of what SOAS and the entire University of London consortium has on offer for researchers is an absolute privilege. But remember to also think about stuff other than your thesis from time to time! There are loads of things outside of your subject area which can provide you with enriching insights into your own work. And lastly: make friends! Being able to share experiences with the people in my year, like meeting up while on fieldwork in the same country or going to a conference together, has definitely made achieving my doctoral goals feel a little less daunting. Good luck!

Francisca McNeill – PhD candidate

2.4 Types of Enrolment

Students at SOAS are normally registered on a full-time basis for research degrees but may also enrol on a part-time basis subject to approval of the supervisor and relevant Department. Students enrolled on a full-time basis are required to complete active research and a draft thesis within three years of initial enrolment. Students enrolled on a part-time basis are expected to be in attendance for half the equivalent full-time enrolment and complete their active research and a draft thesis within six years of initial enrolment.

Students wishing to enrol on a part-time basis must sign a **declaration that they are not intending to study on a full-time basis**. The conditions for part-time study are as follows:

- a) Part-time study is half full-time and the expected attendance and supervision will be on that basis, even if the student attends methodological or other courses alongside full-time students in the first year.
- b) A part-time PhD programme is normally six years. For students on the +4 pathway the part-time PhD programme is eight years.
- c) Consideration of transfer to PhD status normally takes place in the sixth part-time term. For students on the +4 pathway consideration of transfer takes place during the twelfth part-time term.
- d) If a thesis is submitted for examination earlier than the expected period of part-time enrolment the student will be deemed to have been studying on a full-time basis for some or all of the programme, with reference to the number of terms they are submitting in advance, and additional fees will be due retrospectively (pro rata at the fee level prevailing at the time of submission). Entry to research degree examination will not be permitted until any outstanding fees have been paid.
- e) **Students wishing to undertake part-time study cannot be studying under SOAS sponsorship for a Tier 4 visa. This type of study is not permitted for Tier 4 students.**

Subject to satisfactory progress and production of a draft thesis by the relevant deadline, all students (whether full-time or part-time) may enrol for a maximum of three further terms on Extension of Writing-up (continuation) status during which time they retain the right to submit the thesis for examination.

2.5 Attendance and Absence

Except during periods of approved overseas fieldwork research students are expected to be undertaking research for their degree while based at SOAS, University of London.

All PhD students are required to provide a local address at (re-)enrolment each year. This should be a contact address in your fieldwork location if you are on approved fieldwork or your contact address near London if you are not on fieldwork.

PhD students will be expected to engage fully with their supervision arrangements and will be required to “check-in” regularly in line with the School’s requirements. A separate [Attendance Policy](#) is available and all students are advised to read this carefully. The main points are summarised here as follows:

- 1) *A record of supervisory contact should be maintained in the Haplo PhD Manager System. Supervisors and students can record information in this system.*
- 2) *In the case of a missed contact, the School will follow up with the student and the supervisor regarding the reasons for the contact being missed.*
- 3) *Supervisory contact is expected every 2 weeks for first year full time students, monthly for all other full time students. Full time students who are not on planned fieldwork and who have no evidence of supervisory contact for 60 days will be contacted regarding their engagement and their supervisor will be contacted to check on progress. Following investigation, withdrawal proceedings could be instigated if deemed appropriate.*
- 4) *Part time students are expected to meet every 4 weeks in their first year and every 2 months in following years. Part time students who are not on planned fieldwork and who have no evidence of supervisory contact for 120 days will be contacted regarding their engagement and their supervisor will be contacted to check on progress. Following investigation, withdrawal proceedings could be instigated if deemed appropriate.*
- 5) *Students on approved fieldwork should remain in contact with their supervisor as agreed in advance of travel. If circumstances lead to a need to change the contact schedule, this should be agreed and recorded in PhD Manager.*
- 6) *Students are only required to notify SOAS of travel in relation to planned fieldwork, planned absences of 60 days or more or where the planned absence will lead to the student missing a planned supervisory contact. Students and supervisors should work together to rearrange contacts within a reasonable timeframe if either party is unable to attend*

2.6 Distance Learning

There is currently no provision for a distance-learning PhD route.

There may be exceptional circumstances when students in their Writing-Up year apply for and are granted enrolment at distance, but the Regulations require that a student is based at SOAS, University of London for the duration of their studies.

2.7 Direct entry to PhD students

It should be noted that different submission deadlines apply for those students enrolling on the ‘Direct entry to PhD’ route where a deadline will be stipulated in the offer letter.

2.8 Changes to the mode of study

Those who have moved from full-time or part-time or from part-time to full-time will have their submission deadline updated in light of the time spent on the earlier mode. In cases of changed mode of study, the Doctoral School will advise the student of the revised deadline.

Permission to change the mode of study will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. A move to part-time study should not be seen as an extension to enrolment.

3. Doctoral School – Mission Statement

The purpose of the Doctoral School is to:

- 1) provide prompt, effective and efficient services to SOAS doctoral researchers and their supervisors to enable SOAS researchers to produce work of the highest calibre that ensures SOAS will remain an international institution of choice for doctoral research;
- 2) provide an academic home and training for doctoral researchers and their supervisors beyond their specific programmes, fostering the identity and community of SOAS doctoral researchers and help to integrate them into a wider SOAS, national and international research community.

To achieve this purpose our objectives are to:

- 1) Support the Head of Doctoral School to lead the development and delivery of the SOAS Postgraduate Research Strategy;
- 2) Provide training and early career researcher opportunities so that doctoral researchers are able to develop their talents in a supportive environment;
- 3) Support the Head of the Doctoral School, ADRs and Research Tutors in encouraging and facilitating a SOAS doctoral researcher identity and community as well as their involvement and participation in SOAS' wider research culture and practises;
- 4) Support research tutors and supervisors to help them achieve excellence when delivering research training and individual advice;
- 5) Provide robust and efficient administration processes that guide doctoral researchers through their degrees and reflect both best practice in the sector and SOAS quality assurance procedures.

We shall deliver our objectives by:

- Providing advice and practical support to the Head of the Doctoral School in the development of the SOAS Postgraduate Research Strategy;
- Providing robust administrative and management support for projects and activities to support the delivery of the SOAS Postgraduate Research Strategy;
- Managing centrally-administered processes and records for doctoral researchers from admission, through training and progression, to examination;
- Agreeing progression milestones / deadlines with Research Tutors/ADRs/Departments and advertising these to doctoral researchers at the beginning of the academic year;
- Providing advice and support in relation to training and early career development to aid doctoral researchers towards completion of their research programmes and on to rewarding careers;
- Providing training, guidance and advice on SOAS Regulations and Procedures to supervisors, research tutors, examiners, Heads of Departments and any other staff involved in the doctoral researcher life cycle;

- Providing advice and practical support to the Head of Department in managing relationships with the major scholarship bodies that include RCUK (AHRC and ESRC) and the Bloomsbury (Inter-Collegiate) Scholarships, as well as a range of other providers;
- Publicizing the events, support and other opportunities available to doctoral researchers and, together with the Research Student Association, regularly reviewing the appropriateness and efficacy of communications;
- Ensuring that all School and relevant external regulations and quality assurance requirements are met in relation to doctoral research administration & training;
- Regularly reviewing and, wherever advisable or required, managing the processes for revising and updating postgraduate research degree Regulations, Policies and Procedures;
- Managing the annual publication of key documents including the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and developing new documentation when required;
- Regularly reviewing the use of the 53 Gordon Square and other smaller Doctoral School spaces and facilities and managing them to provide doctoral researchers with a welcoming and supportive environment;
- Liaising and collaborating with other parties to all these processes notably, but not exclusively, the Research Student Association, Fees and Scholarships, Research Office and Fundraising;
- Managing first stage complaints and first and second stage appeals from doctoral researchers.

Two things I have learned now that I am entering my third year of study are: 1. Do whatever and spend whatever it takes to organize and procure the tools you need for your workspace. 2. If you are a person to whom writing seems like torture, you especially need to set aside 2-4 hours a day dedicated to some sort of writing or revision. A DPhil program is undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges one can assume, but this is in great part rewarded by the relationships one makes with people. Especially at SOAS, it's those relationships that make it all worth it.

Brandi Simpson Miller - History

4. Essential Dates and Deadlines

Task	Deadline	Year group affected	Sanctions for / consequences of missing deadline
Complete both online and in person enrolment (or re-enrolment) and pay fees	15 October each year (Expected to complete enrolment by the end of September each year)	ALL	Withdrawal Policy initiated by Doctoral School / Fees and Scholarships
Complete Annual Training Needs Analysis and send to the Departmental Research Tutor	31 October each year	ALL	
Language Acquisition Funding	As early as possible, but no later than 15 December each year	ALL	No funding
Complete progression requirements - send confirmation of qualifications to Doctoral School (if requested)	31 December each year	1	Withdrawal Policy initiated by Doctoral School
Confirm supervisory committee	15 November each year	1	
Conference funding - first call	1 December each year	3 and 4	No funding
Conference funding - second call	1 March each year	3 and 4	No funding
Fieldwork funding - for students leaving for fieldwork from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019 inclusive	1 December each year	1 (or 2 if PT)	No funding
Fieldwork application (suggested) for students leaving for fieldwork in 2018/19	AT LEAST TWO MONTHS BEFORE DATE OF TRAVEL	1 (or 2 if PT)	No permission to go on fieldwork – delay to data collection
Fieldwork funding - for students leaving for fieldwork after 30 June 2019	1 March each year	1 (or 2 if PT)	No funding

Task	Deadline	Year group affected	Sanctions for / consequences of missing deadline
Upgrade submission for September starters (see Department instructions as to format)	15 May each year, though each Department may set its own Deadline	1 (or 2 if PT)	
Department to advise student of upgrade outcome	15 June each year	1 (or 2 if PT)	
Upgrade outcomes to be with Doctoral School	15 June each year	1	
Extension to Writing Up – student sends draft thesis to supervisory committee	15 June each year	3 (or 6 if PT)	
Upgrade referral - student to submit revisions to Department	15 August each year	1	
Upgrade referral - decision to be with Doctoral School	1 September each year	1	WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENROL OR PROGRESS TO YEAR 2
Extension to Writing Up – Research Tutor to send results to Doctoral School	15 September each year	3 moving to 4 (or 6 moving to 7 if PT)	Delays at re-enrolment as new invoice to be issued. NO NEW INVOICE WILL BE DURING ENROLMENT WEEK THEREFORE TERM 1 WILL BE PT OR FT
Student-led projects (interdisciplinary conferences) – first call	1 December each year	ALL	No funding
Student-led projects (interdisciplinary conferences) – second call	1 March each year	ALL	No funding
Annual Report submission (all years, unless student submitting in same year)	15 July each year	ALL	WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO RE-ENROL OR PROGRESS TO NEXT YEAR
"Entry to Examination form"	15 July each year before 15 September submission deadline	3 or 4	Delay to viva date confirmation as it means examiners nominated late, possibly after submission
Thesis submission	15 September each year	3 or 4	Withdrawal Policy initiated by Doctoral School

Writing a PhD is the most intellectually exciting experience you can have. You will have time to pursue your own interests systematically. You will discover things that you did not expect, and you will change your mind several times. You will grow both as a person and as a scholar. Your supervisor will be there to support you, but the PhD is your own, and you will be in the driving seat. Your supervisor will discuss with you every step in the process, but you will make all the difficult decisions. Because of these demands, writing a PhD is a very intense experience. It is also psychologically very challenging, and you must be prepared for that. It is your interest that will bring the topic alive, and will make it important to everyone around you. Your thesis will be as unique as you are, and it will give you a solid start for a career in research, teaching, and writing.

Prof Alfredo Saad Filho – Head of the Doctoral School and Professor of Development Studies

5. What Does The Doctoral School Do?

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Doctoral School Administrative Office

The Administrative Office (located in Gordon Square) has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Manages and maintains postgraduate research students' academic records
- Confirms deadlines for progression milestones and submissions
- Advises of expected progression milestones
- Administers training and conference funding and supports the use of logbooks
- Administers fieldwork/ethics applications
- Administers the appointment of examiners

5.2 Doctoral Researcher Training

Doctoral training takes place principally at the programme level, led and overseen by the Research Tutors. This departmental provision is complemented and enhanced by interdisciplinary training open to all doctoral researchers across the School. The latter covers, but is not limited to, the following areas: thesis writing; generic methods and techniques for data collection and analysis; research integrity and management; and academic publication and presentation. Various teams, including the Library and Information Services, the Careers Service, Learning and Teaching Development, the Research Office, Student Advice and Wellbeing, and IFCELS, contribute to this institution-wide provision. The Doctoral School works closely with them to ensure all such contributions fit together, in addition to offering—both online and offline—short courses, workshops, and bespoke tutorials itself.

The Doctoral School also represents SOAS in its many intercollegiate training collaboration schemes such as the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network (BPSN), the Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts in Southeast England (CHASE), and the UCL, Bloomsbury & East London Doctoral Training Partnership (UBEL).

I've heard so many friends on fieldwork say "I haven't got enough data", "I've got the wrong data", or occasionally "I've got far too much data". I've never heard anyone come back from fieldwork and say "I've got exactly what I need". It never happens. This is all part of the challenge, but be kind to yourself in the process.

Clare Williams – Law

5.3 Supervisors' Responsibilities

First supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to agree with the student a suitable topic for research that can be completed and written up within the prescribed period of study. • to assist the student in making full use of the facilities provided by the School and to encourage him/her to play a full part in the intellectual and social life of the School; • to assist the Research Tutor to appoint a full Supervisory Committee, normally within six weeks of the student's enrolment • to establish a timetable of regular meetings with the student. This is normally fortnightly during the first year and monthly during subsequent years of full-time enrolment or part-time equivalent at which all matters relating to, or affecting, his/her work are discussed; • to oversee student maintenance of the logbook; • no later than six weeks after registration to agree with the student the subject and basic structure of the research project, an appropriate research method, and a realistic plan of work, and to advise on any additional skills required; • to ensure that a student training needs analysis is undertaken annually at the start of each academic session and needs matched to provision; • to agree with the student a realistic timetable for completion of the research and writing-up of the thesis. This must allow for completion of active research and a draft thesis within the deadline for submission. • to monitor progress of the student in accordance with the agreed schedule and to advise the Research Tutor, Faculty Associate Director of Research, and Doctoral School of any issues as they arise; • to arrange (in consultation with the Supervisory Committee and the Research Tutor) for a replacement supervisor in the event of in excess of one calendar month; • to maintain supervision during periods of research leave or to arrange for assumption of supervision by another member of the Supervisory Committee for the period of leave if continuing supervision is not feasible; • to ensure that the project is progressed in accordance with the School's regulations and procedures in respect of on-campus research degrees; • to inform the student about requirements for, and procedures relating to transfer to PhD; to initiate the transfer at the appropriate time; to liaise with other members of the Supervisory Committee concerning the transfer and to supply them with copies of written materials for assessment; to advise the Research Tutor and to inform the student of the result and consequences of the decision concerning transfer; • where transfer has not been initiated following consideration for upgrade, to raise with the departmental Research Tutor and the Faculty Associate Director of Research the question of whether or not the student should be given a further opportunity to proceed to a PhD, remain as an MPhil student, or have his/her registration terminated; • the supervisor must make himself/herself aware of the requirements of the student's funding body, report promptly on the student's progress when required to do so by the Faculty Associate Director of Research or external funding bodies, and ensure, as far as possible, that the student completes within the prescribed period; • to advise the student on correct research procedures, including the dangers of plagiarism, and to report to the Faculty Associate Director of Research any persistent research misconduct, including plagiarism; • at an appropriate point in the student's study (and in accordance with SOAS regulations) make recommendations for the appointment of internal and external examiners and ensure that the student enters for the MPhil or PhD
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	<p>examination in good time (at least two months before submission) and submits the thesis within the School deadline; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to advise the student on SOAS regulations about research theses and procedures relating to research degree vivas and their outcomes.
Second supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where possible the second member of the Supervisory Committee should be selected before, or as soon as possible after, a research student's enrolment and no later than six weeks of the start of the research degree; to enhance or augment the supervision of the student by contributing additional guidance and expertise; to maintain an active involvement with the general progress of the student's work and to participate in decisions relating to his/her transfer to PhD, eligibility for enrolment on Extension of Writing-up (Continuation) Status or, where necessary, termination of registration; and to act on behalf of the supervisor during unforeseen periods of absence
Third supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where possible the third member of the Supervisory Committee should be selected before, or as soon as possible after, a research student's enrolment and no later than six weeks from the start of the research degree; where required the third member should enhance or augment the supervision of the student by contributing additional guidance and expertise; to maintain awareness of the students' progress in the degree and participate in decisions relating to his/her transfer to PhD, eligibility for enrolment on Extension of Writing-up (continuation) status or, where necessary, termination

(Summarised from *Code of Practice*, points 73-75)

5.4 Research Students' Responsibilities

- to attend meetings with their supervisor as and when arranged, to meet agreed deadlines for work, to agree an agenda for future meetings and bring to supervision meetings topics or research material for discussion, and to inform the supervisor of any likely absence of more than one calendar month (apart from approved periods of fieldwork);
- to carry out their research effectively, to an approved standard, and within the prescribed period of study and deadlines.
- to participate in, and satisfy the requirements of their MPhil/PhD training programme and personal training needs analysis assessment;
- to agree and abide by a timetable for regular meetings with the supervisor, to submit written work (allowing sufficient time for the supervisor to read and comment on the work) and to make such oral or seminar presentations as may be required by the supervisor or departmental Research Tutor;
- to be aware of the School's regulations and procedures in respect of research degrees and to ensure that enrolment and registration requirements are completed correctly;
- to follow the School's procedures with respect to transfer to PhD;
- to complete such reports and returns as are required by the supervisor and Departmental Research Tutor;
- to maintain the logbook with details of supervisory meetings, research training, research progress and issues arising. An agreed record of the number and nature of supervision meetings will be particularly valuable for the completion by supervisor and student of the

annual report forms and in any appeals procedure. The logbook should be completed for each meeting.

- to contact the other members of the Supervisory Committee as appropriate;
- to pursue research actively while based at SOAS, University of London, except during periods of approved interruption or overseas fieldwork.
- to remain in contact by appropriate and agreed means with the supervisor during periods of fieldwork;
- to bring any complaints or problems (including those of a medical nature) to the attention of the supervisor and/or Departmental Research Tutor, and to inform the supervisor of any problems seriously affecting the progress of research and writing;
- to consult in confidence with the Departmental Research Tutor (or, where appropriate, the Head of Department) if it is felt that a change of supervisor is necessary; and
- to follow the requirements of the School with respect to the submission and examination of research theses.

(Summarised from *Code of Practice*, points 76)

5.5 Research Tutor Responsibilities

The main responsibilities of the Departmental Research Tutor are:

- to oversee the selection and admission of new MPhil/PhD degree students and the allocation and notification to those concerned of supervisors and Supervisory Committees except where the Department has appointed a Research Admissions Tutor to undertake this responsibility;
- to organise (and, where appropriate, run) a training programme for MPhil/PhD students
- to ensure the distribution and the prompt completion and return of annual report forms and other reports concerning research students. Student progression is dependent on receipt of a satisfactory annual report from the supervisor and enrolment for the next year of the programme will not be permitted without this;
- to ensure effective knowledge and operation of departmental procedures for students' transfer from MPhil to PhD status;
- to ensure effective monitoring of the progress of students on Maintenance of Registration status;
- to ensure timely submission of Annual Research Programme Review to the Faculty Research Committee;
- to maintain, with the Doctoral School, an accurate and up-to-date record of a student's registration status; and
- in association with the Head of Department and the Faculty Associate Director of Research, to achieve or maintain satisfactory completion rates within the department.

(Summarised from *Code of Practice*, points 77)

6. Doctoral Researcher Development

Pursuing a PhD is increasingly seen as more than producing a thesis and acquiring a scholarly specialism. Your motivations for embarking on a PhD journey may vary, but by the end of it, you will be expected to be able to operate as an independent and competent researcher in various professional contexts and achieve broader social impacts. In order to better prepare you for the current competitive economy and other challenges ahead of you, SOAS is committed to the academic and professional development of all doctoral researchers. Our doctoral training programme is robust and in line with the recommendations of UK Research Councils (RCUK), the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, and other good practices of the sector. This page provides you with an overview of training opportunities at your disposal. Each doctoral programme has a specific training programme designed for a cohort that all doctoral candidates will have to follow.

Given the abundance of opportunities but the pressures of time, it is crucial for doctoral researchers to plan and monitor their researcher development activities strategically.

6.1 Training Needs Analysis

The annual Training Needs Analysis ([TNA](#)) has been designed to help students and their supervisors identify training needs within the Vitae framework. The doctoral researcher and their lead supervisor should meet at the beginning of each academic year and both parties should identify skills areas that need further development and make prioritised action plans for that year taking fieldwork, data collection and writing up needs into account.

6.2 Logbook

Throughout the rest of the year, doctoral researchers are required to enter any activities and reflections that 'evidence' their efforts to meet the training needs in the [SOAS Logbook](#). The entries will be overseen by the supervisors and considered for annual progression. Support for logbook use can be found on [BLE](#). You will need to log in using your SOAS ID and password.

We are developing a new PhD Manager system which is expected to launch in 2018/19. The Moodle logbooks will move to PhD Manager and further details will be circulated in due course.

6.3 Training courses

First year students should note that they are required to attend the weekly Departmental training sessions and your Departmental Research Tutor will contact you to advise on the time. Please also review the Welcome Week Handbook you received at enrolment for contact details or see the website.

Students in all years should be aware that [skills training courses](#) are available regularly within SOAS and will be advertised on our [course page](#). You can also attend training at other Bloomsbury institutions via the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network. Other Doctoral Training Partnerships (e.g. CHASE) do offer off-site training in academic writing, conference presentation or research impact, among other themes and we will circulate details as new courses are announced.

6.4 Conference Funding

As part of Early Career Researcher development, SOAS has made some funding available to allow all full-time doctoral researchers in their third or fourth 'writing up' year (or part-time equivalent) the opportunity to present a paper at a major conference. Applications to the fund, for a maximum of £500, should be made via the Doctoral School which administers the scheme.

Applications will be accepted in two calls and must be emailed to doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk. The first deadline for applications is **1 December each year**; the second deadline is **1 March each year**. No late applications can be considered. We aim to confirm the availability of funding within one month of the deadline. Applications must be signed by the first supervisor before being submitted or they will not be processed.

Applications for conference expenses may be made in advance of the conference, but you should not rely on receiving conference funding while making arrangements to attend and notification will be sent out after the deadline for applications has passed. If you have submitted a proposal to a conference, you should also apply for funding by the deadline even if you do not yet have proof of acceptance. Proof of subsequent acceptance to present at the conference must be included with any claim. To fall into the 2018-19 cycle, expense claims must be lodged before the end of the financial year by 30 June 2019. Expenses incurred subsequent to this must be claimed against the 2019-20 cycle.

Applications will not be accepted from researchers other than those in their writing-up years (third or fourth year full-time, or part-time equivalent). Researchers in other years, or on interruption, are ineligible for this scheme which has a fixed funding. While doctoral researchers on 'extension of writing up' are eligible, no claims may be submitted after theses have been submitted. All claims must be supported with valid receipts and no 'per diem' will be awarded. Please note that you must be a current student to make a claim.

Because this is a once-only award, researchers are asked to consider carefully whether the best opportunity to make their work known more widely occurs in their third or fourth year. To be clear, no-one who has already received conference funding from the Doctoral School can be considered for a second award in a different academic year.

If you have any queries about eligibility or the conditions of the award please email an enquiry to doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk.

All successful award-holders will be required to submit a short report on their conference.

6.5 Language training

The Doctoral School has responsibility for the Language Acquisition Fund. A small amount of funding (up to £750 per applicant) is available to help MPhil/PhD research students to acquire language skills necessary for their research work. The grant will cover tuition fees only. Students may apply for funding in any year of study.

It is extremely important that any language learning needs are identified as early as possible during the application process and in the Training Needs Analysis Form when you first meet your supervisor. Decisions on applications for admission to research degrees should indicate any likely need for support. There is a section for this on the decision form. The decision form should include a specific request from the proposed supervisor indicating the nature of the language learning to be undertaken, the

duration of the language training, the likely cost and the importance to the research project. Applications will only be considered where the language training is **DIRECTLY** relevant to the student's research needs. Supervisors must therefore demonstrate clearly that the need is central to the nature of the research.

NOTE: All applicants should first check for the availability of their intended language course in the SOAS [Language Centre](#) and the term dates. If the language course required is available within SOAS then it should be studied here and the Doctoral School can consider a request for reimbursement after the student has paid the fees. Only where a course is not available at the SOAS Language Centre will applications for outside study be considered.

Students wishing to apply in 2018-19 should send an application as early as possible but **no later than 15 December 2018** to the Doctoral School via email. Funds are limited and once the initial allocation has been made, later applications can be considered only if funds remain.

Priority is also given to those students whose admission forms indicated a need for support.

It may not always be possible to award the full cost of the training. In situations where a student's needs are extensive, and where work for the MPhil/PhD is unable to proceed effectively until a language has been mastered, or acquired to a relevant level, it may be best to seek to defer entry to the research degree and look for funding to enable a year to be devoted exclusively to language learning.

Course costs

Applicants should note that they will need to pay for the course in advance and apply for reimbursement. This is permitted under the following conditions:

1. If the course is offered by SOAS Language Centre
2. If the course is offered by another University Language Centre in the UK or overseas
3. If the course is offered by recognised course provider in UK or overseas (e.g. Goethe Institut)

Private language tuition / Bespoke language tuition

If a course is not available within SOAS or via another course provider, then the fund can be used for private language tuition. Students seeking private tuition should contact SOAS Language Centre for information on bespoke language training as they have the expertise and knowledge of London-based tutors.

Note: Students may not engage their own language tutor and expect to submit receipts for a claim from the Fund.

6.6 Student-led initiatives

As part of Early Career Researcher Development, the Doctoral School is able to offer a maximum of £500 per event for student-led research activity. This grant is in addition to the conference funding (Years 3 and 4 only) and students may make an application to both funds in the same year if they are in Years 3 and 4.

Applications are encouraged from SOAS PhD students in any year of study who wish to organise a SOAS-based interdisciplinary conference or workshop. They can, of course, make an application with researchers from another institution and we would expect that the other institution would also offer

partial funding. The money can cover catering or travel expenses for speakers. The Doctoral School will order catering on your behalf and supply expense claim forms for your speakers. Please note that all claims for travel expenses will need to be supported with valid receipts and no 'per diem' can be awarded.

Projects funded in previous years include Queer Asia, MUSA Conference, AFNET, Moralities of Dance (with the Institute of Historical Research), What is Good Food?, Agriculture in South Asia and Refracting Gender in Modern China (with the SOAS China Institute).

Similar projects have also received partial funding from The Centres and Programmes Office, other University of London institutions and DTPs.

Please apply by sending an outline of your conference or workshop to doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk. Your outline must include:

1. Title
2. Expected audience
3. Proposed dates and times
4. Draft budget

We are particularly keen to fund projects spanning Departments. The first deadline for applications is **1 December each year**; the second deadline is **1 March each year**. We aim to confirm the availability of funding within one month of the deadline and we expect your event to be held by **Friday 16 June 2019**.

6.7 SOAS Research Online

PhD students are welcome to add any publications to [SOAS Research Online](#), the School's institutional repository, this will automatically update your publications profile on the SOAS website. We encourage you to add full-text to SOAS Research Online whenever you can to increase the visibility of your research. For questions or help adding your research to SOAS Research Online write to outputs@soas.ac.uk

If your research is funded by the RCUK you are required to add any journal articles you publish to SOAS Research Online and make them Open Access according to a set of criteria. You can also apply to use the SOAS RCUK funds to pay publishers to make your article Open Access. Full information and the application process is available [online](#).

6.8 Website profiles

Website profiles are created at the request of the individual student and requests for updates may be submitted at any time. Your profile will be added to your Department's website. A web profile is not compulsory, though you are encouraged to do so, and you may add as little or as much information as you choose about your research.

Please use [this form](#) to update the information and email webcontent@soas.ac.uk with a photo of yourself to upload.

The SOAS website is not the only place you can develop an online profile, you may want to register for an ORCID ID, add your presentation slides to platforms such as Figshare or Slideshare or you might want to start a social media account. Check out the '[Becoming an Open Researcher](#)' workshop series run by the Library to find out more about this.

I always think there are two things to keep in mind when you arrive to commence your doctoral research. First, everyone experiences imposter syndrome in the first few months and is waiting for someone to tell them they don't belong. You have to not let this feeling become debilitating. Second, the biggest shift from your previous study will be the removal of deadlines, structures and regular expectations from the University to you. In partnership with your supervision team, you become responsible for planning, structuring, creating deadlines and building your programme with some annually imposed deadlines (termly in the first year) from the university. I think doctoral students find this a big shift, after all a doctoral student is by definition someone who has been very good at complying with and fulfilling the expectations of an undergraduate and postgraduate university programme. Successful doctoral students embrace this new found freedom and yet remain rigorous in the attention to deadlines and process as equally as they are passionate about their ideas, their thesis.

Dr Gina Heathcote – Law

7. Careers

SOAS has specialist Careers Consultants who work with Doctoral Researchers and Early Career Researchers. This provision includes an annual programme of skills development workshops, tailored information resources and bookable one-to-one consultations to address career development needs (these can involve, for example, discussions about career options and decision-making, CV and application feedback, interview coaching). SOAS Careers also work closely with SOAS alumni and can put you in touch with former students in a wide range of countries and job sectors.

We work with all students at all stages of study and this begins at (re-) enrolment each year when we ask you to complete a short survey about your career plans. We use this information to plan workshops and events around your answers. Flagship events each year include Academic Careers Evening where you have the chance to meet and discuss career paths with Early Career and established academic colleagues.

We find that a large number of our Doctoral Researchers are engaged in activities often related to their studies, from supporting the research and delivery of related charities and NGOs to working in libraries or galleries, running projects of their own and much more. SOAS Careers also supports Student Enterprise.

To support you in your job search during and after your studies, we advertise vacancies (full-time, part-time, internships and volunteering) on our website, on our Facebook page and on noticeboards around campus. Finally, apart from many resources online, students can also use our Careers Library.

The SOAS Careers Service is open every day SOAS is open including vacations. For full opening hours please see the Careers website.

Please come and see us any time during our opening hours to find out how we can support you during your time at SOAS. For our location, contact details and a full list of our services and upcoming events please see www.soas.ac.uk/careers

SOAS Careers Service is part of The Careers Group, University of London, the largest higher education careers service in Europe

The Ph.D. experience is not only about writing a thesis and doing field work. Maybe more important is that interaction with peers, scholars, the wider magical world of SOAS and the incredible city of London. I found the Research Students' Association presidency, the engagement in SOAS restructuring process and even running the London Marathon are very helpful activities to sharpen my topic of research and diverse its dimensions.

Mohamed Taha

Research Students' Association - former president - Media Studies

8. Library

As a doctoral researcher at SOAS you will have access to one of the world's most important academic libraries for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East with over 1.30 million printed volumes and a major collection of archives, manuscripts, rare books and special collection and a vast network of electronic resources.

All new doctoral researchers will be invited to meet with their dedicated subject library for a specialist induction on resources available for their research. The Library and Archives and Special Collections welcomes enquiries and requests for 1 to 1 training all year round. You can also access subject specific and general information skills training and introductions to special collections, either through classes in your Department or the [Library Training & Events series](#).

The most important thing supervisors and PhD candidates can do is to establish the parameters of the relationship at the outset. Have a meeting; decide how often you will meet; decide what you see your role to be; how you hope to communicate. Remember, you are writing your thesis for your examiners, not for your supervisor; but just as importantly, remember that your supervisor has a great deal of experience guiding theses to completion, and so the advice they have for you is not because they want to mould you in their own image, but because they want to make sure you complete your work.

As for the relationship between supervisor and student, the single most important thing is communication.

Don't disappear into the ether; respond to emails. Even if you have a writing block, have nothing to say, or don't feel like talking, make sure to remain connected to your supervisor. Trust your supervisor to come up with solutions to problems that may seem insurmountable. Even if they can't help directly, hopefully they will be able to point you to someone who can help you.

Finally, perhaps the most important group of people you will meet are your doctoral cohorts. They will become friends, remain your supporters, and provide you with feedback. Set up informal PhD reading groups; encourage one another by reading one another's chapters, exchanging tips, and seeking support from one another.

Doing a doctorate is a kind of apprenticeship which will allow you to learn how to research and write. Remember that for the whole of the rest of your academic career nothing you will write will receive the care and scrutiny and feedback that your thesis will receive. Take advantage of it.

Prof Laleh Khalili – Politics and International Studies

9. Research Students' Association

The SOAS Research Students' Association (RSA) represents all Post Graduate Researchers at SOAS. Its board consists of the roles noted below, which are up for nomination during the October Student Union election process. The President post is elected every spring term within the SOAS Students' Union elections as the Postgraduate Research Officer (PGR). Department Student Reps are observers of the RSA and are able to raise student issues at committee meetings.

The RSA has representation on the Doctoral School Management Group in order to make sure that students' voices are heard on the issues that concern them, and that students are aware of all the initiatives taken in relation to the doctoral experience. The RSA also helps to bring awareness of Doctoral Researchers' issues to the SOAS Students' Union, through the PGR Officer, and highlights concerns raised through student reps. In addition to its representative functions, the RSA has editorial responsibility for a lively student journal (the [SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research](#)), and organises a variety of academic and entertainment events throughout the year.

The RSA keeps students informed about matters that affect them through weekly RSA newsletters (keep an eye out for emails from ResearchSoc@soas.ac.uk). You can also input into matters that affect you by attending open meetings and stay informed with what the RSA is doing by enrolling to the RSA moodle page where all meetings minutes are readily available to you. Just login to Moodle, search for the "Research Students' Association" course and enrol. We are also on Twitter @SoasRSA and have a Facebook group called SOAS Research Students' Association. You can find us in person in the RSA office on the lower ground floor of 53 Gordon Square.

RSA Committee Roles:

1. **Secretary** – responsible for working closely with the president to ensure the annual planning and daily work of the RSA is supported. Also responsible for taking meeting minutes, drafting agendas, and setting dates for meetings and ensuring the RSA is adequately transparent.
2. **Events Officer** – responsible for organising events and activities and ensuring an active social scene for PGR students across the academic year. Also responsible for allocating annual budget for events appropriately.
3. **Communications Officer** – responsible for effective and efficient communication both within the RSA, and with the wider student body where required. Also responsible for maintaining an effective and safe online forum, and ensuring that web spaces and social media are maintained. Also responsible for allocating annual budget for communications appropriately.
4. **Journal Chief Editor** – responsible for overseeing the planning, budgeting and production of the SOAS Postgraduate Research Journal.
5. **Academic Support Officer** – responsible for encouraging and supporting students to develop their research skills through attending relevant trainings and conferences. Also responsible for allocating annual budget available to support student led conferences.
6. **Campaigns Officer** – responsible for coordinating / supporting campaigns of relevance to the RSA. Also responsible for allocating annual budget for communications appropriately.
7. **Treasurer** – responsible for the RSA budget for the academic year, including petitioning the SU / DS for funds, obtaining the best prices for goods we source, and liaising with members to ensure the financial health of the RSA. The Treasurer will be required to keep a running total of the budget, and update the RSA Board on income and expenditure at Board meetings.

10. Pathways of a PhD Student

10.1 Research Programme Structure

There is some variation between programmes, but in general a full-time PhD student registering for an MPhil with the intention of completing a PhD can expect to follow a programme with the general structure outlined below. They also attend weekly regional and/or Departmental (disciplinary) research seminars in all years and during the third year must present at least one research paper to that seminar or an equivalent. MPhil/PhD students are expected to be based at SOAS unless on a period of approved fieldwork.

Year 1 – Project Development and Research Training

Doctoral candidates will undertake a programme of seminars and courses designed to provide research training - depending on their individual annual research skills needs assessment, these might include courses on research methodologies, statistical methods, using and creating databases, using web-based resources, or others of relevance to the research area and more rounded development as an early-career researcher. On the basis of this skills development, as well as supervised research, the doctoral candidate will develop a detailed research proposal and may undertake the first stages of research. This work will be aimed at meeting the particular requirements for transfer to PhD status in the discipline during the upgrade process. Disciplinary requirements vary, but these may include a literature review, fieldwork proposal, initial draft of some chapters, or an outline of the main arguments of the thesis. Exactly what is required will depend on your discipline and topic (whether it is predominantly: quantitative or qualitative; library, archive or fieldwork-based; deductive or inductive; and so forth), but irrespective of the content of your thesis, the upgrade process is when you have to demonstrate your capacity to take the work to completion.

By the end of Year 1 you will have*

- Met with your Supervisor regularly. Supervision sessions normally last for about one hour. The *Code of Practice* (Point 65) gives the guidance that fortnightly (full-time) or monthly (part-time) is a suitable supervisory schedule for your first year.
- A full supervisory committee is agreed and the information is sent to the Doctoral School by the Research Tutor by **15 November**
- Recorded your supervision meeting notes in your Logbook
- Completed your Training Needs Analysis by **31 October** and uploaded a copy to your logbook
- Completed research skills training whether online or at [SOAS/BPSN courses](#)
- Submitted your Upgrade to PhD paper and Ethical Approval Application to your Department by **15 May** (Please note that your Department may have its own deadlines, but that your supervisor will send the results to the Doctoral School by **15 June**). You may be asked to submit an updated and amended upgrade paper and the results will be due by 15 September. Please note that it is only possible to defer the upgrade deadline in very exceptional circumstances. If you fail to achieve the necessary standard for upgrade to PhD you may be eligible to submit an MPhil within 2 years or be required to withdraw from the programme.
- Completed and passed the [Research Integrity course](#). (Please also see the Upgrade Form)
- Applied for and gained permission for overseas fieldwork. Please note that the Fieldwork Application Form must be submitted to the Doctoral School at least **TWO MONTHS** prior to the intended date of travel.
- Submit your Annual Progress Report by **15 July**

***Please note that failure to submit the required paperwork according to the deadlines above will delay your enrolment to the next year and/or permission to start your fieldwork. Registry will email all students regarding online enrolment from late June each year. You will be required to enrol in person during the last week of September unless you are on approved overseas fieldwork. You are required to enrol in person at the Doctoral School once you have completed your fieldwork visit and full instructions will be emailed to you when you are given permission to travel.**

Year 2 – Fieldwork and Data Collection

This may vary according to discipline, but having been upgraded to PhD, the second year is usually the year in which primary research is conducted most intensively. This may involve a period of fieldwork, or time spent in archives, or carrying out interviews, undertaking observation or data collection. The shape of the completed thesis should begin to emerge in draft by the end of this period. *[EXAMPLE: You will have completed your draft introduction, methodology and literature review and have collected the data you will analyse in depth in your third year].*

By the end of Year 2 you will have*

- Met with your Supervisor monthly
- If you are on fieldwork you should have made contact with your supervisor on a monthly basis via email/Skype or other means as agreed
- Recorded your supervision meeting notes in your logbook
- Completed your Fieldwork
- Completed your Training Needs Analysis by **31 October** and uploaded a copy to your logbook
- Completed research skills training whether online or at [SOAS/BPSN courses](#)
- Completed your Annual Progress Report and your supervisor will submit the signed report to the Doctoral School by **15 July**

***Please note that failure to submit any of the required paperwork according to the deadlines above will delay your enrolment to the next year. Registry will email all students regarding online enrolment from late June each year**

Year 3 – Writing-up

The objective is to finish research and write a complete draft of your thesis. Most Departments organize seminars at which doctoral researchers returning from fieldwork are expected to present the results of their work-in-progress and receive feedback from both academics and research fellows. Supervisors will provide advice to help you refine and polish the arguments of the chapters.

By the end of Year 3 you will have*

- Met with your Supervisor monthly (full-time and part-time students)
- Recorded your supervision meeting notes in your logbook
- Completed your Training Needs Analysis by **31 October** and uploaded a copy to your logbook
- Have established with your supervisory committee the date by which your application for examination should be submitted
- Have agreed with your supervisory committee when the nomination of examiners form should be submitted
- Have agreed with your supervisory committee whether an application will need to be made to request 'extension of writing up'

- Completed your Annual Progress Report and your supervisor will submit the signed report to the Doctoral School **by 15 July**
- Applied for 'Extension of Writing-Up'. Your Department will have its own deadlines to receive a final draft thesis, but the form must be received by the Doctoral School by **15 September**. If you have not submitted a full draft of your thesis by the end of 3 years of full-time study, then it is possible to enrol for the fourth year as a full-time student, but no extension to the submission deadline can be considered.

***Please note that failure to submit the required paperwork according to the deadlines above will delay your enrolment to the next year**

Year 4 – Continuation (Extension of Writing-Up) (Optional – subject to agreement with Research Tutor and Supervisory Committee)

Any work done at this stage will normally involve only redrafting of chapters, clarifying methodologies and improving the thesis in consultation with your supervisor. No primary research or fieldwork should be undertaken. The thesis must be submitted for examination during this year.

This enrolment status is available for one year whether you were previously registered as full-time or part-time

By the end of Year 4 you will have

- Met with your Supervisor monthly (full-time and part-time students)
- Recorded your supervision meeting notes in your Logbook
- Have ensured that your supervisor has submitted the nomination of examiners form
- You have submitted your application for examination in good time for your submission deadline
- Have completed your thesis and had it printed, bound and submitted by your deadline

10.2 Progression

Progress to the next year of the PhD programme is not automatic. Failure to complete enrolment (including payment of all fees due) and/or failure to make satisfactory academic progress mean that the [Withdrawal Policy](#) may be initiated at any time by the Doctoral School or the Supervisory Committee.

Postgraduate researchers are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and research project, accept guidance from their supervisory committee and conduct themselves appropriately. In addition to withdrawal at the upgrade stage or following completion of the Annual Report Form, the Supervisory Committee can recommend that a student be withdrawn at any point in their registration if there are serious concerns about a student's academic progress and/or their compliance with SOAS regulations and research requirements. In this case, the Supervisory Committee must do the following:

- a) There are three stages to the withdrawal process:

Stage 1: First warning from the Supervisory Committee

Stage 2: Second warning from the Supervisory Committee

Stage 3: Final Warning - Meeting with the Head of Doctoral School

Stage 1: Concerns regarding academic progress

It is expected that a plan for remediation will be agreed between the Student and the Supervisory Committee after concerns have been raised regarding academic progress. The action plan must have an agreed timeframe, the minimum period of which is one month. The action plan must be documented in writing and a copy provided to the student and the Doctoral School Section, Registry. The student will have the right of appeal against the decision.

Stage 1: Concerns regarding behaviour

It should be agreed at the meeting of the Student and the Supervisory Committee that the behaviour must cease immediately. An agreed timeframe, the minimum period of which is one month, should be set to review the student's progress. The outcome of the meeting will be documented in writing and a copy provided to the student and the Doctoral School Section, Registry. The student will have the right of appeal against the decision.

Stage 2 – Second warning

If the concerns about unsatisfactory academic progress of the student and/or their compliance with degree regulations and research requirements have not been addressed satisfactorily within the agreed timeframe, the Supervisory Committee can issue a second warning and a revised remediation plan and a timeframe for compliance.

Stage 3 – Final Warning - meeting with the Head of the Doctoral School

If the issues are still not resolved by the next review meeting, the Supervisory Committee must meet with the Head of the Doctoral School to initiate Stage 3 of the process. The student will be called to a meeting with the Head of the Doctoral School who will inform the student that if there is no resolution by the next Supervisory review meeting then formal withdrawal procedures will be instigated. The Head of the Doctoral School will inform the Doctoral School Section, Registry and the Supervisory Committee of the outcome of this meeting and the Doctoral School Section, Registry will confirm the outcome in writing to the student.

Should the situation not be resolved to the satisfaction of the Supervisory Committee and Head of the Doctoral School they shall inform the Registry and request the student to be withdrawn from the School. The Doctoral School Section of the Registry will write to the student and inform them of the decision to withdraw them from the MPhil/PhD programme. The student will have the right of appeal against the decision.

10.3 Interruption

Research programmes are intended to be continuous. To meet the requirements for award research students are expected to demonstrate the ability to devise and manage a research project within the constraints of the degree requirements and deadlines. In some cases students may not be able to continue with their normal registration and an interruption of study may be sought through submission of an [Application for Interruption of Study Form](#) to the Doctoral School for the consideration of the relevant Associate Director of Research. Applications for interruption must be supported by the supervisor and will be granted only in exceptional circumstances such as pregnancy,

serious illness or unforeseen extraordinary personal circumstances. Applications must include supporting documentation. Clarification of accepted supporting documentation is available from the Doctoral School. Interruption is considered on a term-by-term basis and the maximum period of interruption normally allowed in any research degree programme is three terms whether the student is enrolled on a full-time or a part-time basis.

Interruption of Study may affect eligibility for council tax exemption, travel discounts and visas. Students and supervisors should seek advice from the Doctoral School if they are unsure of these implications.

Students granted interruption status are not actively enrolled and do not have access to supervision or School facilities during the period of interruption. Their SOAS student email account will remain active.

Interruption of study cannot normally be applied for retrospectively.

10.4 Maternity / Paternity Policy

SOAS is determined that becoming pregnant or caring for a child should not, in itself, prevent any student from succeeding in his/her studies. The School is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to facilitate students' success, ensuring that no such student is disadvantaged while also ensuring that academic standards are not compromised.

It is important for students to take responsibility for their own learning experience and alert the School to their maternity/paternity/caring responsibilities as set out in this policy so that appropriate steps may be taken to support them at the relevant time. Students will not normally be permitted a leave of absence or other facility under this policy in retrospect.

The current Maternity & Paternity Policy can be found on the Regulations [website](#).

10.5 Disability

The Doctoral School recognises that some postgraduate researchers may have, or may develop, a disability or long term health or mental health problem. SOAS endeavours to ensure that a disability or long term health problem should not be a barrier to student success. Postgraduate researchers are strongly encouraged to declare any disability or long term health problem to the School and to seek advice and support at the earliest possible opportunity. The Disability and Dyslexia Service at SOAS can provide specialist guidance and assistance. If your disability or long term health condition impacts on your ability to manage your research, meet deadlines or undertake fieldwork it is imperative that you discuss these difficulties with your supervisor so that consideration can be given as to what reasonable adjustments might be appropriate. Any reasonable adjustments must be agreed by your Supervisory Committee, the Doctoral School and formally recorded. Reasonable adjustments cannot normally be agreed retrospectively.

Doing a PhD is an immense privilege, so be proud of yourself and enjoy it. Build up a network of reliable colleagues who can comment on your work and try to do something PhD related often – even if that's only checking footnotes or doing the bibliography.

Behar Sadriu

PhD Candidate & Graduate Teaching Assistant - Department of Politics and International Studies

11. The PhD Thesis

11.1 What should a PhD thesis include

The scope of the PhD thesis shall be what might reasonably be expected after three years full-time study. The thesis shall:

- 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.

(Reproduced from the *Code of Practice*, point 6.1).

11.2 Use of data / Research integrity

PhD students should remember that they are undertaking original research in their subject area and that they are expected to make the results of their research available once their PhD has been awarded.

Research Integrity: the definition of research integrity currently used in UK higher education draws on a number of existing values:¹

- **Honesty** in all aspects of research includes the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; reporting on research methods and procedures; methods of gathering data; using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings.
- **Rigour**, in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards in: performing research and using appropriate methods; adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; drawing interpretations and conclusions for the research; and communicating the results.
- **Transparency and open communication** in: declaring conflicts of interest; the reporting of research data collection methods; the analysis and interpretation of data; making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and presenting the work to other researchers and to the general public.

¹ *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, p. 11.

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf>

- **Care and respect** for all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations.

(Reproduced from SOAS Ethics Policy)

Principles of Research Integrity

SOAS believes that ethical research must be guided by the following five principles, which are found in the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*:²

- 1) Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
- 2) Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
- 3) Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
- 4) Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
- 5) Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

The *Concordat* defines a set of core values, which apply to any research and is not exhaustive. Additional values and principles may be relevant in specific contexts.

(Reproduced from SOAS Ethics Policy)

11.3 Use of Personal Data in Research

All SOAS PhD theses are made available in SOAS Library and SOAS Research Online and available for researchers to consult. If you collect personal data as part of your PhD research you will need to get permission from research participants to include this type of material in your thesis or anonymize it before you submit your thesis for examination.

When you use personal data you must do so in line with data protection legislation (currently the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and from May 2018 the EU General Data Protection Act). This legislation permits researchers to collect and use personal data for research and publication purposes but under specific conditions.

All PhD Students must read the [SOAS Code of Practice for Use of Personal Data in Research](#) and refer to and uphold [Data Protection legislation](#). You should also refer to the School's [Information Compliance](#) pages for up to date advice.

11.4 Open Access

You will have the choice to make your thesis available in SOAS Research Online either immediately or after 3 years. All theses are made available under a Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-ND). This means that your thesis can be used by anyone providing that you are acknowledged as the author,

²<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/TheConcordatToSupportResearchIntegrity.pdf>

the use of your thesis is non-commercial and that your thesis is not changed. Please see our [PhD Thesis Submission Forms](#) for specific details.

If your PhD research is funded by the RCUK you are required to make it Open Access no later than 12 months after it was awarded and you should select the correct option on the [Thesis submission form](#).

Making your thesis Open Access can greatly increase the visibility of your thesis and demonstrate interest in your research (the most popular thesis in SOAS Research Online has been downloaded just under 10000 times). This may help you to acquire a publishing deal however you should also be aware that some publishers will not allow your thesis to be an Open Access prior to publication. If you plan to publish all or part of your thesis you should just think a little bit ahead and check your target publisher's policy about this whether journal or book publishers.

The 'Becoming an Open Researcher' scheme includes workshops on Publishing Agreements, Open Access and Copyright and this will help you to make a decision that is right for you. There are also dedicated [training sessions](#) on PhD Thesis submission requirements and your options.

If you have any questions please contact outputs@soas.ac.uk

11.5 Embargo requests

SOAS encourages candidates to allow for online availability of their thesis to ensure maximum visibility and access to SOAS theses. Therefore, you are expected to make your thesis available in print in the SOAS Library and online via SOAS Research Online (according to your selection on the Electronic Thesis Agreement Form you fill in).

There may be in exceptional circumstances the need for an embargo to be placed on both the printed and electronic version of your thesis. If this is the case then you are required to complete the embargo request form and take it to your Supervisor and Department Research Tutor for consideration as soon as you are aware you may need to request a full embargo. The request will then be considered by the Associate Director of Research who will decide whether an embargo should be recommended and considered by the SOAS Research Ethics Panel.

Before completing this form it is recommended that all candidates read the [supporting guidance](#).

12. Fieldwork

There are many ways to define ‘fieldwork’, but this activity can cover data collection, interviews, experiments and archive research if undertaken away from SOAS. It is used here as an umbrella term to cover any form of primary research and/or data collection when the student is based away from SOAS, typically during their second year of studies. Fieldwork can be undertaken within the UK or overseas – if you will be collecting data of any kind, then you should discuss completing a fieldwork form with your supervisor.

Fieldwork is subject to a series of checks and approvals – including ethics – so that it can be verified that the work is approved for inclusion in the PhD. Students and supervisors should need to be aware of the risk of fieldwork findings being invalidated if they work outside this system. No unapproved fieldwork results may be incorporated in the thesis.

A maximum of three terms’ overseas fieldwork is normally permitted in a full-time PhD Programme. In many cases a research proposal will plan a period of extended fieldwork outside the UK during the second year of full-time registration. Any longer periods require the special permission of the relevant Associate Director of Research who will only approve cases where clear academic grounds have been presented by (or through) the supervisor. **No student will be permitted to proceed to overseas fieldwork until transferred to PhD status and their fieldwork has been approved by the Doctoral School.** Applications for fieldwork outside of the second year of full-time enrolment (or part-time equivalent) are subject to the approval of the relevant Faculty Associate Director of Research. Such applications must satisfy the Faculty Associate Director of Research that extended or late fieldwork will not affect completion of research within the deadlines for the degree. Students on the +4 pathway would normally undertake fieldwork in the third year of full-time enrolment (or part-time equivalent).

An **Application for Fieldwork** form must be completed in advance for each period of overseas fieldwork requested or for any amendments to previously agreed arrangements. This form must be submitted to the Doctoral School well before departing for the fieldwork – we suggest that you do so at least two months before your planned date of departure. Non-standard fieldwork applications will need the approval of the Faculty Associate Director of Research.

Some funding for fieldwork is available and this will be dealt with via the Scholarships Office. Please see their [website](#) for guidance on the application process and deadlines.

Important documents to be submitted to doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk at least TWO MONTHS prior to your proposed dates of travel:

- [Fieldwork Form doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk](#)
- Ethics Checklist – if changes have been made to the project and not already considered in the ethics check as part of the PhD Upgrade
- [Second stage ethics plan](#) (If any item on the Ethics Checklist is ‘YES’)

12.1 Insurance

SOAS provides insurance cover for PhD students on approved periods of fieldwork. All insurance documents can be found on [MySOAS](#). The insurance covers most matters from getting ill to getting lost. Please download the app and familiarise yourself with the contents before you travel.

Please note that you are expected to provide a contact address while on fieldwork so that we are able to contact you if we are advised of any local problems or concerns e.g. tropical storms or political instability. We do this from concern for your well-being.

The **Research Students' Common Room** on Moodle also provides updates from our insurer and other travel partners that may be of use to you when planning your time away from SOAS.

1. Schedules

Timing is everything. Stretching out over four years (generally), PhD programmes appear to follow a rather loose schedule, but this is not actually the case. Every week matters. I like to spend quite a bit of time with my students recognizing that, when it comes to schedules, (a) different types of deadlines work for different types of students, (b) it's important to build in breaks (including unexpected breaks and, occasionally, very long breaks that require 'interruption'), and (c) demonstrating an ability to complete milestones on an agreed schedule (while dealing with any associated bureaucracy!) is a key part of the process. Schedules are always negotiated; but, to some extent, students should expect their supervisors to take the lead in setting them.

2. Fieldwork

Fieldwork is fun, but (a) 'safety first' is not a negotiable rule and (b) our job lies in digging deeper than the average bear, so that we can transform 'the real world' into convincing forms of 'evidence' for our arguments. Thin evidence is almost as valuable as no evidence, so it's okay to cut bits of one's argument if they lack sufficient evidence. The process of gathering evidence *should* change the overall shape of one's project (i.e. argument).

3. Writing (I)

Writing up is never a one-step process. We'd all love to write our first draft as our last, but that's impossible. Getting all of the chapters on paper in a rough form before fixing each one is, in my experience, absolutely essential. Doing this helps to see the whole project as one rather than as a series of loosely-connected bits. Supervisors can help students press ahead when every fibre in their being is urging them to spend another week tweaking this-or-that little paragraph.

4. Writing (II)

We write for audiences, not ourselves. Great ideas are 'great' because other people understand and appreciate them. I spend quite a bit of time working with my students helping them (a) understand their own analytical insights more clearly so that they can (b) communicate those insights in accessible ways. Both parts of this process can be very difficult; there's no point suggesting they're easy. Ultimately, however, it's crucial to keep in mind that we always write for others.

5. Professional skills

When presenting one's work (classroom, workshop, and conference presentations really matter!), it's important to distinguish 'challenging-but-helpful' feedback from 'challenging-but-irrelevant' or 'mean-spirited' feedback. Supervisors can help to draw these distinctions. Having said this, professional networks also matter (a lot); it's not always necessary to heed the views of 'that famous figure in the field'; but, sometimes it is. Again, supervisors help to draw these distinctions.

Dr Matthew Nelson – Politics and International Studies

13. Submission Deadlines

SOAS requires that a PhD thesis be submitted within 4 years of initial registration (full-time) or 7 years (part-time). These submission deadlines are in line with sector and RCUK funding norms. PhD research is expected to be 'current' and candidates are expected to submit by the deadline.

It is expected that postgraduate researchers take responsibility for their own research and for ensuring that their thesis is submitted by the required deadline.

Standard submission deadlines

Initial registration	Submission deadline (full-time)	Submission deadline (part-time)
September	15 September + 4 years	15 September + 7 years
January	15 January + 4 years	15 January + 7 years
April	15 April + 4 years	15 April + 7 years

If the submission deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday or a UK public holiday, then the deadline for hard copy submission is 4pm on the Monday immediately following the 15th of each month.

Example 1:

John Smith began a PhD in September 2014 as a full-time student. His submission deadline is 15 September 2018.

Jane Smith began a PhD in September 2016 as a part-time student. Her submission deadline is 15 September 2023.

IMPORTANT NOTE: this is a final deadline. Extensions to the submission deadline are not normally permitted except under particular circumstances (see Sections 13.3-13.4).

13.1 Direct entry to PhD students

It should be noted that different submission deadlines apply for those students enrolling on the 'Direct entry to PhD' route where a deadline will be stipulated in the offer letter.

13.2 Changes to the mode of study

Those who have moved from full-time or part-time or from part-time to full-time will have their submission deadline updated in light of the time spent on the earlier mode. In cases of changed mode of study, the Doctoral School will advise the student of the revised deadline.

Permission to change the mode of study will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. A move to part-time study should not be seen as an extension to enrolment.

13.3 Procedure for deferring submission

A change in the submission deadline is normally only possible in the following cases:

1. The student applies for an approved period of interruption from their studies and agrees a date of return with the Doctoral School and their supervisor. This is normally suitable for those

taking a period of approved absence from their studies for maternity leave, paternity leave or to recover from a period of ill-health.

The student should apply for interruption by sending an email outlining their case (and including supporting evidence) to doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk

2. A student funded by RCUK may be required to undertake additional language training or an overseas institutional visit. It should be noted that written approval from both the funding council and the awarding institution needs to have been sought and confirmed before the student begins their training or visit.

The student should apply for interruption by sending an email outlining their case (and including supporting evidence) to doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk with a copy to the funding body.

It should be noted that the maximum period of interruption is one year (3 terms, full-time) or 6 terms for part-time students. Students holding a Tier 4 visa sponsored by SOAS should carefully consider the implications of applying for an interruption which can lead to a withdrawal of sponsorship and cancellation of the Tier 4. In this case, the student would need to apply for a new CAS and submit a new Tier 4 visa application before re-joining the course at the end of their interruption.

13.4 Disability

The Equality Act requires that universities make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. The Doctoral School may agree to an extended submission deadline where a postgraduate researcher has declared a disability and has an up-to-date/current Study Inclusion Plan (see Section 14 for further guidance) in place. It should be noted that a SIP should be in place well in advance of the submission deadline.

13.5 Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating Circumstances will not normally be accepted for a late submission except in the most exceptional cases such as natural disaster or catastrophic illness or accident. These should normally be submitted within 2 weeks of the deadline.

The [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#) is available for review online. .

13.6 Extension to Submission Deadline

Students and supervisors are asked to note that the submission deadlines are final and normally only modified if a student has taken an approved period of interruption or has changed their mode of study. It is expected that a student will submit by the required deadline.

There is no automatic right to an extension to submission and any requests to extend the submission deadline can only be made on the basis of mitigating circumstances via our [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#). The request will be reviewed by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel. Supervisors and candidates should be aware that an extension request is not automatically granted.

13.7 Late submission

If you do not submit your thesis by your advised submission deadline, your registration as a student will end and you will be formally withdrawn from the programme.

13.8 Non submission

Postgraduate researchers failing to submit their thesis by the proscribed or deferred deadline (whether this is the submission deadline or the deadline set for corrections following the *viva voce* examination) may be withdrawn in accordance with the [Withdrawal Policy for Research Students](#).

14. Support Services

We pride ourselves on providing a friendly and stimulating environment for our community. However, we know that coming to university can present challenges, no matter what stage of your further education you are at. Therefore, we offer a range of support services on non-academic matters, covering areas such as finance, immigration, exam worries and other personal issues.

For full details, go to

www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing

T: +44 (0) 20 7074 5015

E: studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk

14.1 Welfare and international student advice

The International Student and Welfare Advisor provides impartial and confidential advice on non-academic issues such as student finance, visas and immigration, welfare benefits, childcare and general personal issues.

E: welfare@soas.ac.uk

14.2 Counselling

Professionally trained counsellors provide confidential support for students facing problems of a personal or emotional nature.

T: +44 (0) 20 7074 5016/7

E: counsellors@soas.ac.uk

14.3 Health and wellbeing

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor offers professional one-off meetings or ongoing support where students may be struggling to manage their wellbeing whilst at the School or where there may be ongoing mental health concerns. The Advisor can liaise both with internal departments and external agencies depending upon need.

Support meetings and workshops are also offered and in some instances a mentor can be provided for structured support.

T: +44 (0) 20 7074 5013

E: sk110@soas.ac.uk

14.4 Learning advice

Our Learning Advisors offer support and advice for students relating to specific learning differences (SpLDs). SpLDs include: dyslexia, dyspraxia, AD(H) D and dyscalculia. They also provide advice and support regarding other disabilities or issues that can impact on learning, such as depression, anxiety and procrastination.

14.5 Disability advice

The Student Disability Advisors offer information, advice and support to students. The Disability Officer also negotiates individual adjustments for disabled students to make the School accessible

to them. These can include:

- adjustments to exam arrangements and Library services;
- arranging specialist support, such as learning support, mentoring and sessions with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor;
- offering loan equipment (such as digital recorders and laptops with specialist software); and
- creating a learning support agreement which specifies any recommended adjustments so that academic and teaching staff are aware of them.

The majority of SOAS buildings are accessible for wheelchair users and changes can be made to timetabling to ensure that all rooms are accessible where students are unable to use stepped access. There is also some Braille and tactile signage.

14.6 Study Inclusion Plan

The Study Inclusion Plan (SIP) is a confidential report for students with disabilities or SpLDs (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADHD). It describes any adjustments required for study, including exam and library arrangements.

For advice on how to obtain a SIP, please see the Student Advice and Wellbeing [website](#).

15. If things go wrong

We want you to have a pleasant time studying with us, but we understand there might be occasions where you are not as satisfied as you could be. That is what our complaints procedures are for – if you have any issues, we will do our best to resolve and learn from them.

15.1 Complaints about Training or Supervision

A student may complain about a perceived deficiency in research training or supervision under the terms of the Student Complaints Procedure.

The matter should be raised informally with the supervisor or with the Departmental Research Tutor in the first instance but, if this fails to resolve the issue, the student can thereafter approach the Head of Department and, if necessary, the relevant Associate Director of Research.

Here are the steps you could take:

[Step 1: Resolve your complaint or appeal directly](#)

[Step 2: Follow a formal complaints procedure](#)

[Step 3: Learn what happens during the procedure](#)

[Step 4: If you're dissatisfied with the final decision](#)

15.2 Appeals

Advice and guidance on how to make an appeal can be found on the [Degree Regulations](#) website.

15.3 Office of the Independent Adjudicator

If you are unhappy with our final decision at the end of the procedure, you can appeal to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), an independent ombudsman for student complaints. You must do this within 12 months of receiving the Completion of Procedures letter.

16. Courtesy

Respect at SOAS Policy

SOAS is committed to creating and maintaining a School-wide culture of respect as part of its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) SOAS also has a legal duty to foster good relations between those with one or more of the 9 “protected characteristics” and others.

Everyone (staff, students, contractors, visitors) is entitled to go about their daily business at the School or on School related business elsewhere, without being discriminated against for any reason (including having one or more of the defined protected characteristics); belittled; harassed; bullied; deliberately offended; undermined or excluded by others, be they fellow students, colleagues or academic, professional services and support staff, contractors staff or visitors.

Contact with Doctoral School staff

The Doctoral School understands that undertaking a PhD involves significant amounts of pressure and stress. Staff at the Doctoral School do their best to minimize this by providing regular updates regarding deadlines and progression requirements and ask that PhD students and their supervisors use this Handbook and the Code of Practice to remind themselves of these.

17. Contacts

Doctoral School

SOAS, University of London
doctoralschool@soas.ac.uk

Visiting address:

Doctoral School, 3rd Floor, Room GS305
SOAS, University of London
53 Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PD

Postal address

Doctoral School
SOAS, University of London
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

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