MSc by Research Students’ Handbook
2017/18

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Room 1.20, Chrystal Macmillan Building, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD
Gradschool.sps@ed.ac.uk
or your Programme Secretary (contact details in your Programme Handbook)
The Graduate School Office is open Monday to Friday, 9.00 - 12.30 and 1.30 – 4.00

Computing Support sps.support@ed.ac.uk

Security: in emergency dial (0131 6)50 2222
Otherwise: (0131 6)50 2257
WELCOME TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Hello – and a very warm of welcome to the University of Edinburgh and our community here in the Graduate School of Social and Political Science! We are very much looking forward to meeting you, and want you to feel at home as soon as possible after your arrival. This Handbook will help you to do just that. It is a key guide for the main principles and procedures guiding your years ahead.

The Graduate School of Social and Political Science is an interdisciplinary hub providing advanced postgraduate education and training in the social sciences. It forms the postgraduate division of the School of Social and Political Science, which in turn is part of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Graduate School hosts students from each of the School’s subject areas and centres (African Studies; Canadian Studies; Global Public Health; International Development, Politics and International Relations; Science, Technology and Innovation Studies; Social Anthropology; Social Policy; Social Work; Sociology; and South Asian Studies), as well as visitors from universities in other countries. It also plays a lead role in the Scotland-wide Scottish Graduate School of Social Science – www.socsciscotland.ac.uk.

The School is located in the Chrystal Macmillan Building (CMB) in George Square, where the Graduate School Office is located on the first floor.

As professional social scientists, we are committed to teaching, to research and many other kinds of practical engagement with the world. We do each according to international standards of excellence, and want our students to do the same. Each year, we teach more than 400 students on over thirty MSc programmes, and supervise around 350 others working for research degrees. Our Graduate School is a global community with students and staff from Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Our different interests, skills, life histories and experiences come together in one community. We think this makes for a rich and rewarding experience.

The School provides ESRC and AHRC recognised research training for students from across the University. We are also developing innovative, flexible web-based research training in qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. In line with the emphasis on advanced training throughout postgraduate research careers, we offer a range of advanced training courses and work closely with the University transferable skills programme for postgraduate researchers. Meanwhile, our Student Development Office brings in practitioners to support the broader professional development of our postgraduate students. Their innovative workshops are open to students on all programmes.

New study in a new place can be both exhilarating and overwhelming (often simultaneously)! This handbook will provide you with essential general academic and support information to help you and make that experience much more manageable and clear. It should be read in conjunction with your Programme Handbook that your Postgraduate Advisor will give you in Welcome week.

Welcome 2017 students – it is great to have you here!

Dr Daniel Clegg  
Director of the Graduate School of Social and Political Science, September 2017
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1 About this Handbook and Key Sources of Information

This handbook provides an introduction to the Graduate School of Social and Political Science, and the administrative, regulatory and procedural information you will need while studying for a postgraduate research programme here. It also directs you to different kinds of support and advice available on other matters such as welfare and study skills. It will help you make the most of your time while at the University of Edinburgh.

The handbook does not supersede the University Regulations, the formal requirements for each degree as set out in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study and the Research Assessment Regulations, or the Terms and Conditions of Admission set out in the Postgraduate Prospectus. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here was correct at the time of printing, but this handbook does not form part of any contract between the University and student. It should be read together with your specific programme handbook, which provides academic information and advice on your particular degree.

The policies and procedures described here may be subject to change. You will be notified of any changes made during the year via email and the Graduate School website.

For academic issues, your principal source of information and advice is your Postgraduate Advisor. For administrative and procedural issues, please consult the Graduate School Office. The Graduate School website contains a considerable amount of information for postgraduate students:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/

Other useful University websites include:

- Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/research-students
- Research Assessment Regulations http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/research-students
- Information for Students http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/students/

Your official University record – which includes courses taken, marks, credits gained, other achievements and your contact details – is stored on EUCLID, which you can access through MyEd. If you experience difficulties logging on to MyEd, you should contact the IS.helpline@ed.ac.uk.

1.1 Organisation and Governance

The Graduate School is led by an academic Director (Daniel Clegg), supported by an Administrative Officer (Toni Dismore). Deputy Directors are responsible for research degrees (Elke Heins) and for taught Masters programmes (Carmen Gebhard). Graduate School policy and practice is approved by its Postgraduate Committee, while changes to the content and assessment of courses and programmes must be agreed by its Board of Studies. The Director and Administrative Officer are members of the School’s Management Committee and the College Postgraduate Studies Committee, as well as a number of other committees and working groups.

1.2 Student Representation

We take students’ views very seriously, and have a number of formal and informal routes of consultation. We want to support open, collaborative communication among staff and students, and encourage students to raise and discuss problems, ideas and initiatives with course organisers, supervisors and Postgraduate Advisors.
at any time. We also invite written feedback on each course as it concludes: student comments form the basis for annual reporting according to the University’s quality assurance procedures.

Each Subject Area has an elected research student representative, whose role is to promote communication between students and the Postgraduate Advisor and Graduate School through the year. Student reps attend a more general Postgraduate Student Forum each semester, which provides an opportunity for Graduate School staff and students on all programmes to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. Postgraduate student representatives also attend meetings of the Postgraduate Committee and the Board of Studies. The schedule of meetings as well as a list of current student reps can be found at: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/community_and_representation/student_representation.

1.3 Email Communications

The University’s official means of communication with you is via your University email account. Information about your degree programme, other relevant activities, workshops and other postgraduate matters is sent to your University email account, and your course organisers and tutors, your Programme Director and your supervisor, the Graduate School Office and Student Administration will all use it. You must check this account regularly, or arrange an auto-forward to another one. It is also expected that all emails sent to staff must be sent from your university account. If you are experiencing problems with your email account please ensure this is reported to sps.support@ed.ac.uk as soon as possible. It will be assumed that you have received and read email sent to your University account.

1.4 Graduate School Newsletter

The Graduate School office issues a weekly newsletter to all SPS postgraduate students highlighting upcoming events and opportunities, including conferences, calls for papers and job postings. The newsletter is circulated via email on Friday afternoons. If you have an event you would like advertised in the weekly newsletter, email it to gradschool.sps@ed.ac.uk.

2 The MSc by Research Programme

The MSc by Research is a flexible one-year full-time, or two year part-time, degree, which combines hands-on training in social research skills with the opportunity to start work on an individual project. The programme may be taken either as a free-standing Masters degree, or as preparation for a full PhD project. All students must complete an agreed programme of research training and submit a dissertation on an approved topic. For formal assessment, candidates must submit a number of research-related assignments which, taken with the dissertation, will total 180 credits. For students progressing to a PhD the dissertation will normally take the form of a research proposal.

The degree trains students in research skills to the level prescribed in the Economic and Social Research Council’s research training guidelines, and many students on our MSc by Research programmes are funded by ESRC 1+3 studentships. The emphasis in the MSc by Research is on the acquisition of social research skills, rather than intensive knowledge of a specific discipline or sub-discipline. As such the programme is intended for students with either a good first degree in a relevant social science discipline or with a relevant taught Masters degree.

Each MSc by Research programme is organised round specific outcomes as described in the course documentation, such that every student should be able to show they can work with a range of methods and analytic procedures by the end of the programme. In cases where a student can already demonstrate
competence in a specific methodological area at the start of the programme, they are not required to duplicate that particular area of training.

The MSc by Research is highly flexible, in terms both of the content of formal teaching and in the balance between formal training and individual research preparation. Students requiring less formal training have the option of submitting a longer dissertation (with their Programme Director’s agreement). This means that in principle each student has a more or less unique programme for the degree. Decisions about individual course choices must be made at the start of the programme, based on assessment of the student’s training needs, in active discussion with individual supervisors and the convenor of the particular programme.

Each student should agree a programme of training with their Programme Director. For those MSc by Research students who continue on to the PhD, a formal ‘end of first year’ progress review board may be held soon after they enrol as a PhD student. This review will be based on the MSc by Research dissertation, which for prospective PhD students should be written as a research proposal. The aim of this review is to assess whether a candidate’s work meets the required standard to justify confirmation of PhD or MPhil registration.

Thereafter research training needs should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis as part of the Annual Review of progress.

3 Research Training and Development

Successful completion of a research degree involves a balance between the pursuit of your own research project, and training in the skills which enable you to become a more effective scholar, both now and in the future. Our formal requirements for training in research methods include generic and discipline-specific courses, and the School also provides regular workshops and short courses in advanced research methods. All of those are open to students at any stage of their degree.

The modes of delivery of different research training courses have been designed around four key considerations:

- Methods and methodology should be understood in their theoretical or epistemological context;
- Training should emphasise hands-on competence;
- Wherever possible, training should focus on the area of the student’s own research;
- Training should be as flexible as possible, within the constraints of the Programme.

You should consult your specific Programme Handbook to check which research courses are compulsory for your degree, and which are elective.

3.1 Research Training Courses

Full details of our Research Training Courses are available here: [www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/research_training_courses](http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/research_training_courses)

We offer a set of ‘core skills’ courses.

- Research Design | PGSP11208
- Research Skills in the Social Sciences: Data Collection | PGSP11016
- Core Quantitative Data Analysis for Social Research | SCIL11009
- Analysing Qualitative Data | PGSP11110

Almost all our research students take one or more of these. The key introductory course in Data Collection is essentially made up of four two-week sections on what we see as the principal methods: documents and
archives; interviews and focus groups; ethnographic observation; survey method. Each of these is explored in detail in more advanced, specialist options.

- Qualitative Methods and Ethnographic Fieldwork | PGSP11188
- Social Network Analysis: Mapping and Exploring the Network Society | PGSP11372
- Evaluation Research Methods | PGSP11373
- Analysing Social Networks with Statistics | PGSP11452
- The Documents of Life | PGSP11302
- Multi-Level Modelling in Social Science | PGSP11424
- Working with Self and Other in Qualitative Research: Theory and Practice | PGSP11429

As well as in methods germane to particular fields and topics:

- Comparative Analysis of Social and Public Policy | PGSP11104
- Listening to Children: Research and Consultation | PGSP11012
- Research in Africa | PGSP11340

Finally, we offer an option in social and political theory:

- Explanation and Understanding in Social and Political Research | PGSP11017

3.2 Research Training Workshops

In addition to the Research Training Courses, the Graduate School runs a series of Research Training Workshops. They are regular sessions on advanced training topics and themes of interest to research students. They offer masterclass style training from leaders in the field and an opportunity to meet students with similar interests. They are open to all research students in the School, whatever stage you are at and whatever subject you are studying.

3.3 The Edinburgh Award

The Edinburgh Award is a series of events and activities designed to strengthen your CV and help you stand out in the job market. The Award recognises and rewards your involvement in activities undertaken alongside your degree programme and aims to enhance and improve your experience as a student.

You can find detailed information here:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/student_development/edinburgh_awards

3.4 Student Development

The School’s student development office (www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/student_development) is designed to connect postgraduate researchers with the worlds of work beyond the academy. Our workshops bring together visiting practitioners and postgraduate students to discuss aspects of professional and organisational practice. They serve to open new areas of research and reflective enquiry, as well as to develop transferable skills. The Student Development office can be contacted at ssps.student-development@ed.ac.uk.

Postgraduate researchers also have access to the University and College-wide programme of training in transferable skills: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development and to courses provided by the University Computing Services: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/services/help-consultancy/is-skills.
4 Choosing Courses

A University of Edinburgh MSc by Research comprises 180 credits, normally composed of 120 credits of taught courses, plus a Dissertation worth 60 credits. Some programmes offer the option of a longer Dissertation, provided the Programme Director approves. Most SSPS courses are a standard 20 credits, but some are of a different value. Your Programme Handbook sets out the courses required for your degree. Some MSc by Research degrees offer a mixture of ‘compulsory’ and ‘elective’ courses.

Normally, MSc by Research students take 60 credits in semester 1 and 60 in semester 2. In exceptional circumstances, and with your Programme Director’s agreement, it may be possible to change this weighting (i.e. take 40 credits in one semester and 80 in another).

All programmes have some compulsory courses, and some elective courses. The courses students can take as part of their programme are listed in the Degree Programme Table (DPT). More information about each course is available through the clickable links in the DPT. Students are responsible for checking that the courses they choose do not have clashing timetables. The easiest way to plan the semester timetable is to use the PATH tool. Please note that PATH does NOT register students for courses.

The Graduate School operates a pre-enrolment system to manage the allocation of students’ places to courses across the School. Students should expect to receive a programme specific course selection survey via email by early August. This provides students with an opportunity to see what courses are available, and, working in conjunction with the PATH tool, form a provisional timetable. Completed surveys are to be returned to the Graduate School as soon as possible and at the latest, by the deadline stated in the survey (usually, third week of August).

Based on the pre-enrolment information gathered in this process, the Graduate School Office will seek to ensure students are given their first or second course choices. However, due to high demand and capacity problems students might at times not be given a place on a course of their preference.

Course choices made at this stage are by no means final for students. Should they decide to change any of their elective courses, for instance, after talking to their Programme Director during Welcome Week, then this will be possible until the end of the second week of the semester. In doing so, however, students will have to expect that some more popular course options might be unavailable by that point. See below for information on course changes.

Students can check via MyEd which courses they have been signed up for. Please email gradschool.sps@ed.ac.uk for queries or if any errors appear.

4.1 Auditing Courses

MSc by Research students may ask to ‘audit’ a course, in addition to their standard requirement of 120 credits. Auditing (listening) means that you sit in on a course, but don’t do the assessment or earn any credit for it. Auditing is at the discretion of the course organiser – some course organisers may not accept auditing students - for example if the course is already full. Some may only allow auditing students to attend lectures, while others may expect them to play a full role in seminar discussions.

If you wish to audit a course, you should email the course organiser to ask him or her for permission. If granted, print off their email and staple it to the course choice form before submitting it. The Graduate School will then enrol you as an auditing student. Providing you have correctly enrolled as an auditing student on a course, the audited course will appear on your transcript.
You may audit the equivalent of one 20-credit course per semester. Permission to audit more will be given only in exceptional circumstances and with the written support of your Programme Director.

Providing you have correctly enrolled as an auditing student on a course, the audited course will appear on your transcript.

4.2 Course Changes and Withdrawals

You may be able to change your elective course choices up to the end of the second week of each semester, if places are available. In order to do this you will need to obtain approval from the course organiser. If they approve, print off their email and staple it to the course change form (available from the Graduate School Reception) before submitting it to the Graduate School reception in room 1.20.

It is not normally possible to change courses after the second week of either semester unless your Programme Director strongly supports such a change. It is not possible to change courses after you have received a mark for a piece of assessment.

5 Assessment and coursework requirements

NOTE that the following rules and procedures on assessment and coursework requirements apply to all Graduate School of Social and Political Science courses. Students taking courses provided by other Schools should check with the relevant school about the correct procedures for that School.

The different components of a course may be assessed in a variety of ways appropriate to its aims and content. All courses in the Graduate School tend to combine a number of different components of assessment, usually involving written assignments and in some course a practice or participation element. Students get written feedback on each written piece of work they submit. All assessment is subject to moderation by a second member of our academic staff and then further review by an external examiner from another university. Students can therefore expect staff to be fully engaged and wholly fair when marking course work. Marking is also carried out anonymously across the board, so that students can expect the judgement to be fair and equitable.

5.1 Submission and return of coursework

Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. Students are not required to submit a paper copy. Marked course work, grades and feedback are also returned via ELMA. We undertake to return all coursework within 15 working days of submission (with the exception of dissertations, which take longer to mark). This time is needed for marking, moderation by a second marker and the input of results by the office. If there are any unanticipated delays, it is the Course Organiser’s responsibility to inform students of the reasons.

NOTE that days on which the University is closed (e.g. on Public Holidays or during the Christmas Break) do not count as ‘working days’ and return of coursework can therefore take longer. Course handbooks will normally specify the dates when marks are returned.

For information, help and advice on submitting coursework and accessing feedback, please see the ELMA wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SPSITWiki/Students. The wiki is the primary source of information on how to submit work correctly and provides advice on approved file formats, uploading cover sheets and how to name files correctly. Any items submitted electronically through ELMA require students to state their exam number (printed on the student ID card) and NOT their matriculation number. This is to ensure that all marking is anonymous.
Further detailed guidance on the essay deadline and a link to the wiki and submission page will be available on the LEARN page prior to submission deadlines for each individual course. When submitting work electronically, students are asked to tick a box confirming that the work is their own except where they have acknowledged the use of the works of other people.

5.2 Confirmation of marks
All coursework assessment is reviewed at a formal Board of Examiners held at the end of semester 2, in late May/early June. All marks returned to students are provisional until confirmed by the Board. Provisional course marks are posted on ELMA; once confirmed, final marks are uploaded to students’ MyEd, normally by mid June. At that point, students will also be informed about whether they have progressed to dissertation stage.

5.3 Extensions, deadlines and penalties
Coursework deadlines are published in individual Course Handbooks and on the LEARN pages of each individual course. Please note all coursework is due at 12 noon, and submitting later than this without an extension will incur a penalty. If students cannot meet a given deadline, they should seek an extension in advance following the appropriate procedure. Supporting evidence such as a medical certificate might be required for extensions of more than 5 calendar days.

Computer or printer failures are never regarded as adequate justification for an extension. Students are expected to back up their work regularly so that they have two independent up-to-date copies at all times. Students should also plan their submission well to work around potential delays due to high levels of traffic on University servers or busy periods in university computer labs, which might affect their access to internet and/or IT facilities. Poor time management is also not normally a valid reason for an extension. Follow the link above on the appropriate procedure for a list of circumstances that do or do not qualify for an extension.

Students with long-term health problems and learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia must contact the Disability Service as soon as possible after their arrival in Edinburgh. The Disability Service will provide an Adjustment Schedule, which entails appropriate support and alternative assessments to be arranged. Please note that it is not possible to take learning difficulties into account when extensions are requested without an Adjustment Schedule provided by the Disability Service beforehand. Moreover, the Adjustment Schedule does not automatically entitle a student to extensions. Extensions must instead be applied for using the standard procedure. Should a student want to make a case for learning difficulties or other long-term circumstances to be taken into account across all their courses, they need to contact the Disability Service of the University in time for arrangements to be put into place. Either way, the Adjustment Schedule cannot provide extensions for all coursework. They must be applied for separately.

Work submitted late without an approved extension in place incurs a lateness penalty of 5 marks for each calendar day of lateness up to a maximum of 5 calendar days, after which a mark ‘0’ will be given. If a student fails to submit their coursework in the correct format, they will be asked to resubmit within 24 hours. Failing an accurate resubmission within that time frame, students incur a penalty for incorrect submission (5 points) and a late submission penalty (5 marks per calendar day).

Every written assignment has a maximum word count stated in the Course Handbook. The word count includes footnotes and endnotes (if any), in-text references, appendices, tables and diagrams, but not the bibliography, the cover page, the abstract and the table of contents. Any work exceeding this limit incurs a 5% penalty for over length. This deduction will take place after any other potential penalty has been applied. A Course Organiser may decide that any additional text (that is, text over the word length) will be excluded from the
assignment when marked. Given that footnotes and endnotes are included, you may wish to use a concise referencing style such as the Harvard System.

5.4 Marking and feedback
We take considerable care to ensure that our marking is fair and consistent for all students. Once all coursework submitted has been marked, marks are moderated by a second member of staff, and a sample is second marked to ensure consistency. Samples from every course are also sent to an External Examiner, an experienced member of staff at another University, to further ensure that our marking is fair, consistent, and equivalent to other UK institutions. The External Examiner also comments on the design and content of the course. All marking in the School follows the common marking scheme.

Feedback is part of an ongoing conversation between students and teachers/supervisors. All our MSc programmes take feedback very seriously, and have been routinely praised by External Examiners for the quality of their feedback. Feedback takes various forms: Written feedback on coursework is given on a standard form that helps students evaluate their strengths and identify areas for improvement. Students can consult with their course organisers and the programme director if they require further feedback. Verbal feedback is provided in class discussion or in conversation with your Course Organiser or Programme Director. This means that feedback may occur at times not specifically associated with an assessment event.

The expectation is that students actively engage in learning and soliciting feedback and share responsibility for shaping their own experience that way. A good opportunity for students to obtain feedback are the weekly “guidance and feedback hours” that every member of staff holds during general teaching times (for details, check our staff pages). These are drop-in sessions and they are open to all students.

5.5 Appeals
According to University regulations, students may not ask for their work to be re-marked, but in certain circumstances can appeal their marks. However, marks cannot be appealed until they are finalised by a Board of Examiners.

5.6 Good Scholarship and avoiding plagiarism
Scientific progress builds on existing knowledge, but it must adequately acknowledge the existing knowledge on which it builds. Therefore, all academic work needs to cite the sources which it uses, refers to or critiques. For this reason, the copying of someone else's words or ideas or information, without acknowledging where they come from (even if inadvertently) is called plagiarism and is seen as a form of cheating. This applies to all written sources, including any found on the Internet or in another student's work. Also, copying or re-using one’s own text or material for two assignments is called self-plagiarism and is equally not permissible (e.g. using entire paragraphs of an essay for the dissertation or for an assignment on another course or at another university). Plagiarism and self-plagiarism are severely punished in this University and can result in students failing a course, or in severe and repeated cases, in students being ex-matriculated. Further details on University policy and procedure, and good practice in avoiding plagiarism, are provided here.

NOTE that all work submitted for assessment is electronically scanned for plagiarism using software called ‘Turnitin’ which also holds records of papers submitted to other universities.

5.7 Special circumstances
Occasionally, a special circumstance such as illness, bereavement or another serious personal problem may have an adverse effect on students’ coursework. Students may then request, via their Programme Director, that such special circumstances be taken into consideration by the Board of Examiners when finalising their marks. Where marks for specific components of assessment are missing or deemed unreliable because
circumstances might have affected the outcome the Board of Examiners can derive an overall mark for a course from the existing assessed work. Evidence to support the claimed circumstances is normally required.

6 The MSc by Research Dissertation

The dissertation for the MSc by Research takes the form of either a research proposal (for example when a student is planning to go on to study for a PhD) or an independent research project.

We have an online Dissertation Library, where SSPS MSc students can consult recently completed SSPS dissertations and placement reports. Please note that in using the Library, you agree to abide by its terms and conditions. Further information about the Library is on the Graduate School website at: https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/hss/sps/libraries/SitePages/Home.aspx

6.1 Supervision

Students will normally be allocated a dissertation supervisor for work early in Semester 1. Work with supervisors is central to the postgraduate researcher’s career. The supervisor’s role is to provide guidance on the structure and content of the dissertation. This will usually include:

- agreeing a suitable field of study, and appropriate training;
- reading, and offering comments and suggestions on, written work, from early reviews of the background literature to the final draft of the dissertation;
- supporting the postgraduate researcher to plan and manage their research effectively.

The postgraduate researcher and supervisors are jointly responsible for staying in touch throughout the period of study. They should arrange to meet regularly, and exchange frequent correspondence if the postgraduate researcher is away on fieldwork. It is important that a supervisor knows how to reach a student at all times. It is also important that supervisors keep postgraduate students informed of any periods when they will be away from the University.

Individual supervisors differ greatly in their styles of supervision. Some prefer very frequent meetings and more structured tasks for the postgraduate researcher; others prefer more informal ways of working. Some are more directive, while others see their role essentially encouraging and enabling.

Whatever the pattern of supervision that develops, it is vital that it suits the specific needs of the particular postgraduate researcher at the time, and that both parties discuss and negotiate how best to work. What works well for one postgraduate researcher may not be appropriate for another. Moreover, what students need from their supervisors may well change over time and at different stages of their work: the supervisory relationship is an evolving one. It is therefore crucial to a successful relationship that postgraduate researchers learn to say what they need from their supervisors, and that supervisors be flexible and open enough to respond constructively.

That said, postgraduate research is inevitably lonely and stressful at times and this can place an additional burden on the supervisory relationship. Occasional disagreements, stresses and strains are part of most healthy supervisions, but it is important for all parties to be able to manage any tension which might develop. In some cases, a second supervisor may provide an alternative point of view and different kinds of support. Other postgraduate students (and other members of teaching staff) can also provide a great deal of informal support and guidance. However, if you feel you are having a serious problem I relation to your supervisor, you should let your Programme Director know as quickly as possible.
6.2 Formal requirements

Length: The standard dissertation is worth 60 credits and has a word length of 15,000 words, but on some Programmes it may be possible, with the consent of the Programme Director, to take a longer Dissertation worth 80 or 100 credits (and therefore do proportionately less coursework). Students wishing to take a longer dissertation should consult their Programme Handbook and/or Programme Director. Note that, if you are taking the longer dissertation, you should ensure you are correctly enrolled for it by the end of week 5 of semester 1 (section 4, above ‘Choosing Courses’). Longer dissertations may not be taken to compensate for poor performance in coursework.

The word length required for different levels of credit is as follows:

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In all cases, these word limits include the table of contents, tables and footnotes, but exclude the bibliography, abstract and appendices. Keeping to the specified word limit is part of the task of writing a dissertation. In all cases, penalties will be applied if your dissertation exceeds the limit. When you submit your dissertation, you must attach a word count using your word processing package.

Abstract: An abstract of the contents of the dissertation, of no more than 200 words, should be inserted immediately after the title page.

Style: The dissertation should be well written and meet normal academic standards concerning the use of citations, references, presentation of data, and the marshalling of arguments and evidence.

Structure: It is normal to break the dissertation into chapters (say 3-4000 words on average), with short introductory and concluding chapters. The introduction should present the aims, scope, rationale and an outline of the dissertation. Where the work includes empirical research, there should be a separate methodology chapter. The conclusion should summarise the main themes of the argument, reflect on the wider implications of your work and, if relevant, suggest areas for future research.

Format: The dissertation should be typed, 1.5 or double spaced with reasonable margins and should be submitted as a word doc or docx format to ELMA.

Deadline: The deadline for submission of the dissertation is 12 noon on Thursday 9 August 2017.

The dissertation deadline is set by the University and extensions can only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Examining: The dissertation is marked in September/October by two internal examiners (one may be your supervisor) and may also be read by an external examiner. Any student who does not pass the dissertation is eligible to receive the Diploma. The degree (section 7, below) is normally awarded in the November graduation.

6.3 Ethical issues in relation to the Dissertation

Attention to the ethical and legal implications of research for researchers, research participants, sponsors and collaborators is an intrinsic part of good practice. The School attaches great importance to addressing the ethical implications of all research carried out by its members. We emphasis a collaborative approach to improving ethical awareness as part of professional research roles and training. Our procedures are designed
to anticipate and offset problems through proper ethical review and accountability. All research carried out by members of the School, including postgraduate researchers, is subject to the same procedures. They are offered as tools to aid the achievement of the highest standards of ethical awareness in the conduct of research.

MSc by research students should conduct an ethics self-assessment in conjunction with their supervisors as part of the dissertation. Self-assessment is conducted via an online ethics form.

Once finalised, the ethics form is submitted online to the Graduate School Office and your supervisor, and the Director of the Graduate School (if necessary).

SSPS has adopted a three level approach to ethical approval:

- **Level 1**, in which the self-assessment process identifies no reasonably foreseeable ethical risks.
- **Level 2**, in which the self-assessment identifies particular risks and requires further scrutiny. This higher level of scrutiny will generally be required for research on sensitive topics or illegal practices, research involving vulnerable groups or children, research that could adversely affect participants or the researcher, or in cases where there are impediments to obtaining the informed consent of participants. In most cases, these types of risks can be dealt with through standard procedures, checks, and safeguards, which need to be elaborate via the online ethics form.
- **Level 3**, in which a proposed project creates more serious risks, usually because of physical or psychological harm to the researcher or participants. Level 3 applications are scrutinised by an ad-hoc Research Ethics Subcommittee.

Level 1 ethics forms can be approved by your supervisor, whereas levels 2 and 3 will be sent for further approval to the Graduate School Director or Deputy Director (research) with level 3 requiring an ad-hoc Research Ethics Subcommittee.

The full document setting out the School’s Research Ethics Policy and Procedure can be downloaded from the web at: [http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics](http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics).

### 6.4 Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme

If, as part of your postgraduate studies (course, dissertation, thesis or placement), you are likely to have unsupervised contact with or be in sole charge of a child or protected adult, you may be required by University to join the Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme or have an update (if already in the scheme). This scheme is managed and delivered by Disclosure Scotland, and further information is at:

[www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/pvgscheme.htm](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/pvgscheme.htm).

You and your supervisor should discuss whether or not you need to join the scheme; School permission to undertake the activities it covers will be dependent on the results of the check. Different procedures may apply to international students.

If PVG membership is required, it must be applied for via the College Postgraduate Office ([hsspg@ed.ac.uk](mailto:hsspg@ed.ac.uk)).

### 7 Degree Classification

The MSc by Research is not a taught Masters degree, and is not assessed as if it were. In assessing the MSc by Research, examiners are looking at a student's overall performance. Although coursework assessment is validated by a Board of Examiners in May, the crucial assessment decision will be made after submission of the dissertation in August. At this point, the external examiner will see as complete a portfolio of the student’s
work as can be assembled, including both assessed coursework and the dissertation. The Board of Examiners (which includes the External Examiner, the student’s supervisors, and the programme convenor) will make a decision on each case based on the complete portfolio.

The four options for the Board of Examiners are: Pass with Distinction; Pass with Merit; Pass; Pass for Diploma (not MSc); Fail.

Where students have low marks on particular pieces of coursework, these must be interpreted in the context of the overall portfolio of work, and Boards of Examiners can invite supervisors to speak to individual cases of inconsistent performance. If there is one aberrant mark in the context of an otherwise very strong performance, it is up to the particular Board to decide on the appropriate outcome. Where weak marks occur across the coursework, and are matched by a weak Dissertation, the Board may want to recommend a pass at Diploma level, or even a Fail in particularly serious cases.

MSc by Research dissertations will be examined in their entirety and as an entity, irrespective of whether elements of them have been presented for assessment in different form earlier. It is likely that elements of prior coursework will be integrated into the dissertation but it is also likely that these will have been reworked or further developed in the course of the dissertation, on the strength of earlier feedback and the student’s own development. Care must be taken to avoid self-plagiarism (see Section 15). If in doubt, take your supervisor’s advice.

7.1 Requirements for the Award of MSc by Research Degrees
The formal requirements for the award of the MSc by Research degree comprise:

(a) The certified completion of research training plus other designated projects and/or assignments and/or coursework, and the completion of a dissertation. The assessed work, including the dissertation, should be equivalent to but not more than 30,000 words. The dissertation may comprise the total of the assessed material or only part of it, in which case that part must be worth at least 60 points out of the total 180 points required for the award of the degree. Assessment of the various elements may be made separately or together at the end of the programme.

(b) The completion of any required research training and demonstration by the presentation of work specified above that a student has acquired an advanced level of knowledge and understanding in the field of study and is capable of undertaking independent research.

(c) The portfolio of projects or dissertation submitted should comprise either a satisfactory record of research undertaken by the candidate, or a satisfactory critical survey of knowledge in the field of study, or both combined with a satisfactory plan for a more advanced research project. It should show competence in the appropriate method of research and an adequate knowledge of the field of study. The work must be satisfactory in its literary presentation and include adequate references.

8 Absence from Edinburgh

8.1 Leave of Absence
It is a University requirement that if you are away from Edinburgh for a month or more you must have a ‘Leave of Absence’ recorded on your record. The request form must be submitted to the Graduate School Office by your supervisor prior to your departure. Please ensure that your programme director has completed and submitted the request form.
9 Students on a Tier 4 visa

As a Tier 4 student, the University of Edinburgh is the sponsor of your UK visa. The University has a number of legal responsibilities, including monitoring your attendance on your programme and reporting to the Home Office where:

- You suspend (interrupt) your studies, transfer or withdraw from a course, or complete your studies significantly early;
- You fail to register/enrol at the start of your course or at the additional registration sessions each year and there is no explanation;
- You are repeatedly absent or are absent for an extended period and are excluded from the programme due to non-attendance. This includes missing Tier 4 census points without due reason. The University must maintain a record of your attendance and the Home Office can ask to see this or request information about it at any time;

As a student with a Tier 4 visa sponsored by the University of Edinburgh, the terms of your visa require you to, (amongst others):

- Ensure you have a correct and valid visa for studying at the University of Edinburgh, which, if a Tier 4 visa, requires that is a visa sponsored by the University of Edinburgh;
- Attend all of your University classes, lectures, supervision meetings etc. where required. This includes participating in the requirements of your course including submitting assignment and attending supervision meetings. If you cannot attend due to illness, for example, you must inform your School. This includes attending Tier 4 Census sessions when required throughout the academic session;
- Make sure that your contact details, including your address and contact numbers are up to date in your student record;
- Make satisfactory progress on your chosen programme of studies;
- Observe the general conditions of a Tier 4 General student visa in the UK, including studying on the programme for which your visa was issued, not overstaying the validity of your visa and complying with the work restrictions of the visa.

Please note that any email relating to your Tier 4 sponsorship, including census dates and times will be sent to your University email address – you should therefore check this regularly.

You are required by the UK Visa and Immigration to attend a census at various times during the year. The University Student Administration arranges this, and emails all students (to their University email accounts) with information and instructions. If you miss a census, your university registration may be withdrawn: this has very serious implications both for your degree and your visa status. You should let Student Administration and the Graduate School Office know immediately if you must miss a census date. If we know that you are away (because, for example, we have received a Leave of Absence form from your Programme Director) then we can work with Student Administration to avoid any adverse consequences for you. However, if we do not know where you are, and you do not respond to Student Administration emails, then both your student registration and your UK visa may be withdrawn.

Further details on the terms and conditions of your Tier 4 visa can be found in the ‘Downloads’ section at www.ed.ac.uk/immigration.
Information or advice about your Tier 4 immigration status can be obtained by contacting the International Student Advisory Service, located at the International Office, 33 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9JS. immigration@ed.ac.uk.

10 Student Services and Support

We very much hope that your time as a student here will be enjoyable and rewarding, and that you will take advantage of all that the University has to offer, both academic and social. Please make use of the many social and intellectual events and projects that we have going on throughout the year. This section includes information on where to go for help and support, if you should need it; and also on some of the many University student services to help you get the most out of your time here.

10.1 Pastoral Support

Apart from their more strictly academic duties, your Programme Director is available as a first line of support and advice for any academic or personal issues which may arise whilst you are studying here. Students are encouraged to inform their Programme Director immediately of any problems which are interfering with their studies.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Director to offer assistance to students in respect of a variety of choices that have to be made during their studies. In particular, this applies to the choice of elective courses and to the initial stages of the selection of a dissertation topic.

If necessary, and in discussion and agreement with you, your Programme Director can arrange an Interruption of Studies for you ('time off' from your degree, during which you are not a student at Edinburgh), or an Extension of Studies (an extension to your period of study). It may also be possible for Home/EU students to change from fulltime to part-time study. Note that International Students must check the impact of any interruptions or extensions on their visa: the International Office can advise on this.

10.2 Problems and Complaints

The Graduate School is the ultimate authority concerning the teaching of all MSc by research programmes within the School of Social and Political Science. Where problems cannot be resolved at a lower level, you are invited to contact the Director of the Graduate School: Dr Daniel Clegg (Daniel.Clegg@ed.ac.uk).

Information on the University’s formal Student Complaint Procedure is at: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-academic-services/student-complaint-procedure

10.3 Student Services

The University provides a wide range of student services. Information about all of them is available at: www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/students/student-services.

They include:

**Edinburgh University Students’ Association (EUSA)** [http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/)

**The Advice Place** [www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/)

A free advice and information centre for all students, run by EUSA, which offers advice on a variety of issues including academic and financial issues, harassment and legal advice.

**University Health Centre** [www.health-service.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.health-service.ed.ac.uk/)

For all matters relating to physical and mental health, there is an on-campus, health centre operated by independent General Practitioners on behalf of the National Health Service. Students should consider registering with this, or another local general practice for the duration of their studies.

**Student Counselling**
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling)
This free and confidential service offers counselling to help students work through any difficulties, understanding themselves better and finding ways of managing their situation.

**Student Disability Service**
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service)
The University offers support if you have a disability, specific need or a specific learning difficulty. Students with disabilities should contact the Disability Service as soon as possible to discuss their requirements.

**Accommodation Services** [http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk/)
Advice and support is available to help you find somewhere to live and assist with any housing issues.

**Careers and Employment**
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers)
The University provides careers advices and resources to current students and to alumni for up to two years after graduation.

**Chaplaincy Centre**
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/chaplaincy/home](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/chaplaincy/home)
Provides a meeting place for groups and individuals of any religious allegiance, or none. The Chaplain, and our team of multi-faith honorary chaplains, offer support and guidance to all students.

**International Office**
[http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office)
The International Office offers all non-UK applicants and students’ assistance, advice and support. All questions concerning visas and immigration should be directed to the International Office, where staff are trained and up to date with the latest legislation and regulations.

**Libraries**
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/library-museum-gallery](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/library-museum-gallery)
You will probably find a large part of the material you need is either online, through the University’s digital collections, or in the Main Library on George Square. The University has a number of other libraries that provide specialist collections (e.g. Law, Divinity) and useful study space. The National Library of Scotland is nearby on George IV Bridge - [www.nls.uk/](http://www.nls.uk/).

**Sport**
[http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/sport-exercise/home](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/sport-exercise/home) Information on the University’s sport and exercise facilities.

### 11 Safety and Security

#### 11.1 Fire, Accidents and Emergencies

Fire alarms are located throughout the building. If the alarm rings, leave the building by the nearest exit and assemble at the side of the building on Middle Meadow Walk. The fire alarm is generally tested on a Tuesday at 11:00 and will sound briefly.
Any accident should be reported to the Graduate School Office. Trained first-aiders in the Chrystal Macmillan Building can be located as follows:

- Gillian MacDonald, GSO room 1.20, (0131 6)50 3244
- Cristyn King, GSO room 1.20, (0131 6)51 3865

First aid boxes are located in rooms 1.02, 1.20, 2.25, 6.16 and 6.29 CMB.

There is an internal calls only phone in the computer lab for use in emergencies out of office hours.

In case of emergency of any kind, call security on 2222 (internal) or 0131 650 2222 (external).

11.2 Harassment

Guidance on how to deal with harassment is contained in the University Dignity and Respect Policy, available at: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/legislation-policies/policies. The Policy details the range of help available, from self-help to informal and formal measures.

A network of Contact Officers, Advisers and Conciliators is available, and reports to the University’s Equity Committee. Postgraduate Advisors can also be consulted. Full information can be found at: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity.

11.3 Security and Personal Possessions

Students’ personal possessions are not covered by the University’s insurance policy. Lost property in the CMB will be held at the Undergraduate Teaching Office reception on the ground floor – this includes any property handed in to the Graduate School Office reception. If items go missing please inform Security (0131 650 2257) and the Graduate School Office.

12 Facilities

All students undertaking study in the School have access to a number of dedicated facilities in the School of Social and Political Science, as well as those provided by the University.

SPS based facilities are available 24x7 unless stated. Access to buildings and rooms is by your university card. There is excellent wireless coverage across campus, and the Chrystal Macmillan Building has complete wireless coverage.

The facilities described here may be subject to change. You will be notified of any changes made during the year via email and the SPS Graduate School website.

12.1 Computing Facilities

Main University Library in George Square

As well as the standard library facilities, the Main Library includes a café, open-access computer labs, café PCs, and group study pods.

University computer labs

There are a number of open-access computer labs provided by the University, across the various campuses. Information on these can be found at:

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/services/computing/desktop-personal/openaccess/locations
SSPS Microlabs
Located in rooms B.03/B.04 (basement) - (for all SSPS students, both undergraduate and postgraduate). Note that although these may be used by students outside teaching hours; they are sometimes booked for classes during teaching hours. The microlabs are accessed using your university card and pin number. They are open 24 hours, 7 days a week. **Food and drink (other than water in a closed container) is not allowed in the labs.** Please use the common room (1.15) which has kitchen facilities.

Logging On
Log on to the computers using your matriculation number and associated password issued during matriculation. Remember to log off when you are finished.

Computer Familiarisation
Computer drop-in clinics will be run in Welcome Week; if further clinics/courses run during the year, you will be alerted, via e-mail, by the Graduate School. A list of further computing courses run by the University’s Information Services branch can be found on the Web at: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/services/help-consultancy/is-skills](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/services/help-consultancy/is-skills). These courses are free to postgraduates, if deemed necessary to your research by your supervisor.

Data Storage
**It is recommended that you use your network space to save files.** You access this file space from any lab computer on campus. We advise you not to rely on memory sticks or hard disks as your sole medium of storage. Damage to either may lead to work being irretrievably lost, and we are not permitted by the University to make allowances for this.

E-mail
Access to e-mail is provided through MyEd. You will have an e-mail address of the form: matriculation number@sms.ed.ac.uk. A ‘friendly’ alias also exists, normally: first initial.surname@sms.ed.ac.uk.

Please check your University e-mail frequently, because this is how we contact you. Set up any other e-mail accounts you may have so that messages are automatically directed to them from your University student address. When a message is sent to your University e-mail address, it will be assumed that you have received and will read it. If your student email address is not working, please contact sps.support@ed.ac.uk as it is our primary method of contact with you.

Support
IT support is available via sps.support@ed.ac.uk or the Help Desk in room 2.16, Chrystal Macmillan Building.

Printing and Photocopying Credits
There are various printers and copiers located throughout the Chrystal Macmillan Building. All SSPS research students are given free printing in the Chrystal Macmillan Building. Please print responsibly – store important information electronically where possible and print only when absolutely necessary. As a School we are committed to reducing our burden on the environment and are increasingly moving towards a paperless environment.

12.2 Study, Storage and Social Space

Hotdesk Facilities
West Wing, rooms 3.18 and 3.19 William Robertson Wing, Old Medical School (access from the 5th floor of the Chrystal Macmillan Building, by lift and stairway 2).
Graduate School Common Room
Room 1.15, Chrystal Macmillan Building – a common room for all postgraduate students in SSPS, which includes kitchen facilities.

Graduate School Practice Suite
Room 1.12, Chrystal Macmillan Building - a bookable study space room. Many of the Student Development and Research Training Workshops will take place here. Note that, although this room may be used by students outside teaching hours, it will often be booked events or workshops during teaching hours.

Lockers
Lockers are available on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th floors of the Chrystal Macmillan Building, and in both rooms of the West Wing. Locker keys are available (for a £10 deposit) from the Graduate School Office Reception. Please note the lockers are intended for storing academic items (e.g. books) and personal items you have brought in with you in order to use the CMB and University facilities. They are not for long-term storage of other items. There is a high demand for lockers, and we reserve the right to spot-check their contents.

Meeting Rooms
Meeting rooms within the Chrystal Macmillan Building can be booked by postgraduate students via the Graduate School Office reception, either in person or by email (gradschool.sps@ed.ac.uk).

Mail
There are postgraduate student mailboxes in the Graduate School Office Reception. Please remember to check them regularly.

Access to CMB outwith office hours
Out of office hours, to gain access to the building you must use the smaller glass door on the ground floor where there is a swipe card system on the right hand side of the door. For entry you will need your student card and pin number (your pin number can be found on MyEd). You can also gain entry from the lower ground floor.