



# MPhil in DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**COURSE  
HANDBOOK  
2022/2023**



Cover Photo by Anahitha Sagar, MPhil in Development Studies 2017-19.

## Purpose of the Course Handbook

This book contains all the information you will need concerning the MPhil in Development Studies. It covers the structure of the course and the basic timetables for each year, the purpose of each component of the course as well as information on the teaching and assessment of each component. The Handbook also contains information on the examination of the course, guidance on writing essays and the MPhil. thesis and on preparing for fieldwork research, and a section giving details about the Oxford Department of International Development. In the final sections, you will find some information on the regulations and University legislation governing the course, as well providing links as noted below to other sources.

**If you have a query about the course, please refer to the Handbook in the first instance.**

This Handbook applies to students starting the course in **Michaelmas Term 2022**. The information in this Handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

## Other Key Sources of Information

Please see below quick links to other sources of information about the MPhil., the Department and the University. More details are given later in this handbook. An electronic copy of the Handbook is posted on the MPhil Programme Canvas site (see below).

MPhil Development Studies Canvas site: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/180752>

Examination Regulations: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/>

Oxford Students website: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students?wssl=1>

For information about your College specifically, please see your College website.

## University term dates and attendance

Oxford University's academic year is divided into three terms: Michaelmas Term (MT), Hilary Term (HT) and Trinity Term (TT). Each term is 8 weeks in length; however, you are expected to arrive in Oxford **one full week before the beginning of term** (at the start of 0<sup>th</sup> week) and to remain in Oxford **until the end of the ninth week of term**. This is because it is often necessary to schedule lectures, mock examinations or other course deadlines in Week 0 or Week 9. Please see the schedules on the following pages for details.

The dates of these terms for the years 2022-23 and 2023-24, and the dates between which you should be in Oxford are the following:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Attendance required</b>
Michaelmas Term 2022	9 October – 3 December	3 October – 9 December
Hilary Term 2023	15 January – 11 March	9 January – 17 March

Trinity Term 2023	23 April – 17 June	17 April – 23 June
Michaelmas Term 2023	8 October – 2 December	2 October – 8 December
Hilary Term 2024	14 January – 9 March	8 January – 15 March
Trinity Term 2024	21 April – 15 June	15 April – 21 June

**You must notify your Course Supervisor and the Course Director should you need to be absent from Oxford for an extended period during the time your attendance is required.**

## **Examination Regulations**

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available [here](#). If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns please contact the Course Coordinator (mphl-admin@qeh.ox.ac.uk).

The information in this handbook is accurate as of September 2022, however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained [here](#). If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook online together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

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## Welcome to the MPhil in Development Studies

A warm welcome to Oxford and ODID!

In your two years at Oxford, we want to explore Development Studies with you in a way that is inter- and multi-disciplinary, historical and critical. Development studies has always been subjected to critical enquiry: when and how ‘development’ as a distinct concept emerged; what claims and arguments have been made in its name, and with what consequences; why the tides of theory and policy ebb and flow as they do; what gives rise to resistance and by whom; where the global economy is headed, now in an era of climate, health and political crises; and how we, as scholars, practitioners, and engaged individuals, relate to all this. Our project celebrates these debates.

In your first year, you will be introduced to social science disciplines, to a range of research methods and to theories and issues related to development. You will read widely before reading deeply for your thesis and your second year Options. One of Oxford’s strengths is its libraries. The Social Science Library holds a wide range of development studies materials; the large number of specialist area studies and disciplinary libraries provide added depth and hold important archival collections. Your teachers will have reading lists and advice on material that goes substantially beyond what you are exposed to in formal lectures and classes. Another of Oxford’s strengths is the vast range of seminars and conferences held throughout term time – you are encouraged to take full advantage of the intellectual discussions and world-class speakers that abound across the University.

We see the MPhil as an interactive process of learning between teachers and students. You may also want to create study or discussion groups of your own. Students often organize guest speakers and workshops. Meetings will be organised to solicit your ongoing views on the course, and you will have the opportunity to fill in feedback forms for each component of the course. During the Induction Week you will be asked to elect two Course Representatives who will act to convey your collective views to the Teaching Committee. You will also nominate Social Representatives, who will help coordinate the associational life of your cohort alongside your counterparts in the second year of the MPhil.

I am available to meet with you during my office hours for enquiries on any matter connected with the course. These are set aside specifically, and you can set up an appointment with me via a link in the Canvas MPhil site. Your course supervisor will be your first point of contact, but do not hesitate to come and see me if you have any worry or problem you cannot solve with your course supervisor.

A final note. You will doubtless observe that people refer to ODID (the Oxford Department of International Development) and QEH (Queen Elizabeth House, out of which ODID grew, and the name of our building). To allay confusion, they are both us! And, while like all names they stand for histories and identities, for everyday purposes they refer to the same thing.

I very much look forward to working with all of you in the coming two years!

Maxim Bolt

Course Director, October 2022

## MPhil Development Studies: Schedule of First Year Deadlines

Week	Michaelmas Term	Week	Hilary Term	Week	Trinity Term
0	Induction	0	<b><u>Core Course:</u> Assessed essay no. 1 via online submission by 9:30 am Monday.</b>	0	
1		1	<u>Economics Foundation</u> : essay to be submitted to convenor via email by <b>9:30 Monday am</b> <u>Core Course:</u> Preferred topics for essay no. 2 to be sent to Course Co-ordinator by <b>Friday, noon</b>	1	<b><u>Examinations:</u> two out of three Foundation Courses</b> Safety in Fieldwork Workshop (provisional timing)
2	<u>Core Course:</u> Preferred topics for essay no. 1 to be sent to Course Co-ordinator by <b>noon Thursday</b>	2	<u>Anthropology:</u> essay to be submitted to convenor via email by <b>9:30 am Friday</b>	2	<u>Research ethics form, safety in fieldwork form, travel insurance form</u> due on Monday. <b>All require extensive advance preparation.</b>
3		3	<u>History &amp; Politics:</u> essay to be submitted to convenor via email by <b>9:30 am Friday</b>	3	<u>Research Design Essay:</u> Draft assessed essay to supervisor by <b>12 noon Friday.</b>
4	<u>Anthropology:</u> essay 1 to be submitted to convenor via email by <b>9:30 am Friday</b>	4	<u>Thesis Preparation:</u> Submit to course supervisor a two-page description of the thesis topic	4	<u>Option courses:</u> Option course choice to be made online by <b>12 noon on Friday</b>
5	<u>History &amp; Politics:</u> essay 1 to be submitted to convenor via email by <b>9:30 am Friday.</b> N.B. No essay for Economics	5	<u>Economics Foundation:</u> Mock exam	5	<b><u>Research Design Essay:</u> Assessed essay via online submission by noon, Wednesday.</b>
6	<u>Research Methods (Qualitative):</u> essay to be submitted to convenor via email by <b>9:30 am Friday</b>	6		6	
7	<u>Core Course:</u> Draft assessed essay no. 1 to supervisor by <b>12 noon Friday</b>	7	<u>Core Course:</u> Draft assessed essay no. 2 to supervisor by 12 noon Friday	7	
8	Exam Entry for Foundations online	8	Research Ethics Workshop (provisional timing)	8	<b><u>Examination:</u> Research Methods</b>
9		9	<u>Thesis outline form to be submitted via email to the Course Co-ordinator on 12 noon Wednesday.</u> <b><u>Core Course:</u> assessed essay No. 2 due for online submission by noon Friday</b>	9	

## MPhil Development Studies: Schedule of Second Year Deadlines

Week	Michaelmas Term	Week	Hilary Term	Week	Trinity Term
0		0		0	
1	Welcome back session with Course Director	1	<u>Thesis</u> : title and abstract to be sent to Course Co-ordinator by 12 noon Friday	1	<b><i>Thesis: to be handed in to the Examination Schools by 12 noon Friday</i></b>
2	Meet with supervisor and establish a set of deadlines for writing thesis	2	<u>Thesis</u> : draft to be handed in to thesis supervisor by 12 noon Friday. Later deadline acceptable ONLY by negotiation of a mutually agreed new deadline	2	
3	<u>Thesis workshops</u> : on fieldwork findings. <i>Prepare presentations in advance.</i>	3		3	
4	<u>Thesis workshops</u> : on fieldwork findings. <i>Prepare presentations in advance.</i>	4		4	
5		5		5	
6		6		6	
7		7		7	
8	Exam Entry for Options courses online	8		8	<b><u>Examination: Two Options examinations or submissions to be held during week 8 or week 9</u></b>
9		9		9	<b><u>Examination: Two Options examinations or submissions to be held during week 8 or week 9</u></b>

**NB:** There will be Option formative essays and other deadlines in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms – details from course convenors. Deadlines for all assessed work must be strictly observed. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of examination regulations, for which students may be penalised, including by the deduction of marks or outright failure of that component. Please see Examination Conventions (Appendix 1) for late penalties.

Failure to submit any summative work by the deadline is automatically reported to the University Proctors.

# 1. Overview of the course

The course will introduce you to development studies as an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary subject. It covers the intellectual history of development, the paradigm shifts and internal conflicts within the discipline and the contemporary relevance of research to development policy and practice. It aims to encourage innovative, original and critical approaches to development studies.

Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of key social science disciplines that have a bearing on development studies as a multi- and inter-disciplinary subject; social and development theory that underpins development discourse and policy intervention; past and present social, political and economic conditions of developing countries; and qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in the social sciences.

The programme is wide in scope, while its duration for two years also allows in-depth enquiry, critical appreciation and innovative analysis in students' chosen areas of specialisation. Students develop the needed competence in foundation disciplines bearing on development studies in the first year, along with intensive research methods training and research preparation. The second year is devoted to area or thematic specialisation, and the writing of a substantial research-based dissertation.

Students are taught through a combination of lectures, seminars, classes, and supervision sessions, with constant dialogue between teachers and students and among students themselves. The interactive nature of the course encourages students to develop critical, synthetic and presentation skills. A comprehensive Research Methods course is compulsory for all students. It covers qualitative and quantitative research methods and basic statistics. The Research Design Essay, written before undertaking the thesis research, gives students the opportunity to develop a rigorous plan for inter-disciplinary research and for thesis writing. All students have the opportunity to make seminar presentations on the analytical framework and research methodologies deployed in their thesis.

The MPhil is an intensive course and the workload in the first year is particularly heavy. If you have any concerns about managing your workload, please consult your course supervisor and your college adviser for support.

Six elements comprise the MPhil in Development Studies:

- a) Core course
- b) Foundations courses
- c) Research Methods course
- d) Thesis Preparation Workshops
- e) Options
- f) Thesis

Students must successfully pass all the assessed components of the course in the first year in order to progress to the second year. These are the following:

- a) Two Foundations examinations
- b) Examination in Research Methods
- c) Two Core course essays
- d) Research Design Essay

Students will submit and receive feedback on both formative and summative work. Formative work is designed to give you feedback, but the marks do not count towards your degree. Summative or assessed work is that for which the marks do count.

The final mark for the degree is made up of four components, weighted as follows:

- i) the mean for the two core course essays (20%)
- ii) the thesis (30%)
- iii) the final mark for Research Methods, which is the mean of the mark for the Research Design Essay and that for the examination in Research Methods (15%)
- iv) the marks for each of the two second-year Option examinations or assessed essays (17.5% for each Option; total 35%). These are discussed below in the section on assessment.

## 2. Course Components

This section discusses the courses that students take: the Core course, the Foundations courses, Research Methods, the Thesis Workshops, and the Options courses. The thesis is discussed in the section on assessed written work.

### Teaching and Learning in 2022-23

Teaching and research will be conducted in person. We will not as a matter of course be live-streaming or recording lectures or classes. Individual students may be granted permission to make audio recordings of lectures **for their own personal use only**, either via a Student Support Plan issued from the Disability Advisory Service, or on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the lecturer.

All assessments for the MPhil, including examinations in Trinity Term, will be online (open-book) exams. Details and guidance will be provided in advance of examinations.

### Core Course

The Core course is convened by **Dr Séverine Deneulin**. It runs weekly through the first and second terms of Year 1.

The Core course of the MPhil in Development Studies introduces students to the multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of development studies, and to the concepts and tools that enable critical engagement with a wide range of theories and themes. This is not a ‘how to’ course; it is primarily concerned with the intellectual challenges of understanding processes of social, economic and political change. The core runs over the first two terms and is divided in two parts:

- Michaelmas Term (MT): Ideas and theories about development
- Hilary Term (HT): Key themes in development

As a relatively new field, Development Studies has engaged with ideas from sociology, geography, anthropology, economics, and politics, among others. This fertile yet contested ground is represented in our topics. The lectures and classes in the first term of the MPhil are intended to introduce you to some of the key theories of development. Throughout this term, we emphasise that ‘development’ is a historically constructed idea, that it has been interpreted in a wide range of not always compatible ways, and that the language of development is loaded with baggage that requires careful exploration. We need to understand the origins of these ideas, the reasons they have had such a powerful appeal, their political uses, and their effects.

We should be able to explore them from the point of view of different disciplinary approaches. Lectures are arranged to reflect the chronology of when particular theories, which evolve over time, have been especially pertinent.

In the second term, we turn to key topics and debates in development. The coverage is by no means exhaustive, but it reflects ODID's strengths and expertise, exposes students to innovative research in the field, and draws in policy implications and applicability where possible. The wide range of topics covered demonstrates that development represents many narratives, which may not always come together in a synthesis. Moreover, we show that while all the viewpoints we cover have had their critics, some of them trenchant, they nonetheless continue to shape thinking about development, consciously and unconsciously, in the academy, and among governments, political activists, international development organisations, and civil society actors.

**The Core course is examined by means of two 5000-word assessed essays, both submitted in Year 1.**

## **Foundations Courses**

Students take two of the three Foundation courses in Economics, History & Politics, and Social Anthropology in their first year. These courses run for the whole of the first term in Year 1 and for the first four weeks of the second term.

Students are allocated to the two Foundations courses in which they have **the least academic experience**. Please note that the **Economics** course is compulsory for those students who have not taken economics in their first degree. Those who have studied economics previously must take Social Anthropology and History and Politics. If you have questions regarding the appropriate Foundations courses, please discuss this with Prof. Max Bolt, the Course Director.

The **Economics** course is convened by **Prof. Cheryl Doss**. It is designed to show you how economists think about development. We will initially focus on some key economic concepts like opportunity costs, the power of incentives, and the workings and failures of markets. We hope you gain an understanding of how economists approach the challenge of development and how this informs policy debates. In doing so, we will also explore how this discipline speaks to other social sciences. We will not study the various concepts in an abstract way but will focus on their application to developing countries and policy debates. To do so, the course will make intensive use of practical applications and economic data and will minimize the use of abstract formulas and graphs. We also encourage you to check newspapers and blogs as often as possible and read a wide range of material (the reading list includes material from economists with different perspectives).

The **History & Politics** course is convened by **Prof. Jocelyn Alexander and Dr Myfanwy James**. This course introduces students to the ways in which the disciplines of history and politics have tried to understand key processes of change in the 'Global South'. The lectures explore a selection of the concepts and methods these disciplines have developed and deployed, often in conversation with other disciplines. We focus on scholarly debates and contentions with an eye to both the contexts that produced historiographical shifts and the politics of knowledge production itself. We investigate different types of agents and ideas

that have shaped change – from discourse and political ideology to economic and technological forces; from state and international institutions to social movements – and consider how the ways in which topics are deemed worthy of study, and how they are studied by scholars of history and politics, have shaped our understanding of the Global South. The course does not aim to be comprehensive in scope. It draws selectively from the modern history and politics of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, from the 1880s up to the present. Themes that the course addresses include processes of state formation; colonial and post-colonial forms of power, knowledge and identity; the constitution and reproduction of classes, movements, and political and social elites; nations and the politics of belonging; international orders; conflict and violence; and democracy.

The **Social Anthropology** is convened this academic year by **Prof. Laura Rival**. The purpose of this course is to introduce some of the foundational concepts and core methodological tools of contemporary anthropology, while showing the relevance for development studies of the anthropological way of thinking about change and researching social life. Anthropological perspectives have played a significant role in international development, not least through the training of prominent practitioners and critics. Anthropologists have been directly engaged in many development policy debates. Anthropological concepts, methods, and approaches will be illustrated through the presentation of local and ordinary people's mobilisations to improve their lives, as well as through the discussion of their encounters with those who want to 'modernise' and 'develop' them. By illuminating the latter, the course also reveals how apparently impersonal 'systems' are themselves sites of contingency and meaning-making. As a whole, the course seeks to demonstrate how anthropologists work as bridge makers, translators and facilitators in the multi- and interdisciplinary contexts that constitute development studies, including contexts where engaged participation and collaborative endeavours prevail. The course also aims to showcase a diversity of voices reflecting the plural experiences that make up the world, whether 'South' and 'North,' or 'developed' and 'developing.' Finally, the course illustrates the ways in which ethnography reaches beyond the confines of disciplinary boundaries and becomes a research tool widely recognised for its usefulness in documenting empirical situations.

Each Foundation includes regular lectures, question-and-answer seminars with the lecturers, and class sessions with a TA. Lectures, seminars and sessions may vary from week to week depending on the content and course structure.

Students write two formative essays for both the History and Politics and the Social Anthropology Foundations courses, one in each of MT and HT. For the Economics course, students submit one formative essay and sit a mock exam. While these marks do not form part of the formal examination process, they are extremely valuable and give students the opportunity to explore relevant topics. Foundation essays provide a focus for course reading and an opportunity to critically explore debates. They are essential for students to monitor their progress as they embark on learning how to structure an argument in a new discipline; they also enable the teaching staff to detect possible problems and to address them in good time. It is expected that students will meet the deadlines for the formative essays so that staff can provide timely feedback. Course convenors should be informed in advance of any difficulty in meeting deadlines.

**Each Foundation course is examined through a three-hour written examination held at the beginning of Trinity Term in Year 1. Students are required to pass these examinations to be allowed to continue to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the course. (See details below on examinations.)**

## **Research Methods**

All students take the course in **Research Methods**. This course is convened by **Dr Francesca Lessa** (qualitative methods) in MT by **Dr Hailemariam Tiruneh** (quantitative methods) in HT. The quantitative methods section of the course is taught in conjunction with the MSc in Global Governance and Diplomacy. In HT and TT, additional sessions on research design, research ethics, fieldwork safety and risk assessment, library resources, and software and computerised databases are held.

This course aims to provide students with a basic knowledge of social science research methodologies, to develop the capacity to conduct qualitative and quantitative research and analysis, and to explore the ethics and politics of social science research in practice.

The Research Methods course is as important to the MPhil degree as the Core course. Its main objectives are to raise the epistemological and ethical questions underpinning social science research in the context of international development, to familiarize students with the basic statistical methods used in quantitative social research, and to explore the ways in which qualitative and quantitative research methods may complement one another. By so doing we hope to facilitate your training in inter-disciplinary research.

During the first term, students will be introduced to research design and epistemology; working with and studying agents of development such as NGOs; the use of archives and texts; ethnography and participant observation; oral history and interviewing; mixed methods; and the use of images and visual methods. Each session will address theoretical issues as well as practical questions regarding the ways in which these methods might be effectively used by MPhil students in their thesis research. Week 8 of MT will be devoted to considerations of research design and methodology as applied to MPhil theses in anticipation of the Hilary Term thesis workshops. Voluntary sessions on data management and basic statistics will also be offered.

The second term will be dedicated to the formal teaching of basic statistical methods used in quantitative social research, with a particular focus on development. The emphasis will be on the intuitive understanding of concepts and procedures (the mathematical derivation of the techniques will be skipped), but the logic and reason behind each formula will be discussed. Students who have no prior experience will be able to develop skills in research methods and those with some prior knowledge will have the opportunity to enhance their skills. (There are three optional routes for students with prior knowledge in quantitative methods: 1) stay with the MPhil RM course and spend more time on other courses; 2) stay with the MPhil RM course and do a quantitative methods Option in Year 2; 3) stay with the MPhil RM course and do a quantitative methods Option in Year 1. Note that all students must take the MPhil RM exam no matter which route is chosen.) During this term, students will be introduced to basic descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, simple and multiple regression analysis, identification issues, and impact analysis. The objective is also to develop basic skills in using the statistical software STATA for quantitative analysis.

During the third term, students will have workshops on ethics and on safety in fieldwork and exam revision sessions.

We do not promote any particular theoretical approach or research method but attempt to help you reach an understanding of how different research methods can best be used to reach your objectives in different contexts, depending on the underlying purpose of your research and the questions you are seeking to answer. We focus on the conception, design and implementation of studies that seek to understand both theoretical and practical issues.

The Research Methods course is taught through weekly lectures and classes. Extra sessions may be added as needed. Formative work includes one essay due in Michaelmas Term and a series of problem sets in Hilary Term.

**The Research Methods course is examined by two forms of assessment. The first is a three-hour 20 minutes online open-book examination, which students sit in TT of Year 1. This covers the material from both MT and HT, the qualitative and quantitative components. The second is the 5000-word Research Design essay (RDE), on which more detail is provided in the Assessed Written Work section below.**

## **Thesis Preparation Workshops**

### Year 1:

The Thesis Workshops are run in the second half of HT. The workshops focus on practical steps for developing a well-designed research project and writing the RDE. Topics to be covered are: (1) formulating and refining a research question; (2) identifying and using relevant literature, including theory; (3) choosing appropriate methods and locating sources. In weeks 5, 6 and 7, the workshops include a lecture followed by discussions with a TA. Students may be asked to prepare brief assignments before the TA sessions. In week 8, students present their research proposals to an audience of two teaching faculty and their peers.

### Year 2:

In MT, students present the findings of their research and the preliminary arguments of their thesis to an audience of two teaching faculty and their peers. The aim of the workshops is to disseminate the findings of student research, to facilitate the exchange of ideas, to provide feedback and constructive criticism, and to give students the opportunity to develop their presentation skills.

## **Options**

In their second year, students choose two Options. Each usually runs for an eight-week term in either MT or HT. The Options available vary from year to year depending on the available teaching staff. A variety of Options are offered within the MPhil Programme.

Options are expected to have two formative essays due during the term. They are generally summatively assessed in Trinity Term. Each of the two Options will be examined by one of the three following means:

- 1) A three-hour online open-book examination, in which students answer three questions selected from at least eight.

- 2) A 5,000-word essay, usually due in Trinity Term, selected from a list of at least eight questions provided by the course convenor. In some circumstances, teaching committee may approve an Option assessed by an essay that is either longer or shorter than 5,000 words and such requests will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 3) In the case of the Option course, The Politics of Film in Africa, it will be assessed in two parts:
  - a. a 4,500-word assessed essay (80% of the overall mark). Questions will be provided in Trinity term and students will have four weeks to complete the essay.
  - b. i) a short film of about 3-4 minutes on an issue related to significant themes on the course. Films will be screened in the Week 8 Seminar of HT and will be assessed on critical engagement with these issues, not for their technical or aesthetic values (10% of the overall mark).  
ii) a critical 2,000-word treatment to accompany the film (10% of the overall mark).

**Students are strongly encouraged to take two MPhil Options, and it is mandatory to take at least one.** However, students may choose their second Option from other programmes within ODID or from other departments at Oxford. Please see the section on ‘Procedure for taking non-MPhil Options’ courses below for more details.

### 3. Summative assessed written submissions

There are four major pieces of summative assessed course work that all MPhil students are required to complete: the two Core essays, the Research Design Essay (RDE), and the Thesis. This section of the Handbook considers these in detail, providing advice on how to select topics, engage with supervision, conduct research, develop ideas, and write up these submissions.

Several second-year Options courses are also assessed by a 5000-word essay, and formative submissions are required for the majority of courses – some of the advice provided below may also be helpful for completing these essays.

Advice on examinations (Foundations, Research Methods and some Options courses) will be provided during the relevant courses.

#### Core Essays

The course will be examined via two supervised essays, of 5000 words each. The first essay will be submitted before the start of Hilary Term, and the second essay at the end of Hilary Term. Students will receive feedback from the assessors for their Core essays.

#### Choosing Essay Topics

For each essay, students are required to indicate their preferred essay topics by **Thursday of Week 2, Michaelmas Term** (for 1<sup>st</sup> Core essay) and by **Friday of Week 1, Hilary Term** (for 2<sup>nd</sup> Core essay). Their first, second and third preferences are sent to the Course Co-ordinator via an online form on the Core course Canvas page. The Core course convenor, in consultation with the Course Director, will then allocate topics and supervisors to each student. While we attempt to satisfy the first choice, balancing the preferences of students with the capacity of each supervisor is not easy and sometimes, second or third preference

will have to be allocated. The Core essay questions are reviewed by the MPhil Board of Exams each year.

### Essay Supervision

The essay supervisor should discuss the topic with the student, offer advice on readings, discuss an outline of the proposed essay, and provide comments on a draft. This involves a minimum of two meetings. The draft essay must be delivered to the supervisor two weeks before the deadline for the submission of the essay – or by a mutually agreed date– and the supervisor should return it in time for the student to revise the essay as needed. Typically, the supervisor reads and comments on one full draft of the essay. For students who are struggling with the writing, the supervisor may read a revised section of the essay and provide further comments if the timeframe allows.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Core Essay

In your first Core essay, you will be asked to critically answer an important theoretical question in development studies based on one of the major themes addressed in the lectures. It is crucial that you answer the question as stated; please do not re-phrase the question or make up your own.

You are expected to read deeply into the theme of your chosen essay question, drawing on both primary and the secondary literature. This is an exercise in critical and analytical writing through which you should demonstrate a clear understanding of the question – its wider theme, and its debates and controversies – and develop your own argument. One of the key pedagogical aims of the first Core essay is to learn how to frame an original, structured and evidenced argument.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Core Essay

For the second essay, your topic will be closely linked to the questions explored in the Core course lecture series. The second essay will engage with a major theme in development from an inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary perspective, based on the questions provided by the lecturers over the term.

### General Advice on Core Essays

There is no rigid template for Core essays. However, there are some useful considerations that may help you write a good essay:

- Before you start writing you might like to establish the kind of argument you are going to construct, identify the question that you are answering, define your terms, establish the theme, and indicate the method by which you will tackle this theme.
- When you finish writing, it is useful to re-consider the introduction and check whether you have indeed addressed the issues you intended to analyse. Be sure to balance analysis and argument with empirical exposition.
- Read as widely as you can and use your initiative, special interests and skills. If you so wish, you may use the Core essays to deepen your knowledge of a region of the world. A good essay has a succinct and thorough analysis of the relevant literature (be it theoretical or historical/empirical or both).
- Try to read from primary sources – it is much better for you than to read secondary reviews or derivative work, though the latter are unavoidable in a subject as big as development studies and it may be necessary to trace ideas in later works, different contexts or popularisations. Development Studies is a highly contested subject. Show

evidence that you understand controversies associated with your topic and the reasons for them. These controversies may be theoretical or methodological, or related to evidence and its interpretation. You are warmly invited to criticise discourse, concepts, assumptions, logic, evidence, use of policy and politics, etc.

- Don't forget to provide reasons and evidence for the statements you make! E.g. don't simply write 'inequality is pervasive in South Africa', without mentioning at least some statistical evidence of your claim.
- Do not plagiarise (see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>), and do reference all points of evidence and points of argument due to others (e.g. do not write '90% of the population in Niger live in multidimensional poverty' without citing your source of data). It should be clear which ideas are yours and which are ones you have read by others.
- Where appropriate use evidence or choose one or several case studies. While 'Asia', 'Africa' and 'Latin America' are political categories used in the development literature, pause before you leap, and consider whether the region is appropriate for the theory.

While it is critical to be honest about the attribution of ideas, you are encouraged to explore your own ideas – do not be too modest about them. It should be clear in your essay which ideas are yours and which ideas are ones you have read by others (cf. above on plagiarism).

What makes a good essay is:

- Coherence of the essay structure, and its relevance to the essay question;
- The capacity to develop your own position on complex issues. This requires the capacity to understand and then critically assess the position of other scholars who contribute to the debate you are analysing;
- The capacity to contrast and compare, without caricaturing, differing positions on a given theme;
- The rigorous use of evidence to back up your claims.

The most common cause of a poor essay is the lack of a clear structure and of a strategy to answer the question. A symptom of this is the presence in your essay of abrupt transitions between one section and another. You therefore need to pay attention to the flow of your argument and make sure it works smoothly. It is useful to think of your essay as the sum of a number of paragraphs. Each paragraph contains one key idea. You should start each paragraph by outlining that idea, and then proceed to present the evidence to justify it. Each new idea (or paragraph) builds on the previous one.

It might be beneficial to the strength of your essay structure to present, towards the end of the opening section of your essay, a brief outline of how you will answer the essay question, and the sub-arguments in your essay. This will then guide you to structure your argument.

Other common shortcomings include:

- The essay does not fully engage with the essay question and/or digresses on themes of little relevance to it;
- Your statements are not backed up by evidence;
- The essay contains too much description and too little analysis;
- There is poor identification of the essay sources.

Each essay for final submission must be:

1. accompanied by a standard cover sheet (available via the MPhil Canvas site);
2. a maximum of 5,000 words in length (**excluding the bibliography, but including footnotes**); **exceeding the word limit will result in the imposition of penalties (see MPhil handbook)**;
3. accompanied by a word count;
4. written with correct observance of proper procedure in reference citation (see thesis guidance below).

In order to maintain anonymity during marking, students are issued with an examination candidate number which should appear on the cover sheet of each essay. Please note that this number is **different** from the student ID number issued by the University.

**The Core essays must be submitted online only; no hard copy will be accepted. Details for online submission are available on Canvas.**

## Research Design Essay

The Research Design Essay is written in preparation for the second-year thesis and must be relevant to the inter-disciplinary field of Development Studies. A 'Research Design' consists of a plan for research and for writing a thesis, including:

- (a) the specification of a set of research questions or a statement of problems to be analysed;
- (b) a discussion of relevant existing scholarship and theoretical approaches within an inter-disciplinary framework;
- (c) an outline of the initial framing, argument or hypotheses, depending on your project;
- (d) a discussion of case selection and empirical sources and analysis; and
- (e) an account of how the analysis will bear on or address the research questions posed, or how it will make a contribution to the subject area. This should include some brief discussion of your analytical approach.

The essay should include a bibliography of works cited and a projected schedule of work. It must not exceed 5,000 words, excluding the bibliography and timetable of work.

The RDE serves multiple purposes, as an essay that is both summative and formative. It is worth setting these out explicitly:

- (a) it demonstrates what you have learned from the Research Methods course, as part of its summative assessment;
- (b) it assesses your ability to design a research project as an intellectual problem, as the basis of your thesis;
- (c) it demonstrates the feasibility of your research plans – the Board of Examiners will provide separate formative feedback to your supervisor about these plans, in addition to comments provided as part of the summative assessment.

The following is a suggested structure for a Research Design Essay. However, the essay should reflect the focus of your research. Research projects vary in their emphasis (theory, the literature, the methods of gathering data or other primary materials, the methods of analysis, the results of the analysis, etc) so the relative lengths and the order of these sections can vary:

**Introduction:** What is your research question? In your introduction you should state your **research question(s)** as succinctly and clearly as you can. It is best to try to frame your

project around an intellectual problem, paradox or debate. It is helpful to formulate this as a specific question or set of questions that you will answer, rather than a broad topic of interest. You may wish to develop a set of sub-questions that are more straightforwardly amenable to empirical investigation than your headline question; if so, be very clear about how these relate to one another, and how they together enable you to address your larger intellectual problem. The introduction should also include a justification for why this is an important and interesting question to address.

**Literature review: What is the contribution your research will make to existing knowledge?** The research question must be put into the context of the existing literature, both theoretical and topic specific. In this section you need to concisely outline your interpretation of the existing literature and explain how your research project ‘fits’ and will contribute: how does your project relate to approaches, ideas and findings in the existing literature and how does it develop these further?

There are a number of approaches: you may identify a gap in the literature (but note that a gap is not enough – it must be an interesting gap!); you may suggest that the accepted findings are controversial or open to doubt; you may question the dominant theoretical framework(s); you may identify a continuing conflict between two or more ‘camps’ or disciplinary approaches; you may suggest that different and more appropriate methods could be used; you may see a generative resonance between theoretical approaches or conceptual insights that are not generally brought together; or you may seek to apply established ideas in a different context that will provide new insights or for a different purpose. Make clear your assumptions and the limits of your topic. The account of existing scholarship and research will necessarily, however, be brief.

**Selection of case, methods and empirical material: How will you answer your research questions?**

First, you may want to discuss the selection of cases, events, persons, processes, outcomes, texts, etc. Why have you chosen a specific case or set of cases, a particular data set, or a particular group of interviewees or texts?

Second, you should discuss how you will obtain the relevant empirical material. Primary research materials are diverse, including historical or archival documents, data about organisations, bureaucracies and individuals, interviews and observational data whether from participant observation or non-participant observation, surveys and ethnographies. Existing statistics, survey data and even ethnographies are invaluable sources for some research projects. You should discuss your choice of research methods in some detail (archival research, collecting published documents, interviewing, ethnography, focus groups, participant observation, obtaining large scale datasets, etc), clearly stating why these are the best methods for addressing your research question. Think about practical issues too: are these materials accessible and sufficient to allow you to answer your research questions?

Third, you should describe how you intend to analyse your research materials. Will you be using statistical analysis (what kind?), discourse analysis, content analysis, constructing historical chronologies or analytic narratives – or, as is often the case in development studies, a combination of one or more of these methods? Be as specific as possible in describing the approach that you will use.

Finally, be sure to discuss the advantages and potential limitations of your chosen method(s) and the potential biases of your sources.

**Conclusion:** Finally, you need to conclude by discussing briefly how the data analysis you propose should bear on your research question in such a way as to make a meaningful

contribution to the field you have described in your literature review. In some circumstances, you may also need to discuss the feasibility of the project if there is a concern about the availability of data or the sensitivity of the topic. The conclusion should also include a projected **schedule of work** so that the assessors and your supervisor can be satisfied that you have a reasonable prospect of completing the work in the allocated time.

**Bibliography:** Include a complete list of all cited work at the end of your research design. There is no specified reference format, but you should be consistent in how you cite the works.

For students working in the realm of **pure theory**, these general guidelines should be interpreted broadly and flexibly. Students must include a general overview of the subject area, and a discussion of the methods to be used. In addition, a Research Design essay on a theory topic will usually include one or more of the following elements: i) a literature review and a discussion about a specific topic in political, social or other theory, with some reference to the grounds on which different authors advance different and competing arguments; ii) an intellectual analysis of an author's methods and/or progression in their writing; iii) comparison of an author's methods or a comparison of several authors' methods on a specific theoretical topic or issue.

For final submission, the Research Design essay must be:

1. accompanied by a standard cover sheet (available via the MPhil Canvas site);
2. A maximum of 5,000 words in length (excluding the bibliography and timetable, but including footnotes), strictly observed – **exceeding the word limit will result in the imposition of penalties (see p. 29)**;
3. accompanied by a word count;
4. written with correct observance of proper procedure in reference citation (see Thesis Guidance Note later in this booklet).

**The essay must be submitted via online only; no hard copy will be accepted. Details for online submission are available on Canvas.**

In order to maintain anonymity during marking, students are issued with a number which should appear on the cover sheet of the essay. The number used for the RDE is the same as the examination number issued to each student in the first year of the course. The number is available online on each student's Self-Service Page, and should also be used in each written examination and submission during the student's time on the course.

## **Thesis**

The thesis is a major piece of original work. Students conduct research for the thesis during the summer between their first and second year. In the first year, students prepare for the thesis research by identifying a supervisor, choosing a topic, and writing the Research Design Essay. Much of the second year is spent writing and rewriting the thesis.

While the thesis must be in the broad area of Development Studies, it does not need to be on a topic directly related to the courses undertaken as part of the degree. Students must discuss their thesis topic with their course supervisor – the earlier the better, and certainly by Week 8 of Michaelmas Term of year 1.

Theses submitted for the MPhil in previous years which, in the opinion of the examiners, are of a high standard are kept in the Social Sciences Library – ask at the issue desk. It may be

useful to take a look at these for intellectual inspiration, style and presentation. We encourage you to look at several of these to see the range of ways in which students approach the thesis. Some of the issues about framing your thesis topic are discussed above in the section on the RDE.

### Timetable for writing the MPhil thesis

<b>Year 1</b>	
MT	The subject matter of the thesis should be discussed with the course supervisor as early as possible, and no later than Week 8, MT, Year 1.
HT	Identify a thesis supervisor
Week 4-8 HT	Thesis Preparation Workshops CUREC/research ethics session.
Week 9 HT	A one-page outline of the thesis topic, signed by the course supervisor and (if different) the thesis supervisor, to be handed in to the Course Director (via the Course Co-ordinator) for approval by noon, <b>Wednesday</b> of week 9. This outline should indicate not only the subject matter of the thesis but also the method of investigation proposed. The form to use to record your outline is available on the MPhil Canvas page.
Week 1 of TT	Safety in Fieldwork Workshop. Workshop on completing the CUREC and risk assessment forms. Students requiring immunizations for fieldwork should make appointments at the University's Occupational Health Service office.
Week 2 of TT	Students must complete the CUREC form and submit it to the Course Co-ordinator by Friday. Those students planning to do fieldwork must also submit the risk assessment forms.
Week 5 of TT	Students must submit the Research Design Essay via online by 12 noon on <b>Wednesday</b> .
Week 8 of TT	Students meet thesis supervisor before going to the field
<b>Summer</b>	Research

<b>Year 2</b>	
Week 2 of MT	Students meet thesis supervisor to report on research and writing plans
Week 3 and 4 of MT	Thesis workshops
Week 8 of MT	The examination entry form distributed by the Colleges must be completed and returned to the College Secretary of the student's college by 12 noon on Friday. Students are asked to state on the form the proposed field of the thesis.

Week 1 of HT	The title of the thesis and a 300-word abstract should be sent to the Course Co-ordinator.
Week 6 of HT	Deadline to apply to change a thesis title is on Friday. Minor adjustments may be made to the title of the thesis with the agreement of the thesis supervisor. However, for any significant changes, an application must be made to the Examiners. MPhil Examiners will not accept applications after this date.
Week 1 of TT	The thesis must be submitted online by 12 noon on Friday with the student's examination number

### Choice of Thesis Topic

There is no set model for a thesis – there is a very wide range of possibilities in terms of topics and approaches. In your thesis, you should display a capacity to carry out research and analysis in development studies.

A number of factors will influence your choice of a research question:

- 1) The potential to make a contribution to the academic conversations on this issue. (see above on RDE).
- 2) It should be a question that will sustain your interest for more than a year!
- 3) You must identify a supervisor who is willing and able to supervise the thesis. Not all topics have a potential thesis supervisor available.
- 4) The topic must be one that can be handled within the 30,000-word limit. Although there is no minimum, the thesis must be a substantive piece of work. The word length will vary depending on the topic and methods.
- 5) The thesis must be feasible for you to do, given your background, experience, and skills (including language skills.) Any health constraints should also be considered in considering fieldwork. You are required to obtain research ethics approval, so it must meet ethical guidelines. Studying vulnerable populations, including children, requires that you go through a very extensive ethics review process so you must plan this early in the year.
- 6) We strongly encourage you **not** to choose sites for in-person fieldwork that are rated by the FCDO (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>) as “Advise against all but essential travel”. Travel to these areas requires an extensive approval process and the approval may not be granted. It can be difficult to do fieldwork under such circumstances and there are added ethical issues to address. The impact of Covid-19 on the 2021-22 academic year must be considered when planning for research in the field. Travel restrictions and other risk factors will need to be taken into account when preparing your research and data-gathering. Students should always have a back-up plan (or two or three) if they are planning for travel and fieldwork.
- 7) If you plan to do a DPhil after completing the MPhil, you should consider the feasibility of extending the research into a DPhil thesis. What would you add, or develop further, and how? Not all good MPhil thesis topics are extendable, and a switch to a new topic for your DPhil may complicate your progression from MPhil to DPhil status.
- 8) Financial constraints. The availability of funding may also shape your decisions about your research plan. Colleges may be able to provide some financial support for research.

Students should discuss thesis ideas with their course supervisor early in their time at ODID. If the topic is not in the course supervisor's area of expertise, the student should approach

other members of ODID academic staff or senior members in other relevant University departments. This should only be done after consulting (and with the support of) the course supervisor; course supervisors may directly refer students to potential thesis supervisors. While approaching various potential thesis supervisors, students must ensure that their course supervisor is kept informed at every stage.

Despite the wide interests and competence of Oxford's academic staff, **there can be no guarantee that for every topic and in every academic year a supervisor is available, able and willing to take on the task of thesis supervision.** This makes early consultation imperative. You may need to change or adapt your topic in order to find an appropriate supervisor.

Thesis supervisors will vary in terms of what they expect to see from students and when. Some supervisors prefer to give comments on each chapter as it is drafted while others prefer to review and comment on a completed first draft of the entire thesis. Supervisors will need time to read and comment on the drafts. Note that supervisors are not expected to be available during the breaks to read and comment on drafts. In addition, you will need time to revise the paper, sometimes substantially, in response to the comments. Generally, a complete draft should be provided to the supervisor by week 2 of HT, unless a different schedule is agreed upon in advance. A series of workshops and deadlines helps to ensure that students are on track with their thesis. The thesis workshop in HT provides additional guidance on choosing a topic, case, methodology, and situating it in the literature. Students have the opportunity to work in small groups with a TA on their RDE. An ethics workshop, focused on the CUREC process (see below), and a field safety workshop will be held at the beginning of TT.

### **Thesis Outline**

Students must complete an outline of their thesis topic (**in 300 words or less**), giving a preliminary title, on the thesis outline form (available via the MPhil Canvas site). This must be signed by your course supervisor and thesis supervisor (if the same staff member is acting as both, they should sign twice). The signed form must be submitted to the Course Coordinator by **Wednesday of week 9, HT of Year 1.**

### **Financial support for Research**

ODID provides some financial support for students to do research. This has typically been up to a maximum of £700 for each student collecting data. Summer funding may also be available through your College. Research costs tend to range between approximately £700 and £5,000 depending on fieldwork site(s), the cost of travel, the in-country expenses such as accommodation, software purchases, additional technology for collecting data, translation fees, and whether hired research assistance is needed. It is important to ensure that you will have sufficient funds to carry out your chosen research.

### **Compulsory Research Ethics (CUREC – Central University Research Ethics Committee) and Student Travel forms**

A series of forms are due in week 2 of TT. They all require your supervisor's signature. Your supervisor may ask for revisions before signing, so you should contact your supervisor substantially *before* the deadline. These forms comprise:

1. CUREC form for all students

2. Risk assessment form for any student travelling or conducting face-to-face research.

These forms are updated regularly, so you should obtain the most recent version. Links to the websites for CUREC forms plus guidance on completing them and the supporting documents that must be submitted with the form can be found on the International Development tile on Canvas. This site also provides the links to the risk assessment template and the TIRS site where you will need to upload it once your supervisor has approved it. Additional information on these forms is available in Appendix 1.

The CUREC forms must be approved by the Department Research Ethics Committee (DREC). They often require clarification or changes. The purpose of the CUREC process is to ensure that you have thoughtfully considered the various risks that your research may pose and how to minimize these. It is common for the Committee to ask you to revise your forms and to demonstrate that you have thought through important potential issues.

Similarly, the Risk Assessment form requires approval from the Head of Department. Applications to travel to areas with FCDO restrictions (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>) may require lengthy processes for approval and *the application may not be approved*. You would be expected to demonstrate that you have carefully considered the risks that you will face and that you will take steps to minimize these. In addition, you would need to demonstrate that this research could not be conducted in a location without FCDO restrictions. Thus, it is critical that applications are submitted on time. **Only after the above forms have been received and approved can the student's thesis topic be formally approved by the Course Director.**

The restrictions on travel and fieldwork due to COVID-19 have been constantly changing and may change again even after approval has been granted. If government guidelines change, both in the UK and in the country(ies) you are going to, travel approval may be rescinded. Thus, all students should have back-up plans if they are expecting to do field-based research that involves travel and/or face-to-face contact with research participants.

It is essential that the thesis topic, supervision arrangements and summer research plans are all finalised in advance of the completion of the forms. Meeting the week 2 deadline is important in order to ensure that any risk and safety, insurance and ethical challenges can be addressed and resolved so that you can begin your research in a timely manner.

### **Immunisations available via the Occupational Health Service**

The University's Occupational Health Service, 10 Parks Road, provides travel advice, immunisations and antimalarial prophylaxis to University staff and certain students travelling in the course of their work. MPhil students planning travel for fieldwork are encouraged to book any necessary immunisations or other treatment needed through the Occupational Health Service; they hold a travel clinic on Monday afternoons. They can be contacted by telephone: 01865 (2)82676, or e-mail: [enquiries@uohs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@uohs.ox.ac.uk). **Book well in advance** so that courses of immunisation can be completed in good time (at least six weeks before your departure date). Bring a completed travel appointment request form, available on the following webpage: <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs/travelhealth/>. ODID will pay for any immunisations provided by the Occupational Health Service (in addition to the travel grant noted above); Dominique Attala is the contact person within the Department for any queries.

This service does not extend to families or other accompanying persons or travel on College business. Advice for non-University business should be obtained from your G.P. Please note

that ODID will pay for immunisations provided by the Occupational Health Service **only**, not for immunisations provided by your G.P.

### **Contact with supervisor during the summer research period**

During the summer, students should stay in regular contact with their thesis supervisor and should consult carefully regarding any major change of plans or any significant change in the subject or focus of the thesis. Students and their thesis supervisors should have a clear and shared understanding of how and how often students should contact supervisors during the long vacation, and when contact might involve meetings. Where checking in during fieldwork is required, students should consider being in contact with their supervisors every two weeks or so. In other cases, the frequency of contact may vary. Meetings will typically be more widely spaced, depending on the arrangement with the supervisor, progress with the research, and whether particular issues arise that need addressing.

### **Thesis Presentation**

*Grammar, punctuation, and spelling.* Students are ultimately responsible for all aspects of thesis presentation, including ensuring that the thesis is written in clear, standard English. While a thesis supervisor may be prepared to help by correcting the worst errors, she or he is under no obligation to do so and no student should assume that the supervisor will take on this function. It is important to allow ample time for editing the thesis. This should include sufficient time for the text to be thoroughly checked and corrections made where necessary.

*Formatting.* The thesis pdf should be formatted on A4 size, double spaced and on one side of the paper only, with a 1" (3cm) margin on the left hand side. For ease of reading, we recommend that you use a font size no smaller than Times New Roman 11 point.

*Word-count.* The thesis must not be more than 30,000 words in length. The word-count applies to the main body of the thesis, footnotes or end-notes included. **Bibliography, acknowledgements, thesis title, list of contents, tables, figures, graphs, captions and so on are not to be included in the word-count.** There is no minimum word count. You should discuss the appropriate length with your supervisor. It will depend on the topic and the methods used.

*Title page.* Specimen title pages are to be found on the MPhil Canvas site.

*Chapters/sections.* It is useful to divide your thesis into clearly defined chapters or sections. It is also sometimes helpful to sub-divide within each chapter/section. A list of the chapters or sections should be included at the front of the thesis.

### **Reference citation**

The purpose of a bibliography is to enable a reader to find the original book, article or source. The system adopted should thus be clear and consistent. Care should be taken to ensure that it is accurate and that every reference cited in the body of the text appears in the Bibliography. There are a number of citation systems; consult with your supervisor and choose an appropriate one and use it consistently throughout the thesis. There are a number of citation managers which can make compiling your references much easier, such as Mendeley, Refworks, or Zotero. (The Social Sciences Library offers training on these.)

In-text references are recommended. Do not use footnotes to cite simple references; use them when the list of authors is too long to be included in the text, and include *only* author names and dates. For instance: (Dalhberg and Bennet 1985; Harrison 1992; Sullivan and Molle 2009), or: Dalhberg and Bennet (1985), Harrison (1992), Sullivan and Molle (2009), and Hall et al (2007b). Footnotes may also be used to elaborate – sparingly – on statements made in the text.

### **Appendices and Annexes**

You need to discuss the inclusion of appendices and annexes with your thesis supervisor. If you are using a great deal of newspaper quotations, unpublished records and reports, and grey literature materials, you may wish to separate those from your main bibliography. You may include an appendix of survey questionnaires, maps, or any other field material you feel relevant. Lists of interviewees should be included in your bibliographical references rather than in an appendix. All identifiers of the author **MUST** be taken out of the appendices and annexes (ex. sample letters, forms).

Please note that all materials essential to your argument should be included in the main body of your thesis. It is not compulsory for assessors to read appendices or annexes, and they should be kept to a minimum.

### **Assessment of the Thesis**

The Examiners expect a balanced and appropriately referenced piece of work, with a sequence of chapters that present evidence, develop an argument, engage in analysis, and come to a conclusion, all in rigorous academic fashion. It is expected that appropriate use will be made of relevant approaches in the interpretation, analysis, and presentation of data.

The best theses will be worthy of publication; all should show originality and/or competent and creative scholarship.

Examiners will assess the thesis under three broad headings:

1. *Aim and Concept.* Is the aim or concept of the thesis well chosen, and has it been given a sound intellectual and practical context by reference to literature, case studies, etc?
2. *Execution.* Is the research method and design justified? Are the data or other empirical sources and the quantity and quality of effort involved in obtaining and applying source material appropriate? Have the best analytical techniques been used? Is the reasoning clear and the argument logical?
3. *Presentation.* Is the physical presentation (e.g. format, illustrations, references, bibliography, etc.) of an acceptable and consistent standard?

Examiners will come to an overall assessment based on a combination of the above.

## **4. Assessment Organization**

This section of the Handbook provides an overview of the administration and marking of all MPhil summative assessments – including both summative submissions and examinations. The full examination conventions are provided in Appendix 1 .

The final mark for the degree consists of four components, weighted as follows:

- i) the mean for the two Core course essays (20%)
- ii) the thesis (30%)
- iii) the final mark for Research Methods, which is the mean of the mark for the research design essay and that for the examination in Research Methods (15%)
- iv) the marks for each of the two second-year Option examinations or written assessed essays (17.5% for each Option)

**In order to progress to the second year of the degree, students must receive passing marks in:**

- Two Core essays:
- Two Foundations exams
- The Research Methods exam
- The Research Design Essay (RDE)

**To complete the degree, students must also receive passing marks in:**

- The thesis
- Two Options courses

Note that students are required to pass the Foundations exams, but that these do not count towards the final overall grade. All grades (including the Foundations marks) appear on the final transcript.

The examination of all assessed work is done through very formal procedures at Oxford. The proper conduct of all examinations in the University comes under the jurisdiction of the Proctors (two senior academics appointed for a one-year term of office and who, during their time in post, are relieved of all normal university activities). The Junior Proctor normally handles matters relating to graduate students and it is to the Proctors that all applications for dispensation, complaints and appeals must be made, with the advice and support of the student's college.

## **Examination Board**

The Examination Board oversees the assessment of all assessed work, including the Foundations, Research Methods, and Options exams and the Core essays, RDE, and thesis.

There are four nominated Examiners for the MPhil in Development Studies – three internal to the University and one external. They are usually appointed for three-year terms. Each Examiner covers a different discipline. The Examiners are assisted by a number of assessors (markers) so as to ensure that all disciplines and geographical regions included in the degree are covered. In the case of Options where MPhil students join another degree course, the Examiners and/or assessors for that degree act as assessors.

The Internal Examiners for the MPhil in Development Studies examinations which take place over the 2022-23 are Prof. Cheryl Doss (Chair), Dr Francesca Lessa, and Dr Myfanwy James. The External Examiner for 2022-23 will be appointed in Michaelmas 2022. Students are strictly prohibited from contacting the External Examiner or the Internal Examiners directly. If you are unhappy with an aspect of your assessment, you may make a complaint or appeal.

In any one year, the same MPhil Examiners are responsible for first-year and second-year examinations and assessed written work

The Board of Examiners produce a report on examinations each year to monitor trends and keep a record of students' performance. The report from the previous Trinity Term is posted on Canvas during Michaelmas Term; the report from Trinity Term 2022 will be available to students in Michaelmas Term 2022.

## **Taking the assessments**

Students will register for their assessments online, via the Student Self-Service system, during MT of Year One and Year Two. You will be sent reminders online. You will be automatically registered for all compulsory assessment items (i.e. Core course essays, Research Methods examination and RDE) but will have to register the two Foundations courses you are taking. In your second year, you will have to register the two Options courses you are taking, including for Options with assessed essays, as well as a draft title of your thesis.

It is possible to change your assessment entry after the deadline, but you will have to pay a fee to do so. The fee for a late change of assessment entry during 2022-23 will be £65. This is charged by the central University Academic Records Office, and the Department is unable to fund it, except in cases where the change of assessment entry was necessitated by factors outside the student's control (e.g. a last minute timetable change). Please pay particular attention to the deadline with respect to your enrolment for Option courses. Please contact your college if you need to change your entry and inform the Course Coordinator.

In order to maintain anonymity during marking, students are issued with a candidate number which is used for all assessed work. The number is available online on each student's Self-Service page.

Further information about assessment entry and alternative examination arrangements can be found [here](#).

In the case of our MPhil, each Foundation course, the Research Methods course and some Options are assessed by means of a 3-hour online examination (or 3 hours 20 minutes where there is a handwritten component, to allow this to be uploaded online). Past examination questions are available on the [WebLearn OXAM site](#).

The Foundations examinations are held in Week 1 of TT of the first year. The other examinations for graduate students generally take place in Weeks 7, 8 and 9 of TT (Please note that some Option exams may take place in Week 1 of TT). Details of the examination timetables, once finalized, can be found [here](#).

In 2022-23, all examinations within the MPhil course will be given as open-book online exams. Online examinations follow detailed guidelines set up by the Examination Schools. These guidelines will be made available on Canvas in the weeks prior to the first examination.

External Options may be assessed by in-person examinations – there are strict rules and requirements for taking these; please contact the Course Administrator for the relevant external degree programme for details.

## **Meetings of the Board of Examiners**

The marks for all summative assessed work must be finalised at a meeting of Board of Examiners before release. The Board of Examiners for the MPhil usually meets during HT to finalise marks for the 1st Core Essay, then twice during TT to finalise marks for the 2nd Core

Essay, Foundations examinations, Research Methods examination, Research Design Essay, Options examinations and Theses. The timing of these meetings varies according to the Examiners' availability, but the final Examiners' Meeting is usually held at the end of 10th week or the beginning of 11th week, TT.

## **Applications for extensions of deadlines**

You are responsible for management of your time with respect to deadlines for submitted work. Extensions are only granted in exceptional cases, such as illness or other urgent cause. For extensions longer than a week, evidence (e.g. a letter of support and explanation from your doctor/GP) **will be required**.

The department **cannot** grant extensions of deadlines for assessed work. All such requests must go via your college to the University Proctors.

**Extension requests can take time to process; if a student knows they would like to request an extension they should plan to submit the extension at least 5 working days before the submission deadline.**

The deadlines for assessed work are based on the timeline necessary for the work to be marked, and marks to be finalised at the Examination Board meeting. Academics block off time from teaching and research in advance to mark assessments, and are not usually available outside of the usual marking schedule to mark late submissions. **When students obtain extensions, it may not be possible to assess the work within this timeline.** In this case, the marks are likely to be finalised at a later meeting of the examination board.

### **Before applying for any extensions, please consider:**

- The impact on deadlines for other submissions and/or exam dates: consider whether the new, extended deadline will create a clash with any other deadlines or exams.
- The impact on supervision: depending on the timing of the extension, supervisors may not be available to provide supervision after the original deadline.
- The impact on progression from first to second year: please consult the Course Coordinators to determine if an extension will affect this.
- The impact on graduation date (for extensions on second-year assessed work): if you have booked a graduation and associated travel and accommodation, it may be advisable to cancel these bookings, and not to rebook until your results have been released (please check with your college for the regulations on rebooking graduation ceremonies).
- The impact on your visa status (for extensions on second-year assessed work): your visa may run out before your results are released – this is particularly relevant if you wish to apply for a Graduate visa, as to be eligible for this, you need **both** a valid Student visa **and** evidence you have successfully completed your course (i.e. your final results).

Please discuss this with your supervisor and the Course Coordinator if applying for an extension of any deadline.

## Provision of formative and summative feedback

As noted above, formative assessment does not contribute to the overall outcome of your degree, but instead is designed to help you learn more effectively. Summative assessment does contribute to your degree result and is used to formally evaluate the extent to which you have succeeded in meeting the published assessment criteria for your programme of study.

Formative assessment for the Foundations and Research Methods courses is carried out by the marking of essays, assignments, mock examinations or group projects. Written feedback is provided as soon as possible on essay, assignment and test performance. Students are encouraged to discuss points of concern with the markers (usually the course convenor or staff who have given lectures on the course).

The MPhil includes summative assessment in both years of the course. A feedback report of two paragraphs is given for each **Core essay** submitted. This may be longer where the essay has failed. In these cases, the Board of Examiners provides guidance on re-writing the essay, based on the points raised by the assessors and the External Examiner.

For the **Research Design Essay**, since this essay contains a discussion of students' research plans, the Board of Examiners provides feedback on the plans to the students' supervisors, following the comments made by the assessors. Supervisors are responsible to communicate the feedback to the students.

Students do not receive feedback or a breakdown of marks per question on the **Foundations** examinations or the **Research Methods** examination or any **Options** which are assessed by exams. They only receive the final mark for the examination. For Option essays, if the essay is over 5000 words, students will receive brief feedback on their essay.

Finally, for the **Thesis**, the first marker will compile a report (reviewed by the Board of Examiners) outlining the strengths and weaknesses, using comments from both markers. The report will be sent to each student as soon as possible following the Final Examiners' Meeting, and is usually sent out by email by the Course Coordinator.

## Plagiarism

### Good Practice in Citation, and the Avoidance of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting some else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional and reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.

The University Student Handbook 2022/23 (section 7.7) highlights the following:

*"You must read the [Proctors' Disciplinary Regulations for University Examinations](#), which make clear that:*

- *you must indicate to the examiners when you have drawn on the work of others, using quotation marks and references in accordance with the conventions of your subject area*
- *other people's original ideas and methods should be clearly distinguished from your own*
- *the use of other people's words, illustrations, diagrams etc. should be clearly indicated regardless of whether they are copied exactly, paraphrased or adapted*
- *material you have previously submitted for examination, at this University or elsewhere, or published, cannot be re-used – including by drawing on it without referencing it, which constitutes 'autoplagiarism' – unless specifically permitted in the special Subject Regulations.*

*Failure to acknowledge your sources by clear citation and referencing constitutes plagiarism. The University's description of plagiarism should be read carefully. That description includes a link to the [University's online course about understanding what plagiarism is](#), and how to avoid it. You are strongly advised to complete the course.*

*The University has the right to use software, and routinely does so, in order to screen submitted work for matches either to published sources or to other submitted work.*

*Work submitted for assessment and open- book exam responses may be screened for matches either to published sources or to other submitted work. Any matches might indicate plagiarism or collusion.*

*Although you are permitted to use electronic resources in academic work, remember that the plagiarism regulations apply to online material and other digital material just as much as they do to printed material.*

*Guidance about the use of source materials and the preparation of written work is given in departments' literature and is explained by tutors and supervisors. If you are unsure how to take notes, use web-sourced material or acceptable practice when writing your work, please ask for advice.*

*Under new UK legislation, providing or using professional essay writing services, or 'essay mills', is now a criminal offence. Students have also been advised that using these services directly contravenes the University's code of conduct. If students are found to be using professional writing services, or passing off other people's work as their own, they will face serious disciplinary action."*

To avoid plagiarism, it is important for all students within individual subject areas to be aware of, and to follow, good practice in the use of sources and making appropriate reference. You will need to exercise judgement in determining when reference is required, and when material may be taken to be so much a part of the 'general knowledge' of your particular subject that formal citation would not be expected. The basis on which such judgements are made is likely to vary slightly between subject areas, as may also the style and format of making references. Your supervisor will be in the best position to advise you on such matters.

By following good practice in your subject area you should develop a rigorous approach to academic referencing, and avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Cases of apparently deliberate

plagiarism, while happily infrequent in the University, are taken extremely seriously, and where Examiners suspect that this has occurred, they bring the matter to the attention of the Proctors.

**All students taking the MPhil** must read the [information provided by the University online about avoiding plagiarism](#) and take the [first online tutorial](#) on avoiding plagiarism. On completing the course, you must print out the certificate of completion and submit it to the Course Coordinator.

**Self-Plagiarism:** Students should be aware that self-plagiarism is not permitted. Students should not repeat material from one examined element of the course in another piece of work that they have submitted for assessment. It is however acceptable for students to use material contained in their Research Design Essay in the final version of the thesis they submit for their MPhil; and material from their MPhil thesis may partly overlap with their doctoral work. A signed declaration should be included on the cover sheet submitted with all coursework, Core Essays, Research Design Essays and theses, that the work is the student's own, and has not previously been submitted for assessment, either at Oxford or another institution. This also applies to online open-book examinations and students are expected to not copy their own work in response to online examination.

**Turnitin:** all summative assessed work will be automatically screened through the online plagiarism detection programme *Turnitin*. Further information can be found [here](#).

## Awards

### University Awards Framework

The University does not assign credit values for the majority of its awards. The University Awards Framework (UAF) positions the qualifications and awards which the University offers at the appropriate level of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). The MPhil in Development Studies is at the FHEQ level 7. Information for the framework can be found here < <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-awards-framework>>.

### MPhil Prizes

The *Eugene Havas Memorial Prize* is awarded to the student achieving the best overall distinction in the MPhil. The *Papiya Ghosh Thesis Prize* is awarded for the best performance in the MPhil thesis. These Prizes are usually awarded during the Long Vacation after completion of the course; however, the awards may be delayed if some students' results remain to be finalized after the Final Examiners' Meeting. Occasionally, there is an Examiners' Prize that is awarded to a student based on academic performance. The financial value of the Prizes varies from year to year.

## 5. Main Contacts

There are nine main contact points for students:

- i. Course Supervisor
- ii. Essay Supervisor
- iii. Thesis Supervisor
- iv. Course Director

- v. Director of Graduate Studies
- vi. Course Co-ordinator
- vii. Graduate Student Administrator
- viii. College Adviser
- ix. The Social Science Library Services

## **i. Course Supervisor**

On arrival at the beginning of Michaelmas Term each student is assigned a course supervisor by the Course Director. The supervisor is expected to be in regular contact with the students allocated to them and to guide and advise them through the first year of study. This means, at a minimum, meetings at the beginning and end of each term. In year one, students may receive supervision from other academic staff for essays and so it is not essential to ensure an overlap of academic interest between the individual student and the course supervisor, though every effort is made to match interests. In year two, the thesis supervisor automatically takes on the role of course supervisor, except when the supervisor is external to ODID. In such cases, the student retains his or her first year course supervisor (or is assigned someone new if that person is not available).

During ODID's Induction Week, time is allocated for students to meet with course supervisors. If for any reason this proves impossible, then it is imperative students meet with their supervisor in the first week of term. Students should notify the Course Director as soon as possible if they fail to make contact with their supervisor. It is important for students to reach an agreement with their course supervisor about the means and frequency of communication.

Students may approach members of staff other than their supervisor to discuss aspects of their work on an informal basis.

If a student wishes to change supervisors, they should speak to the Course Director.

The Memorandum of Guidance reproduced below outlines the responsibilities of the student, the course supervisor and the Department. It is not the intention that it should be followed slavishly but rather that it should provide a framework within which a dynamic and constructive relationship can develop.

### Memorandum of Guidance for MPhil Students and their Course Supervisors

#### *Responsibilities of the student*

1. *The student must accept his or her obligation to act as a responsible member of the University's academic community.*
2. *The student should take ultimate responsibility for his or her work programme and endeavour to develop an appropriate working pattern, including an agreed and professional relationship with the supervisor(s). The student should discuss with the supervisor the type of guidance and comments which he or she finds most helpful, and agree a schedule of meetings.*
3. *The student should make appropriate use of the teaching and learning facilities available within the University.*

4. *It is the student's responsibility to seek out and follow the regulations relevant to her or his course, and to seek clarification from supervisors and elsewhere if this is necessary.*
5. *The student should not hesitate to take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties. She or he should ensure that any problems regarding the course are drawn to the attention of the supervisor so that appropriate guidance may be offered.*
6. *The student should seek to maintain progress in accordance with the plan of work agreed with the supervisor, in particular the presentation of the required written material in sufficient time for comment and discussion. Both the student and supervisor should keep a record of all formal, scheduled meetings. They may well want to agree on a record of what has been discussed and decided.*
7. *The student should recognise that a supervisor has many competing demands on her or his time. The student should hand in work in good time to the supervisor and request additional meetings in advance. Adequate notice (a minimum of two weeks) also applies to requests for references from the supervisor.*
8. *The student should be aware that the provision of constructive criticism is central to a satisfactory supervisory relationship, and should always seek a full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of her or his work.*
9. *If the student feels that there are good grounds for contemplating a change of supervision arrangements, this should first be discussed with the supervisor or, if this seems difficult, with the Course Director, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the college adviser.*
10. *Where problems arise, it is essential that a student gives full weight to any guidance and corrective action proposed by the supervisor.*
11. *The student should ensure that the standard of his or her English is sufficient for the completion of written assignments, including the Core assessed essays, the end of year examinations and the presentation of a thesis. Students whose first language is not English should take advice on this.*
12. *The student should make full use of the facilities for career guidance and development, and should consult their supervisor for advice and encouragement where appropriate.*
13. *The MPhil is a full-time taught course and students are not expected to hold any employment while enrolled on the course. However, in some circumstances, and with the expressed approval of the Course Supervisor, students may undertake not more than four hours of paid work per week.*

Responsibilities of the course supervisor

1. *Course supervisors must recognise and accept the responsibilities both to the student and to the Teaching Committee implicit in the supervisory relationship.*

2. *The supervisor is required to make an appointment for a meeting with the new student not later than the first week of Full Term. **Two formal meetings per term, one at the start and one at the end, are considered a minimum level of contact.***
3. *The supervisor is responsible for giving early advice about the nature of the course and the standard expected. In a general sense, the supervisor is also responsible for advising the student about literature and sources, attendance at classes, and requisite techniques (including helping to arrange instruction where necessary). The supervisor should identify with the student any subject-specific skills necessary for the course.*
4. *The course supervisor should discuss potential thesis topics with the student, **no later than the end of MT of Year 1.** Where appropriate the supervisor should identify other potential thesis supervisors and may facilitate the contact.*
5. *The supervisor should meet formally with the student regularly (at least two times per term). Informal day-to-day contact should not be seen as a substitute for formal meetings. The supervisor should also be accessible to the student at other appropriate times when advice is needed.*
6. *The supervisor should provide feedback to the student and discuss the student's progress. It is essential that when problems arise, corrective action is clearly identified and full guidance and assistance given to the student.*
7. *The supervisor is required to report online on the student's work three times a year, using the GSR system, once at the end of each term. Each report should state the nature and extent of contact with the student. The report should also make clear whether the student is making satisfactory progress and, in this regard, the supervisor should bear in mind, and where appropriate report on, comments made by essay markers, special supervisors and the thesis supervisor. The DGS, the Course Director and the Teaching Committee should be informed, with the student's consent, of personal problems of a kind that affect the student's performance.*
8. *The supervisor should not be absent on leave unless appropriate temporary supervision has been arranged for the student.*

#### Responsibilities of the Department

1. *The Department should provide information about:
 
  - (i) any induction provided on a departmental basis;
  - (ii) welfare arrangements within the University, e.g. the Counselling Service, Student Hardship and Access funds, the provisions for support offered by the Proctors and the Assessor, arrangements for dealing with issues of harassment;
  - (iii) any general transferable skills from which the student is likely to profit during the course, and the available provision at departmental, faculty and university level.*
2. *The Department should ensure that there is appropriate monitoring of a student's work and progress and that reports are submitted on a termly basis in accordance with the University's requirements."*

## ii. Essay Supervisor

Students will be assigned a supervisor for each of the two core essays. The essay supervisor should discuss the topic with the student, offer advice on readings, discuss an outline of the proposed essay, and provide comments on a draft. This involves a minimum of two meetings. The draft essay must be delivered to the supervisor two weeks before the deadline for the submission of the essay – or by a date agreed by the student and essay supervisor – and the supervisor should return it in time for the student to revise the essay as needed. Supervisors are not expected to read and comment on essays during the breaks between terms.

Typically, the supervisor reads and comments on one full draft of the essay. For students who are struggling with the writing of such essays, the supervisor may read a revised section of the essay and provide further comments if the time-frame allows.

## iii. Thesis Supervisor

The **course supervisor** will assist students in identifying an appropriate thesis supervisor.

In Year 1, the **thesis supervisor** should discuss the thesis topic with the student, offer advice on readings and on methodological approaches, supervise the Research Design Essay, and provide guidance in the completion of the research ethics and, if needed, the risk assessment forms.

During the summer between Year 1 and Year 2, the **thesis supervisor and supervisee** will stay in contact, but the frequency and nature of that contact will depend on the research. This particularly depends on how far the project involves fieldwork, and how often that fieldwork is agreed to require supervisory input or check-ins. This should be explicitly discussed between supervisor and student ahead of the summer.

In Year 2, **the thesis supervisor** should discuss the research findings, offer advice on writing up, and read and comment on an initial plan and then written drafts. The expectation is that the supervisor will read and provide substantive comments on a draft of each substantive chapter (i.e. sections presenting findings) as well as a full draft of the thesis.

For this to be possible, the expectation from **the student** is that a thesis plan be submitted to the supervisor for feedback in the first half of Michaelmas Term, and before presentation of the research in the MP2 thesis workshops. The first draft chapter should be submitted in time for the supervisor to read in Michaelmas Term (or in 9<sup>th</sup> Week if agreed). The timing of further chapter submissions should be carefully planned out and agreed. A full draft of the thesis should be submitted in time for the supervisor to read in Hilary Term (or in 9<sup>th</sup> Week if agreed). How long the supervisor requires to offer feedback should be discussed explicitly between supervisor and student, and deadlines agreed on this basis.

**Students should not as a matter of course expect drafts to be read after the deadlines, and supervisors are not expected to read draft work in vacation time.**

Thesis supervisors should meet students a minimum of twice per term. **It is important to discuss the frequency of meetings and expectations regarding supervision early on, and**

**to establish the best means of communication.** Different supervisors will have different styles of supervision.

#### **iv. Course Director**

The Course Director for 2022-23 is **Prof. Max Bolt**. He is responsible for the overall administrative organization of the degree. Much of this work does not impinge directly on the students. The Course Director chairs the Teaching Committee which deals with such matters as the organisation and content of teaching, liaison with the library, equipment and timetabling. This Committee meets in Weeks 3 and 8 of each term. The thesis topic must be approved by the Course Director. Prof. Bolt is available to meet with students – office hours can be booked on Canvas.

#### **v. Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)**

The DGS for 2022-23 is **Prof. Nikita Sud**. Course supervisors are required to write a report each term on the progress of the students in their care. Copies of these reports are sent to the University Offices and to the student's college. The DGS, along with the Course Director, reviews these reports and follows up any which suggest that a student's performance is giving cause for concern.

The ODID Graduate Studies Committee meets twice each term and is chaired by the DGS. This Committee deals with admissions for the MPhil and the MSc courses offered by the Department, as well as research students. All matters of a formal regulatory nature to do with the administration of the degrees covered by the Committee are first discussed there before being forwarded for further consideration to the Social Sciences Divisional Board and its committees, as appropriate. The Committee also discusses policy papers relating to teaching and research which come down for comment from the University's Educational Policy and Standards Committee.

#### **vi. Course Co-ordinator**

There are two MPhil Course Coordinators: **Fraser Boyd** (Senior Course Coordinator) and **Elliot Smith**. **They should be your first port of call for any administrative queries.** For 2022-23, Fraser will mainly be responsible for managing administration related to second-year MPhil students, and Elliot for first-year MPhil students.

The Course Coordinators can both be contacted at [mphil-admin@geh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mphil-admin@geh.ox.ac.uk), and their office is in room 20:24. On weekdays during term-time, there will usually be at least one Course Coordinator in person in the office between 10am and 4pm. They understand that administrative processes at Oxford can be difficult to navigate, so if you have any queries or concerns, you are always welcome to drop in. The Course Coordinators will also hold dedicated office hours, with snacks, in the **Music Room** from **13:00-14:00 on Mondays** during term time – no appointment necessary.

#### **vii. Graduate Student Administrator**

The Graduate Student Administrator is **Dominique Attala** who deals with admissions for the doctoral programme. The GSA also keeps the records of all Research Students in

Development Studies and takes care of the administration of this area in conjunction with the Graduate Studies Office. Her advice should be sought if an MPhil student wishes to move on to a research degree after completing the MPhil. Dominique Attala's email address is: [dominique.attala@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dominique.attala@qeh.ox.ac.uk); her office is also in room 20:24.

### **viii. College Adviser**

As well as the support offered by the Department, every graduate student at Oxford has a College Adviser, who is an academic member of his or her College, usually a Fellow.

The role of the College Adviser is additional and complementary to that provided in the student's department or faculty. The College Adviser is not expected to perform the role of the Course Supervisor, or to be responsible for directing students' academic work. Rather, the intention is to provide a focal point for an individual student's relationship with the College, and general academic or pastoral advice and assistance throughout the student's course of study.

### **ix. The Social Science Library Services**

The extensive Development Studies collections are housed at the Bodleian Social Science Library (SSL) in the Manor Road Social Science building, five minutes' walk from Mansfield Road.

All library holdings are searchable through the online catalogue, SOLO (<http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>). The Library has access to a comprehensive collection of electronic journal titles via *e-Journals A-Z* and databases (*Databases A-Z*) listed under useful links on SOLO. As members of the University, students can also use the Bodleian Library, as well as the libraries within the Bodleian Libraries system such as Law, Radcliffe Science and Anthropology.

Students will be provided with a library induction session at the beginning of Michaelmas Term. Students may also request an individual session with the subject consultant to discuss resources for their thesis. The Libguide for International Development also provides useful links for subject-specific resources (<http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/development>).

SSL also offers workshops for students on a range of topics, such as using reference managers or research skills training.

**Sarah Rhodes**, Subject Consultant for International Development, is based in the SSL and available for individual research appointments on request ([sarah.rhodes@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.rhodes@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)). Social Sciences data management queries can be addressed to John Southall ([john.southall@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:john.southall@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)). The SSL website can be found at [www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ssl](http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ssl).

#### Feedback on Library Resources

Suggestions for additions to the SSL collection of readings in development studies are always welcome! They can be made through the class representative or directly to the Library staff.

## **6. Feedback, Consultation, Complaints and Appeals**

### **Class Representatives**

Each year students nominate two class representatives. The representatives act as a channel for the class to convey their collective views to the Course Director. If appropriate, the representatives can request and convene a class meeting – known as the Joint Consultative Committee – with the Course Director. The representatives are invited to attend meetings of the Teaching Committee for the MPhil, usually held in weeks 3 and 8 of each term and are invited to report on issues of concern to students. The class representatives may send out short surveys to identify issues facing students or to get their perspective on a particular concern. The class representatives from all courses are invited to meet with the Head of Department periodically. The class representatives should be nominated as soon as possible in Michaelmas term, and the Course Co-ordinator and Course Director should be informed of the choice. A list of the names of the representatives for all courses can be found on Canvas. In addition, the class representatives typically organize the Holiday Party in December, other social events, and may organize additional speakers. Students may elect social student representatives to be responsible for organizing events for their cohort. The Course Coordinators and the Course Director are happy to provide additional guidance and support for such activities.

### **Other Feedback on the Course**

In addition to having class representatives, all students are encouraged to make suggestions for changes and improvements directly to teachers, supervisors and the Course Director at any time. Feedback is sought from students on lectures, seminars, and classes at the end of each term. Students are encouraged to complete and return these forms (anonymously). Forms will be distributed during the final lectures of each course. A final report on course feedback is discussed at the final Teaching Committee meeting in Week 8 of Trinity Term. If there are particular issues regarding a lecture, seminar, or class, please discuss this with the appropriate person (course convenor or Course Director) as soon as possible so that it can be resolved.

### **Other University Feedback**

Students on full-time and part-time matriculated courses are surveyed once per year on all aspects of their course (learning, living, pastoral support, college) through the Student Barometer. Previous results can be viewed by students, staff and general public at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-surveys>. The results are reported to the Teaching Committee for consideration on a yearly basis.

### **Complaints and Academic Appeals**

**The University's policy on complaints and academic appeals is the following.**

The University, the Social Sciences Division and ODID all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their course of study will result in no need for complaints about that provision or appeals against the outcomes of any form of assessment.

If you have concerns, please first try to resolve it informally with a discussion with the appropriate people. Many concerns are satisfactorily resolved in this manner.

Many sources of advice are available from colleges, faculties/departments and bodies like the Counselling Service or the Oxford SU Student Advice Service, which have extensive

experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of those sources before pursuing your complaint.

General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should be with the student reps who can organize meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee or raise the issue with the MPhil Teaching Committee. You may also speak directly with the Course Director.

### **Complaints**

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the department, then you should raise it with the Director of Graduate Studies. Complaints about departmental facilities should be made to the Departmental Administrator. If you feel unable to approach one of those individuals, you may contact the Head of Department, Prof. Diego Sánchez-Ancochea. The officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the Proctors under the University Student Complaints Procedure (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/complaints>).

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by your college, you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

### **Academic appeals**

An academic appeal is an appeal against the decision of an academic body (e.g. Boards of Examiners, Transfer and Confirmation decisions etc.), on grounds such as procedural error or evidence of bias. There is no right of appeal against academic judgement.

If you have any concerns about your assessment process or outcome it is advisable to discuss these first informally with your subject or college tutor, Senior Tutor, Course Director, Director of Studies, supervisor or college or departmental administrator as appropriate. They will be able to explain the assessment process that was undertaken and may be able to address your concerns. **Queries must not be raised directly with the examiners.**

If you still have concerns you can make a formal appeal to the Proctors who will consider appeals under the University Academic Appeals Procedure (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/complaints>).

## **7. Illness and Emergency**

In cases of serious illness, bereavement or other unforeseen emergency, students may apply for a suspension from the MPhil, known as a 'suspension of status'. The Department will usually consider granting a suspension of status for three terms (one academic year), but the suspension can be extended if necessary for a further three terms, giving a maximum suspension of six terms (two academic years).

Students who are granted a suspension are usually expected to return to the course at the point at which they left (a student suspending at the beginning of Hilary Term 2022 would be expected to rejoin the course at the beginning of Hilary Term 2023).

Suspensions of status are granted by the Proctors' Office, and any student seeking to suspend should first approach their College for assistance, as well as informing their supervisor, the Course Director and the Course Co-ordinator.

## Appendix 1: Additional course information

A range of optional courses is available for students to take in their second year. Each usually runs for an eight-week term in either MT or HT. The Options available vary from year to year depending on the teaching staff. A variety of Options are offered within the MPhil Programme. Students may also choose Options from other programmes within ODID or from other departments at Oxford. Students are strongly encouraged to choose at most one external Option.

The list of MPhil Options will be made available on Canvas the weeks prior to Option selection

### Procedure for taking non-MPhil ('external') Options

Students are strongly advised to take Options offered through the MPhil, since these Options are specifically designed for MPhil students. It is mandatory to take at least one of their Options from those offered by the MPhil.

Options are also available through other ODID courses, and MPhil students may request permission to take these.

The procedure for taking any Options external to the MPhil is as follows:

1. The student should contact the convenor of the external Option to enquire whether they are open to accepting external students on their course, and request an up-to-date syllabus
2. The student should use the syllabus to make a preliminary check that the course meets the basic requirements for approval by the MPhil Teaching Committee, which are that it must be:
  - a. Taught through a minimum of eight 2-hour seminars or equivalent
  - b. Requiring some form of written formative work (typically two or more essays)
  - c. Assessed either by a 5,000-word essay (special permission may be granted for a longer or shorter length) or a three-hour written examination in which three questions are answered from a list of at least eight (special permission may be granted for a longer timeframe in which to answer). **Please note:** it will not be possible to create 'bespoke' examinations to allow MPhil students to take external Option courses, so if the assessment method of an external course differs significantly from the rubric for the MPhil Options, this course will not be approved by Teaching Committee.
3. The student should then discuss the appropriateness of the course with their thesis supervisor.
4. Submit the Option to Teaching Committee for consideration by **Thursday of Week 2, Trinity Term**. To do this, send following information to the Course Coordinators:
  - a. Course title
  - b. Course degree programme
  - c. Convenor name(s)
  - d. Written permission from their thesis supervisor to take the course
  - e. Confirmation that the course convenor(s) is open to allowing external students
  - f. Course outline and reading list

The course and reading list will then be reviewed by the MPhil Teaching Committee who will give final approval. Teaching Committee will assess whether the course meets the basic requirements listed above, alongside two other criteria:

- Whether it is of second-year standard from another MPhil (unless it is from a one-year MSc), and
- Whether it is appropriate for MPhil students in Development Studies based on consideration of the reading lists, lectures, and assignments.

Please note that there are many challenges to taking Options that are not offered by the MPhil. These other Options are designed for the students on other courses and special arrangements should not be expected for ODID MPhil students. The timing of some final assessments may be on a different schedule and MPhil students will be expected to abide by the timings as set by the Option. In addition, last minute-timetabling changes may create clashes with MPhil Options, and often, external student are put at the bottom of a waiting list for entry onto an Option course.

Students are also able to audit additional Option courses with the permission of the convenor of the Option. However, audited Option courses will not show on a student's transcript.

## **Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice**

Queen Elizabeth House has adopted the following *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice*.<sup>1</sup> The guidelines contain general provisions for good practice applicable to the conduct of research in the field of Development Studies. Though they should be interpreted in light of the demands and circumstances of individual research projects, the guidelines should broadly govern all research conducted under the auspices of ODID.

All researchers must also receive formal approval for their research by completing the University's CUREC (Central University Research Ethics Committee) forms. Instructions regarding the completion of the forms follow the guidelines below.

*“Research in the field of Development Studies occurs in many places around the world, often in countries which are not the ‘home’ of the researcher. Such studies occur within a variety of economic, cultural, legal and political settings. As professionals and as citizens, researchers need to consider the effects of their involvement with, and consequences of their work for, the individuals and groups among whom they do their fieldwork (their research participants or 'subjects'); their colleagues, and collaborating researchers; sponsors, funders, employers and gatekeepers; their own and host governments; and other interest groups and the wider society in the countries in which they work.*

*Researchers are increasingly faced with competing duties, obligations and conflicts of interest, and the need to make implicit or explicit choices between values and between the interests of different individuals and groups. Ethical and legal dilemmas can occur at all stages of research - in the selection of topic, area or population, choice of*

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<sup>1</sup> These are adapted with permission from the ethical guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth.

*sponsor and source of funding, in negotiating access, making 'research bargains' during fieldwork, in the interpretation and analysis of results, and in the publication of findings and the disposal of data. Researchers have a responsibility to anticipate problems and insofar as is possible to resolve them without harming the research participants or the scholarly community. They should do their utmost to ensure that they leave a research field in a state which permits future access by other researchers. As scholars committed to the pursuit of knowledge and the public disclosure of findings, they should strive to maintain integrity in the conduct of their research.*

*To these ends Queen Elizabeth House has adopted the following set of ethical guidelines to which individual researchers should subscribe. They aim to alert researchers to issues that raise ethical concerns and to potential problems and conflicts of interests that might arise in the research process. They are intended to provide a practical framework for scholars to make informed decisions about their own behaviour and involvement, and to help them communicate their professional positions more clearly to the other parties involved in, or affected by, their research activities.*

### ***I. Relations With and Responsibilities towards Research Participants***

*The association of researchers with the people among whom they carry out research entails personal and moral relationships, trust and reciprocity between the researcher and research participants; it also entails a recognition of power differentials between them.*

#### ***(1) Protecting research participants and honouring trust:***

*Researchers should endeavour to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of those whom they study and to respect their rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy:*

- (a) Most researchers in Development Studies would maintain that their paramount obligation is to their research participants and that when there is conflict, the interests and rights of those studied should come first;*
- (b) Under some research conditions, particularly those involving contract research, it may not be possible fully to guarantee research participants' interests. In such cases researchers would be well advised to consider in advance whether they should pursue that particular piece of research.*

***(2) Anticipating harms:*** *Researchers should be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and should endeavour to guard against predictably harmful effects. Consent from subjects does not absolve researchers from their obligation to protect research participants as far as possible against the potentially harmful effects of research:*

- (a) The researcher should try to minimise disturbances both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment. Even though research participants may be immediately protected by the device of anonymity, the*

*researcher should try to anticipate the long-term effects on individuals or groups as a result of the research;*

- (b) Researchers may sometimes be better placed than (at the least, some of) their informants to anticipate the possible repercussions of their research both for the immediate participants and for other members of the research population or the wider society. In certain political contexts, some groups, for example, religious or ethnic minorities, may be particularly vulnerable and it may be necessary to withhold data from publication or even to refrain from studying them at all.*

**(3) Avoiding undue intrusion:** *Researchers should be aware of the intrusive potential of some of their enquiries and methods:*

- (a) Like other social researchers, researchers in Development Studies have no special entitlement to study all phenomena; and the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of information are not in themselves sufficient justifications for overriding the values and ignoring the interests of those studied;*
- (b) Researchers should be aware that for research participants becoming the subject of scholarly description and interpretations can be a welcome experience, but it can also be a disturbing one. In many of the social scientific enquiries that have caused controversy this has not arisen because participants have suffered any actual harm, directly or indirectly. Rather, the concern has resulted from participants' feelings of having suffered an intrusion into private and personal domains, or of having been wronged (for example, by having been caused to acquire self-knowledge which they did not seek or want).*

**(4) Negotiating informed consent:** *Following the precedent set by the Nuremberg Trials and the constitutional laws of many countries, inquiries involving human subjects should be based on the freely given informed consent of subjects. The principle of informed consent expresses the belief in the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between social researchers and the people whom they study.*

- (a) Negotiating consent entails communicating information likely to be material to a person's willingness to participate, such as: - the purpose(s) of the study, and the anticipated consequences of the research; the identity of funders and sponsors; the anticipated uses of the data; possible benefits of the study and possible harm or discomfort that might affect participants; issues relating to data storage and security; and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality which may be afforded to informants and subjects.*
- (b) Conditions which constitute an absence of consent: consent made after the research is completed is not meaningful consent at all. Further, the persons studied must have the legal capacity to give consent. Where subjects are legally compelled (e.g., by their employer or government) to participate in a piece of research, consent cannot be said to have been meaningfully given by subjects, and researchers are advised not to pursue that piece of work.*
- (c) Consent in research is a process, not a one-off event, and may require renegotiation over time; it is an issue to which the scholar should return periodically.*

- (d) *When technical data-gathering devices such as audio/visual recorders and photographic records are being used those studied should be made aware of the capacities of such devices and be free to reject their use.*
- (e) *When information is being collected from proxies, care should be taken not to infringe the 'private space' of the subject or the relationship between subject and proxy; and if there are indications that the person concerned would object to certain information being disclosed, such information should not be sought by proxy;*
- (f) *The long period over which researchers can make use of their data and the possibility that unforeseen uses or theoretical interests may arise in the future may need to be conveyed to participants, as should any likelihood that the data may be shared (in some form) with other colleagues or be made available to sponsors, funders or other interested parties, or deposited in archives.*

**(5) Rights to confidentiality and anonymity:** *Informants and other research participants should have the right to remain anonymous and to have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected. However, privacy and confidentiality present particularly difficult problems given the cultural and legal variations between societies and the various ways in which the real interests or research role of the scholar may not fully be realised by some or all of participants or may even become "invisible" over time:*

- (a) *Care should be taken not to infringe uninvited upon the 'private space' (as locally defined) of an individual or group;*
- (b) *As far as is possible researchers should anticipate potential threats to confidentiality and anonymity. They should consider whether it is necessary to record certain information at all; should take appropriate measures relating to the storage and security of records during and after fieldwork; and should use where appropriate such means as the removal of identifiers, the use of pseudonyms and other technical solutions to the problems of privacy in field records and in oral and written forms of data dissemination (whether or not this is enjoined by law or administrative regulation);*
- (c) *Researchers should endeavour to anticipate problems likely to compromise anonymity; but they should make clear to participants that it may not be possible in field notes and other records or publications totally to conceal identities, and that the anonymity afforded or promised to individuals, families or other groups may also be unintentionally compromised. A particular configuration of attributes can frequently identify an individual beyond reasonable doubt; and it is particularly difficult to disguise, say, office-holders, organizations, public agencies, ethnic groups, religious denominations or other collectivities without so distorting the data as to compromise scholarly accuracy and integrity;*
- (d) *If guarantees of privacy and confidentiality are made, they must be honoured unless there are clear and over-riding ethical reasons not to do so. Confidential information must be treated as such even when it enjoys no legal protection or privilege, and other people who have access to the data should be made aware of their obligations likewise; but participants should be made aware that it is rarely, if at all, legally possible to ensure total confidentiality or to protect the privacy of records;*

(e) Similarly the measures taken by other researchers to maintain the anonymity of their research field and participants.

**(6) Fair return for assistance:** There should be no economic exploitation of individual informants, translators and research participants; fair return should be made for their help and services should be respected.

**(7) Participants' intellectual property rights:** It should be recognised that research participants have contractual and/or legal, interests and rights in data, recordings and publications, although rights will vary according to agreements and legal jurisdiction.

(a) It is the obligation of the interviewer to inform the interviewee of their rights under any copyright or data protection laws of the country where research takes place, and the interviewer must indicate beforehand any uses to which the interview is likely to be put (e.g., research, educational use, publication, broadcasting etc).

(b) Under the UK Copyright Act (1988), researchers making audio or video recordings must obtain 'copyright clearance' from interviewees if recordings are to be publicly broadcast or deposited in public archives. Any restrictions on use (e.g., time period) or other conditions (e.g., preservation of anonymity) which the interviewee requires should be recorded in writing. This is best done at the time of the interview, using a standard form. Retrospective clearance is often time-consuming or impossible where the interviewee is deceased or has moved away.

(c) Interviewers should clarify before interviewing the extent to which subjects are allowed to see transcripts of interviews and fieldnotes and to alter the content, withdraw statements, to provide additional information or to add glosses on interpretations.

(d) Clarification must also be given to subjects regarding the degree to which they will be consulted prior to publication.

**(8) Participants' involvement in research:** As far as is possible researchers should try and involve the people being studied in the planning and execution of research projects, and they should recognize that their obligations to the participants or the host community may not end (indeed should not end, many would argue) with the completion of their fieldwork or research project.

## **II. Relations With and Responsibilities Towards Sponsors, Funders and Employers**

Researchers should attempt to ensure that sponsors, funders and employers appreciate the obligations that they have not only to them, but also to research participants, and to professional colleagues.

**(1) Clarifying roles, rights and obligations:** Researchers should clarify in advance the respective roles, rights and obligations of sponsor, funder, employer and researcher:

(a) They should be careful not to promise or imply acceptance of conditions which would be contrary to professional ethics or competing commitments. Where conflicts seem likely, they should refer sponsors or other interested parties to the relevant portions of the professional guidelines;

- (b) Those who work in non-academic settings should be particularly aware of likely constraints on research and publication and of the potentiality for conflict between the aims of the employer, funder or sponsor and the interests of the people studied;*
- (c) Where some or all of the research participants are also acting as sponsors and/or funders of the research the potential for conflict between their different roles and interests should be made clear to them.*

**(2) Obligations to sponsors, funders and employers:** *Researchers should recognise their general and specific obligations to sponsors, funders and employers whether these are contractually defined or are only the subject of informal, and often unwritten, agreements. In particular:*

- (a) They should be honest about their qualifications and expertise, the limitations, advantages and disadvantages of their methods and data, and they should acknowledge the necessity for discretion with confidential information provided by sponsors and employers;*
- (b) They should not conceal personal or other factors which might affect the satisfactory conduct or completion of the proposed research project or contract.*

**(3) Negotiating 'research space':** *Researchers should be careful to clarify, preferably in advance of signing contracts or starting their research, matters relating to their professional domain and to control over the research project and its products:*

- (a) Researchers are entitled to full disclosure of the sources of funds, personnel, aims of the institution, the purpose(s) of the research project and the disposition of research results;*
- (b) They are entitled to expect from a sponsor, funder or employer a respect for their professional expertise and for the integrity of the data, whether or not these obligations are incorporated in formal contracts. Even when contractual obligations may necessitate the guarding of privileged information, the methods and procedures that have been utilised to produce the published data should not be kept confidential;*
- (c) They should pay particular attention to matters such as: - their ability to protect the rights and interests of research participants; their ability to make all ethical decisions in their research; and their (and other parties') rights in data collected, in publications, copyright and royalties.*

**(4) Relations with gatekeepers:** *Where access to subjects is controlled by a national or local 'gatekeeper', researchers should not devolve their responsibilities onto the gatekeeper. Whilst respecting gatekeepers' legitimate interests, researchers should adhere to the principle of obtaining informed consent directly from subjects once access has been gained. They should be wary of inadvertently disturbing the relationship between subjects and gatekeepers since that will continue long after the researcher has left the field.*

### **III. Relations With, and Responsibilities Towards, Colleagues and the Discipline**

*Scholars derive their status and certain privileges of access to research participants and to data not only by virtue of their personal standing but also by virtue of their professional citizenship. In acknowledging membership of a wider intellectual community researchers owe various obligations to that community and can expect consideration from it.*

**(1) Individual responsibility:** *Researchers bear responsibility for the good reputation of social science research and its practitioners. In considering their methods, procedures, content and reporting of their enquiries, behaviour in the field and relations with research participants and field assistants they should therefore try to ensure that their activities will not jeopardize future research.*

**(2) Conflicts of interest and consideration for colleagues:** *It should be recognised that there may be conflicts of interest (professional and political) between researchers from other countries and local researchers:*

- (a) Consideration for and consultation with researchers who have worked or are working in the proposed research setting is advisable and is also a professional courtesy.*
- (b) In cross-national research, consideration should be given to the interests of local scholars and researchers, to the problems that may result from matters such as the disparities in resources available to visiting researcher, and to problems of equity in collaboration. As far as is possible and practicable, visiting scholars should try and involve local scholars in their research activities but should be alert to the potential for harm that such collaboration might entail in some contexts.*

**(3) Sharing research materials:** *Researchers should give consideration to ways in which research data and findings can be shared with colleagues and with research participants:*

- (a) Research findings, publications and, where feasible, data should be made available in the country where the research took place. If necessary, it should be translated into the national or local language. Researchers should be alert, though, to the harm to research participants, collaborators and local colleagues that might arise from total or even partial disclosure of raw or processed data or from revelations of their involvement in the research project;*
- (b) Where the sharing with colleagues of raw, or even processed, data or their (voluntary or obligatory) deposition in data archives or libraries is envisaged, care should be taken not to breach privacy and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity, and appropriate safeguards should be devised.*

**(4) Collaborative and team research:** *In some cases scholars will need to collaborate with researchers in other disciplines, as well as with research and field assistants, clerical staff, students etcetera. In such cases they should make clear their own ethical and professional obligations and similarly take account of the ethical principles of their collaborators. Care should be taken to clarify roles, rights and obligations of team*

members in relation to matters such as the division of labour, responsibilities, access to and rights in data and fieldnotes, publication, co-authorship, professional liability, etcetera.

**(5) Responsibilities towards research students and field assistants:** Academic supervisors and project directors should ensure that students and assistants are aware of the ethical guidelines and should discuss with them potential (as well as actual) problems which may arise during fieldwork or writing-up.

#### **IV. Relations With Own and Host Governments**

Researchers should be honest and candid in their relations with their own and host governments.

**(1) Conditions of access:** Researchers should seek assurance that they will not be required to compromise their professional and scholarly responsibilities as a condition of being granted research access.

**(2) Cross-national research:** Research conducted outside one's own country raises special ethical and political issues, relating to personal and national disparities in wealth, power, the legal status of the researcher, political interest and national political systems:

- (a) Development studies researchers should bear in mind the differences between the civil and legal, and often the financial, position of national and foreign researchers and scholars;
- (b) They should be aware that irresponsible actions by a researcher or research team may jeopardise access to a research setting or even to a whole country for other researchers.

**(3) Open research:** Scholars owe a responsibility to their colleagues around the world not to use their role as a cover for clandestine research or activities.

**(4) Legal and administrative constraints:** Researchers should note that there may be a number of national laws or administrative regulations which may affect the conduct of their research, matters pertaining to data dissemination and storage, publication, rights of research subjects, of sponsors and employers, etcetera. They should also remember that, save in a very few exceptional circumstances, social research data are not privileged under law and may be subject to legal subpoena. Such laws vary by jurisdiction. Some which may have consequences for research and publication in the U.K. are, for example, the Data Protection Act, law of confidence, Race Relations Act, defamation laws, copyright law, law of contract, and the Official Secrets Act; in the U.S.A. particularly important are the federal regulations governing human subjects' research, the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Copyright Act.

#### **V. Responsibilities to the Wider Society**

Researchers also have responsibilities towards other members of the public and wider society. They depend upon the confidence of the public and they should in their work attempt to promote and preserve such confidence without exaggerating the accuracy or explanatory power of their findings.

**(1) Widening the scope of social research:** Researchers should use the possibilities open to them to extend the scope of social inquiry, and to communicate their findings, for the benefit of the widest possible community. Scholars are most likely to avoid restrictions being placed on their work when they are able to stipulate in advance the issues over which they should maintain control; the greatest problems seem to emerge when such issues remain unresolved until the data are collected or the findings emerge.

**(2) Considering conflicting interests:** Social inquiry is predicated on the belief that greater access to well-founded information will serve rather than threaten the interests of society:

(a) Nonetheless, in planning all phases of an inquiry, from design to presentation of findings, researchers should also consider the likely consequences for the wider society, groups within it, and possible future research, as well as for members of the research population not directly involved in the study and the immediate research participants;

(b) That information can be misconstrued or misused is not in itself a convincing argument against its collection and dissemination. All information is subject to misuse; and no information is devoid of possible harm to one interest or another. Individuals may be harmed by their participation in social inquiries, or group interests may be harmed by certain findings. Researchers are usually not in a position to prevent action based on their findings; but they should, however, attempt to pre-empt likely misinterpretations and to counteract them when they occur.

**(3) Maintaining professional and scholarly integrity:** Research can never be entirely objective - the selection of topics may reflect a bias in favour of certain cultural or personal values; the employment base of the researcher, the source of funding a various other factors may impose certain priorities, obligations and prohibitions - but scholars should strive for objectivity and be open about known barriers to its achievement:

(a) Researchers should not engage or collude in selecting methods designed to produce misleading results, or in misrepresenting findings by commission or omission;

(b) When it is likely that research findings will bear upon public policy and opinion researchers should be careful to state the significant limitations on their findings and interpretations.

## **Epilogue**

The reputation of Development Studies research will inevitably depend less on what professional bodies assert about their ethical norms than on the conduct of individual researchers. These guidelines are aimed at helping researchers to reach an equitable and satisfactory resolution of their dilemmas. This statement of ideals does not impose a rigid set of rules backed by institutional sanctions, given the variations in both

*individuals' moral precepts and the conditions under which they work. Guidelines cannot resolve difficulties in a vacuum nor allocate greater priority to one of the principles than another. Instead, they are aimed at educating researchers, sensitizing them to the potential sources of ethical conflict and dilemmas that may arise in research, scholarship and professional practice, at being informative and descriptive rather than authoritarian or prescriptive. They aim to ensure that where a departure from the principles is contemplated or where the privileging of one group or interested party or parties is deemed situationally or legally necessary, the researcher's decisions should be based on foresight and informed deliberation."*

## **Ethical Review Procedures for Research in the Social Sciences**

ALL University of Oxford research projects involving human participants or personal data, conducted by Oxford students or staff (including academic and research staff) require research ethics scrutiny and approval before the research starts.

- **Why is ethics scrutiny and approval important?**
  - It is part of the responsible conduct of research.
  - It demonstrates that your research has been conducted according to the highest ethical standards. It is important to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of all those involved in the research (whether they are participants, researchers or third parties)
  - It is a University requirement.
  - It is now the expectation - and in some cases formal requirement - of funding bodies.
  - If you are a DPhil student, you will have to answer a series of questions regarding ethical scrutiny of your research in your Transfer and Confirmation of Status application forms.
  
- **You need ethics approval if...**
  - Your research requires human subjects to participate directly by, for example,
    - answering questions about themselves or their opinions - whether as members of the public or in elite interviews.
    - performing tasks, or being observed - such as completing an online survey, participating in an experiment in a computer lab, reading words aloud for linguistic analysis.
  - *OR* your research involves data (collected by you or others) about identified or identifiable people.

## **Research Ethics Approval Procedures for MPhil Students**

MPhil students should apply for research ethics approval in Trinity term of their first year. An early start is recommended. Filling out these forms requires that you have addressed many of the issues of your research design as you will have to discuss the recruitment of participants, any risks to participants, plans for managing your data securely, and submit interview guidelines.

Forms may be downloaded from the [CUREC website](#). Please see also the Departmental Canvas page for further guidance on research ethics and the CUREC forms.

- All students must complete the CUREC 1a form. CUREC 2 need only be completed under certain circumstances specified in the CUREC 1a form. (These are cases where there are complex ethical issues, such as recruitment of people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question, risk to participants of criminal prosecution or the use of deception.) The forms must be signed by your thesis supervisor, who may suggest revisions before signing the forms.
- Students should submit the completed forms to Dominique Attala no later than Friday of Week 2, Trinity term (earlier is preferable).
- The forms are then reviewed by a member of the Departmental Ethic Review Committee. They often return the forms to students for further elaboration or clarification. If there are remaining concerns about the proposed research, the Course Director or Director of Graduate Studies will discuss the relevant issues with the student and supervisor in order to reach a satisfactory resolution. In the unlikely event that no departmental resolution is possible, the forms will be forwarded to the Interdisciplinary Research Ethics Committee.
- From the submission of the forms to their approval in straightforward cases, the process should be completed in 4 weeks. (If a CUREC2 form is required, the process will be much longer.)

## **Research: Fieldwork Safety and Training**

### **Fieldwork**

Many students will undertake fieldwork as part of their course. Fieldwork is defined as any research activity contributing to your academic studies, and approved by your department, which is carried out away from the University premises. This can be overseas or within the UK. Types of fieldwork range from face to face interviewing to research in archives. In planning fieldwork students will need to consider the cost of undertaking their planned fieldwork as well as matters of safety and welfare.

The safety and welfare of its students is paramount to the University. This includes fieldwork and there are a number of procedures that you must follow when preparing for and carrying out fieldwork.

### **Preparation**

Safe fieldwork is successful fieldwork. It is very difficult to do effective fieldwork when you are worrying about your own safety and that of those around you. Thorough preparation can pre-empt many potential problems. When discussing your research with your supervisor please consider the safety implications of where you are going and what you are doing. Before doing any fieldwork, you will be required to complete a travel risk assessment form, which sets out the significant safety risks associated with your research, the arrangements in place to mitigate those risks and the contingency plans for if something goes wrong. You are also expected to take out University travel insurance (there is no cost to doing so). Your department also needs accurate information on where you are, and when and how to contact you while you are away. The risk assessment process should help to plan your fieldwork by thinking through arrangements and practicalities.

## **Training**

**Safety in Fieldwork Training is compulsory for all students.** Even if you are familiar with where you are going there may be risks associated with what you are doing. The departmental course is held usually in week 1 of TT. A range of other courses are available at the university for students who are not able to attend the one in the department.

In addition, there are a wide range of other fieldwork training courses available through the university. They will prepare you to do fieldwork in a range of situations. The courses on vicarious trauma are particularly useful for students who are involved in research on potentially traumatic or distressing topics.

**University Safety Office fieldwork page:** <https://safety.admin.ox.ac.uk/fieldwork>

**UK government travel advice for women:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advice-for-women-travelling-abroad>

**UK government travel advice for LGBT people:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice>

**Travel safety advice and courses also available at:** <https://carolinesrainbowfoundation.org/>

# **MPhil in Development Studies Examination Conventions, 2022-23**

**For students taking the qualifying examination and final examination in 2022-23**

## **1. Introduction**

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

The supervisory board responsible for approving the examination conventions is the MPhil Teaching Committee and the Social Sciences Quality Assurance Committee.

All students should refer to the University Student Handbook at <http://www.proctors.ox.ac.uk/handbook/> for further information on examination matters and plagiarism.

## **2. Rubrics for individual papers**

Candidates will be required to satisfy the examiners in the following components:

### First Year Requirements - Qualifying examinations

(a) *Two Foundation Papers*, each examined by a three-hour online open-book examination taken in Trinity Term, chosen from (i) Economics, (ii) Social Anthropology and (iii) History & Politics. Students with no previous training in economics must take Economics as one of their foundation courses; otherwise the other two must be taken. Further Information about the rubric of each of these examinations will be provided by the course convenor before the end of Hilary Term.

(b) *Research Methods* is examined by means of both:

- I. A three-hour online open book examination paper taken in Trinity Term. Information about the rubric for the examination paper will be provided by the convenor of the qualitative methods course before the end of Michaelmas Term and by the convenor of the quantitative methods course before the end of Hilary Term.
- II. A Research Design Essay submitted electronically by Wednesday of week 5 in of Hilary Term: The Essay must not exceed 5,000 words in length (excluding the bibliography but including footnotes), and specifies a set of research questions or a statement of problems to be analysed. Expectations on the content of the research design essay can be found in the Student Handbook.

The Research Design Essay, submitted in the first year, and the first year Qualifying Examination written paper in Research Methods (above) shall each constitute 50% of the marks for the Research Methods component of the final examination. These marks are carried over into the student's second year.

(c) *Two core essays*

Students must submit two core essays in Hilary Term of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the programme, on topics related to the core course components. Topics and supervisors for core essays will be

assigned by the course convenor in consultation with the Course Director. Guidelines concerning the approval of essay topics are included in the Course Handbook. The mark awarded for the two core essays taken in the first year also constitute an element in the second-year final examination (see point 4.2(i-ii) below).

The first core essay (on ideas about development: social, political and development theory) must be submitted electronically by 9:30 noon on Monday of Week 0 of Hilary Term. The second essay (on key themes in development) must be submitted electronically by 12.00 noon of Friday of Week 9 of Hilary Term.

Each core essay for final submission must be 4,000 – 5,000 words in length (excluding the list of references but including footnotes and appendices).

### Second Year Requirements

#### (a) *Options*

Each of the two Options will be examined by one of the three following means:

- 4) A three-hour online open-book examination, in which students answer three questions selected from at least eight. Teaching Committee may approve courses assessed by examinations in which students have a longer timeframe to answer, on a case by case basis.
- 5) A 5,000-word essay, usually due in Trinity Term, selected from a list of at least eight questions provided by the course convenor. In some circumstances, teaching committee may approve an Option assessed by an essay that is either longer or shorter than 5,000 words and such requests will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 6) In the case of the Option unit, *The Politics of Film in Africa*, it will be assessed in two parts:
  - a. a 4,500-word assessed essay (80% of the overall mark). Questions will be provided in Trinity term and students will have four weeks to complete the essay.
  - b. i) a short film of about 3-4 minutes on an issue related to significant themes on the course. Films will be screened in the Week 8 Seminar of term 2 and will be assessed on critical engagement with these issues, not for its technical or aesthetic values (10% of the overall mark).  
  
ii) a critical 2,000-word treatment to accompany the film (10% of the overall mark).

Candidates may offer an Option course in other relevant master's degrees in the University, subject to permission from the relevant Graduate Studies Committee and from the MPhil Teaching Committee. Applications to do this must be made following the requirements and by the date specified in the Course Handbook.

If students join a course on another degree to fulfil one of their Options, it is the examiners/assessors for that degree who act as assessors, and students must follow the submission requirements and assessment method of the degree in question including

deadlines. In such cases, the MPhil examiners pay close attention to the calibration of marking conventions.

(b) *Thesis*

Students must submit a thesis of not more than 30,000 words (excluding the bibliography, acknowledgements, title, list of contents, tables, figures, graphs and captions, but including footnotes) on a topic approved by the Teaching Committee or by a person or persons to whom the Committee may delegate this function, usually the Course Director. The thesis must be on a topic in the general field of development studies.

An anonymous electronic copy of the thesis should be submitted electronically by noon on Week 1 of Trinity Term.

Mode of completion for assessments

(a) *Examinations*

All examinations will be online, open-book examinations.

- *Social Anthropology Foundation: typed*
- *History and Politics Foundation: typed*
- *Economics Foundation: Mix of handwritten and typed. The handwritten portion will be available on this exam as it may involve students writing equations and/or graphs.*
- *Research Methods examination: Mix of handwritten and typed. The handwritten portion will be available on this exam as it may involve students writing equations and/or graphs.*
- *Options assessed by examination: Details of the mode of completion will be provided in advance of the examinations*

The new e-assessment platform will automatically capture typed answers in open book examinations. This means that additional technical time will not be given for typed answers. Typed answers with a handwritten element, such as equations and/or graphs, will have a slightly longer overall time to account for the extra time required to upload these elements.

(b) *Submissions*

All written submissions must be typed and submitted electronically.

Word limits for open-book online examinations

For all open-book exams which include substantial prose answers (e.g. essays but not short answer questions), the MPhil in Development Studies exam board has set word limits for individual questions/essays. The word limits include:

- a minimum length, work shorter than this is unlikely to fully answer the question
- a maximum length, text beyond this length may be disregarded by the examiner.

The exam board recommends a word limit of 1,200-2,000 words per question on open-book examinations. It is expected that a typical essay within this recommended limit will be approximately 1,500 words.

No specific mark deduction penalties will be applied to under or over-length work on open book exams. However, please note the discussion around minimum and maximum length above.

### 3. Marking Conventions

#### 3.1 University scale for standardised expression of agreed final marks

70 - 100	Distinction
65 – 69	Merit
50 – 64	Pass
0 – 49	Fail

#### 3.2 Qualitative marking criteria for different types of assessment

The following reflects the expected quality for each range of marks in all assessed work:

##### Distinction level

80-100	<b>Superb work</b> showing nuanced command of intellectual debates and making a creative contribution to them
75-79	<b>Excellent work</b> , intellectually stimulating and original argument
70-74	<b>Fine work</b> showing powerful analysis and critical engagement with the secondary literature

##### Merit level

65-69	<b>Merit:</b> strong and well-developed analysis with some indication of distinction potential; no significant errors of fact or interpretation
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##### Pass level

55-64	<b>Good pass:</b> competent analytical standard with most points developed rather than stated
50-54	<b>Pass:</b> basic analytical skills apparent from identification of intellectual problems and some structured discussion of them

## Fail

45-49	<b>Marginal fail:</b> inadequate development of points made
0-44	<b>Outright fail:</b> inadequate coverage and inadequate analysis

### *3.3 Verification and reconciliation of marks*

Summative assessment will be marked independently by two assessors (sometimes referred to as ‘double-blind marking’), except for class presentations and part (b) of the Politics of Film in Africa Option course assessment (the film and film treatment). Marks are returned independently, with comments, by the initial examiners/assessors. The final mark is the mean of the marks of the two examiners/assessors unless:

- i. it differs by more than 6 marks;
- ii. one mark is less than or equal to 49 and one more than 49;
- iii. one mark is less than or equal to 64 and one more than 64;
- iv. one mark is less than or equal to 69 and one more than 69.

In these cases, the examiners/assessors are asked to consult with each other and come to an agreement. The agreed marks and explanatory comments are then submitted. If differences remain, the Chair of Examiners will refer this either to a third examiner or to the external examiner, along with all initial and final marks and comments of internal assessors. The third marker must mark within the range of the two initial marks. The mark of the third marker is taken as final.

In the final exam board meeting all marks (excluding the previously finalised marks for the two core essays) will be considered in detail for inconsistencies and exceptional cases will lead to moderation as appropriate.

### Marking of examination scripts

Students are required to answer three questions in each written examination (see below for penalties for departure from rubric). The assessors each provide an overall mark for the paper comprising the mean of the marks for the three answers; these overall marks are then agreed or forwarded to a third marker as discussed above.

In most cases, students may answer any three questions provided, except where questions are marked as ‘either/or’.

Two examination papers are divided into two sections each, and students are required to answer at least one question from section one and at least one question from section two. These cases are the following: the Foundation examination in Economics, which is divided into section 1 (essay answers) and section 2 (exercises); and the examination in Research Methods, which is divided into section 1 on qualitative research methods and section 2 on quantitative research methods.

### 3.4 Scaling

Rescaling of papers is not normally undertaken. However, the Examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:

- a) a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or
- b) an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or
- c) a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that candidates' marks are not advantaged or disadvantaged by any of these situations. In each case, examiners will establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling will only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed, and a complete run of marks for all papers is available.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, the examiners will review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes an appropriate performance within in each class.

Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied will be included in the Examiners' report and the algorithms used will be published for the information of all examiners and students.

### 3.5 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

There is no compensation for missing answers (short weight) or for incomplete answers. Students are strongly discouraged from answering more questions than the rubric allows. In the final Examination Board all marks will be considered in depth for inconsistencies and exceptional cases will lead to moderation, as appropriate.

In the two exams where answers to specific sections are mandatory (Economics and Research Methods), where a candidate has failed to answer a compulsory question, or failed to answer the required number of questions in different sections, the complete script will be marked and the issue flagged. The board of examiners will consider all such cases so that consistent penalties are applied.

### 3.6 Penalties for late or non-submission (Research Design Essay, Thesis, Core essay, assessed Option essays,)

The scale of penalties agreed by the board of examiners in relation to late submission of assessed items is set out below. For information on penalties for late submission of open-book examination scripts, see section 3.9 below. Details of the circumstances in which such penalties might apply can be found in the Examination Regulations (Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 14.)

<b>Lateness</b>	<b>Cumulative mark penalty</b>
• after the deadline but submitted on the same day	2 percentage points
• within 7 days	5 percentage points
• within 14 days	7 percentage points
• after 14 days	Fail

Failure to submit a required element of assessment will result in the failure of the Examination. Non-submission of an assessment item is classed as a technical fail. As such, the mark for the re-sit will be capped at the pass mark (50).

Submitting written work must be done by the deadline scheduled on British Standard Time. If students are in another time zone, they must plan accordingly.

### *3.7 Penalties for over-length work*

The scale below indicates the penalties that can be applied by the Exam Board for the Thesis, Core Essays, assessed Option essays, and Research Design Essays for exceeding the word-count.

<b>Amount of excess</b>	<b>Indicative amount of excess for 5,000-word assignment</b>	<b>Penalty to apply</b>
Up to 4%	Between 1 and 200 words	1 percentage point
Over 4% and up to 8%	Between 201 and 400 words	2 percentage points
Over 8% and up to 12%	Between 401 and 600 words	3 percentage points
Over 12% and up to 16%	Between 601 and 800 words	4 percentage points
Over 16% and up to 20%	Between 801 and 1,000 words	5 percentage points
Over 20%	1,001 words or more	Automatic fail

### *3.8 Penalties for poor academic practice*

The Examination Board shall deal wholly with cases of poor academic practice where the material under review is small and does not exceed 10% of the whole.

Assessors should mark work on its academic merit with the board responsible for deducting marks for derivative or poor referencing.

Determined by the extent of poor academic practice, the board shall deduct between 1% and 10% of the marks available for cases of poor referencing where material is widely available factual information or a technical description that could not be paraphrased easily; where passage(s) draw on a variety of sources, either verbatim or derivative, in patchwork fashion

(and examiners consider that this represents poor academic practice rather than an attempt to deceive); where some attempt has been made to provide references, however incomplete (e.g. footnotes but no quotation marks, Harvard-style references at the end of a paragraph, inclusion in bibliography); or where passage(s) are ‘grey literature’ i.e. a web source with no clear owner.

If a student has previously had marks deducted for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism the case must always be referred to the Proctors.

In addition, any more serious cases of poor academic practice than described above should also always be referred to the Proctors.

Where assessment includes open-book examinations, candidates will be required to sign up to the University’s [honour code](#). While it is not permissible to submit work which has been submitted, either partially or in full, either for their current Honour School or qualification, or for another Honour School or qualification of this University (except where the Special Regulations for the subject permit this), or for a qualification at any other institution, it is permissible to use work that has been written during the course of a candidate’s studies (e.g. formative essays).

All online submissions and open-book examinations will be screened by *Turnitin*. As students will have unfettered access to literature, pre-prepared notes and web-based resources, there is increased risk of copying and pasting information from other people’s work and presenting it as your own (plagiarism), or working with other students to complete an assessment that should be taken independently (collusion). Plagiarism and collusion are serious offences. If either plagiarism or collusion are suspected in your work, you may be asked to attend an interview with a member of the Board of Examiners where you will be given the chance to discuss the issues.

### *3.9 Penalties for late submission of online examination scripts*

Candidates undertaking exams with a typed mode of completion have their exam responses automatically captured by the system and therefore are not able to submit late. Thus, this section applies to all candidates with a handwritten mode of completion, including those who handwrite an online exam as an exam adjustment.

Candidates should upload their submission within the time allowed for their online examination (inclusive of any additional time for exam adjustments and technical time). Candidates who access the paper later than the published start time (and who do not have an agreed alternative start time) must finish and submit their work within the originally published timeframe or be considered to have submitted late.

Candidates who access the paper on time but who submit their work after the published timeframe will also be considered to have submitted late. If candidates submit their examination response after the end of the specified timeframe and believe they have a good reason for doing so, they may submit a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners (MCE) to explain their reasons for the late submission (see section 11.8.3). The Exam Board will consider whether to waive the penalties (outlined below) for late submission.

The examiners should mark all work received and consider whether or not any penalty should be applied at the meeting of the exam board at which the paper level marks are considered. The penalties should be applied at the paper level, and should only be applied once the exam board is satisfied that there are no valid reasons for late submission.

Time	Penalty
First 5 minutes	No penalty
6 minutes onwards	Fail mark (0)

## 4. Progression rules and classification conventions

### 4.1 Qualitative descriptors of classes

The overall classification results from the average of different courses. Nevertheless, the outcomes should reflect the overall quality of the work in the following way:

**Distinction:** Demonstrates overall excellence, a strong knowledge base and wide-ranging secure command of material.

**Merit:** Demonstrates strong and well-developed analysis with some indication of distinction potential.

**Pass:** Demonstrates overall a good standard of knowledge and familiarity with material, and the ability to apply it effectively.

**Fail:** Fails overall to demonstrate a sufficient range of knowledge, or fails to apply it appropriately.

Note that the aggregation and classification rules in some circumstances allow a stronger performance on some papers to compensate for a weaker performance on others.

### 4.2 Final outcome rules

The final mark for the degree is made up of seven components, weighted as follows:

(i) and (ii) Core essays: the marks for each of the two core course essays (10% for each essay);

(iii) Thesis (30%)

(iv) and (v) Research Methods: the mark is the mean of the mark for the Research Design Essay and for the examined paper on Research Methods (7.5% for each component)

(vi) and (vii) Options: the marks for each of the two second-year Optional papers (17.5% for each Option)

If the mark for one component of the final examination is not consistent with marks in the other components, the mark is discussed and in some cases adjusted, where appropriate, at the final Examiners' meeting in view of the overall performance of the candidate. This will normally be done by reading that component where the mark is out of line.

### Criteria for the award of a pass

To pass the examination, candidates must achieve a mark of at least 50 in each of the seven summatively assessed components listed above.

### Criteria for award of merit

The candidate achieves a mean between 65 and 69, weighting as above the seven components of the final examination.

### Criteria for award of distinction

The Examiners may award a distinction if the following conditions are met:

The candidate achieves a mean of 70 or above, weighting as above the seven components of the final examination, including the thesis.

In agreeing changes to assessment, the exam board has ensured that the learning outcomes for the programme as given in the Course Handbook are still met.

### *4.3 Progression rules*

**A pass mark of 50% must be achieved in each of the following in order for students to proceed to the second year of the course:**

- Two Foundation papers
- Research Methods Examination
- Research Design Essay
- Two core essays

Failure after resit in one (or more) element of the Qualifying Examination would amount to a failure of the entire degree and students would be required to leave the course.

There is no provision for the award of distinction in the Qualifying Examination.

### *4.4 Use of vivas*

*Viva voce* examinations are not held for the MPhil in Development Studies.

## **5. Resits**

A candidate who fails one or more of the foundation papers, and/or the Research Methods examination may be permitted to re-take them in early September of the first year. If a candidate fails either of the core essays, or the Research Design Essay, they will be allowed to re-submit before the beginning of the next academic year. If a candidate fails any component of the first year on a second occasion, they are not permitted to continue to the second year.

One resit/resubmission attempt is permitted for all summatively assessed components of the programme. Re-sits for components failed in the second year, including the thesis, would normally be in Trinity Term of the following academic year. Marks for any element that has

been successfully completed at the first attempt will be carried forward and it will therefore only be necessary for students to re-sit the failed element(s).

Where a candidate has failed an assessment unit owing to a technical fail (non-submission or non-attendance), the mark for the resit will be capped at the pass mark (50). The mark for any resit of assessment owing to an academic fail is awarded based on the merits of the work, subject to a determination by the Exam Board.

## 6. Consideration of mitigating circumstances

A candidate's final outcome will first be considered using the classification rules/final outcome rules as described above in section 4.2. The exam board will then consider any further information they have on individual circumstances.

Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission, under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations that unforeseen circumstances may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. Review will be on anonymised basis by candidate number. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence provided in support. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. Further information on the procedure is provided in the *Examination and Assessment Framework, Annex E* and information for students is provided at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/problems-completing-your-assessment>

Candidates who have indicated they wish to be considered for [DDM \(Declared to have a Deserved Masters degree\)](#) will first be considered for a classified degree, taking into account any individual MCE. If that is not possible and they meet the DDM eligibility criteria, they will be awarded DDM.

## 7. Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

### Examiners

Chair of Examiners Prof. Cheryl Doss

Oxford Department of International Department

Internal Examiner Dr Francesca Lessa

Oxford Department of International Development

Internal Examiner Dr Myfanwy James

Oxford Department of International Development

External Examiner TBC

**Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual Internal or External Examiners.**

### Appointment and role of Examiners

There are four Examiners for the MPhil in Development Studies – three internal to the University and one external. One of the three internal examiners acts as Chair of the Board of Examiners. The three internal examiners are appointed by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department of International Development on recommendation of the departmental Nominations Committee, which is composed of the Director and Deputy Director(s) of the Department of International Development and the Director of Graduate Studies. They are normally appointed for a term of three years. Each examiner usually covers a different discipline. In addition, they are assisted by a number of Assessors appointed by the Chair of Examiners, so as to ensure full competence in the assessments of all disciplines and geographical regions included in the degree. The Assessors may be based in ODID or elsewhere in the collegiate university.

The External Examiner is also nominated by the Nominations Committee, having considered evidence of competence and absence of conflict of interest. They are invited by the Vice Chancellor and normally serves a term of three years.

The External Examiner acts as an impartial external arbiter of academic standards. The external examiner monitors the standard of the course, the standard of the achievement of the students, the procedures for assessment and for the fair conduct of examinations and assessment. They will also arbitrate in marks when internal assessors cannot agree.

The External Examiner is provided with full information on the aims and objectives of the degree, its practical organisation, the syllabus, the course handbook (Guidance notes for students) and the marking conventions. They are consulted on draft examination papers (on which s/he is expected to comment), including re-sits, and agrees the principles according to which the external examiner will see scripts and other assessed material. They are invited to attend all examiners' meetings, and are consulted about their timing. They must attend all examiners' meeting where marks are finalised, and must sign the pass list.

In any one year, the MPhil Examiners are responsible for both the First Year Qualifying Test and the Final Examination at the end of the Second Year.

### Examiners' Reports

The Internal and External Examiners are required to produce reports after the examinations for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department of International Development (ODID), the Social Sciences Division and the Educational Committee (EC). Minutes of examiners' meetings must be taken.

Examiners' reports must be submitted by the end of September of the year in which the examination was taken. The report is expected to cover the following aspects of the examinations:

- the standards demonstrated by the candidates
- the extent to which the standards are appropriate for the award
- the quality of teaching and learning which is indicated by their performance
- the design, structure and marking of assessments

- the procedures for assessment
- the adequacy of the External Examiner's access to the material necessary to make the required judgements and his/her power to call upon such material
- candidates' performance in relation to that of their peers in comparable courses and the rationale for such comparisons
- the coherence of policies and procedures relating to their own duties

The Examiners' reports are discussed by the MPhil Development Studies Teaching Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee in the term following the examinations. Any issues arising from the reports are then addressed.

## Progression from MPhil to DPhil Status

Progression from the MPhil is ODID's preferred mode of entry into the DPhil in International Development, and has provided ODID with many excellent research students. Successful progression requires good advance planning and a good understanding of the admissions process. The process of transferring from MPhil to DPhil status is described in detail below. However, given the importance of this decision and the complexity of the process involved, second year students may wish to hold a special information-sharing meeting with relevant staff at the end of MT or at the beginning of HT. Please contact your Class Representatives who will inform the Course Director of your wish to attend a special meeting.

### Advance planning for the DPhil

Students who are intending to apply to progress to the DPhil at the end of their MPhil should from quite early in their first year on the MPhil give thought to the following three issues.

**1. Choice of thesis topic.** As mentioned earlier, it is vital that the topic of the MPhil thesis be one that can readily be extended into a DPhil thesis. ODID will not normally allow the progression of students who wish to switch to a different topic and thus cannot incorporate work done for their MPhil theses into their DPhil theses, since this causes unacceptable delays in completing the DPhil. There are many ways in which an MPhil thesis might be extended, depending on its topic – for example, by making comparisons with another country or region, or doing complementary research in the same country at a different level (regional rather than local, or national rather than regional), or using other methods, sources or data to generate more evidence on the same issue. The key is to think about this aspect of the research from the outset.

**2. Appropriate supervisor.** Choice of thesis supervisor is even more important if a student intends to progress to a DPhil – and this point can also have important implications for the choice of topic. Most academics can provide good supervision for an MPhil thesis in their broad area of expertise, but DPhil research is of a higher standard and tends to be more successful and more enjoyable if the thesis is closely related to the supervisor's own current research. The supervisor can then provide more specialised and higher-quality advice, and is also likely to take a keener interest in the student's research. Consultation on topics with potential supervisors is always essential. It is also desirable to choose a supervisor who does not have too many other students and so is able to give enough time to each of them: a survey recently showed that frequency of contact with the supervisor is the single most important determinant of the perceived quality of a doctoral student's experience at Oxford. The supervisor must be a permanent or long-term contractual member of ODID's academic staff, though staff from other departments or on short-term contracts can be co-supervisors. Always check availability: supervisors may be unable to take on additional students or they may be going on leave in any given year. **Please note that you need to have obtained the agreement of a member of ODID's academic staff to act as your doctoral supervisor before beginning the application process.**

**3. Adequate financing.** Progressing to a DPhil requires at least two additional years of full fees (assuming there is no break between the MPhil and the DPhil), and continuation fees for any subsequent terms. Also there will be two to three more years of maintenance costs, including the extra costs of fieldwork. It is crucial to develop a plan for financing these expenses. Formally, the financial plan is assessed by the student's college, but the guarantees made in it are regarded as binding by ODID. We encourage students to undertake some teaching and

research assistantship, but as part of their professional development rather than as a major income source. We expect them to make use of the sources specified in the financial plans provided to their colleges, and we do not allow them to undertake large amounts of paid work or in other ways to interrupt or delay their studies on grounds of insufficient funding (unless they can prove that for reasons outside their control funding that was originally guaranteed has ceased to be available).

### **The DPhil admissions process**

University rules permit students already registered for an MPhil to seek admission to study for a DPhil in the same broad field (other applicants, including those who graduated earlier from the MPhil, must apply for admission as Probationary Research Students).

**1.** Applications should be made in early January (of the second year of the MPhil) and this is the deadline for those applying for scholarships (Clarendon and ESRC). Applications should be submitted to the Graduate Admissions Office. Please ask the Graduate Student Administrator for the exact dates within these months, as it will change each year. **Please note that this deadline is for the DPhil in International Development only – if you are intending to apply to a different department, you should contact that department for their deadlines.**

They should be made on the pre-populated form which can be accessed from the OSS Student Self Service. Students usually aim to remain in their present college, which gives them priority for admission. The form should include:

(a) A provisional thesis title

(b) A research proposal explaining the intended contribution of the thesis to knowledge. It should indicate the relationship of the topic to existing literature, the main research question or hypothesis, the proposed source of data (describing the fieldwork or statistics), and the method by which these data will be used to answer the question or test the hypothesis. The outline must be produced in consultation with the prospective supervisor. Also include a provisional timetable for carrying out the work. Successful applicants will need to show convincingly that they could produce a doctoral dissertation of high quality within a fairly short period – two years plus up to a year of additional fieldwork – after completing the MPhil. It is important to explain how the MPhil thesis will be incorporated and developed into the DPhil thesis. If the proposed DPhil thesis does not build on the MPhil thesis, the application may be rejected. There is a guide to writing research proposals on the DPhil page of the Departmental website: <http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/content/dphil-international-development>.

(c) An indication of how the period of doctoral study will be financed (please refer to item 3 above).

**2.** In addition, the student should submit:

(a) Three confidential references to the Graduate Admissions Office, either at the same time as submitting the form, or they can be sent later as long as they arrive by the deadline date noted in item 1. These references should be from: the student's current MPhil thesis supervisor, discussing the applicant's suitability for doctoral study; the member of ODID's academic staff who has agreed to supervise the DPhil, confirming that they will

do this and will be in Oxford during the proposed period of study (or will be able to carry out their supervisory duties satisfactorily while out of Oxford), and evaluating the applicant's research proposal; and one other academic with knowledge of your work.

- (b) two separate pieces of written work.
- (c) transcripts of previous higher education.
- (d) a curriculum vitae.

**3.** ODID's DPhil Admissions Committee will evaluate the application and supporting letters to determine whether the topic and method are appropriate to the inter-disciplinary field of Development Studies. If not, and if the applicant so wishes, the application might be forwarded to a more appropriate Department of the University.

**4.** The DPhil Admissions Committee, which consists of the Admissions Tutor, the Director of Doctoral Research and the Director of Graduate Studies, considers all applications which are complete by the deadline dates. For applicants in ODID, the Committee has access to the records of their progress to date on the MPhil. The Committee can also ask for more information or invite candidates for interview. After applications for each deadline have been considered, applicants are notified by letter of the outcome: rejection, deferral to a later field, or an offer of a place, usually subject to certain conditions being met.

**5.** For all applicants from the MPhil, a strict condition of admission is that a student must pass all elements of the final examination with acceptably high marks. The Committee has discretion to decide, but 'acceptable' is likely to mean an overall grade of at least 67% over the five elements of the MPhil final examination (Thesis, two Options, Research Methods and Core course) and a distinction (70% or more) on the thesis. In addition, the MPhil examiners are asked to recommend, on the basis of the assessors' reports on the thesis, whether or not students should be allowed to progress to the DPhil.

**6.** Applicants will be informed of the final decision as soon as possible after the announcement of the results of the MPhil examinations in Trinity Term.

## **Appendix 2: Support at University of Oxford**

### **Hardship Bursary Funds**

The department offers a small number of bursaries towards the cost of course fees for MPhil in Development Studies students going from the first year into the second year. The awards are intended for students who are facing financial hardship owing to circumstances that could not have been foreseen when starting the degree and are mainly intended for those who are self/family funded rather than those with scholarships. The funds should go towards paying fees for the second year, not other research-related costs. The awards have typically ranged from £1000-£5,500.

Self-funded MPhil students currently in their first year of study are eligible to apply. The awards will be made on the basis of first year academic performance on the MPhil, the quality of the proposed thesis research, the unanticipated need, and a letter of support from the applicant's supervisor.

The application should include:

- a cover note detailing the changes in circumstances which have occurred in the past year which have resulted in financial difficulties,
- a thesis proposal of not more than 1,000 words, outlining the significance of the topic and the proposed methodology,
- a full budget of expected costs, showing any secured and potential sources of second year funding and the shortfall expected.

In addition, a letter of support from your course or thesis supervisor should be sent directly to Dominique Attala.

Details, including deadlines, will be provided at the beginning of Trinity Term. Deadlines are typically at the beginning of June

Decisions will be emailed to those who apply. Funds will be transferred into the bank accounts of the successful candidates at the end of July subject to successful passing of the foundations examinations, the research methods examination and the RDE.

### **Language Centre Courses**

Students are able to take language courses at the University especially if needed for their thesis research. More information about what courses are available at the Language Centre are [here](#). Students are expected to pay for the language course through their own funds.

### **Careers Guidance**

The Oxford University Careers Service offers a wealth of tailored support to help you develop your skills and put themselves in the best possible position for entering the jobs market (<https://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/#/>).

In addition, the department hosts alumni events and panels with past ODID students to give current students a chance to network and learn about what careers are available after they complete the course.

## **Oxford Student Union**

We're called the Students' Union because that's what we are; a union of students. It's the issues that matter to students that drive us. Here, students can feel assured that their views count, their voice is strong, and together we'll use them to make student life even better. Oxford SU is the representative body for all University of Oxford students and our direction and ideas are led by our student members. (<https://www.oxfordsu.org/>).

## **University Authorities**

### **The Proctors**

The Proctors' Office is an impartial and discrete institution within the University which carries out work in support of decision making by the Proctors and the Assessor.

The Proctors and Assessor are senior officers and trustees of the University with a role which encompasses advocacy and scrutiny. They oversee student matters and uphold the University's statutes and policies throughout its governance and administration. Colleges are on a rota so that, every year, three of them each choose one of their Fellows to serve full-time for 12 months; two colleges choose the Proctors and the third the Assessor.

### **Education Committee**

The Education Committee has overall responsibility for the definition and ongoing review of the educational philosophy, policy and standards of the collegiate University in respect of the teaching, learning and assessment. The Education Committee is supported by a number of panels and sub-committees.

## **Equality and Diversity**

*"The University of Oxford is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. We recognise that the broad range of experiences that a diverse staff and student body brings strengthens our research and enhances our teaching, and that in order for Oxford to remain a world-leading institution we must continue to provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish."* University of Oxford [Equality Policy](#)

As a member of the University you contribute towards making it an inclusive environment and we ask that you treat other members of the University community with respect, courtesy and consideration.

The Equality and Diversity Unit works with all parts of the collegiate University to develop and promote an understanding of equality and diversity and ensure that this is reflected in all its processes. The Unit also supports the University in meeting the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with and without the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Visit our website for further details or contact us directly for advice: [edu.web.ox.ac.uk](mailto:edu.web.ox.ac.uk) or [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The Equality and Diversity Unit also supports a broad network of harassment advisors in departments/faculties and colleges and a central Harassment Advisory Service. For more information on the University's Harassment and Bullying policy and the support available for students visit: [edu.web.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice](http://edu.web.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice)

There are a range of faith societies, belief groups, and religious centres within Oxford University that are open to students. For more information visit: [edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/religion-and-belief-0](http://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/religion-and-belief-0)

## **Student Welfare and Support Services**

The Disability Advisory Service (DAS) can provide information, advice and guidance on the way in which a particular disability may impact on your student experience at the University and assist with organising disability-related study support. For more information visit: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das)

The Counselling Service is here to help you address personal or emotional problems that get in the way of having a good experience at Oxford and realising your full academic and personal potential. They offer a free and confidential service. For more information visit: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/counselling](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/counselling)

A range of services led by students are available to help provide support to other students, including the peer supporter network, the Oxford SU's Student Advice Service and Nightline. For more information visit: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer)

Oxford SU also runs a series of campaigns to raise awareness and promote causes that matter to students. For full details, visit: [www.oxfordsu.org/communities/campaigns/](http://www.oxfordsu.org/communities/campaigns/)

There is a wide range of student clubs and societies to get involved in - for more details visit: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/clubs](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/clubs)

## **Disability Advisory Services**

The Disability Advisory Service provides information and advice on disability issues and facilitates support for those with, for example, sensory or mobility impairments, long-term health conditions, specific learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions or mental health difficulties. (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability>)