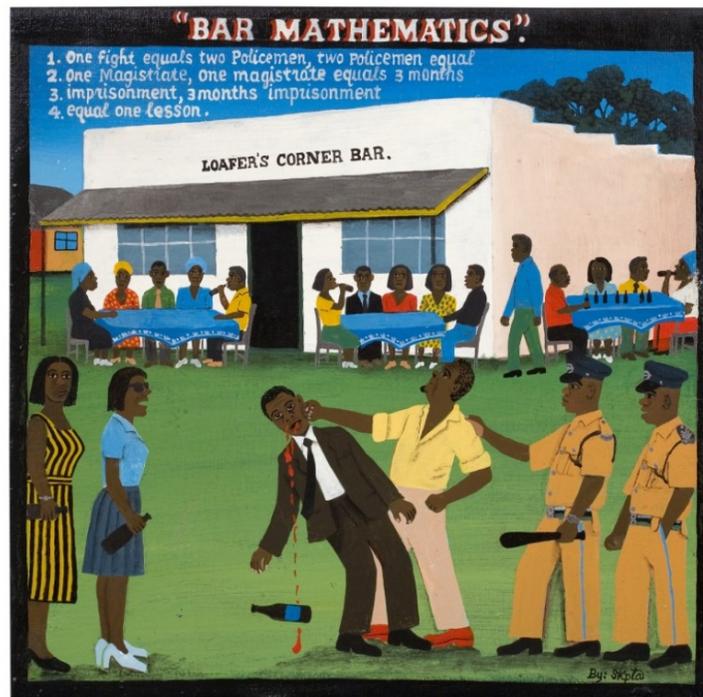


PhD in African Studies
PROGRAMME HANDBOOK

2015-16



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Welcome to the Centre of African Studies (CAS)!

1 Introduction

What's in the Handbook? This Handbook contains information specific to CAS for students studying for the PhD degree. It outlines the research training provided within this programme, and explains our arrangements for supervising and reviewing your progress.

The Handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- Graduate School PhD Students' Handbook:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/for_phd_students/programme_handbooks.

The Handbook provides information on resources and entitlements for Graduate School students, and on supervision, upgrading and other formal requirements for the progress of all research students. It also describes the School's procedures for ethical review of postgraduate research projects and for dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism.

- Graduate School Research Training Courses website:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/research_training_courses.

This website sets out the Graduate School programme of generic social research training and its workshops in advanced research skills. It also provides information on the wide range of training in generic and transferable skills available across the University.

- The University of Edinburgh Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/codes>.

Students may also find it helpful to consult the Graduate School page for incoming students:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/applicants/incoming_students.

2 About the Centre of African Studies (CAS)

The Centre of African Studies (CAS) provides a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of historical and contemporary Africa. It is the only such academic unit in Scotland dedicated to the study of the continent. Founded in 1962, we have longstanding links both with the Scottish Africanist community and with African academics, institutions and agencies. CAS is especially well-networked within Europe by virtue of its active role in AEGIS, and has close working relations with a number of African universities, especially in Tanzania, South Africa, Ghana, Senegal and Malawi.

This is an exciting time to be studying Africa, and we hope that you will make the most of the considerable skills of our growing base of lecturers and internationally-recognised researchers who help make CAS one of the world's leading centres of Africa-focused knowledge and research. Our approach draws on the full range of the Social Sciences and Humanities to understand and interrogate the processes, people and politics that have shaped and continue to shape African societies, environments and futures.

CAS comprises of a number of core staff members (www.cas.ed.ac.uk/people/core_staff), and other associate staff who are located in core disciplines within the School of Social and Political Science (especially Politics and Social Anthropology), as well as Africanists in other schools within the University - among them Law, Education, Divinity, Geosciences and History. We are committed to rigorous disciplinary traditions and to innovative multidisciplinary approaches to both our research and our teaching and supervision. Full details of our activities, research and teaching and training can be found on the CAS website: www.cas.ed.ac.uk.

3 Graduate students at CAS

CAS has a thriving and cosmopolitan international community of graduate students studying for the degrees of PhD and MSc in African Studies, and MSc in Africa and International Development.

We currently have twenty-five PhD students, many of whom make an immense contribution to the activities of the Graduate School, both through CAS and through the range of subjects within the School. Among our former postgraduates, some of the very recent outgoing students have gone on to employment in the private sector in Africa, others have entered posts in academia (among them recent lectureships at the University of Leeds at the University of the Witwatersrand, and at the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and in non-governmental organisations, while still others have been offered postdoctoral fellowships - among them, positions at the University of Oxford, Leiden University, University of Zurich, and of course Edinburgh.

These recent successes support our belief that CAS offers the best of theory and practice and equips our graduates to make not only academic contributions but also practical interventions as well.

CAS strongly supports the idea of research students receiving the best possible academic apprenticeship and to this end encourages students to engage with the broadest possible scholarly community. We encourage students to involve themselves in the conception, organisation and management of the Centre's annual international conference. In June 2012, CAS celebrated its 50th anniversary with an even larger than usual international conference entitled, 'CAS@50: Cutting Edges and Retrospectives'. Some months before this event, students at CAS organized their own conference on Pan-Africanism. Last academic year we organised a well-attended event around 'New Political Topographies : Trans-boundary Flows, Power and Legitimation in Africa and Beyond': http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk/events/annual_conference.

Our students are also encouraged to present at international conferences, such as the AEGIS European Conference on African Studies (ECAS), and have been successful in applying for their own funding to run seminars on advanced research techniques. Current student contacts can be found at: http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk/research_student_profiles.

The Centre meets weekly at the [Centre of African Studies seminar series](#) each Wednesday from 16:00-18:00 in Seminar Rooms 1 and 2 of the Chrystal Macmillan Building (CMB). The series aims to offer a wide disciplinary and geographical selection of presentations, with a view to

exposing students and staff to a variation of the latest research on Africa, presented by a range of academics from very established names in African Studies. The seminars are advertised at http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk/events/seminar_series/upcoming and on noticeboards. After the seminar there is an opportunity to meet the presenter in more informal surroundings. This post-seminar social is traditionally one of the opportunities for staff and students to meet. Attendance at the seminar series is strongly recommended to PhD students.

4 Research degree programmes

All research students, whatever degree they are registered for, follow a programme of research training, drawn from the core courses co-ordinated by the Graduate School, and the African Studies-specific training. Detailed information on the PhD programme structure and requirements is available in the SSPS Graduate School PhD Students' Handbook.

4.1 PhD in African Studies

The characteristic feature of the PhD is independent scholarship supported by personal supervision, culminating in the production of a thesis.

PhD students are registered for 3 years full time or 6 years part time, with an optional year for writing up. It is desirable – and certainly feasible – for students to complete and submit their thesis within a three to four-year period (four to seven years for part-time students). This requires careful planning of the research and frequent communication with supervisors at every stage in the process.

4.2 Programme of work for PhD students

(Year 1) The normal progression for a PhD is that the first year is spent preparing for the main research work – training, reading and reflecting on relevant literature, with the support of the supervisors, and developing the full research proposal. All full-time PhD students undergo a formal 'end of first year' progress review within 9-12 months of their enrolment. Students should expect to be formally reviewed in May or June of their first (full-time) academic year, and prepare accordingly. For part-time students this review process also takes place within 9-12 months of enrolment. Not as much progress is expected to have been made and the decision on the confirmation of PhD registration can be delayed until the second annual review.

The Review is carried out by a Board, which usually has four academic members including supervisors. The postgraduate researcher makes a written presentation to the Board, usually in the form of a full research proposal. Such a paper will specify the research question, locate it in the appropriate academic literature and fully elaborate the research design, methodology and anticipated contribution to knowledge. It will discuss ethical, political and practical issues and also include a detailed timetable and programme of work. It often includes a substantive piece of writing.

(Year 2) The second year is spent conducting the main body of the research (data collection and analysis for students doing empirical research). For African Studies students, this typically involves extended periods of field research, and ideally includes relevant language training.

(Year 3) The third year is spent completing the analysis and writing and submitting the thesis. During this period, students are normally expected also to build their academic curriculum vitae and gain experience as junior academics; for example, in teaching and attending appropriate academic conferences.

Research training is available flexibly to all PhD students throughout their time on the programme. Students entering the PhD programme will almost certainly be required to do some modules of substantive and research training during the first year. A programme of work should be agreed with your supervisors at the start of the year. Where this is core training in generic research skills, you will be required to complete the requisite coursework assignments. Substantive courses will usually lead to the production of written work to be integrated into the eventual research proposal. Most of the training courses are offered through the Graduate School. For a list of courses, see:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/research_training_courses.

The Centre of African also offers an Africa-specific methods course entitled:

[Research in Africa \(PGSP11340\): Semester 2](#)

Research students are strongly encouraged to take this course.

CAS also offers two other courses which are complementary to this offering:

[Building Blocks of African Studies \(PGSP11417\): Semester 1](#)

[Contemporary African Issues and Debates \(PGSP11076\): Semester 2](#)

In subsequent years of your PhD you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of any further subject-specific, generic or transferable skill modules or courses that may be relevant and helpful. This will often take the form of advanced training appropriate to the specific demands or stage of your research – for example, in the use of software packages for data analysis, advanced quantitative data analysis, writing for publication and so on (see the [Graduate School's research training](#) pages). You may take such courses for credit or may audit them; in the latter case, you will not be required to complete coursework assignments. The auditing of courses must be approved by

the relevant course convenor. Be aware that if there is restriction on numbers, priority will be given to those taking the course for credit. The research training and development available to research students extends well beyond the formal provision of taught courses and the role of supervisors. We encourage you to participate fully in all formal and informal activities within the subject area.

4.3 Expectations for PhD students

The Centre offers a range of activities that are designed to be of benefit to its research students. This also entails a reciprocal commitment to take part in scheduled activities:

Seminars

As with all other CAS graduate students, you are expected to attend the Centre of African Studies seminar series.

Capacity building activities

Workshops will be offered during Semester 2 on:

- **The transition board**

This workshop will be of most use to students in Year 1 of their PhD. It will be held in w/c 16th November 2015 (date and time depending on PhD students' course timetable).

- **Submitting papers for publication**

This workshop is appropriate for all doctoral students at any stage of their studies. It will be held in w/c 8th February 2016 (date and time depending on PhD students' course timetable).

- **Preparing for the viva**

This workshop is most helpful to students in Year 3, but is open to any others who are interested. It will be held at a date in Semester 2 that best suits (Edinburgh-based) post-fieldwork PhD students' needs.

The annual Africanist PhD students' presentation day will take place in w/c 11th April 2016 (date and time depending on CAS core staff availability). Each student is required to present a

20-minute paper on an aspect of their forthcoming (for pre-fieldwork students), or recent (for post-fieldwork students) field research. It is recommended that the presentation covers a discrete aspect of the research as opposed to a broad-ranging 'all-about-my-thesis' presentation. The research topic does need to be contextualised however, which makes this an exercise in conveying a compact yet digestible message in a short period of time. Quality is preferred over quantity. After each presentation 15 minutes are then given to questions and discussion.

The Africanist PhD students' presentation day is a great opportunity for staff to offer feedback to PhD students. It is also a chance for other PhD students to get a sense of the doctoral research that is being undertaken by their peers at different stages of study.

The PhD Advisor has informed all supervisors and the Graduate School Office that **attendance at the Africanist PhD students' presentation day is obligatory for all PhD in African Studies students**. *The only exception* are for those PhD students who the College of Humanities & Social Science has formally granted a *Leave of Absence* from Edinburgh (most normally for overseas fieldwork), or for those who the University has formally granted an *Interruption of Study*. If required, the PhD Advisor will obtain from supervisors and/or the Graduate School Office formal evidence of College approval of Leave of Absence and/or Interruption of Study.

Research meetings

Feedback from previous years suggests that PhD students appreciate the opportunity to have their peers reflect on their work. Students are encouraged to organise their own advanced training and work-in-progress seminars.

Undergraduate tutoring

All research students are encouraged to take on limited amounts of teaching in related subject areas, for which they must attend the relevant training sessions.

In these ways, postgraduate students often contribute significantly to the University research

community in African Studies. In addition, such activities are vital parts of the ‘apprenticeship’ aspect of the PhD; they help socialise you into academic scholarship and so provide invaluable experience when you come to look for a job.

5 The supervisory relationship

Supervision for all graduate students is described in the Graduate School Research Students Handbook. In African Studies we also recognise that supervision needs to be tailored to the specific requirements of each student at the time. What works well for one student may not work for another, and most students need different input from supervisors at different stages in the degree. Supervisors also differ in their styles of supervision, and in the particular skills, knowledge and experience they can offer a student. Some may prefer very frequent meetings and structured tasks, others may prefer more informal ways of working; some are more directive, others see their role more as encouraging and enabling. Whatever the preferences and needs, we encourage students to talk about what they want from the supervision process. Equally, we expect supervisors to be flexible and open enough to respond appropriately, and to negotiate how best to make the supervision work.

First and second supervisors (or 'Principal supervisor', PSUP and 'Assistant supervisor', ASTSUP respectively) will usually share responsibilities equally, but supervisors and students can agree a different division of labour if this is more suitable and mutually acceptable. Second supervisors may become more important than the first supervisor; supervisors may meet the student together or separately; the second supervisor's role may be more passive, perhaps mainly providing continuity in the first supervisor's absence, the second supervisor may provide an alternative point of view and different kinds of support and so on. CAS particularly supports the idea of joint supervision. We feel it is especially appropriate given the multidisciplinary nature of the subject, as it allows students to draw on the widest range of supervisory expertise, be that disciplinary or geographic, available in the University.

All research students and supervisors should also make themselves familiar with the sections on 'supervisors' and 'students' (sections 3.2 and 3.3) in the University Code of Practice:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/codes>.

6 The Postgraduate Advisor

An Advisor coordinates the PhD in African Studies programme. With the Directors of the Graduate School, and supervisors, they take responsibility for recruitment, admissions, assessment, monitoring progress, programme evaluation and curriculum development.

The Advisor is available to all research students as their first line of pastoral support, as an alternative to the supervisor, and advice for scholarly or personal issues that arise whilst they are studying. These may include routine advice about course or topic choices at critical stages in the Programme, or advice on individual problems. Students are responsible for informing their appropriate Advisor promptly of any problems which interfere with their coursework or progress, including any issues that might affect their participation in aspects of the Programme.

The PhD Advisor is [Dr Thomas Molony](#)
Room 4.05, Chrystal Macmillan Building
Thomas.Molony@ed.ac.uk
0131 650 6976

7 Facilities and resources

For details of the facilities and resources provided by the Graduate School please consult the Graduate School PhD Students' Handbook:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/on_course/for_phd_students/programme_handbooks.