THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Social and
Political Science

Programme Handbook 2020-21

PhD in African Studies

THIS HANDBOOK CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT IF REQUIRED

0. Programme Administrative Support:

The Postgraduate Research Support Team is your first point of contact within the Graduate School of Social and Political Science. Contact details are below:

Graduate School Office
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool

Please contact via email in the first instance as staff may be working away from their campus office: pgresearch.sps@ed.ac.uk

Note*:* The handbook does not supersede the University *Regulations*, nor the formal requirements for each degree as set out in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study, nor the Terms and Conditions of Admission set out in the Postgraduate Prospectus. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this Handbook was correct at the time of going to press, but the handbook does not form part of any contract between University and student.

Contents

1. Introduction and General Information

Welcome to the Centre of African Studies (CAS) at the University of Edinburgh. This Handbook contains information specific to CAS for students studying for the PhD in African Studies. 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:

- The Graduate School PhD Students' Handbook:
  This handbook introduces the Graduate School of Social and Political Science, and the administrative, regulatory and procedural information you will need while studying for a PhD programme here. It also directs you to different kinds of support and advice available on other matters such as welfare and study skills. It will help you make the most of your time while at the University of Edinburgh.

- The Graduate School Research Training website:
  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. See also the Learning and Academic Skills webpage andthe Institute for Academic Development website, which has a range of free training workshops available to students.

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

You may also find it helpful to consult the Graduate School webpage for incoming students.

- Events that form part of the *Graduate School Postgraduate Research Welcome Week* are advertised here.
- Information for current students can be found here.

Note: ***All new PhD students need to have their attendance confirmed***.

Set up your first meeting with your supervisors as soon as possible and decide on which courses to register for. You must choose your courses (for both semesters) **no later than 11th September 2020**. This means you need to have done so before welcome week starts on the 14th of September. In your supervisor meeting you will also discuss your Training Needs Assessment form.

Note, you can either audit courses or take them for credit. Ask your supervisors for advice on this. You will also find more information on courses for PhD students and how to register here.

1.1 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 the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (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, 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 Divinity, Geosciences, History and Law. 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.

1.2 Graduate students at CAS

CAS has a thriving and cosmopolitan international community of graduate students studying for the degrees of PhD in African Studies, and MSc in Africa and International Development. We currently have around 25 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.

1.3 Conferences and associations

Our students are also encouraged to present at international conferences, such as the biannual AEGIS European Conference on African Studies). CAS hosted ECAS 2019. We would also encourage PhD researchers to get the student membership for the African Studies Association of the UK and present at its conferences. Specialised thematic workshops also happen year-round across the UK and outside and students are encouraged to present their research and build professional relationships. Students have also been successful in applying for their own funding to run seminars on advanced research techniques. Current student contacts can be found here.

1.4 CAS PhD Seminars

Attendance and full participation at the CAS PhD Seminars are obligatory for all. These seminars offer a friendly peer driven space for PhD students to learn important skills such as academic public speaking and to receive essential but friendly feedback on pieces of work that may not necessarily be ready for wider audiences. This space will also help to build a supportive peer-to peer cohort that will be useful in the lonely journey of writing a PhD thesis. Students are encouraged to take full advantage of this opportunity. More information on the CAS PhD Seminars will be shared in due course and will be available via your Learn page.

1.4 CAS Seminar

The Centre normally meets weekly at the Centre of African Studies seminar series each Wednesday from 1600-1800 in Seminar Rooms 1 and 2 of the CMB. However, this Semester, the CAS Seminars will be held entirely online. 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 in African Studies. The seminars are advertised online and on noticeboards and screens in the CMB. 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.

You may also be interested in seminars held by other subject areas within the School including, inter alia:

- Science, Technology and Innovation Studies, Mondays, 15:00
- Social Anthropology, Fridays, 11:00

All CAS students are welcome to contribute to the CAS students' blog, 'Postgrads from the Edge', in which students offer 'opinions, about Africa, from Edinburgh'.

2. 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.

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.

2.1 Progression and assessment

Year 1

The first year of the PhD is probationary. The normal progression for a PhD is that the first year is spent preparing for the main research work – training, taking useful methodology or language courses, reading and reflecting on relevant literature, and developing the full research proposal with the support of the supervisors. All full-time PhD students undergo a formal 'end of first year' progress review within 9-12 months of their enrolment. Both full-time and part-time students should expect to be formally reviewed between May and August of their first (full-time) academic year, and prepare accordingly. Not as much progress is expected to have been made for part-time students, and the examiners take account of this.

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 of 15,000 – 20,000 words. 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. It will discuss ethical, political and practical issues and also include a detailed timetable and programme of work. It involves a substantive piece of writing. Your supervisors will guide you throughout the year on how to draft this document and prepare for the exam, but there are additional workshops to support you. For further details on exam results and procedures, see the other handbooks linked in Section 1.

Supervisors are responsible for monitoring student progress and reporting annually to the Graduate School Office and the College Postgraduate Office. This progress is monitored via the Annual Progression Review. There is not a requirement for a formal review board with external assessor(s) in subsequent years of study. The review consists of a dedicated meeting between the student and the supervision team, and progress to the next year of study must be confirmed. The student and supervisor(s) must also complete the annual review form. The annual review system for PhD students is an online form within your student record (accessible via MyEd).

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 may include 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 early career academics; for example, in teaching and attending appropriate academic conferences.

3. Research Training

Research training is available flexibly to all PhD students throughout their time on the programme. Students beginning research degrees normally take a full programme of training courses in their first year of study.

3.1 SPS methods courses

The Graduate School research training programme is designed to meet the generic requirements of the ESRC Postgraduate Research Training Guidelines, and to provide additional subject-specific, and more advanced, training for students working in the core social science disciplines represented in the School. The courses are chosen in discussion between the student and supervisor at the start of the first year when you complete your Training Needs Assessment. For further details see the Research Training Centre website and information on choosing courses.

Subject areas also offer research training courses with a specific disciplinary or regional emphasis. There are relevant course options in other Schools that, in discussion with your supervisors, you should explore. These will be searchable on the SPS website. In particular, the Centre of African Studies offers an Africa-specific methods course, Research in Africa (PGSP11340), that PhD students whose research focuses on Africa are strongly encouraged to take.

3.2 Skills courses

A wide range of courses in methods, skills, professional development etc are provided for PhD students through the [Institute for Academic Development](#) (IAD), the [Student Development Office](#) (SDO), the Graduate School in SPS and the [careers office](#). Please see their website for further details and to sign up.

The Graduate School has produced a list of recommended courses and advice on when to take them. Please note:

- These are recommended but not compulsory.
- You can take them at any time of your PhD. This is a suggested pathway.
- Details may change and it is important you use the IAD / SDO websites to sign up well in advance.

Year 1

Course	Approx. dates	Delivery
Managing your research project	Three times per year	IAD
Seven secrets of a highly successful research student	Once per year	IAD
Searching research literature and managing bibliographies	Several times per year	IAD
How to be an effective researcher	Several times per year	IAD
PhD career planning	October	Careers
Tech & Tools: Choosing from over 1000 options	November	SDO
Research ethics	January	SPS
Good practice in research data management	Several times per year	IAD
Writing a literature review (CAHSS)	Several times per year	IAD
Designing effective slides	Once per year	IAD
Presenting with ease	Online	IAD
How to prepare for your first year review board	April	SPS

Year 2

Course	Approx. dates	Delivery
Practical project management for researchers	Several times per year	IAD
Researcher reflexivity		SPS
Researching with service users		SPS
Pitch perfect: public speaking, networking & engaging	Several times per year	SDO
Writing skills to take you from A to Z: How to plan and write your thesis	Several times per year	SDO
Safe and responsible research – REDr travel safety	September	SPS/SDO
Managing your research project		IAD
Managing your work, yourself and your goals		IAD
Presenting at conferences	Semester 2	SPS
Using social media for research and impact		IAD

Year 3

Course	Approx. dates	Delivery
Post-fieldwork support network	Several times per year	SPS/SDO
Navigating peer review	January	SDO
Professional networking for researchers: strategy & engaging		SDO
Writing skills: How to plan and write your thesis	Several times per year	SDO
Writing skills: how to edit and critique your work	Several times per year	SDO
Effective conference posters	Online	IAD
Public engagement	Several times per year	SPS/SDO

Building impact		RO
An introduction to copyright and publishing	Several times per year	IAD
Publish or perish: academic publishing in a nutshell	October	SDO
Pursuing a career in academia	February	SPS
Finding funding for your research	Twice per year	IAD
Attracting your own research funding	February	SDO
Viva survivor	Several times per year	IAD
Demystifying the viva	Semester 2	SPS
Writing job applications and preparing for interviews	Semester 2	Careers/SPS

In addition, there are several courses on academic writing and working on offer by the IAD, e.g. 'Beating writers' block', 'Academic speed reading', 'Is my writing 'academic' enough?', 'Just write', 'Just present', 'Designing research posters', depending on individual needs. The IAD is also extending their online course offer.

3.3 Annual presentation day

At a conference style event held in April-May each year, each student is required to present a 15-20 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. It provides a friendly, supportive and constructive conference-like setting to improve your confidence and abilities in presenting, which is an important academic skill.

The Postgraduate Advisor for African Studies 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.

4. The supervisory relationship

Supervision for all graduate students is described in the [Graduate School PhD 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 fairly equally, although the first supervisor is often responsible for the administration of the supervision. 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 'On Being a Research Student' (section 2.6) and 'Contact between Students and Supervisors' (3.1) in the [Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students](#).

5. Undergraduate tutoring

Research students may wish to take on limited amounts of teaching in related subject areas, for which you must attend the relevant training sessions. In these ways, postgraduate students often contribute significantly to the University research community. 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. Typically, we would only recommend doing [tutoring](#) in year 2 and beyond, since year 1 should be focused on passing the end of first year progression board and receiving training.

Specialist support for tutors

- Assessment and providing feedback
- Effective tutoring
- Enhancing tutorials
- Engaging students in an online environment
- Developing a teaching portfolio (SPS)

Formal teaching accreditation can be achieved through the IAD course [Introduction into Academic Practice](#) (IntroAP) and the [Edinburgh Teaching Award](#) (EdTA).

6. The Postgraduate Advisor

The [Postgraduate Advisor](#) (PGA) for the PhD in African Studies is:

[Dr Akin Iwilade](#)

Room 4.01, Chrystal Macmillan Building

6.1 PGA role
As PGA, I coordinate the PhD in African Studies programme. With the Directors of the Graduate School, and supervisors, I take responsibility for recruitment, admissions, assessment, monitoring progress, programme evaluation and curriculum development of the programme. I run the academic workshops and meeting for the programme.

I am happy to offer advice on scholarly or personal issues that arise while you are studying. You are responsible for informing me and your supervisor(s) of any problems which interfere with your coursework or progress, including any issues that might affect your participation in aspects of the Programme.

6.2 Personal issues
I am available to all research students on the programme as your first line of pastoral

support, as an alternative to your supervisor(s). The Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students indicates that 'Students are encouraged to bring any concerns, including those of a social or medical nature, to the attention of supervisors especially if the problem is interfering with the student's work. Supervisors will be able to advise on special circumstances … and how to apply for concessions if appropriate. Supervisors will also respect any student's request for such concerns to be treated confidentially.' If, for whatever reason, you feel that you cannot discuss an issue with your supervisor(s), please do not hesitate to contact me.

7. Other forms of support

Student representation

The PhD in International Development normally has two programme representatives, who will be appointed by the end of Welcome Week. If you have a particularly sensitive issue that you would prefer one of your peers raise, then you may wish to approach one of the programme reps.

University support

The School and the University offer a wide range of support for students across all programmes. These include advice and career services, counselling, support for students with disabilities.

EUSA

The Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA) provides a wide range of support and advice for students.

UCU

The University and College Union is the representative trade union for the UK university sector. Postgraduate students engaged in paid teaching or research can join for free.

A final word: The PhD is probably your best chance to thoroughly research a topic for a significant period of time. Enjoy your time in CAS, and make the most of the rich research environment.