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

# Programme Handbook 2020-21

# PhD in Social Anthropology

**If you require this document or any of the internal University of Edinburgh online resources mentioned in the document in an alternative format please contact Graduate School (gradschool.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. Key Contacts

## 1.1 Postgraduate Advisors:

On Course:
Dr Tom Boylston, Room 5.03, Chrystal Macmillan Building
Email: tom.boylston@ed.ac.uk

Admissions and Funding:
Dr Alexander Edmonds
Email: alex.edmonds@ed.ac.uk

## 1.2 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

## 2. Introduction

This Handbook describes training provided by the Social Anthropology subject group, which is available to support students at all stages in their programme. It should be read in conjunction with the following:

- School of Social and Political Science **PhD Student Handbook**

- **Research Training Courses web page**: This 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 Postgraduate Research Students and their Supervision**: A Code of Practice for Supervisors and Students**. This provides information on University expectations for both students and supervisors, including guidance on formal requirements for progression and completion of research degrees. This is available online.

### 2.1 About Social Anthropology

Edinburgh's Social Anthropology department is among the largest in the UK, and our research interests are correspondingly diverse. Our research is global in scope and includes core themes in health and wellbeing; religion and society; migration and refugee studies; science and technology; the anthropology of kinship; peace and conflict studies; anthropology and the arts; media anthropology; cultural heritage; international development; human-animal relations; and the anthropology of design (among other things). Our work generally combines a traditional anthropological emphasis on ethnographic fieldwork with a focus on contemporary issues. We welcome interdisciplinary research and are home to the Edinburgh Centre for Medical Anthropology (EdCMA), and numerous collaborations with the Edinburgh College of Art, including the Atelier Network. We also work closely with the Centre for African Studies (CAS), particularly with research on international development.

Full details of our current research, publications and awards are on the Social Anthropology web pages.

## 3. Doing a PhD in Social Anthropology

Postgraduates are critical to the quality of the Edinburgh Social Anthropology research community, and we encourage students to participate in all formal and informal sociology activities, including seminars, work in progress workshops, research meetings, staff meetings and undergraduate tutoring.

The Graduate School PhD Students' Handbook provides a more detailed explanation of the structure and timetable for the task involved in completing a PhD, as well as arrangements for part-time study. Students and supervisors should familiarise themselves with the relevant sections of the Graduate School Handbook as well as the University Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

### 3.1 Studying During the Covid-19 Pandemic

*We are doing our very best to adapt to the unfolding global situation. Please note that a significant number of courses will be delivered online-only for at least Semester 1 and possibly longer.*

*Whether you come straight to Edinburgh at the beginning of your studies, or will begin your study remotely, please contact the [Postgraduate Advisor](#) ([Tom Boylston](#)) and your supervisors so that we can plan accordingly. It is strongly recommended that you talk to your supervisor to establish how you and they can meet, in-person or remotely, in ways that everyone is comfortable and safe.*

*We do not yet know how fieldwork plans for 2021 will be impacted by Covid-19, but will discuss contingency planning as part of our on-course training.*

*If you have any concerns at all, please contact Dr Tom Boylston.*

### 3.2 Advanced Training throughout the PhD

In addition to personal supervision, [research training](#) is provided flexibly throughout the degree:
  - students are expected to attend, and routinely present their work to the weekly Research in Progress seminars throughout the year;
  - students are encouraged to run their own advanced training seminars – these seminars can be facilitated by working with the Scottish Training in Anthropological Research (STAR) consortium;
  - in second and subsequent years, students are encouraged to participate in advanced training appropriate to their needs. This may include for example the use of software packages for data analysis, advanced quantitative data analysis, writing for publication and so on (see Graduate School [website](#))
  - post-fieldwork students are encouraged to take on limited amounts of teaching in the subject group, for which they must attend the relevant training sessions.

  - It is recommended that all students join at least one research group or network in addition to their PhD cohort. Many of these are interdisciplinary and are hosted in other departments/schools. They can be a great way to develop wider research links. Examples include [Students of Medical Anthropology](#) (SoMA, part of the Edinburgh Centre for Medical Anthropology); [Food Research in Edinburgh](#) (FRiED Network); [SKAPE](#) Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy, and many others.

### 3.3 Supervisors

PhD students have two supervisors, with whom they work closely throughout their research, at least one of whom will be from the Social Anthropology subject group. All new research students are allocated a principal supervisor when they are accepted for admission. Most PhD students are allocated a second supervisor at the same time; if the second supervisor is not allocated upon acceptance, the allocation must be set by the end of October during the student's first semester. It is quite possible, and often beneficial for the student, to arrange joint supervision with someone from another subject area whose

expertise is especially relevant to the student's research topic. Such decisions are always made in consultation with the student.

### 3.3.1 Supervision

The Graduate School **PhD Students' Handbook** provides detailed information on supervision arrangements across the School of Social and Political Science, as well as requirements for upgrade to PhD, monitoring of progress in Annual Reviews etc.

## 3.4 Postgraduate Advisors

The on-course Postgraduate Advisor coordinates the Social Anthropology PhD programme.  With the School Director of Postgraduate Research Programmes, and supervisors, the Advisor takes responsibility for assessment, monitoring progress, programme evaluation and curriculum development. The Advisor is available to all research students as their first line of pastoral support and advice for scholarly or personal issues which 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. In Social Anthropology there are two Postgraduate Advisors, with one dealing with recruitment, admissions and funding (Dr Alex Edmonds) and the other responsible for on-course issues during the course of the PhD (Dr Tom Boylston).

**Students are responsible for informing the Postgraduate 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.**

## 3.5 Social Anthropology Staff

For profiles of all staff see:  http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff

## 3.6 Graduate Students

The first year is designed to ensure all research students meet the learning outcomes required by the Economic and Social Research Council Postgraduate Training Guidelines. It combines training in qualitative social research skills, with specific anthropological training in ethnographic fieldwork. At the end of the year students are expected to submit a dissertation in the form of an extended research proposal.

- The first year is focused around the production of a 15000 word research proposal.
- The second year is usually devoted to language training and field research.
- The third year is devoted to writing-up the results of field research.
- Part-time students follow the same sequence but over a longer period of time.

The overwhelming majority of our successful PhD students now work in research-based positions, whether as lecturers in Social Anthropology and related subjects at University level, as researchers in universities and government departments, or in private sector research and consultancy. Our training programme is intended to provide the skills needed to pursue research careers in any of these settings, as well as the more specialised skills needed for successful completion of the PhD itself.

### 3.7 Training and Research

Successful completion of a research degree involves a careful balance between the pursuit of your own research project, and training in the skills which will enable you to become a more effective researcher, both now and in the future. Although our formal requirements for training in research methods currently concentrate on generic and discipline-specific courses for students in the MSc by Research or first year of the PhD, the School provides a growing number of short courses in advanced research methods. All of these courses are open to students at all stages of their degree. Research students also have access to the University and College-wide programme of training in transferable skills, and to courses provided by the University Computing Services.

Descriptions of the School courses, and guidance on other training providers around the University, can be found here.

Each student is expected to formulate an individual training programme in consultation with their supervisor (and, in the case of the MSc by Research, with the Postgraduate Advisor). It is recommended that you fill out a Training Needs Assessment form in consultation with your supervisor.

This programme should be revised and updated on an annual basis as part of the regular round of Annual Review meetings described in the Graduate School PhD Students' Handbook.

# 4. The PhD Degree Programme

The PhD is a 3-year programme for full-time students (6 years part-time). The first year is regarded as probationary; upgrade to full PhD status is achieved through the submission of a full research proposal (see below, "The Upgrade Paper", p.10).

Fieldwork normally takes place immediately after upgrade to PhD. On returning from the field, students are required to attend the Work in Progress Seminars (see below), and will produce a writing-up timetable in consultation with their supervisors.

## *4.1 First Year PhD Training Programme*

The programme combines individual work on the student's own research project with his or her supervisors, with collective disciplinary training in the context of social anthropology seminars and workshops, and completion of key courses in generic social research methods.

The social anthropology department provides the following research training seminars:

- **Work in Progress Seminar** (Dr Lotte Hoek, Fridays 11-1, *currently online*) – **Required for post-fieldwork students**. First year students are warmly invited to attend.
- **Masterclass Seminars** (organized with Dr Lotte Hoek and Dr Tom Boylston) with members of the department and visiting speakers to be arranged on a per-semester basis. **All PhD and MSc Research students are invited to attend.**

All first year PhD students, along with MSc Research (Social Anthropology) students are required to attend the doctoral training seminar:

- **Doctoral Seminar in Social Anthropology**

Convenor: Dr Tom Boylston, tom.boylston@ed.ac.uk

The Doctoral Seminar meets weekly during semester time on Thursdays from 9-11am (beginning September 24 2020). All meetings will be [*offered online initially*].

This will serve primarily as a workshop for developing students' dissertations and research proposals throughout the year. It also allows for discussion of methods, ethics, and research practicalities relevant to students' specific projects. Although the seminar series is not subject to formal written assessment, students are required to make regular oral presentations on their work in progress.

Finally, the seminar is a space where students can come together as a group for mutual support and socialisation into the research student cohort, the subject area and the discipline of social anthropology. The doctoral seminar is not a course, and there is no assessment or credit. However, **participation in the Doctoral Seminar is required for probationary research students (1st year PhD students and MSc by Research Social and Political Science students whose supervisor is based in the Social Anthropology subject area)**. The Postgraduate Advisor coordinates a programme of activities for the semester and facilitates the seminars.

### 4.1.1 The 1ˢᵗ Year Showcase

The 1ˢᵗ Year Showcase is an annual event where probationary research students (1ˢᵗ year PhD students and MSc by Research Social and Political Science students whose supervisor is in Social Anthropology) make a presentation of their research proposal and respond to questions and feedback about it from other research students and staff in Social Anthropology. **Doing such a presentation is a requirement for successful progression to full PhD study in the subject area.** The Showcase takes place in the late spring each year (2020-21 date TBC).

### 4.1.2 Other First Year PhD Training

A normal first year programme would also involve successful completion of the following training courses in the Graduate School of Social and Political Science:

- *Research Skills in the Social Sciences: Data Collection* *[PGSP11016] 20 credits*
- *Qualitative Methods and Ethnographic Fieldwork* *[PGSP11188] 20 credits*

Together with attendance at the Doctoral seminar. Students would normally take at least two further appropriate training courses (to be agreed with supervisors): these could be from the programme provided by the Graduate School of Social and Political Science, or an appropriate language training course if this is available.

Throughout the year students will also work with their supervisors in a programme of systematic review of the secondary literature in their proposed area of research. Supervisors will also advise students of the most appropriate further training in their area of research interest.

**Students are strongly encouraged to take relevant modules in generic and transferable skills throughout their time in the University.**

The SPS Research Training Centre offers a series of Micro-Methods workshops on specific topics – it is strongly recommended that students check these offerings for sessions relevant to their research.

### Language Training

Language training in a wide range of European and Asian languages is available through the University's Institute for Applied Language Studies, in either all-year, or short-course format, depending on the student's other commitments. In all cases, we would expect this to be essentially introductory, and for language training to continue well into the second and subsequent years of research. In many cases it will be more appropriate for a student to immerse themselves in language training in situ in the first months of his or her field research.

### 4.1.3 Research in Progress Writing Seminar

Fridays, 11:10am to 1:00pm

*Organiser: Dr Lotte Hoek*

Students are also expected to attend the weekly Research in Progress Writing Seminars on Friday mornings. These seminars are designed to give post-fieldwork students an opportunity to present their own material to other research students in a seminar format. The seminar provides an opportunity to give formal academic presentations within the supportive context of fellow research students. Anyone attending the seminar is expected

to read the circulated work carefully and come prepared to participate in the seminar discussion.

Periodically and with the consultation of post-fieldwork students, other members of staff or visiting speakers will be invited to present masterclasses on their ongoing work. First-year research students are encouraged to attend and participate, particularly in Masterclass sessions, as this is important way of developing links across student cohorts and to get a sense of how students present their dissertation work.

## *4.2 Structure*

A typical full-time first year programme would be structured as follows:

Semester 1
Doctoral Seminar
Research Skills: Data Collection
1-2 other courses

Semester 2
Doctoral Seminar
Qualitative Methods in Ethnographic Fieldwork
1-2 other courses

Spring
STAR 1 Workshop
First Year Showcase

June/July
Submit research proposal. Upgrade Board
Submit ethics and risk assessment forms

## *4.3 The Upgrade Paper*

The upgrade paper takes the form of a research proposal of approximately 15000 words excluding bibliography. This is examined by an upgrade panel as detailed in the SPS PhD Students' Handbook. Your First Year Board should be completed within a year of your first registration, which means it is often desirable to arrange for your upgrade viva to be held in June or July, to ensure availability of examiners. Before proceeding to PhD (and preferably around the time of the upgrade board) you should also submit ethics and risk assessment forms. Part-time students operate to the same timescale as full-time students, however they will not be expected to have made as much progress within this time. Additionally there is the option to defer the progression decision / confirmation of registration to the second annual review.

The upgrade paper should contain the following components:
- a review of the literature, both theoretical and ethnographic;

- an outline of the specific questions to be addressed, methods to be employed, and the expected contribution of the study to anthropological understanding;
- a discussion of the practical, political and ethical issues affecting the conduct of the research *including discussion of how research may be affected by Covid-19, and plans to mitigate that impact*;
- a presentation of the schedule for the research, and its estimated budget.

## *4.4 External Examiner*

The External Examiner for the MSc by Research in Social Anthropology is Dr Susan Molyneux-Hodgson, Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield.

# 5. Scottish Programme of Advanced Training In Social Anthropology (STAR)

As part of the Scottish Doctoral Training Consortium, an Anthropology postgraduate training consortium, linking Edinburgh, Aberdeen, St Andrews and Glasgow, will be offered during April and May 2020.

Two annual four-day residential courses are planned, *Covid-19 conditions allowing; otherwise online alternatives will be offered*. The first course targets students at the pre-fieldwork level; the second is aimed at those who have completed their fieldwork and are at a fairly advanced stage of writing up. **All research students who are currently in residence are required to attend the appropriate residential course**.

The *pre-fieldwork course* (STAR 1) will run over four days and will involve 6 half-day sessions, each combining a plenary workshop with smaller break-out groups. One distinguished UK anthropologist will be invited to attend the entire course, and will open the programme with a formal lecture, on a subject of his/her choice. Workshop topics include such themes as: writing fieldnotes; politics and ethics; working in a second language; visual methodologies; archival research; and material methodologies including issues of property and ownership. The University of Edinburgh Social Anthropology staff involved in organising STAR 1 are Dr Maya Mayblin and Dr Jiazhi Fengjiang.

The *advanced (post-fieldwork) course* (STAR 2) will include plenary workshops, with break-out groups to address key topics in the building of research careers, both within and outside the academy and a series of parallel master-classes lead by distinguished international guests, allowing students to present their work and receive feedback from some of the most exciting innovators in world anthropology. Each day will close with a plenary lecture from one of the international visitors, drawing on their current research-in-progress. The University of Edinburgh Social Anthropology staff involved in organising STAR 2 are Dr Lotte Hoek and [tbc].

The workshops will cover the following areas: anthropological publishing; grants and research careers; researching for policy and practice; and innovation ethnography.