



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

# Programme Handbook 2020-21

## PhD in Social Work

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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](mailto:gradschool.sps@ed.ac.uk))

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**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.

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# 1. Key Contacts

## 1.1 Postgraduate Advisors:

On Course:

Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh  
Room 2.08, Chrystal Macmillan Building  
Email: [a.roeschmarsh@ed.ac.uk](mailto:a.roeschmarsh@ed.ac.uk)

Phone: please email, currently working from home

## 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: <a href="mailto:pgresearch.sps@ed.ac.uk">pgresearch.sps@ed.ac.uk</a>
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## 2. Introduction

Welcome to the Social Work PhD programme at the University of Edinburgh! We are delighted that you are joining our community of scholars. We hope and expect you to make connections with our academic staff and other PhD students on the programme, as well as students based in other parts of the School of Social and Political Science, and across the institution.

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

- [Postgraduate Research Training Courses web page](#): This sets out the Graduate School's programme of generic research training courses 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 PhD Students' Handbook](#): This provides information on resources and entitlements for Graduate School students and on supervision and other formal requirements for the progress of all research students. It also describes the School's procedure for the ethical review of postgraduate research projects.
- The University [Postgraduate Research Students and their Supervision: A Code of Practice for Supervisors and Students](#).

### 2.1 Social Work at The University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh began providing training for social workers from 1918 and, over time, came to be recognised as a leading institution in social work education. Today social work at Edinburgh is part of the School of Social and Political Science, a constituent of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science. We seek to meet the demands of a changing profession and to contribute to better understanding of and improvements in public policy and professional practice. We collaborate with several universities and service agencies to promote understanding of best practice in social work services. The provision of social work education and training at qualifying and post-qualifying levels remains a central focus of activity. We promote the training and professional advancement of social workers in numerous ways, through training courses at undergraduate (BSc Social Work) and at postgraduate (MSW) levels. We offer an MSc in Advanced Professional Studies (Mental Health Officer Award).

### 2.2 Graduate Students

In addition to a long history of providing qualifying postgraduate and undergraduate social work education, the University has a well-established higher degree programme leading to the award of a PhD or MSc by Research. This programme draws on the expertise both of research active social work staff and of colleagues in the Graduate School of Social and Political Science. Social work is part of the Social Work and Social Policy Pathway within the the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science, which is the Scottish Doctoral Training Partnership for the Economic and Social Research Council <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/>.

Our community of graduate students is diverse encompassing international students who are full-time and home students, of which some are part-time and live locally. Social Work higher degree students are integrated into the wider Graduate School training programme offering stimulating opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching, debate and learning.

We have recently changed the way we engage with postgraduate and research students. This is the second year we have run the **Postgraduate Research Seminars** and a reading group. These alternate on Mondays 3-5pm; further details will be provided at the start of the semester. The Research Seminars provide an opportunity for you to hear about social work research undertaken by our staff and discuss a wide range of issues related to research. First year research students will present their proposed research to staff and follow students on 29 March 2021. The reading group will allow you to engage with social work research as driven by the needs and interests of current research students. Staff members will join, help facilitate the discussion, and suggest readings but we hope you will also suggest relevant readings.

We also run a small number of research in departmental research conversations each year, arranged by our **Research Convener, Dr Sumeet Jain**. Further information will be provided about these but PhD students are expected to attend if they are available.

In 2020, we ran our first **Social Work Research Conference** for social work staff and research students at the University of Edinburgh. The event provided a very supportive and inclusive forum for staff and students to present and discuss their research. Due to the pandemic it was not possible to run this event in 2020. However, we hope to run a similar conference on **14<sup>th</sup> of June 2021**; we hope you will attend and will consider presenting your research (no matter what stage you are at). If you would like to be involved in the planning of the conference please let Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh know.

### **Promoting Your Work, Building Your Profile**

After their first year review we expect all PhD student to write a short blog of 1,000 words outlining the aims of their study so that we can share this widely and publicise the work of our students. You are also welcome to write other blogs for the subject area as your work develops on themes of interest including methods, initial findings or policy developments. Read our current blogs here: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/socialwork/>

You may also wish to create a Twitter or other social media account so that you can begin to engage with others working in your field. Training on how to develop your academic profile and make the best use of social media is free and offered regularly by the University. For a list of upcoming course please look at Events tab in MyEd. Follow the Social Work Departmental Twitter account @SocialWorkEdinU.

We also expect that you will create an online student profile as a student in our department. Again, this should be completed after your first year review. To begin the process please fill in the form here:

[http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/intranet/support/website/request\\_a\\_staff\\_profile](http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/intranet/support/website/request_a_staff_profile)

## **2.3 Disclosure**

If, as part of your MSc or PhD studies (course, dissertation, thesis), you are likely to be directly responsible for a child or protected adult, you may be required to join the [Protecting Vulnerable Groups](#) scheme. This scheme is managed and delivered by Disclosure Scotland and currently costs £59 to join.

It is unlikely that all postgraduate students will need to join this scheme, and you will be advised by your Postgraduate Advisor or supervisor if you do need to join.

## **3. Research Degree Programmes**

Students may be initially registered for a PhD (3 years full-time; 6 years part-time) or MSc by Research (1 year full-time; 2 years part-time). Upon submission of the MSc by

Research dissertation, and successful completion of the University upgrading procedure, students can then re-register either as PhD students and/or graduate with the [MSc by Research in Social Work](#).

#### **4. Doing a PhD in Social Work**

Higher degree students are critical to the quality of the University of Edinburgh Social Work research community, and we encourage students to participate in all formal and informal subject activities, including seminars, the student-led reading group, research meetings and undergraduate tutoring.

##### **4.1 Aims and structure of the PhD**

The degree of PhD is awarded for theses which must draw on the student's own research. For the PhD (80,000 - 100,000 words), the thesis must be an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the chosen field of study and contains material worthy of publication. It must show adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature, and the ability to look critically at both the candidate's own work and that of other scholars in the field. It should contain material which presents a unified body of work such as could reasonably be achieved on the basis of three years of study and research.

Students are usually allocated two supervisors, chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the applicant's field of study. Supervisors offer regular guidance, consultation and support at all stages of the research.

The normal progression for a PhD is that the first year is spent preparing for the main research work – through [research teaching and training](#), reading and reflecting on relevant literature with the support of the supervisor, developing the full research proposal. The second year is spent doing the body of the research (usually empirical data collection and analysis), and the third year is spent completing the analysis and writing the thesis.

It is not uncommon for students to take a little more than three years to complete a PhD. University regulations specify a maximum period of registration for the PhD of four years for full-time students and seven years for part-time students. [Extensions](#) may be granted but cannot be guaranteed. It is both feasible and desirable for students to complete and submit their thesis within the four-year period. This requires careful planning of the research and frequent communication with supervisors at every stage.

##### **4.2 Thesis Preparation**

Culminating in the preparation of a research proposal, thesis preparation is undertaken alongside formal research teaching and seminars. Students will progress this work in consultation with their supervisors.

There must be a [formal End of First Year Review Board](#) of all PhD students within 9 to 12 months of their enrolment, for both full-time and part-time students.

The objective of the 'end of first year review is to assess:

- (i) whether the candidate is capable of doing a PhD, and
- (ii) whether their work is sufficiently developed and of a sufficient standard to justify confirmation of PhD registration. Part-time students are not expected to have made as much progress. The decision to confirm registration to PhD may be deferred to a further review meeting between 18-24 months from enrolment for part-time students.

The submitted proposal should be between 10,000-12,000 words (excluding the bibliography).

### 4.3 Advanced Training throughout the PhD

In addition to personal supervision, research training is provided flexibly throughout the degree:

- students are expected to attend the programme of Social Work seminars when feasible;
- students are encouraged to run their own developmental seminars;
- 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;
- all students where practicable, are encouraged to take on limited amounts of teaching in the subject group, for which they must attend the relevant training sessions.
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## 5. Postgraduate Advisor

The [Postgraduate Advisor](#) coordinates the Social Work PhD programme. With the Director of the Graduate School, and supervisors, the Advisor takes 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 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.

**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.

## 6. Supervision

Please see [PhD Student's Handbook](#) for full details. Essentially the supervisors' role (usually 2 supervisors) is to provide guidance on structure and content of the thesis. This will usually include:

- Agreeing with the student a suitable field of study and training, as appropriate.
- Reading and offering comments and suggestions on written work, from early reviews of the background literature to the full draft of the final thesis.
- Ensuring that the end of first year review and subsequent annual reviews of progress are held and reported properly.
- Supporting the student to plan and manage their research effectively.
- Being the first point of contact if there are any problems – whether intellectual, practical or emotional – which the student wants to discuss.
- Applying for any interruptions or extensions of study that may be deemed necessary.
- Giving guidance on academic publishing and careers, and providing references for job applications after completion of the thesis.

The student and supervisors are both [responsible for staying in touch](#) throughout the period of study. They should meet regularly, and exchange frequent correspondence if the

student is away on [fieldwork](#). It is important that both supervisors know how to reach the student at all times. It is also important that the supervisors keep the supervisee informed of any periods when they will be [away from the University](#).

Individual supervisors differ greatly in their styles of supervision. Some prefer very frequent meetings and more structured tasks for the student; others prefer more informal ways of working. Some are more directive, while others see their role more as encouraging and enabling. Second supervisors may assume very different roles. Sometimes they become more important than the first supervisor; sometimes both supervisors choose to meet the student together for supervisions; and sometimes the role is providing a more limited input to the student's work.

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

Postgraduate research is inevitably lonely and stressful at times and this can place an additional burden on the relationship with the supervisor. Occasional disagreements, stresses and strains are part of most healthy supervisions, but it is important for all parties to be able to contain and manage any tension which might develop in the relationship between the supervisor and researcher. The second supervisor is always there to provide an alternative point of view and different kinds of support. Fellow students (and other members of the teaching staff) can also provide a great deal of informal support and guidance. However, if students believe they are having a serious problem with a supervisor or supervisors, the [Postgraduate Advisor](#) should be informed. Alternatively the Head of Subject Group or [Student Representatives](#) could be approached. (Research students elect two new representatives at the beginning of semester 1).

**All research students and supervisors should make themselves familiar with the sections on 'supervisors' and 'students' in the [University Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students](#).**

## **7. Social Work Staff Team**

Profiles of all staff within SPS can be found [here](#).

## **8. Postgraduate Research Seminar Schedule 2020/21**

The schedule for postgraduate research seminars for 2020/21 is presented below. Please note that this may be subject to change, in which case you will be informed in advance. First year research students are expected to attend all sessions; we hope that PhD students in other years of their studies will also attend when possible. Please contact the [Postgraduate Advisor](#) if you have any questions about the seminars or reading group.

## Semester one – Location TBC– time 3:10-5:00pm

*This is subject to changes – a final programme will be shared in Welcome Week*

Week	Date	Seminar / Reading group	Speaker
1	14-Sep	Welcome week – N/A	
2	21-Sep	Beginning the PhD journey	Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh
3	28-Sep	Reading group	Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh
4	05-Oct	Seminar	Dr George Palattiyil
5	12-Oct	Seminar	Dr Georgia Cole
6	19-Oct	Reading Group	Dr George Palattiyil
7	26-Oct	Seminar	Dr Franziska Meinck
8	02-Nov	Seminar	Dr Gary Clapton
9	09-Nov	Reading group	Dr Franziska Meinck
10	16-Nov	Seminar	Dr Steve Kirkwood
11	23-Nov	Reading group	Dr Georgia Cole

## Semester two – Location TBC – time 3:10-5:00pm

Week	Date	Seminar / Reading group	Speaker
1	11-Jan	Seminar	Dr Jackie Gulland
2	18-Jan	Reading group	Dr Gary Clapton
3	25-Jan	Seminar	Dr Sumeet Jain
4	01-Feb	Reading group	Dr Jackie Gulland
5	08-Feb	Seminar	Dr Pearse McCusker
	15-Feb	Flexible Reading Week	
6	22-Feb	Seminar	Dr Mary Mitchell
7	01-Mar	Reading group	Dr Pearse McCusker
8	08-Mar	Seminar	Prof John Devaney
9	15-Mar	Reading group	Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh
10	22-Mar	Seminar	Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh
11	29-Mar	Presentations	1st year research students