



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

Programme Handbook 2020-21

PhD in South Asian Studies



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)

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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 Adviser:

Dr Hugo Gorringe

Room 1.02, 22 George Square*
Edinburgh EH8 9LD

Tel: (0)131 650 3940*

E-mail: h.gorringe@ed.ac.uk

Guidance and Feedback Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 9.30-10.30

Please contact via email or MS Teams in the first instance as he is currently working away from the campus

Web: <http://www.csas.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

2.1 What's in the Handbook?

This Handbook contains information for students studying for the South Asian Studies PhD degree. It explains our research training activities and talks about the arrangements for supervision of students and reviewing progress.

It needs to be read in conjunction with:

- [Graduate School Research Training Courses 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.
- [Graduate School Research PhD Students' Handbooks.](#)
These provide information on resources and entitlements for School of Social and Political Science students, and on supervision, upgrading and other formal requirements for the progress of all research students. It also describes the School's procedure for ethical review of postgraduate research projects.
- [The University Postgraduate Research Code of Practice for Supervisors and Students.](#)

2.2 About South Asian Studies

The Xanadu of European imagination, the first and most important colony of the British Empire, as well as the first to win independence from colonial rule, the countries of South Asia are today becoming increasingly important in world affairs, both strategically and economically. The sub-continent contains two rival nuclear states and alongside China, India is now one of the fastest growing economies in Asia. At the same time, the subcontinent remains home to the largest proportion of the World's poor. The majority of the population reside in rural areas, where problems of gender and caste discrimination, environmental degradation, and income inequality remain profound. With ongoing insurgencies in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, central and north-eastern India, the subcontinent is also the focus of the global war on terror, with all its social and political ramifications.

The University of Edinburgh has had a long tradition of teaching and scholarship on South Asian topics and has long been the principal centre of expertise in Scotland. The Centre for South Asian Studies was first established in 1988, and is now one of the four main centres for South Asian Studies in the UK. The Centre, and this degree, were both founded out of a conviction that the academic and applied study of the subcontinent requires an integrated, inter-disciplinary approach which combines the perspectives of multiple disciplines. With one of the largest concentrations of South Asianists in the UK, we are fortunate in being able to make this possible.

The Centre's core staff come from the disciplines of History, Sanskrit, Social Anthropology, Sociology, Politics and International Relations within the Schools of History, Classics & Archaeology, Literature, Languages and Culture (Asian Studies), and the School of Social and Political Science. However, membership of the Centre extends to Business and Religious Studies, the School of Geography and Geo-Sciences, and even beyond the confines of the University itself. Full details of our current research, publications and awards are on the [CSAS webpages.](#)

The South Asian Studies research degrees are administered by the Graduate School of Social and Political Science.

2.3 The Research Ethos and Environment

The ethos of interdisciplinarity which lies at the heart of the South Asian Studies PhD programme makes it a priority for the Centre to encourage regular meetings between staff and students across a wide range of disciplines. This is effected firstly by means of formal and informal supervision, which is commonly drawn from more than one subject area. Students are also encouraged to seek advice at any time from any member of staff associated with the Centre.

Sustained interaction between different disciplines, staff and students is achieved at a fortnightly, inter-disciplinary, South Asian Studies research seminar, which is held during term-time throughout the year. There is also the option of a weekly reading group. The Centre also organises regular social events and a number of workshops and conferences each year, commonly addressing broad interdisciplinary themes. Postgraduates are encouraged to attend and contribute to these events. Apart from CSAS seminars and workshops, there are also a variety of other subject-based seminar programmes (in Social Anthropology and Sociology, for example) which South Asian Studies MSc by Research and PhD students are welcome to attend. The Centre has an outstanding record in achieving major research grants (ESRC, AHRC, DFID, Leverhulme) which commonly involve colleagues across several disciplines and, wherever possible postgraduate and post-doctoral research assistants.

2.4 Graduate Students

Our cosmopolitan community of graduate students make a critical contribution to a thriving research environment in Edinburgh. In a typical year there are between 10 to 15 PhD and MSc by Research students working exclusively on South Asian research topics within the University, of which a portion will be registered for degrees exclusively with the Centre for South Asian Studies. You will meet a good many of these each week at the CSAS Research Seminar or community building events. Others will be enrolled for degrees in Sociology, Social Anthropology, Religious Studies, Politics and International Relations or History – with supervisors often being drawn from more than one subject area. You can find some examples of current projects [here](#).

Our graduates have gone on to teach in universities around the world, as well as working in more applied contexts with (for example) government and private development agencies.

3. PhD in South Asian Studies Research

Standard arrangements for supervision of all graduate students are described in more detail in the Graduate School [PhD Students' Handbook](#).

Postgraduate students are critical to the quality of the University of Edinburgh South Asian Studies research community – which covers many disciplines. We therefore encourage students to participate in all formal and informal CSAS activities, including seminars,

workshops, research meetings, and undergraduate tutoring. Postgraduate social events are also held at least twice a year.

3.1 Research and/or Advanced Training

Students requiring formal research training should enrol on courses drawn from the core [research training courses](#) of the MSc by Research programme co-ordinated by the Graduate School of Social and Political Science. You must meet with your supervisors and the [Postgraduate Adviser](#) at the earliest opportunity to decide which courses to register for. Those without a social science background are strongly encouraged to include a supervised reading course.

Throughout your degree, you are also strongly encouraged to **plan your personal development** through the University's wide-ranging employment-related and generic skills training programmes delivered by the [Institute for Academic Development](#).

In addition to personal supervision, which provides the main forum for reflection and review, research training is provided flexibly throughout the degree:

On-going training needs are identified through the supervision process, and particularly at the [Annual Progress Review](#); specific research training is provided flexibly throughout the degree:

- all students are expected – when in Edinburgh - to participate in the Autumn, Spring and Summer Semester Research seminars of the Centre for South Asian Studies and to present in the Work-in-Progress events.
- in second and subsequent years, advanced training, geared to student needs, may include for example the use of software packages for data analysis, advanced quantitative data analysis, writing for publication and so on. See the [postgraduate research courses webpage](#) for further details.
- all students are encouraged to take on limited amounts of teaching in the subject group, for which they must attend the relevant training sessions.

3.2 The Supervisory Relationship

We 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. 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 and we expect supervisors to be flexible and open enough to respond appropriately, and to negotiate how best to make the supervision work.

3.2.1 The Roles of First and Second Supervisors

It is normally expected that first and second supervisors will 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, or the second supervisor may

provide an alternative point of view and different kinds of support and so on. You can find further details in [the University Postgraduate Research Code of Practice for Supervisors and Students](#).

3.2.2 What You Can Do If Supervision Problems Arise

Postgraduate research can be lonely and stressful at times and this places an additional burden on the supervisory relationship. Occasional disagreements, stresses and strains are part of normal supervision, and it is important for all parties to be able to talk about any tensions, initially by the student and the supervisor discussing it. Other students (and other academic staff) can also provide a great deal of informal support and guidance.

If a student feels they are having a serious problem with a supervisor and cannot talk to them about it, they are asked to act as quickly as possible. There are a number of ways to find help with this: students should contact their [Postgraduate Adviser](#) in the first instance. Following that they may request to meet with the Director of Postgraduate Research, or the Co-Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies, or contact their [student representatives](#) (research students elect two representatives at the beginning of semester one).

4. South Asian Studies Staff

4.1 The Postgraduate Adviser

The [Postgraduate Adviser](#) coordinates the South Asian Studies PhD programme. With the Director of Postgraduate Research, and supervisors, the Adviser takes responsibility for recruitment, admissions, assessment, monitoring progress, programme evaluation and curriculum development. Details of the Postgraduate Adviser are below:

*Hugo Gorringe
Room 1.02, 22 George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9LD
Tel: 650 3940*

E-mail: h.gorringe@ed.ac.uk

Guidance and Feedback Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 9.30-10.30

Web: <http://www.csas.ed.ac.uk/>

Guidance and Feedback hours are times when you may drop in without an appointment. Longer meetings or meetings at alternative times can be arranged by email.

**During the pandemic, 22 George Square has been closed. Please use email or TEAMS to contact Hugo instead.*

The Adviser is available to all research students as their first line of pastoral support and advice for scholarly or personal issues which arise whilst studying. These may include routine advice about course choices, or advice on individual problems.

Students are responsible for informing their Postgraduate Advisor promptly of any problems which interfere with their coursework or progress.

4.2 Other Staff Contacts

The Co-Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies and Convenor of South Asian Studies seminars is Dr Talat Ahmed in History. Feel free to approach her during the seminars to discuss your work.

Details of other staff in the Centre for South Asian Studies are published on the [School website](#).

5. Part-Time Teaching Opportunities

Research students make an invaluable contribution to the School of Social and Political Science teaching team for undergraduates, running tutorial groups, and reading and commenting on students' work. In the specific field of South Asian Studies, the most important opportunity lies in the interdisciplinary second year course, South Asia in the World, or the Honours optional course South Asia: Culture, Politics and the Economy although you may find opportunities to teach subjects with South Asian content, or with relevance to your particular interests, across the School. The School provides training and some teaching materials for Postgraduate Tutors. Tutoring is paid work. It provides a small amount of income, but not enough to meet living expenses and is primarily an excellent source of teaching experience.

Those interested in participating should visit the [Tutoring Opportunities for PhD Students webpage](#) for further details. You may also inform the Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies, and other subject areas, before the start of the Autumn Semester. In allocating teaching, priority is given to the needs of the undergraduates, but we aim to balance these with the abilities of those postgraduates available to teach, and with the possible competing demands of their research. Those appointed as tutors receive a letter setting out the terms and conditions of their appointment.

6. Facilities, Communication and Feedback

6.1 Facilities

All research students in the School of Social and Political Science have access to the facilities detailed in the Graduate School [PhD Student's handbook](#).

6.2 Communication

Information about research activities, workshops, seminars, socials and other postgraduate matters is circulated by **email** to your University email account. It is vital that you check your email regularly. Note that the University's formal means of communication is via email to your University email account. When sending out information by email, the Graduate School Office will only contact you via your University email.

6.3 Representation and Feedback

Student feedback and evaluation is a valued input to the review of training and supervision and curriculum development. Formally, students are invited to select one or more representatives to attend staff meetings. The Postgraduate Advisors organise at least one annual feedback meeting between staff and students, and informal feedback to the Advisors is welcome at any time.

7. South Asian Studies Staff Research Interests

Centre Members of Staff and Fellows

The [core members](#) of the Centre, along with their main teaching, research and supervision interests are listed on the CSAS website.

Associate Members of the Centre located across Scotland and elsewhere are listed on the [Centre's website](#). Most are closely linked to the Centre and are also available for advice and consultation.