



MPHIL IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

2025-26

COURSE HANDBOOK

Welcome from the Head of Department

On behalf of everyone in the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), I would like to offer you a very warm welcome to Cambridge. We hope you will have a rewarding time here both intellectually and personally. POLIS is a relatively new and fast-growing department (founded in its current form in 2009) within an old and very well-established university (816 years to be precise). Within POLIS there are a number of centres and institutes that make it the most intellectually diverse department in the University: African Studies, Development Studies, Latin American Studies, South Asian Studies, Gender Studies, Governance and Human Rights, and the YouGov Centre for Public Opinion and Policy Research.

POLIS prides itself on being an intellectually open academic environment and on its strong tradition of interdisciplinary study. Academics and students embody a wide variety of different approaches, linked by a shared respect for intellectual curiosity. This is a fascinating and challenging time to be studying politics and we hope that you will benefit from what we offer as a department, and we welcome your contribution to the diversity of what we do together. You will notice the many public events, seminars and lectures taking place in the Alison Richard Building (ARB) throughout the year and we hope you will take advantage of these during your time here.

Arriving in a new academic environment can be a bewildering experience, but we will try to help you feel at home. The academics will ensure that you understand the nature of the work required and to this end please do set up a meeting with your Supervisor as soon as possible. Your Supervisor will help you to plan the best way forward with your research. Our administrative staff are dedicated to helping you to get to know how things work and to help you understand what is expected of you, including the important deadlines. POLIS runs a wide variety of courses (8 Masters' and 4 PhD programmes and 2 joint undergraduate Triposes), so please be understanding of the demands placed on our staff. Aside from the academics working as directors of the various degree programmes, there are student representatives who can also convey to us any concerns that you might have. You will all be members of a College and your Colleges will be able to help you adjust and adapt during your time in Cambridge.

It is important to us that you enjoy your time in POLIS and find it as fulfilling as possible academically. Best of luck with your research, and warmest wishes.

Professor Jude Browne
Head of Department

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CALENDAR 2025-6

MPhil Latin American Studies (one-year taught course):

2025

7 October	Michaelmas Term Full Term begins
7-8 October	Induction Programme
16 October, 4:00pm	Module choices to be submitted to the CLAS Administrator
14 November, 12 noon	First essay title submission deadline
5 December	Full Term ends
5 December, 12 noon	First essay submission deadline

2026

20 January	Lent Term Full Term begins
13 February, 12 noon	Second and third essay titles submission deadline
20 February, 12 noon	Provisional dissertation title submission deadline
20 March	Full Term ends
20 March, 12 noon	Second and third essays submission deadline
28 April	Easter Term Full Term begins
8 May, 12 noon	Final dissertation title submission deadline
15 May	MPhil Research Day
15 June, 12 noon	Dissertation submission deadline
19 June	Full Term ends
29/30 June	Oral examinations (if required)

Deadlines for MPhil Latin American Studies (taught part-time two-year course)

2026

13 February, 12 noon	First essay title submission deadline
20 March, 12 noon	First essay submission deadline
8 May, 12 noon	Second essay title submission deadline
15 June, 12 noon	Second essay submission deadline

2027

12 February, 12 noon	Third essay title submission deadline
19 March, 12 noon	Third essay submission deadline
7 May, 12 noon	Final dissertation title submission deadline
14 June, 12 noon	Dissertation submission deadline

Deadlines for the MPhil Latin American Studies (by thesis only):

2025

14 November, 12 noon	Provisional thesis title submission deadline
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2026

8 May, 12 noon	Final thesis title submission deadline (for the <u>one-year course</u>)
15 June, 12 noon	Thesis submission deadline (for the <u>one-year course</u>)

2027

7 May, 12 noon	Final thesis title submission deadline (for the <u>part-time two-year course</u>)
14 June, 12 noon	Thesis submission deadline (for the <u>part-time two-year course</u>)

WORK SCHEDULE for the MPhil in Latin American Studies (taught course)

Below is week-by-week outline of how students might spread out their workload across the course in order to meet deadlines successfully. This should be treated as a guide only.

Michaelmas Term Week 1	Prepare for Core Course seminar (starts week 1) and optional modules (start week 2)
Week 2	Prepare for Core Course and optional module seminars Sketch out preliminary ideas for dissertation ahead of first meeting with dissertation supervisor
Week 3	Prepare for Core Course and optional module seminars Identify a supervisor and a topic for the essay
Week 4	Prepare for Core Course and optional module seminars Meet with dissertation supervisor this week or next Work on essay title and agree a schedule for draft submission
Week 5	Prepare for Core Course and optional module seminars Research for essay 1 Look into fieldwork procedures if relevant
Week 6	Prepare for Core Course and optional module seminars Intensive research and writing for essay 1
Week 7	Prepare for Core Course seminar Produce draft of essay 1 and meet with supervisor to discuss
Week 8	Prepare for Core Course seminar Edit essay 1 and submit
Christmas break	Read ahead for Lent Term modules Reading for the dissertation
Lent Term Week 1	Prepare for optional module seminars Begin the process of identifying supervisors and topics for the essays 2 & 3
Week 2	Prepare for optional module seminars Meet with supervisor to discuss dissertation progress
Week 3	Prepare for optional module seminars Identify supervisors, work on essay 2 and 3 titles and agree a schedule for submitting drafts
Week 4	Prepare for optional module seminars Research and writing for essays 2 & 3
Week 5	Prepare for optional module seminars Research and writing for essays 2 & 3
Week 6	Produce draft of essay 2 or 3 and meet with supervisor to discuss it
Week 7	Produce draft of essay 2 or 3 and meet with supervisor to discuss it
Week 8	Final editing for essays 2 & 3, ready for submission
Easter vacation	Intensive reading and preliminary drafting for the dissertation Fieldwork if appropriate
Easter Term Week 1	Produce a plan of the dissertation and meet up with supervisor to discuss
Week 2-4	Write first draft of dissertation and meet up with supervisor for feedback Prepare presentation for the MPhil Research Day
Remainder of Easter Term	Redrafting of dissertation and further meeting(s) with supervisor as appropriate

THE CENTRE

The Centre of Latin American Studies was created in 1965 as a meeting place for those from across the University with scholarly interests in Latin America, with a mission to encourage the study of Latin America throughout the University and to facilitate relations with the countries of the region. It provides a hub for researchers working across a wide range of disciplines, organizing and hosting a full programme of seminars, guest lectures, workshops, conferences and other events throughout the year. It runs a multi-disciplinary MPhil programme and provides a home for approximately 10-15 doctoral students working on Latin America from a variety of different disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) perspectives. It also welcomes visiting scholars and students, provides a base for the annual visiting Simón Bolívar Professor and manages a specialist library. It is able to consider applications for funding from students and staff for fieldwork in Latin America, and to help with the costs of running academic events on Latin America in the University.

CLAS Library

The Centre's collection of over 15,000 volumes is primarily a teaching collection, reflecting the courses that have been offered in Latin American Studies over the past fifty years. It is housed in the Seeley Historical Library, ground floor of the History Faculty, Sidgwick Site (in the first six bookstacks on the right-hand side of the mezzanine). To borrow books from the library, you will need your University Card and, to use the library computers, a Desktop Services account and password. The CLAS Librarian is happy to respond to requests for book purchases.

Opening hours:

During Term, Monday-Friday 9.00am-7.15pm, Saturday 9.00am-6.00pm, Sunday 1.00-6.00pm;
During Vacations, Monday-Friday 9.00-5.00pm.

Please consult the [Seeley Historical Library website](#) for further information regarding photocopying and printing, temporary changes to opening hours, etc.

CLAS audiovisual collection

The Centre has a large collection of audiovisual material for students to borrow or watch in the Centre's meeting room, which may be booked if there are no meetings or seminars taking place. Please contact the Events coordinator if you wish to borrow material and the Administrator if you wish to book the meeting room.

CLAS Open Seminars

You should regard attendance as part of your normal term-time routine.

Open seminars take place on most Mondays during term at 5.15pm. They offer an excellent opportunity to hear a wide range of current work on Latin American topics and meet staff and postgraduate students from across many faculties. These seminars are supplemented by a wide range of other talks, workshops and conferences on Latin America over the year, of which you will be informed over email. Attendance is expected.

Staff

The Centre draws on the teaching expertise of lecturers and research staff across the University and its colleges. There are five key academic and administrative roles in the Centre: the Centre Director; the MPhil Director; the PhD Director; the Chair of Examiners; the Senior Examiner; the Centre Administrator; the Events and Communications Coordinator.

Staff contact details

Contact details are listed below for staff affiliated to CLAS.

For a full list of CLAS teaching staff please see: <http://www.latin-american.cam.ac.uk/staff/academic>.

Name	College/Dept/Role	E-mail
Pedro Mendes Loureiro	CLAS Director CLAS PhD Director Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS)	pml47@cam.ac.uk
Adrián Lerner	CLAS MPhil Director Faculty of History	al2093@cam.ac.uk
Carlos Fonseca	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL	cf432@cam.ac.uk
Anna Corrigan	CLAS, Senior Examiner Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL	ac919@cam.ac.uk
Carsten-Andreas Schulz	Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS)	cas245@cam.ac.uk
Françoise Barbira Freedman	Department of Social Anthropology	fb205@cam.ac.uk
Geoffrey Kantaris	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL (on leave)	egk10@cam.ac.uk
Geoffrey Maguire	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL Goinville & Caius College (on leave)	gwm23@cam.ac.uk
Grace Livingstone	POLIS Affiliated Lecturer	gl340@cam.ac.uk
Graham Denyer Willis	CLAS, Chair of Examiners Centre of Development Studies Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS)	Gdw27@cam.ac.uk
Hank González	Faculty of History (on leave)	jhg36@cam.ac.uk
Jimena Lobo Guerrero	Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	jl2283@cam.ac.uk
Liesbeth François	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL Murray Edwards College	lf500@cam.ac.uk
Maite Conde	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL	mc534@cam.ac.uk
Natalia Buitron	Department of Social Anthropology	nb668@cam.ac.uk
Rachell Sánchez Rivera	CLAS Gonville & Caius College	rs871@cam.ac.uk
Rory O'Bryen	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL	rro20@cam.ac.uk
Stephanie Rohner	Spanish & Portuguese, MMLL	sr977@cam.ac.uk
Paola Lopez	CLAS Events and Communications	events@latin-american.cam.ac.uk
Sandra Villadiego	Centre Coordinator	admin@latin-american.cam.ac.uk

Student representation

There is provision for one or two student representatives to sit on unreserved Management Committee of the Centre. This position is usually filled by one of the Centre's MPhil and PhD students, on behalf

of the Centre's postgraduate community as a whole. Volunteers will be sought by email; if the seats are contested, an election may be organised.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

MPhil Director

If you wish to discuss any aspect related to your academic performance or the teaching provided on the course, you should feel free to contact the MPhil Director at any point. It is best to email in the first instance, and to make arrangements for a face-to-face meeting if appropriate.

Dissertation supervisor

Your dissertation supervisor will oversee the preparation of your dissertation and make reports on your academic progress. Your supervisor is often identified during the admissions process but may be subject to change at the start of your course, particularly if your research interest has shifted. The MPhil Director will confirm or change the supervisor after discussing your ideas for a dissertation topic with you early on in the first term. You should make contact with your supervisor soon after this and arrange a meeting to discuss the practicalities of your research. A change in the topic of your dissertation is permitted *subject to the availability of an appropriate supervisor*, and you should discuss this in the first instance with the MPhil Director. Further information on dissertation supervision can be found later in this Handbook.

Essay supervisors

You will receive individual supervision for each of the essays you submit during the course. Your essay supervisors will be able to give you specific advice on your chosen topics.

RELEVANT COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

The Postgraduate Education Committee

The Postgraduate Education Committee (PEC) is comprised of academic staff from the Centre of Latin American Studies and POLIS (Politics and International Studies), the wider Department within which the Centre sits. Its chief functions are to monitor the academic progress of all CLAS students, to appoint supervisors, to consider and approve extensions to submission deadlines for written work, and to appoint examiners and advisers for all assessments. The PEC meets once per term.

The Degree Committee

The Degree Committee sits across the whole of POLIS and deals with postgraduate matters for all the constituent parts of the Department, including CLAS. With regard to the MPhil, the chief function of the Degree Committee are to review and agree marks and recommendations sent to them by the Final Exam Board and the Centre's External Examiner, and to award the MPhil degree.

The Student Registry (Postgraduate Committee)

The Registry is ultimately responsible for admissions, receives regular reports on the academic performance of all graduate students and grants leave to continue towards higher degrees. The Registry publishes on their website extremely useful and authoritative guides to all aspects of graduate life in Cambridge. Often, you are required to make formal application to the Registry (e.g. for leave to work away), which then consults the Degree Committee. This and many other

administrative tasks can be completed online via your CamSIS self-service account.

STUDY FACILITIES

As a student of the University you have access to many libraries in addition to the Latin American collection at the Seeley. At the start of the academic year, introductory tours are usually available in libraries – look out for information at library entrances or on websites.

The University Library

The University Library contains one of the world's largest collections of books. It has the right to receive copies of every copyright publication in the UK, and holds an excellent collection of material published abroad. It is a repository of official documents of the UK government and of many international organisations. Much of its collection is borrowable and on open shelves. Your University Card will provide access to the library.

College and Faculty libraries

Although College libraries are not expected to provide materials for specialist MPhils, many have responded generously to past student requests to acquire relevant books. They provide a good working environment and standard reference works. Faculty libraries relevant to your subject will also be very useful – for example, the Marshall Library of Economics, the Social and Political Sciences Library, the Squire Law Library, and Modern and Medieval Languages and Social Anthropology libraries.

Library catalogues and electronic resources

You may consult the University's print and online collections using a single search engine, [iDiscover](#). You can access many subscription-based information services free over the Internet, provided you are connected to the University network or supply your Raven password. The Librarian will be happy to help if you need advice on searching for material.

IT resources

Your email address and Raven password (to access a number of IT services within the University) will be provided via your college. If you have difficulties, please consult your College IT Officer in College, or the University Information Services.

Inter-library loans and libraries beyond Cambridge

The University Library runs an inter-library loan system. There is a small fee and you should be aware that it may be several weeks before the requested book arrives. Hence, you should determine as soon as possible if you require inter-library loans for your dissertation. This is one reason why preliminary bibliographical work on the dissertation is encouraged in the Michaelmas Term. If you wish to use specialist libraries outside of Cambridge, to which access may be restricted, the Centre will be able to provide a letter of introduction.

OTHER SERVICES AND RESOURCES

The Cambridge Student's Union

Located on the third floor of the University Centre (Granta Pl, Mill Lane), they offer a range of services including advice, thesis printing and gown sales at a low-cost. For more information, please visit <https://www.cambridgesu.co.uk/>

The Student Support Services

Through them, you can find information on all support available to students as well as guidance on how to access them. It includes postgraduate wellbeing, counselling and mental health advice amongst others <https://www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk/>

THE COURSE

The aims of the MPhil course

The MPhil in Latin American Studies is designed to meet the needs of three groups: those who have developed an interest in Latin America through study or work and wish to develop this for personal or professional reasons; those who intend to proceed to a doctorate, and possibly an academic career in the field; and those whose established work stands to benefit from resources not available to them elsewhere. The course seeks to provide participants with a critical understanding of Latin America in all its complexity, and of the means and methods that have been devised to study and understand it better. This is achieved through the three main elements of the course:

- a **core course**, highlighting key critical issues in Latin American studies and providing a forum for interdisciplinary debate and an introduction to contrasting disciplinary methods
- **optional modules** in a range of different fields and disciplines, of which each student selects two in Michaelmas and two in Lent, providing training in a specific discipline and/or experience of a range of disciplinary perspectives on particular theme or topic
- the opportunity to study a specific topic in depth, as preparation for the **dissertation**.

The dissertation is a substantial element of the MPhil, worth 50% of the total mark awarded for the year's work. The examination process and criteria for assessment of the dissertation are accordingly stringent. In particular, there is a requirement for originality, which must be met either by research using primary sources (documents, interviews, official publications, or the like) or by developing a distinctive approach to an existing debate or literature. This is consistent with the general aim of the dissertation, which is to develop advanced skills of research and expression.

By the end of the course, participants will have developed a critical view of the contribution made by the academic study of Latin America and of some of its specific disciplines to the arts, humanities and/or social sciences. They will have become familiar with some of the main themes of contemporary debate. In addition, they will have tested their ability to produce a piece of advanced scholarship in conformity with the scientific method, research techniques, standards of argument and accepted style of presentation of an academic discipline.

Course structure overview

Teaching

	Michaelmas Term	Lent Term
Core Course	7 seminars	7 seminars
Research Skills seminars	1 session	1 session
2 Optional Modules per term	6 seminars per module	6 seminars per module

Written work to be submitted

	Written work	% of overall MPhil mark
Michaelmas Term	Essay 1	50% (weighted at 20% for each of the two essays with highest marks and 10% for the lowest marked essay)
Lent Term	Essay 2 Essay 3	
Easter Term	Dissertation	50%

Students write one essay over the course of the first term and two essays during the second term. Reading and preliminary work on the dissertation should begin during the first term and continue through the second term, but the majority of the writing-up should take place in the third term.

Students are expected to take part in the *CLAS MPhil Research Day*, which will take place during Easter Term. During the event, students present their ongoing research for their dissertations to colleagues and staff members for about fifteen minutes, followed by questions and answers. This is an opportunity for you to give a short presentation on the topic of your dissertation, to an audience of the other students on the course and members of the core teaching staff at CLAS. It is an important moment to receive feedback on your own work and to get to know the work of other colleagues.

Teaching

The MPhil course is largely taught through seminars, supplemented with individual supervision for the essays and dissertation. Active participation in the seminars is vital to success on the course, and students should prepare well for each seminar (having read at least the required texts), and come ready to discuss ideas. Students will be asked to give short presentations once or twice each term for the optional modules, and these presentations will often form the basis of an essay topic. Attendance at all seminars is regarded as compulsory and will be monitored. Students should inform the relevant seminar leader and the MPhil Administrator of any unavoidable absences, e.g. for reasons of illness, in advance of the seminar. It is not usually acceptable to miss seminars for any other reason, except in the case of job interviews that cannot be rescheduled, family emergencies, or similar circumstances.

Other University lectures and seminars

Apart from the official programme of MPhil seminars, there may be other lectures of interest to MPhil students, as advertised in the [University lecture timetable](#). In addition, there are many special lectures and seminar presentations by Cambridge academics and eminent visitors throughout the University, which you will find advertised via College and Dept email lists, as well as in the University Newsletter, and on the University website. Most departments run regular research seminars (e.g. the American Archaeology Seminar, or the Hispanic Research Seminar) which are open to all. You will generally be informed of those of Latin American interest via email the Events and Communications Coordinator. Students are free to attend any lectures and seminars as long as they do not clash with the MPhil programme or affect their preparation for the course.

Keeping term

Students must 'keep' the three Full University Terms (indicated on the calendar of events at page three of this Handbook) during their year at Cambridge and follow their College's regulations on signing in and out. This means that they are required to remain in Cambridge for a certain number of nights per term. Failure to do so may disqualify a student from proceeding to the MPhil Degree. If you anticipate any difficulty in relation to keeping term, you should consult your College Tutor and the Student Registry. As the MPhil course is intensive, any absence during term will have a significant impact on your work. You are advised to speak immediately to the Director if a situation arises that may entail an absence of more than 2-3 days during any term. Permission will normally only be granted in the case of family emergencies or similar circumstances.

There is a different procedure in place if you need to apply for 'Leave to Work Away' (LTWA) from Cambridge, e.g. if you are carrying out fieldwork in Latin America (please see the Fieldwork section of this Handbook). Leave needs to be granted even for fieldwork that takes place during the vacation periods.

Course feedback

The Centre takes pride in the high quality of its academic programmes and monitors the quality of its teaching carefully. Any problems that you encounter should be discussed either with your supervisor or the MPhil Director. Formal feedback is invited via questionnaire at the end of the course. This is considered carefully by the Centre's teaching staff and taken into account when planning course arrangements for the following year.

Reading lists

Readings and materials for POLIS papers and teaching represent a wide range of different views on major topics in politics and international relations. Many of these topics are subject to intense controversy and debate, and it is common to encounter contrasting and contentious arguments in them. The fact that a text is on a reading list or lecture material is not an endorsement of its content. Students at Cambridge are expected to engage with readings and other materials critically, carefully examining and where appropriate challenging evidence and arguments.

COURSE ASSESSMENT: KEY REQUIREMENTS

Essays

The Michaelmas Term (first term) essay should relate in some way to one of the topics studied in seminars, either as part of the Core Course or for one of the optional modules. Each of the two Lent Term (second term) essays should relate to a topic studied for one or more seminars in the optional modules or the Core Course, either that term or the previous term. Overall, of the three essays, one should relate to one of the optional modules taken, the second to another optional module, and the third may relate either to a third optional module, or to the Core Course.

Students may apply to the Director for a special exemption in order to write on a topic that is not covered in one of the seminars, as long as (i) it falls within the general field of the module in question, (ii) a suitable supervisor can be found, and (iii) students' participation in module seminars thus far demonstrates at least a satisfactory level of preparation.

You may plan your essays as part of an ongoing research enterprise, fitting in with your other essays and dissertation, if you wish, but you are also at liberty to write entirely self-sufficient pieces. In most cases, the essay will arise out of a presentation you give during one of the seminars, and this is a good opportunity to receive early feedback on your general approach.

Please note that students taking 'borrowed' papers are subject to distinct essay requirements. These will be made clear to students taking these modules.

Word count

Each of the three essays must be **no more than 5,000 words long**, including footnotes and inline citations, but *excluding* title, contents page, bibliography, and any appendices.

Tables, graphs, charts, maps, and infographics should be counted at 150 words each. Where more than 4 tables (etc.) are used, additional ones (including the fifth) will be counted as 100 words each. For the purposes of establishing the final word count, any words included in those tables/images should *not* be counted. Subheadings and captions will continue to be included in the word count, but if they wish, students may use just a brief caption to identify an image/table inserted in the text, giving the full details in an appendix if they are particularly extensive. Photos, images, reproductions of visual art and other material will not add to the word count (differently from tables etc.), but their subheadings and captions will count as indicated above.

Dissertation

Each candidate for the MPhil is required to submit an original dissertation on an approved topic, by the deadline given at the front of this Handbook.

Word count

The dissertation must be **no more than 15,000 words** long, including footnotes and inline citations, but *excluding* title, contents page, bibliography and appendices. The same guidelines apply for the use of tables, images, captions, etc. as for the essays (see above).

If the nature of your dissertation topic means that you are required to supply a large number of tables or graphs in order to support your argument, you may apply for permission for some of these to be excluded from the word count. You should do this by contacting the MPhil Director no later than one month before submission.

Approval of essay and dissertation titles

You should devise a suitable title in close consultation with your supervisor. You must inform the Administrator, via email, copying in your supervisor, of your agreed title by the date shown in the Calendar at the front of this Handbook. Please ensure that the title submitted is accurate. After this point, minor changes to the essay title may be made, but will need to be approved by the MPhil Director before submission. A minor change would include changes to the wording or the implied argument, but not the overall subject of the essay or the field in which it falls.

The provisional title for the dissertation must be agreed between candidate and supervisor. You and your Supervisor must also decide upon a final title by the deadline given in the Calendar. It is not possible to change the dissertation title once it has been approved. When finally submitted, each dissertation must bear the exact approved title (word for word), and candidates are therefore advised to take great care when drafting titles.

SUPERVISION

Essay supervision

For each essay, you should identify a potential supervisor (*except for borrowed modules, which do not offer supervision*). The most appropriate supervisor will usually be the person who has taught the related topic on the seminar programme, and this should be the person you approach first. If students' interests are very unevenly spread in any year, module convenors or the MPhil Director may need to suggest different arrangements.

Supervision is usually limited to two meetings per essay. The first session, of around 30 minutes, should be used to discuss initial ideas, reading, and a rough plan. It is important that you discuss your initial ideas with a supervisor before you start writing. They will be able to help you define your topic and your approach to it. In the second session, of around an hour, your supervisor will go through your draft in detail with you and make suggestions for improvement. You should not expect to receive any supervision in the last week before the deadline unless specifically agreed in advance with your supervisor. Supervisors will not be able to give useful feedback so close to the deadline, as there will be insufficient time for you to make any major changes. In addition, many staff members will be unavailable at the ends of term due to other commitments. You are strongly advised to agree a schedule with your supervisor for submitting your plan and essay draft well in advance, to ensure that they can provide comments in a timely fashion. As a general rule, arranging dates in advance to submit written work, hold meetings and receive feedback is optimal. Please do not expect staff to provide feedback in less than a week, unless specifically agreed in advance.

Please note that we can only guarantee that essay supervision will be available for those modules that are run by CLAS or jointly with another Faculty; for those modules borrowed from another Faculty, different arrangements may be in place. If you wish to take a borrowed module, you are advised to consult the MPhil Director or the module convenor directly about the availability of supervision.

Dissertation supervision

Students will have submitted a dissertation proposal as part of the admissions process, and many will already have been assigned to an appropriate supervisor. Dissertation topics and supervisors will be confirmed early in Michaelmas Term. In some cases, further study may lead to a change of topic and even to a change of supervisor if that becomes necessary.

Your relationship with your dissertation supervisor is a very important part of your time in Cambridge. Your supervisor will advise you in relation to your dissertation and engage you in critical dialogue while you plan, research, draft and write. In addition, supervisors may also take an interest in other

aspects of your academic work and your career plans, which may include continuation to the PhD. However, commitment to supervise an MPhil dissertation should not be assumed to imply commitment to supervise to doctoral level. Often, supervisors will be able to assist you in arranging meetings or interviews with individuals of interest, inform you about relevant conferences, etc.

You should have initiated contact with your dissertation supervisor by the end of the Michaelmas Term at the very latest, in order to clarify the topic of your dissertation and to consider how it fits in with the rest of your work during the MPhil. The style of supervision will differ from one supervisor to another. However, you should meet with reasonable regularity. As a guideline, we suggest that meetings take place once in Michaelmas Term, once or twice in Lent Term, then two or three times in Easter Term. It is up to you to make arrangements with your supervisor: you should not expect to be summoned by them.

You should start drafting material as soon as you are in a position to do so. Discuss early drafts, even though they may contain tentative arguments. Your supervisor will then be able to make suggestions at a stage when you can still adopt them. During term time, supervisors should be able to give you detailed comments on a chapter within a week of submission. On no account wait until you have arrived at what you consider a near-final version of dissertation chapters or even the entire dissertation before showing your work to your supervisor. At that stage, it may be much more difficult to offer appropriate guidance, and insufficient time may remain for you to respond fully. For this reason, supervisors are entitled to refuse to comment on a draft given to them less than 14 days before the submission date. Supervisors are generally available during term, but research, conference commitments, other University business and holidays mean that they may be away from Cambridge from substantial periods during the vacations. Drafts should not be submitted and supervisions should not be scheduled outside of term time, unless explicitly agreed. It is therefore important to schedule meetings well in advance with regard for the diary commitments of both supervisor and supervisee.

If you are encountering difficulty in relation to your dissertation, be it illness, computer failure or writer's block, consult your supervisor and your College tutor soon.

Most supervisors are conscientious and dedicated to their students. However, if you are unable to make contact with your supervisor, or if they are persistently unable to read your work or to offer you guidance, you should contact the MPhil Director or, when this is inappropriate, the Secretary of the Degree Committee. They can discuss the matter with your supervisor or may propose a change of supervisor. It is once again vital that you let us know about such problems before it is too late to take corrective action. You may also consult appropriate people in your College, such as your Graduate Tutor, or student representatives in your college or the University Student Union.

PRESENTATION OF WRITTEN WORK

It is important that work submitted for formal examination is presented in a professional manner, complying with all the conventions of academic scholarship.

Referencing

Your work should adhere to a recognised citation system. Consult your supervisor on which system(s) would be most appropriate for the field in which you are writing, and make sure that you follow the guide carefully to avoid inconsistencies. Using 'author-date' versions of these systems will take up less of the overall word count.

You are strongly advised to limit footnotes to bibliographical or factual references, and to reserve substantive arguments for the main text. The bibliography should be ordered alphabetically by author and should contain only those works referenced in the main text, although other texts may be added

if the bibliography is split into two sections, 'Works Cited' and 'Other Works Consulted'. Programmes such as Endnote or Zotero (free to download) make referencing very easy.

The style guide of your chosen referencing system should also contain information on how to reference material that is not in a traditional text format, e.g. blogs or interviews. All statistical data should be accompanied by a source, and if the data are used in depth, by a comment on the reliability of the source.

Language

The essays and the dissertation should be written in English. Quotations or transcribed interviews in Spanish or Portuguese should be left in the original language. If translations into English are required (in the case that examiners are appointed who are not fluent in Spanish or Portuguese, as relevant), students will be notified three weeks before the submission deadline. If this is the case, translations should be placed in a footnote and will not be included in the total word count. Citations in other languages (e.g. from theoretical or critical texts in French, German, etc., or interviews conducted in indigenous languages in Latin America) should be translated into English, with the original version retained alongside the translation if the precise mode of enunciation is important.

Layout

Print your work on one side of A4 paper, using a laser printer or a good quality inkjet printer. Leave **margins** of at least 2.5cm on all sides. Everything in the main text should be **double-spaced**, except indented quotations and footnotes, which should be single-spaced. There is no prescribed **font** but it is strongly recommended that the candidate use a simple, classical typeface (Times Roman, Cambria, etc.). **Accents and non-Roman characters** should be rendered accurately, and most word-processing programmes now contain easy shortcuts to produce the most common ones.

Do not use more than three kinds of **headings** within a chapter; the more kinds there are, the more difficult it will be for the reader to distinguish one grade from another. A **list of the abbreviations** used in the text and the footnotes should be placed at the beginning of the dissertation, after the preface. Do check your **tables** carefully. Are they in the form that the reader will find most helpful? Will the reader be able to compare one set of values with another? Are all units, percentages and totals identified? Do the totals tally with the individual values? Are the sources given in the same form for each table? In case of doubt, consult your supervisor. Remember that tables in the dissertation word count at 150 words per table (where more than 5 tables are used, they will be counted as 100 words each).

Short **quotations** should be enclosed in inverted commas and run on with the main text in double-spacing. Quotations extending to more than two or three lines of typescript should be distinguished from the rest of the text and do not need inverted commas (except for quotations within quotations). Start each such quotation on a fresh line and indent the whole quotation (approx. 1cm from left and right margins). Take particular care to transcribe quotations accurately. If a quotation includes an obvious error, do not correct it but indicate it by placing the Latin word 'sic' (meaning 'thus') in square brackets immediately after the error.

Written style

Your coursework should be written in clear, idiomatic English. If you are not a native English speaker (and even if you are!) you should pay particular attention to this and perhaps ask a non-specialist friend or even a professional editor/proof-reader to read through your dissertation before submission. Make sure that you make full use of the resources available to you to check grammar, spelling and punctuation, and to improve your written style. You will have access to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and many other reference works via the @cam domain or your Raven password. An online thesaurus

can also be extremely helpful. Use the grammar and spelling checker built into your word-processing programme. This may have to be ignored when it frowns on the kinds of complex compound sentences that are sometimes required to convey difficult ideas. But it should at least make you think twice and consider whether you can make your writing easier for the reader to follow.

Common errors to avoid when writing

- confusion between words that sound the same (or similar) but mean different things. Common examples include it's (= it is) and its (= belonging to it), tenet and tenant, apprise and appraise, and mitigate and militate
- inversion of the given and family names of authors in footnotes (inversion *is* used in bibliographical entries to achieve alphabetical order)
- plural subject with singular verb and the reverse
- non-standard use of capital letters or the inconsistent use of italics for foreign words
- overlong and convoluted sentences
- sentences without main verbs
- poor paragraphing (unrelated topics in a single paragraph; failure to identify the topic of a paragraph clearly at the outset, failure to link paragraphs clearly to those that precede and follow)
- poor signposting (i.e. lack of guidance to the reader about the general structure of the argument, the order in which topics are to be discussed, etc.)
- ill-considered, excessive, intrusive, or redundant use of the first person (I/we; in my opinion, etc.)
- lazy note-taking (failing to express ideas prompted by your reading in your own words straight away; failing to distinguish between your own notes and passages transcribed from the text for possible use as quotations)
- use of contractions (don't, isn't, etc.)

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

All coursework must be submitted electronically in Word or a compatible word-processing programme (NOT a PDF file) by the relevant deadline.

The title page of your work should state:

- your approved essay/dissertation title
- your name
- your College
- your supervisor
- your word count
- the date of submission

For the dissertation also include:

- the following phrase: 'This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy' and the following statement: 'This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text'
- the copyright statement (© your name, year of submission)

You should leave plenty of time for the final stages of submission. Please remember that computers crash, files become corrupted or lost, Wi-Fi connections go down, and uploading speeds vary. *On no account will the failure of any equipment or connections, or the loss of data, be accepted as an excuse for missing the deadline for submission.* Always make regular backups of your files, keeping copies

in the cloud and on external disks.

Extensions Policy

Extension requests for coursework other than the thesis or dissertation (for example, essays, the First Year Assessment) should not be submitted via CamSIS - please contact your Centre Coordinator for advice on how to apply.

For taught courses, short deadlines which would not impact on the dates on which the marks would be considered by the Exam Board and Degree Committee can normally be considered locally - see link under [Your submission date and how to apply](#).

Note that a longer extension may result in you completing and graduating later than the rest of your cohort, so you should seek clarification on the impact of this from your Department, Faculty or Degree Committee, particularly if the timing of your degree completion will have an impact on your future plans, such as further study, employment or visa applications.

For all applications made via CamSIS self-service, each case is considered in line with the policy of the Postgraduate Committee, which is set out in the guidance on this page:

<https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/postgraduate-study/your-student-status/extending-your-submission-date>

Instructions on how to submit an application can be found on the [Applying for a change in your student status](#) page. Please check the guidance before applying.

If you have any questions about applying for an extension, please submit a query here:
student-registry-help.admin.cam.ac.uk

Penalties for exceeding the stipulated word count

2 marks will be deducted per 100 words (or part thereof) for exceeding the word limit.

Working to a fixed word count is an excellent discipline and any cutting you need to do will generally result in a more concise and precise piece of work.

Penalties for the late submission of work

2 marks will be deducted for each 24-hour period (or part thereof) after the deadline.

[Examination data retention policy](#)

ASSESSMENT

Marking and feedback

Each piece of work you will submit will be marked independently by two assessors, who will then agree a joint mark and submit a report (a joint report in the case of each essay, and individual reports for the dissertation). If the assessors disagree, the External Examiner will adjudicate. The External will moderate all marks falling on the boundary between pass/fail and pass/distinction, and may review other marks as appropriate. The marking schemes used for assessment can be found in this Handbook. Students will be informed individually of the final mark awarded for each piece of written work, once the examination process has been completed. These marks remain provisional until the final examination board at the end of the academic year. Marks are absolutely confidential: no student

is entitled to know or discuss any other student's mark. Written feedback for the Michaelmas essay will be provided around the third week of Lent Term and around the third week of the Easter Term for the two Lent essays. Dissertation reports will be sent out along with the final confirmed course mark in early July. Students are also encouraged to seek specific advice and guidance from module convenors and seminar leaders at any point during the course.

Oral examinations

An oral examination must take place if the dissertation is in danger of failing or if the Examiners and External Examiner cannot agree on a recommendation. An oral examination must be held in any case for a candidate who, because of a borderline or failing performance in the compulsory essay examinations, needs to achieve a High Pass in the dissertation examination in order to qualify for award of the MPhil degree under the compensation rule outlined below.

You are reminded not to make firm travel arrangements that will make it difficult or expensive for you to return should a viva be required. The Centre will give candidates as much notice as possible if they are to be called for a viva examination, but you should be aware that, in some cases, this may be as little as two or three days. The period during which you may be called for a viva is given on the Calendar at the front of this Handbook.

Compensation

In accordance with the Memorandum to Examiners issued by the Student Registry as qualified by the special regulations for the MPhil Latin American Studies, a candidate must pass each part of the examination separately in order to be awarded the degree, except that a borderline fail (Redeemable Performance) in the taught element (the essays) may be compensated by a High Pass in the dissertation, and vice versa.

Review procedure in connection with the examination of registered Graduate Students

The University provides for a review procedure in cases of complaint about the outcome of an examination for MPhil degrees. A candidate or the representative of a candidate may, within the three months following receipt of the result of an examination, make representations in the form of a written complaint to the Secretary of the Student Registry. The following are the **only** grounds which the regulations entertain for the justification of a complaint:

- a) that there existed material circumstances relating directly to the examination (excluding circumstances relating to the candidate's course of research or course of study) of which the Examiners were not aware;
- b) that procedural irregularities occurred in the conduct of the examination, which were of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the Examiners would have reached the same conclusion had the irregularities not occurred;
- c) that there is demonstrable evidence of prejudice, bias, or inadequate assessment in the examination process.

Full details of the procedures that follow from such a complaint are set out in the 'Memorandum to Students' issued by the Student Registry, and a copy of the 'Regulations for the Review of the Results of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications' may be obtained upon request from the Secretary of the Registry. Details on the Student complaint procedure can be found here:

<https://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

ADVICE ON RESEARCH AND WRITING

Scholarly research and critical analysis

The pieces of written work you submit as part of your MPhil course will be assessed as examples of postgraduate writing; as such we expect them to combine scholarly research and critical analysis. If you are intending that the MPhil act as a preparation for doctoral research, the dissertation in particular will need to show strong evidence of research potential. According to the criteria set out by the Student Registry, Examiners will need to be satisfied that 'the dissertation is clearly written, that it takes account of previously published work on the subject, and that it represents a contribution to learning'.

'Scholarly research' means work showing detailed knowledge and careful analysis, whether it be of social, historical, or economic phenomena, or of primary texts. It is not sufficient, for example, merely to 'tell the story' of a set of historical circumstances, or to paraphrase a theory (however difficult): you must also *interpret* and analyse events/social systems/texts and apply existing theories to them. Research requires awareness of the relevant published literature (existing academic research in the field, surveys, critical studies, theoretical approaches), and an ability to assess, assimilate, and master such material. It is not good practice either to paraphrase the work of only one or two researchers, or in contrast to 'drop' dozens of names. When drawing on other scholars' work, this should be properly acknowledged.

'Critical analysis' means that the work should develop an argument (as the term 'dissertation' itself suggests). This may be more or less polemical, but should in any case be a lucid, coherent, and carefully substantiated exposition of a critical viewpoint in its own right. It is not acceptable to produce a mass of uninterpreted or 'descriptive' data, an unstructured meditation, or an unexplained critique, nor to string together a series of disconnected facts and comments.

Work in this field often concerns issues of great political importance and situations of poverty or suffering. In academic writing, however, expressions of disapproval or proposals about how to remedy these ills should not be given excessive space. What counts is your clear analysis of the issues at hand.

An essay or dissertation is subject to all the normal requirements of publishable academic writing: relevance, clarity and accuracy. It is important to plan ahead and submit for approval a title that corresponds with the argument you intend to make, since work which is irrelevant or digressive will be penalized. The text should be a single, comprehensible, persuasive, cumulative demonstration, not a series of disconnected insights. Quality of argument and careful substantiation are at least as important as flash of insight. The organisation of the argument of the essay or dissertation is of crucial importance in giving cogency and credibility to your research and critical position.

Written work for a multidisciplinary area studies degree

The MPhil in Latin American Studies is a multidisciplinary area studies degree. Area Studies starts from the assumption that the study of a range of different phenomena – economic, political, social, literary, artistic, historical, geographical, etc. – mutually illuminates the processes that may be seen to be characteristic of a particular region. The course is flexible enough to allow you to pursue your interests within a single discipline if you choose to do so, but it is structured in such a way that will encourage you to understand that discipline within a much broader context. It will also expose you to new areas of study or methodologies that you may wish to engage with in your own work over the year, quite possibly leading to forays across disciplinary boundaries.

As you approach your written work for the course, you should bear in mind the following:

- The importance of **context** in an area studies degree. Texts, case studies, and data of all kinds should be placed within relevant historical, cultural, socioeconomic or other contexts. How and to what extent such contextualization takes place will differ according to the particular topic being studied, but it should be considered an important element in work for an area studies course.
- Your discussions of **theory** should not occlude the object of your study. You will be encouraged, where relevant, to explore, debate or indicate the limitations of relevant theoretical or conceptual frameworks that have been used, or could fruitfully be used, to elucidate your chosen material. Indeed, a reflexive and critical exploration of such frameworks is often characteristic of good work at Masters level. An appropriate balance should, however, be struck between such conceptual approaches and the object of study, which should not become lost under the weight of theory in your work.
- You will be expected to show an awareness of the **disciplinary context** of the ideas and frameworks you discuss: the traditions from which they have emerged. You may well be given credit for bringing together concepts from different fields, if the result sheds new light on your object of study, or uncovers unexpected links between different theories, for example. But you should also demonstrate an understanding of how these ideas are anchored in particular disciplines or approaches, even if (and especially if) you intend to 'borrow' them for other purposes.

Identifying and defining a topic

Choosing a research project demands care and thought, and you should start this process well in advance of the date for submission of titles, and in consultation with a supervisor. Initially, think through those areas you have been studying and identify those you found most interesting or exciting. Having identified an area of interest, you may find it useful to start by conducting some online searches, including of databases and e-journals to which the University Library holds a subscription. This should be supplemented by trips to the University Library to obtain books and articles only available in print. Your aim at this point is to get a feel for what has already been written and what the major concerns are in that area. Your work should be original in its focus and/or findings, but you must also take account of previously written secondary literature and refer to (some of) it in your essays/dissertation.

While doing background research it is essential that you keep in contact with your supervisor to discuss your project and the progress of your research. S/he will be able to give you further advice and direct your reading.

Bibliography

Start a bibliography from Day One of your research, ideally using a programme such as Zotero (freeware) or Endnote, which will save time in the long term. Always record full bibliographical details of any books/articles you are consulting, as you will need them later for footnotes and bibliography. Note the author, title, editor, publisher, date of publication, page range, and page number of each quotation. It is a very good idea to include the library class mark with each entry, as this too will save time and effort later on if you wish to check or reread something.

Noting citations

It is particularly important that the notes you take should make a very clear distinction between quotations and paraphrase, and that any passages transcribed for future use as quotations be accurately copied. Care in this matter will ensure that you avoid unintentional plagiarism. You must take care to note the ultimate source when noting any material quoted by another author so as to be able to produce a transparent footnote without returning to the library. Keeping careful records throughout the year can save much heartache in the final days of submission.

Drafts, comments and editing

MPhil candidates, especially those who lack experience of writing an undergraduate dissertation, often underestimate both the time required to react to and make best use of the comments offered by supervisors on their drafts, and the gains in clarity of thought and effectiveness of argument that can come from thorough revision and careful rewriting. It is misleading to think of research and writing as being two separate activities. You should avoid the idea of doing 'research' for three months and then 'writing up' in the last few weeks. The only sure test of an argument, or of a chapter structure, is to set it out in a draft. That way both you and your supervisor can judge the strengths and weaknesses of the approach, often devising better research strategies and generating fresh questions. This reinforces the advice that it is wise to start writing drafts as early as possible; you can, after all, supplement your research at a later date if evidence or argument proves deficient.

Additionally, drafts are an important part of the exercise of keeping within the word limit as you develop a better sense of the space you need to budget for each section. At this stage, the task of writing 15,000 words for the dissertation may seem daunting; in practice, your problem is more likely to be deciding what needs to be left out. The task of cutting several thousand excess words cannot be left to the very end. Hurried editing can easily result in poor scholarship, and even failure, by destroying the transparency of referencing or incorporating inset quotations into the main text as unacknowledged, albeit referenced, quotations.

Planning your research and writing

Two common problems are encountered by students in planning the year's work, which may lead to underperformance. You are strongly urged to consider how you will avoid these pitfalls!

- You will need to find a way to undertake crucial initial research for the dissertation while working towards the essay deadlines during the first two terms. If you leave too much to the final term, you will not have enough time to plan and write effectively. In particular, any fieldwork for the dissertation undertaken during the Easter Vacation will need to be carefully planned in advance.
- Cambridge terms are short and intense. The vacations are not holidays, but periods during which the lack of classes makes it easier to study without interruption and freedom of residence makes it easier to use libraries and archives elsewhere, carry out interviews, or seek out a secluded workplace. Students on the MPhil should expect to study full-time between the start of the academic year and the June dissertation deadline, taking no more than two or three weeks' holiday in this period (always out of term time). There is a temptation to relax after the December deadline for written work and some students are then slow to pick up the pace of work again promptly in the New Year, at some risk to the quality of the dissertation.

You should find the suggested work schedule included in this Handbook very useful when planning ahead – sticking to it should ensure that deadlines are met without panic and that work progresses smoothly on the essays and the dissertation throughout the year.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

'Academic misconduct' is gaining or attempting to gain, or helping others to gain or attempt to gain, an unfair academic advantage in formal University assessment, or any activity likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research. It includes being in possession of unauthorised materials or electronic devices during an examination, including recording or communication devices or devices that can store data, even where the Registered Student is unaware that such

materials or devices are unauthorised, has no intention of using them, or is unaware that they have them in their possession. Academic misconduct also includes:

- **Plagiarism:** using someone else's ideas, words, data, or other material produced by them without acknowledgement;
- **Self-plagiarism:** using the Registered Student's own ideas, words, data or other material produced by them and submitted for formal assessment at this University or another institution, or for publication elsewhere, without acknowledgement, unless expressly permitted by the assessment.
- **Contract cheating:** contracting a third party to provide work, which is then used or submitted as part of a formal assessment as though it is the Registered Student's own work.
- **Collusion:** working with others and using the ideas or words of this joint work without acknowledgment, as though it is the Registered Student's own work, or allowing others to use the ideas or words of joint work without acknowledgment
- **Impersonating someone or being impersonated** in an examination or arranging for someone to impersonate someone else by sitting their examination.
- **Fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation** of data, results or other outputs or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, or presenting or recording such data, etc, as if they were real.
- **Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations** in carrying out research. This includes failure to follow agreed protocol if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, other sentient beings or the environment, and facilitating of misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. It includes any plan or conspiracy to attempt to do any of these things.

Artificial Intelligence

A student using any unacknowledged content generated by artificial intelligence within a summative assessment as though it is their own work constitutes academic misconduct, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the assessment brief. More information on University policies regarding this matter here: <https://www.educationalpolicy.admin.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism-and-academic-misconduct/artificial-intelligence-ai>

SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE SKILLS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

At the beginning of the year, all students should, with the help of the MPhil Director and their dissertation supervisor, identify any areas in which they could benefit from additional support and training. These include writing skills (especially, but not only, for non-native speakers of English), training in specific research methodologies, and help with Spanish and/or Portuguese for fieldwork purposes. Students should read information on the following websites carefully to gain a good understanding of the support available.

- **Research methods and frameworks seminars**

These [seminars](#) are provided for CLAS MPhil students alongside the Core Course and optional modules and should be regarded as compulsory for those students working in relevant fields.

- **CaRM (Cambridge Research Methods)**

[CaRM \(Cambridge Research Methods\)](#) provides a full programme of modules which are designed to equip students with vital methodological skills needed for work in the social sciences, including qualitative interviews, statistical analysis, discourse analysis and ethnographic practice. If you think any of these may be relevant to you, please discuss with your supervisor early during the programme and register for any modules and induction sessions.

- **Written English language support**

The [Language Centre](#) offers a wide range of workshops, supervisions and online modules for non-native speakers of English who need to work on their writing for essays and the dissertation. Depending on your college, it may be able to help with any course costs involved.

- **Spanish classes**

The Language Centre offers a range of modules to suit different levels of competence. Those who already have A'level or degree-level Spanish may be particularly interested in the 'Advanced Plus through Film and Literature' module.

- **Brazilian Portuguese classes**

Classes are arranged by the Language Centre and taught at beginner and intermediate levels. They are free for all CLAS students, with the cost being covered by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

FIELDWORK

Cambridge library facilities and internet access mean that many MPhil dissertation topics can be researched without leaving Cambridge. However, a dissertation topic could be enriched by fieldwork trips to consult archives, access material unavailable in the UK, or conduct interviews. MPhil students are encouraged, if relevant, to undertake a short period of fieldwork in Latin America as part of their preparation for the dissertation.

Although there are current updates to the Departmental website on Ethics Risk and Fieldwork frameworks, this link will provide you with most up-to-date information on guidelines and procedures:

<https://www.polis.cam.ac.uk/ethics-risk-and-fieldwork-erf>

Failure to submit the appropriate documentation and complete procedures by the [current academic year deadlines](#) may well result in approval being denied. The details provided in these forms will be checked by the Graduate Education Committee and the Research Committee of the Department. If concerns are raised about any aspect of your proposed fieldwork, you and your supervisor will be contacted and asked to provide additional assurances, to put more robust systems in place to ensure your safety, or to adapt your plans.

Those intending to use **social science methods** for their fieldwork must participate in the fieldwork methods session run by CLAS, as well as other relevant seminars in research methods training as recommended by their supervisor or the MPhil Director. Proper training is particularly important for interview-based research. If students are unable to attend these seminars for any reason, they must satisfy the Director that they are properly prepared, by attending an equivalent seminar in another department or by taking courses in [CaRM \(Cambridge Research Methods\)](#).

Research and fieldwork expenses

College funds

Many colleges allow applications for funding to cover research expenses. You are required to apply for these funds in order to be considered for Centre funding.

Simón Bolívar Fund

The Centre may be able to provide modest financial support for fieldwork trips to Latin America via the [Simón Bolívar Fund](#). Please note that in order to qualify you must also submit funding applications for to your college.

ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH

You will be required to submit an ethics approval form and a consent form for any fieldwork you wish to conduct towards your dissertation. Please read very carefully the information on [POLIS ethical approval webpage](#) as it gives the deadlines for applying for approval, and clear advice on which forms to use, depending on whether your research involves sensitive data, interviewing people, etc.

If your dissertation topic has no ethical implications whatsoever (i.e. you are not doing interviews or collecting non-public data from people) you must still fill in the relevant form to explain why the research is exempt from ethics approval. Your supervisor and the MPhil Director will be able to give you advice if you are not sure how to proceed.

Ethical concerns for work not based on fieldwork

Research that does not involve fieldwork or gathering data directly from participants might still have relevant ethical considerations. If you plan, for example, to gather and analyse information from social media (e.g. tweets or Instagram posts), you are also expected to reflect on the ethical implications of this method and format your research and writing accordingly. This might involve procedures such as seeking consent from participants and anonymising any information, which will be covered during the fieldwork training seminar at CLAS. If you feel this is a relevant concern for your research, your supervisor and the MPhil Director will be able to give you advice.

LEAVE TO WORK AWAY CHECK-IN PROCEDURE

1. Students who are conducting fieldwork in locations with an Amber FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) warning are required to check in weekly with the MPhil Administrator. However, students who are nationals of the country they are conducting fieldwork in, and who have either family or friends in that country, will not be required to check in.
2. Students are expected to return to Cambridge if the FCDO warning for a location changes to Red (advise against all travel).
3. Students who fail to check in will be contacted by the MPhil Administrator, and if they still fail to respond, the MPhil Administrator will communicate with the first emergency contact.
4. If the emergency contact has had no contact with the student, the MPhil Administrator will alert the student's supervisor, MPhil Director, Department Administrator, the University's Insurance Section and the relevant embassies.

You are strongly advised to [sign up for FCDO updates](#).

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

If you intend to conduct interviews as part of your research towards the dissertation, you should make sure that you devise a questionnaire in good time for your supervisor to check it beforehand; as well as the session on fieldwork in Latin America offered by CLAS, it may also be very useful for you to participate in training sessions on interviewing practices, such as the module on qualitative interviews taught by the [Social Sciences Research Methods Programme](#).

Interviewee consent and confidential sources

Confidential sources, either documentation or interview material, play an important role in research into contemporary topics for which documentation is otherwise unavailable. Confidentiality is a cornerstone of social research: all data collected must maintain the anonymity of the source, unless explicit permission is given otherwise. The notable exception is where a source cannot reasonably expect to be made anonymous, as in the case of interviews with experts, dignitaries or public figures. The following are general guidelines to ensure good practice in this sensitive area and, in particular, to ensure that use of interview material can be reconciled with scholarly expectations for verification. For particular concerns you should consult an expert in your methodology, or undertake training in your chosen research method.

It is your responsibility to establish with the interviewee on what basis the interview is to be conducted. Can identity be directly revealed? Can the interviewee's general official status be revealed? Can the person be quoted directly or is the information for 'background' only? If the person is to be quoted, there is need for great accuracy of transcription from tapes or any other medium. The date and place of the interview should be carefully noted. It is conventional practice in the social sciences for

interviewees to be made non-identifiable and given a number or pseudonym. Only that data, stripped of identifiers, should be kept in the event of external questions about reliability and replicability. Protecting research subjects is a key component of carrying out ethical and consensual research.

How anonymity matters varies widely depending on the type of research being carried out. For example, research with victims of police violence will necessarily carry a different set of concerns from research with public figures responsible for creating or managing policing policies. In the former we would expect that all interviewees are made anonymous, while in the latter it would be reasonable for most or all to be identifiable. These kinds of research will necessarily differ from cultural critique, which may rely on the identities, reputation or status of interviewees to assert or advance a finding, and where the attribution of other sources lends credibility to the few who remain anonymous. For documentation, similar guidelines apply. Where the document is not public, and the user would not expect it to be public, identities of research informants in documents must be made anonymous, unless permission has been given otherwise. This is a tightrope of academic work – balancing rigorous and verifiable research findings with the safety, confidentiality and permission of those who provided the data.

You should also bear in mind the importance of the scholarly use of data, for the purpose of argument and publication. For an argument, it is always good to have more than one source. ‘Triangulated’ data, where multiple sources point to the same answer or finding, is good data. This does not mean that sources need be identified: that is a matter of the kind of research being carried out. Some fields may expect a limited use of unattributed sources, while others will expect that you have a commitment to keep research informants safe. In general, the following practices should be adopted:

- At a minimum, you must obtain consent to interview, and keep a record of the date and place of the interview. These should be footnoted when used in writing. Repeated references to the same confidential source should be identified. Heavy reliance on a small number of sources, identifiable or not, does not typically strengthen an argument.
- The status of public-facing individuals (e.g. diplomat, serving officer, etc.) can be identified unless requested otherwise. All others should be anonymized, unless explicit permission is given otherwise.

If the above are not possible, and if, in the context of the dissertation as a whole, doubts are likely to arise about the credibility of the interview material, the candidate should consult their supervisor and/or provide access to the relevant research data. Data would be held in secure conditions in the Centre but could be used to satisfy the Examiners of the *bona fides* of the material.

MARKING SCHEMES FOR THE MPHIL IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (By Advanced Study / Taught only)

General notes

All written work is marked independently by two assessors before a final mark is agreed and may additionally be marked and/or moderated by the External Examiner, who will confirm borderline marks and adjudicate in the case of a significant discrepancy between markers.

Coursework (the three essays combined) cannot compensate for failure in the dissertation (and vice versa), although a High Pass in one component may compensate in cases of borderline failure ('redeemable performance') in the other.

The total mark awarded for the degree is reached by taking an average of the dissertation mark and the mark for the rest of the coursework combined (three essays). The essays are weighted at 20% for each for the two highest marks, and 10% for the lowest mark. Officially, the MPhil degree is awarded in two categories only, Pass and Distinction. To gain a Pass, candidates need to achieve an overall weighted mark of 60 or higher. To gain a Distinction, candidates need an overall weighted mark of at least 75. Final marks are rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Please see the relevant sections of the MPhil Handbook for advice on penalties for late submission or exceeding the word limit.

Marking scheme for the essays

75+: Distinction

70+: High Pass

60+: Pass

Below 60: Fail

(Marginal fail/'redeemable performance': 58, 59)

Distinction

Tackles a topic not widely covered in the literature or approaches a topic covered in the literature from a new angle; shows an excellent grasp of a wide range of sources and utilizes them in a scholarly fashion; shows superior understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological issues; provides a well-argued and referenced answer, with indications of insight and/or originality.

High Pass

Shows a firm grasp of a good range of sources and utilizes them in a scholarly fashion; provides a clear, well-organized answer, showing understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological issues.

Pass

Shows knowledge of a good range of sources and utilizes them in a scholarly manner; provides a clear, well organized answer but has some theoretical and/or methodological weaknesses. Marks at the upper end of the range will have more minor and less serious weaknesses; those at the lower end will have more substantial weaknesses.

Fail

Shows an inadequate grasp of sources or utilizes sources in a casual manner; fails to provide a coherent answer; shows inadequate understanding of theory and/or methods.

Marking scheme for the dissertation

75+: Distinction

70+: High Pass

60+: Pass

Below 60: Fail

(Marginal fail/'redeemable performance': 58, 59)

Distinction

Tackles a problem not well covered in the literature or approaches a topic from a new angle; shows an excellent grasp of a wide range of sources and utilizes them in a scholarly fashion; shows a superior understanding of relevant theoretical issues or shows ingenuity in applying a particular method to an empirical problem; presents a well-argued dissertation which integrates theory, methods and data and shows insight and/or originality.

High Pass

Tackles a problem from a new angle; shows a firm grasp of a wide range of sources and utilizes them in a scholarly manner; shows a good understanding of relevant theoretical issues; applies chosen research method(s) in a sound manner; presents a clear and well-argued dissertation which integrates theory, methods and data and demonstrates some insight.

Pass

Shows an adequate grasp of a wide range of sources and utilizes them in a scholarly manner; shows an adequate understanding of theoretical issues; applies chosen research methods in a sound manner; presents a clear and well-argued dissertation which adequately integrates theory, methods and data. Marks at the upper end of the range will have more minor and less serious weaknesses; those at the lower end will have more substantial weaknesses.

Marginal Fail

A dissertation which shows insufficient evidence of competence in conducting a scholarly investigation of a clearly defined empirical problem and does not reach the standards of achievement in several of the aspects defined under criteria for a Pass, but which exhibits sufficient signs of knowledge to be redeemed by other work of a much higher standard.

Fail

A dissertation which shows insufficient evidence of competence in conducting a scholarly investigation of a clearly defined empirical problem and does not reach the standards of achievement in several of the aspects defined under criteria for a Pass.

MPHIL IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (PART-TIME COURSE)

The MPhil course (either the advanced study course or the thesis-only version) may be taken on a part-time basis over two years. The actual length of the course is 21 months, from the beginning of October in the first year to the end of June in the second year. Students following the taught course take the Core Course and two optional modules in the first year (one in Michaelmas Term and one in Lent Term), and then a further two optional modules in the second year (one in Michaelmas Term and one in Lent Term). They prepare their dissertation over the course of the 21 months, submitting it by the final deadline in June of the second year. Students should be able to dedicate at least 2.5 full days per week to MPhil work, and be able to attend seminars in person in Cambridge on the days on which they are held.

Part-time course structure overview

Teaching year 1

	Michaelmas Term	Lent Term
Core Course	7 seminars	7 seminars
Research Skills seminars	1 session	1 session
1 Optional Module per term	6 seminars	6 seminars

Teaching year 2

	Michaelmas Term	Lent Term
1 Optional Module per term	6 seminars	6 seminars

Written work to be submitted

	Written work	% of overall MPhil mark
End of Lent Term year 1	Essay 1	50%
End of Easter Term year 1	Essay 2	(weighted at 20% for each of the two essays with highest marks and 10% for the lowest marked essay)
End of Lent Term year 2	Essay 3	
End of Easter Term year 2	Dissertation	50%

MPHIL IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (BY THESIS ONLY)

It is possible to take the MPhil by thesis only, either as a one-year or a two-year course. Students choosing this option submit a single thesis of 30,000 words as their only form of coursework. This option is usually restricted to mature students or students who have already completed a Masters course and who are taking the MPhil in order to develop a specific piece of scholarship. If you are interested in this option, you should discuss it with the MPhil Director, ideally before the start of the course, but certainly within the first week or two of the course. The MPhil Director will determine whether this would be a suitable route through the MPhil for you, and whether appropriate supervision can be provided.

Much of the advice and information in this Handbook (on the Centre, research facilities, pastoral support, guidelines on submitting written work, fieldwork, etc.) is equally relevant to the MPhil course by thesis only. However, there are some differences in progression through the course and modes of assessment. These are set out below, and should be read in conjunction with the University's [Code of Practice for Research Students](#).

Taught seminars and training

Students taking the MPhil course by thesis only will be strongly encouraged to participate in the Core Course run for students on the taught course. This is designed to expose you to a wide range of critical issues and approaches to Latin American Studies and should complement your more focused work on your thesis topic. In addition, it may be very beneficial for you to take part in one or more of the research skills seminars offered at CLAS. A discussion will be held at the beginning of the year with your thesis supervisor and the MPhil Director, who will be able to advise you on any specific training you may need. It may also be possible, depending on the number of students enrolled, for you to participate in some of the optional module seminars, but this is not guaranteed.

Supervision

You should expect to meet with your supervisor roughly three times per term. These meetings are likely to be shorter at the beginning of the year as you are starting off, and more lengthy in the final term as you discuss drafts in detail together. To make best use of supervisions, you should prepare carefully, for instance by making an outline plan of your thesis for discussion, or listing questions on matters on which your supervisor's advice would be helpful.

You should aim to complete a draft of a substantial section of your thesis (around 5000 words) by the beginning of Lent Term (mid-January). This will enable your supervisor to provide important early feedback on a more developed piece of work.

Thesis title

The provisional title for the thesis must be agreed between candidate and supervisor. You and your supervisor must also decide upon a final title by the deadline given in the Calendar in this Handbook. Thesis titles will be reviewed by the MPhil Director and the Chair of the Centre's Graduate Education Committee and sent to the Faculty Degree Committee for formal approval. Occasionally the PEC Chair and/or the Degree Committee may insist on changes to a particular title, consulting the student and supervisor concerned. It is not possible to change the final thesis title once it has been approved. When finally submitted, each dissertation must bear the exact approved title (word for word), and candidates are therefore advised to take great care when drafting titles.

Word count

The thesis must be **no more than 30,000 words long**, including footnotes and inline citations, but excluding title, contents page, bibliography and appendices.

Tables, graphs, charts, maps, and infographics should be counted at 150 words each. Where more than 4 tables (etc.) are used, additional ones (including the fifth) will be counted as 100 words each. For the purposes of establishing the final word count, any words included in those tables/images should *not* be counted. Subheadings and captions will continue to be included in the word count, but if they wish, students may use just a brief caption to identify an image/table inserted in the text, giving the full details in an appendix if they are particularly extensive. Photos, images, reproductions of visual art and other material will not add to the word count (differently from tables etc.), but their subheadings and captions will count as indicated above.

If the nature of your dissertation topic means that you are required to supply a large number of tables or graphs in order to support your argument, you may apply for permission for some of these to be excluded from the word count. You should do this by contacting the MPhil Director no later than one month before submission.

Assessment

The MPhil by thesis only is assessed on the basis of the 30,000-word thesis and a *viva voce* examination on its contents. Performance in both elements is judged in relation to what may reasonably be achieved in 8-9 months of full-time research. In other respects, the MPhil by thesis only is assessed according to the general principles of research degrees at the University, including the PhD. No numerical mark is awarded for the thesis, and the course outcome is pass/fail. The Examiners' Reports will specify whether the thesis demonstrates readiness for doctoral research.

The examination of the thesis and the *viva* will be conducted by two independent Examiners, appointed by the Degree Committee, at least one of whom will be external to the University. The supervisor cannot be appointed as an Examiner. After reading the thesis, each Examiner submits an independent signed report, normally including a specific recommendation as to whether or not the thesis meets the requirements of the MPhil. On the basis of the thesis and the candidate's performance in the *viva*, the examiners complete a joint report. The joint report will recommend a result, subject to approval by the Degree Committee.

The viva

The *viva* (oral examination) is conducted by the two Examiners, who will engage the student in discussion on the topic of their thesis. If both Examiners are external to the University, an independent Chair will also be appointed. The Chair does not normally ask questions during the examination. In addition to chairing the meeting, their role is to ensure that the examination process conforms to the regulations. The *viva* is expected to last between 30 and 45 minutes. The purpose of the examination is to allow:

- the candidate to defend his or her thesis and clarify any matters raised by the Examiners
- the Examiners to probe the candidate's knowledge of the general field
- the Examiners to assure themselves that the work presented is the candidate's own and to clarify matters of any collaboration
- the Examiners to come to a definite conclusion about the outcome of the examination.

Special arrangements:

Upon request, special arrangements can be made in particular cases for candidates on the grounds of disability. These may include rest breaks or candidates bringing food and drink into the examination room. Examiners will be informed of any such arrangements.

Outcome of the examination

The following outcomes are possible: approval, revision, or failure. Each outcome may have one or more options, as detailed below:

Approval:

1. The thesis is satisfactory for the award of the Degree **without correction**.
2. The thesis is satisfactory for the award of the Degree sought subject to **minor or straightforward corrections**. Such corrections would be factual, typographic, limited in extent, and could be completed immediately or shortly after the oral examination. Candidates have a maximum of **three weeks** in which to complete corrections and submit a corrected and approved version of their thesis. This deadline runs from the date the student receives their viva report and list of corrections.
3. The thesis is satisfactory for the award of the Degree sought subject to **more substantial, or less straightforward, corrections**. Such corrections may be extensive but should not require major reworking or reinterpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis. Candidates have a maximum of **six weeks** in which to complete corrections and submit a corrected and approved version of their thesis. This deadline runs from the date the student receives their viva report and list of corrections.

Revision:

The thesis requires revision such that the Degree Committee are unable to recommend the awarding of the degree without a fresh examination of a revised thesis. Candidates have a maximum of **10 weeks** to **revise and resubmit** their thesis. This deadline runs from the date the student receives their viva report and list of corrections.

Failure:

The candidate's work is irremediable for the degree – outright failure.

Corrections, approval of the examination results and timeline for graduation

If corrections or revisions are to be carried out after the oral examination, your examiner will indicate what is required and append a list to your joint report. The joint recommendation should also specify which examiner, or whether both examiners, will check that the corrections/revisions have been completed satisfactorily. You will be asked to supply the corrected thesis in an electronic format with any corrections highlighted on it.

If corrections are straightforward and relatively few in number, it may be possible for these to be completed at or immediately after the oral examination.

In most cases, Examiners' recommendations should be released informally so that students may immediately start working on corrections/revisions, but students should note that outcomes are subject to final approval at the final Degree Committee meeting.

At the Degree Committee meeting towards the end of June/beginning of July, final outcomes are approved as follows:

- Where no corrections are required, approval will be given for the award of the MPhil degree.
- Where corrections/revisions are required: once the Examiners confirm that the corrections/revisions have been completed to their satisfaction, arrangements will be made for Degree Committee approval for the award of the MPhil degree.

Candidates with no corrections who submit their work by the main dissertation deadline will *normally* be able to take part in the graduation ceremony to be held in mid-July (although there may be exceptional circumstances in which the examining process may not be completed in time). All other successful candidates will be able to apply to attend a graduation ceremony at a later date. Dates of graduation ceremonies are available [here](#).