



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

MSc Social Research

Using rigorous research evidence
for social change

Dr Carin Runciman | Programme Director | 14 November 2024

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Why do a MSc in Social Research?

- ⑩ A degree programme that allows you to develop and specialise in qualitative and quantitative research.
- ⑩ Provides the training for research that can tackle complex social issues.
- ⑩ Become an independent researcher.
- ⑩ Provides the research methods training required for 1+3 PhD programmes required by some funders (e.g ESRC)



Who is this degree broadly for?

- Aspiring social science researchers who already have some grounding in the theory and methods of the social sciences.
- People looking to make a career change to move in the direction of social science research.
- Those looking to pursue a PhD in the social sciences and who would like to complete the research methods training required by the ESRC as part of their '+1'.
- If you are primarily interested in data and not social science, consider alternative programmes like the [MSc Data, Inequality and Society](#)
- If you are primarily interested in market/user data research, this programme is not designed to support that kind of research interest.



MSc Social Research – two routes

■ Social Research

- Valuable broad training in social research (+1 part of 1+3 ESRC training)
- With options to select advanced electives across quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods

■ Social Research with Quantitative Methods

- Designed for Q-Step students and others interested in advanced QM social research
- Closely linked to the Q-Step centre



Selecting courses and pathways

Semester 1	Semester 2	Summer
Core courses		
Research skills in the social sciences: Data collection	Research design	Standard or work-based dissertation
Core quantitative data analysis 1 and 2		
Optional		
3 courses in advanced training (Graduate School) and/or substantive topics within subject areas.		



MSc Social Research – examples

Qualitative and mixed methods

Humanities and Arts-informed
Research Methods in the Social
Sciences

Analysing Qualitative Data

The Documents of Life

Advanced Methods Workshops

Quantitative methods

Longitudinal Data Analysis

Multi-level Modelling in Social
Science

Bayesian Statistics

Advanced Methods Workshops

Theories and themes

Introduction to Anthropological
Theory

Gender, Politics and Representation

Internet, Society & Economy

Outside courses...

CORE (60 credits)

- Data collection (20)
- Core Quantitative Data Analysis (20)
- Research Design (20)

ELECTIVE (60 credits) e.g:

- Advanced Methods Workshops (20)
- Qualitative Methods and Ethnographic Fieldwork (20)
- Comparative Analysis of Social and Public Policy (20)

DISSERTATION (60 credits)

- Standard
- OR
- Placement-based



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Reasons to follow the standard MSc programme

1. Develop research expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods.
2. Be able to combine the understanding of qualitative and quantitative research with other courses in SPS.
3. Have flexibility in being able to develop a qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research design in your dissertation.
4. Receive additional methods training through the Research Training Centre supported courses – Micro Methods and Advanced Methods workshop.
5. Become an independent quantitative social scientist



Reasons to follow the with QM pathway

1. Cutting edge advanced quantitative training delivered by experts
2. Link advanced QM with substantive SPS options
3. Work on a quantitative social research question in your dissertation
4. Learn within Edinburgh Q-Step Centre
5. Become an independent quantitative social scientist



Your dissertation



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Your dissertation

- Extended piece of writing of up to 15,000 words, based on independent study.
- Select topics from a broad range of themes or challenge-led research.
- Assesses ability to conduct research autonomously
- Review the literature and contribute to a field of research
- Organise effectively bigger quantities of information
- Communicate findings in fluent and structured fashion
- Challenging and rewarding!

Dissertation topics

- Must be related to social research i.e research that uses social science theories to ask and answer questions about society.
- Not topics on economics, consumer behaviour or topics that are about analysing data with no regards to social theory.
- These kinds of topics should be pursued in different degree programmes.



Placement-based dissertation

- Conduct research with organisations, supported by Study & Work Away team
- Develop theoretical & methodological ideas in real-world contexts
- Relationship-building & career development
- Students apply on a competitive basis
- Students may also independently partner with an organisation.
- Host organisations request a specific research topic that they would like to commission a substantive piece of research on.



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Make the most of the Edinburgh
research environment!



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Cross-disciplinary social science expertise & research

- Social Anthropology
- Social Policy
- Sociology
- Social Work
- Centre for African Studies
- Politics & International Relations
- Science, Technology & Innovation Studies
- Research Training Centre



Student Adviser

Cath Thompson – Student.sps@ed.ac.uk

- Student Counselling Service
- The Listening Service
- The Disability & Learning Support Service
- The Advice Place



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Student development

- Learning and Academic Skills handbook (online)
- Academic Writing course (Learn)
- English Language Education courses <https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/ele-courses>
- Graduate Writing Centre
- Institute for Academic Development
- Student Development Office
- Careers Service



Student Development Office (SDO)

- The Student Development Office (SDO) offers skills and employability training through a range of interactive workshops, work shadowing opportunities, professional development awards and placement-based dissertations.
- Open to all students in the School of Social and Political Science, it is the framework through which we connect students with the world beyond academia and boost skills for employability.
- <https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/students/development-hub/masters/placement-based-learning/msc-placement-based-dissertations>

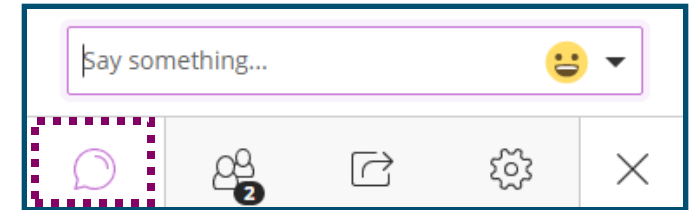


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Asking questions (Collaborate)

- Please hold all questions until the end of the formal presentation
- Always use the ‘hand raise icon’ to queue up your question
- When called upon to ask your question, type it into the “Text chat area”
- Once your question is answered, please lower your hand



Next steps...

<https://virtualvisits.ed.ac.uk/pg>



<https://edin.ac/student-chat-pg>



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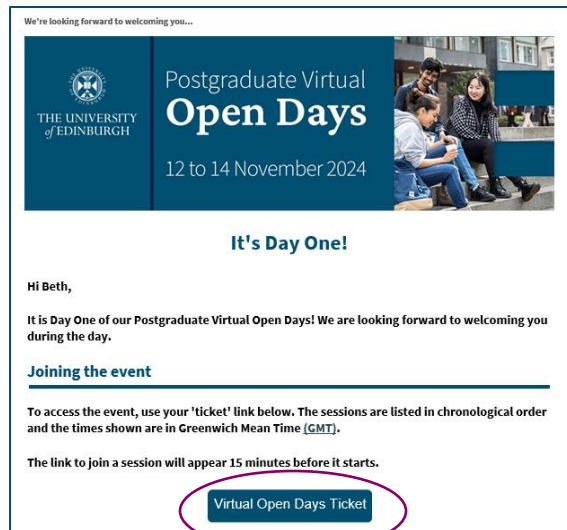
Contact details for follow-up questions

- We apologise if we did not get through all of your questions in the time allotted for this session. If you have further questions that have not been answered, please email: futurestudents@ed.ac.uk

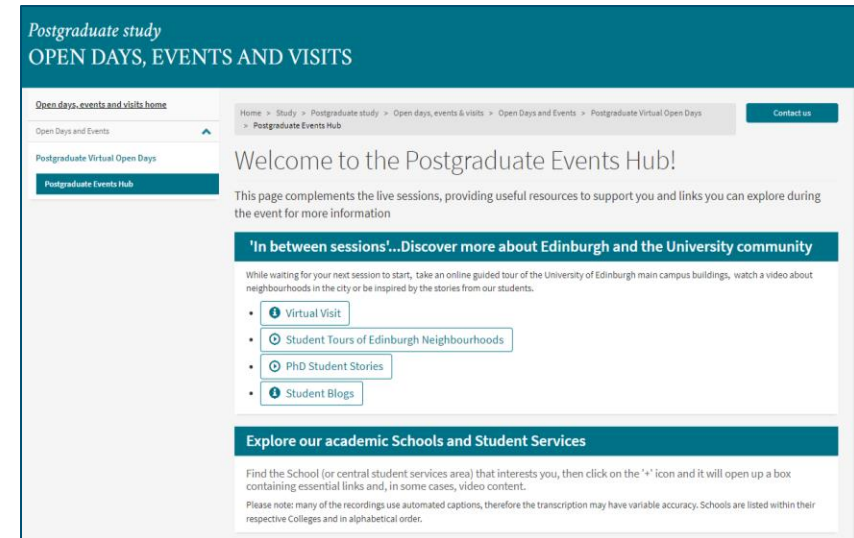


Thank you – click ‘Leave’ when the session ends

- Return to your ‘e-ticket’ to find and attend other sessions you’ve booked – by clicking on the button in the email we sent you...



- ...and visit the events hub:
- <https://edin.ac/4gZuP3G>



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Thank you

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