

MPhil in Sociology Student Life Guide



Welcome new MPhil in Sociology student. **Congratulations** on starting your MPhil at the University of Cambridge! Making it through the application process is a huge achievement in itself.



This short guide had been prepared in the hope of making some Cambridge-isms clearer and answering some of those questions you may not feel comfortable asking / know who to ask.

Before you start flicking through the guide, note that the Department has 4 MPhil pathways (courses). Whilst all the students you were inducted with may not be on the same pathway as you, they are still your greatest allies and will be on your Cambridge journey with you, having similar experiences.

The pathways are detailed as follows:

- Sociology of Marginality and Exclusion
- Sociology of Culture and Media
- Political and Economic Sociology
- Sociology of Reproduction

The core module for your own pathway is compulsory, however, you are more than welcome to attend any teaching that is happening on any of the other pathways or within the department (if you have time).

Good luck on your MPhil journey! Enjoy your course, assessments, and research as much as possible. You are in for an incredible educational journey!

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College Vs Department

All students within the Department will belong to one of the University's 31 autonomous colleges. Some colleges are VERY near to each other but most are not far from each other so it is worth getting to know which of your course-mates are within walking distance and which are a short bike ride away. College is where most students live, eat, and socialise, although some students may choose to live outside of college. College is where support for non-academic and some academic problems can be accessed. Each college has their own internal procedures, support services, and systems, so do check what your college has to offer.



The Department, needless to say, is your primary reason for being at the University. The Department organises your teaching, regulates your research, and oversees your assessments. The Sociology Department has around 17 academic members of staff, 20 postdoc researchers, 60 graduate students (PhD candidates and MPhils), and 40 Sociology Part II students (undergraduates). Lectures and seminars usually take place from Monday – Friday, between 9am -5pm. Your supervisor, teaching staff, and support for academic matters can be found within the department and are also available on email.

Your Supervisor and Supervisions

Your supervisor will have been assigned to you during the admission process and is essentially your personal academic advisor. Your supervisor will help you plan your research and dissertation, approve your dissertation title, and provide feedback on a final draft of your dissertation.

You should expect to have approximately eight meetings with your supervisor throughout the year, each lasting around one hour, these meetings are generally referred to as supervisions. The Department requests that you allow your supervisor reasonable time to arrange meetings and to read your written materials before a meeting.



Supervisions are useful for discussing your progress, ideas, and arguments, as well as planning what you need to do and figuring out what and/or how you need to improve. Preparing well for supervisions will make them more beneficial to you.

Your Timetable

Due to the vast range of modules (sometimes referred to as papers/courses) offered within the Department, you are given the responsibility of constructing your own timetable.

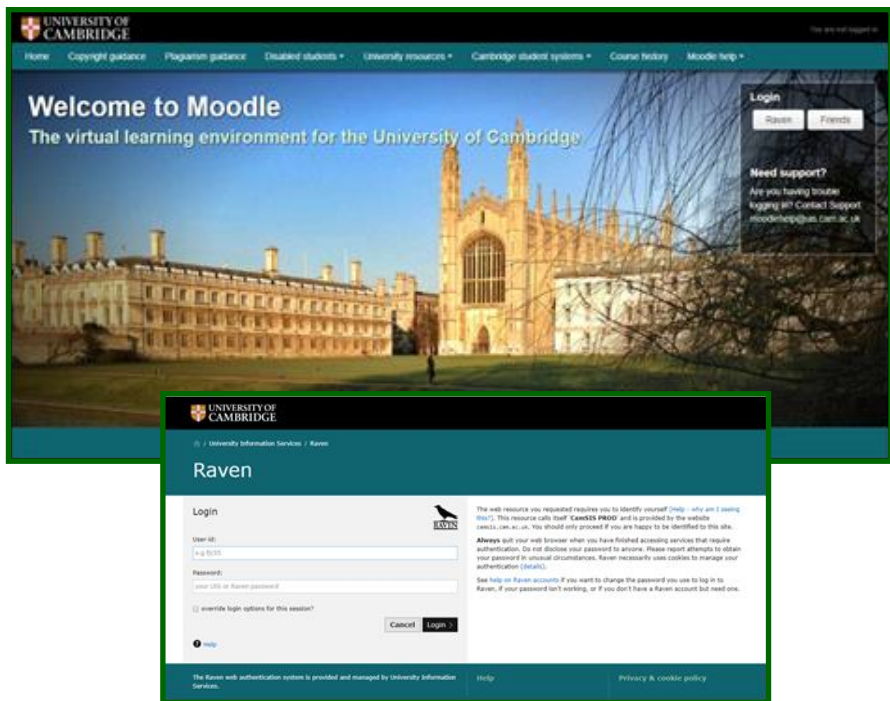
You are expected to prioritise the core module for your own pathway, in addition to any relevant research modules which will assist you in developing knowledge and skills required to pass your MPhil degree.

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
02/10/17		10.30-4.30: Department induction	12.30-2: SSRMC Induction	12-2: Plagiarism [SR]	
09/10/17		10-12: Repro Core [TR]	4-6: Foundations of Qualitative Methods		
16/10/17	2-3.30: Health and Illness [SR]	10-12: Repro Core [TR]	4-6: Foundations of Qualitative Methods		
23/10/17	10-1: Ethnography Workshop [SR] 2-3.30: Health and Illness [SR]	10-12: Repro Core [TR]			

The entire list of all modules are available on Moodle (see next page). Whilst you may want to attend (and you are invited to do so) more than is required of you, doing so may not be feasible, so do plan your timetable carefully.

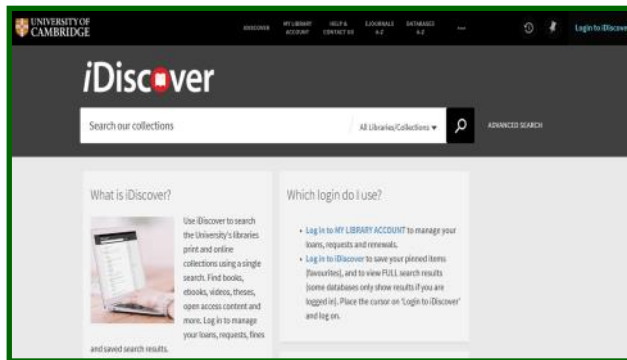
Please do note, some courses, i.e. most research courses, have to be booked in advance, these are identified on the module list and are often accessible on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Cambridge's Virtual Learning Environment

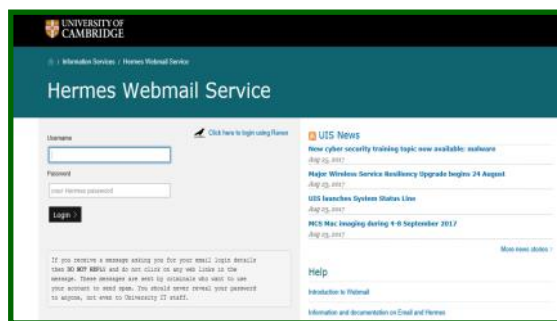


The University's VLE is currently dispersed across several systems, namely Moodle, CamSIS, iDiscover, Hermes Webmail, and Timetable, however, the log in for each of these is facilitated by 'Raven'.

Moodle is where you will find your course handbook (full of very useful information), learning and teaching resources, and assignment feedback (when it is uploaded). Your Moodle may also have areas related to your college and libraries at which you register. Moodle is very important to your student life, particularly within the department, so do ensure you familiarise yourself with it.



iDiscover is the university's libraries' catalogue, it can be slow and has been known to occasionally crash, but do not be deterred, utilising the resource is undoubtedly faster than having to do a manual search. For more detailed information on navigating iDiscover speak to a librarian as there are some great features using advanced searches that are useful to learn how to do, i.e. searching for books in a specific library.



The Department mainly communicates using your Hermes Webmail address, (i.e. your@cam.ac.uk email address), everything from the daily newsletter to notifications about assignments are usually communicated through this channel. If you do not want to miss something important, checking emails daily (at least) usually works – Cambridge is a very busy place!

Assessments, Submission, and Feedback

Your assessments and the deadlines for each one is detailed in your course handbook. Every student gets nervous and stressed about assessments so do not worry, this is normal, you are not alone. If you have any doubts or concerns about an assessment, talk to your supervisor or coordinator.

All assessments need to be uploaded via Moodle, and often you have to upload two copies (one for each examiner). If you think you will not be able to meet the deadline, contact the MPhil course director. A penalty for late submission applies and may be enforced if you haven't sought an extension.



Feedback for an assessment is usually uploaded on to Moodle 2-3 weeks following the deadline. Feedback comes in the form of a pdf document which has the grade and comments from the marker(s). If an assessment has two markers (most do) your grade for the assessment will be the average of the two separate grades. Grades are not rounded up or down. If any feedback is unclear, contact the marker for clarification.

Extra-Curricular Opportunities

The Department hosts 'Sociology Seminars' on a fortnightly basis during term, these are great for finding out about and hearing the research of other academics within the department. Prominent sociologists are also invited to share their research within one of the seminars too so early arrival to these seminars is advocated. Usually, a light lunch is provided before the seminar starts and facilitates a great time to network with department staff as well as other students.



There are several reading/research groups within the department (details of which can be found in your course handbook). The groups provide a fantastic opportunity to engage with wider/other research interests and to meet people with similar interests. Most groups meet on a fortnightly basis during term and usually require some pre-reading. To join or participate in one of the groups please contact the associated convenor, who will be more than happy to loop you in.

Should you find that there is a gap within the department that you feel could be bridged, please do take the initiative to add to the department's vibrant range of activities. The Department is generally quite supportive of student-led events and someone will probably be able to help/direct you in getting something organised. The departmental newsletter is a great starting point for helping you find out what is happening in and around the Department.



Your ID Card

Your university ID card will be your ally whilst at university. Your card acts as your access key to many important spaces, i.e. the department building and your college outside prime hours, as well as libraries.

If you want to take a short cut through a college, e.g. St Johns, and/or gain free entry to one of the university's many attractions (e.g. King's Chapel, The Botanic Gardens etc.), you will also need your ID card.

Additionally, printing, buying food in college, and discounts may prove to be useful functions of your card too. Basically, never leave your room without it!

The University's 100+ Libraries

The university boasts an incredible amount of libraries dispersed around the city. Each of the libraries has their own borrowing rules and loan times, i.e. how many books you can take out at any one time, and for how long. The libraries are semi-autonomous insofar as you have to return books to the library from which you have loaned them, but they all run on the same system (iDiscover).



You will already have been pre-registered with the University Library, which is the university's main library located near Clare's college. You will undoubtedly be able to register with the department's library, which is called 'SPS Library', but will need to take your university ID card with you to be able to do so. You will also have access to your college library. To access/join any other library you will need to request membership by visiting the library in person with your ID card, however, some libraries are only accessible to students who are members of that college / department.

Course Reps and Other Support

Your course representatives are elected within the first few weeks of the new academic year. Any student can nominate themselves to run in the elections, details of how to nominate yourself and voting in the elections are sent out by department staff. Course reps listen to their peers and attend department meetings twice per term to voice student feedback. Course reps help instigate change and development within the department to enhance student experiences.

Your course reps will be able to note your experiences, comments, praises and/or concerns, flag up questions, and work with department staff to implement feasible improvements. Your course reps will also be able to direct you to alternative/ further help and/or support should the necessity arise.



There is plenty of support available within the Department, and most of the time someone will be able to help you, but you do have to ask for help as nobody is psychic. Your supervisor, coordinator, and/or the MPhil director Dr Manali Desai will be able to assist you with most academic queries and/or dilemmas, or be able to point you in the right direction. The list of coordinators and email addresses for academic staff at the Department can be found in your course handbook.

Applications for a PhD

The application portal for 2020/21 entry opened on 2 September 2019. To get a chance to be nominated by the Department for funding from the University Trust or research councils you must apply by 3 December 2019 at the latest. If you miss this deadline you will not be considered for any funding. Please check the graduate admissions website for detailed information on deadlines and applications.



There are several studentships available within the department. All applications submitted on time will be considered for funding. The department will rank and nominate students for any funding they deem suitable. Students nominated for some studentships, e.g. ESRC, may be required to complete a separate application before a decision is made, if further paperwork is required a member of staff will contact you. You will not be informed of which funding (if any) you have been nominated for unless a separate application is required and/or you are invited to an interview. Funding decisions are usually released mid-March onwards.

The Department requests a full research proposal when applying for a PhD which has to be submitted with your application. Writing your proposal during Michaelmas term whilst fulfilling the demands and requirements of your MPhil is a challenge, but if you speak to your supervisor early you will be able to manage.

Graduation



Although graduation may seem a lifetime away, in 10 months you will be in Senate House being conferred in Latin for your MPhil degree (hopefully). Sadly, graduations at Cambridge are not done with individual departments, graduations are organised by colleges. As such, you will not graduate with your course mates unless you are in the same college, but you will get to graduate with your college mates. Graduation dates vary by college so be sure to check the dates with your college before making summer plans.



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