Postgraduate Student Handbook

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Welcome to our postgraduate community in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences! We hope that you will have a very happy, productive and supportive experience with us.

Most of your questions will be answered by the University's student handbook and the Graduate School Network (GSN). These guidelines have information specific to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS).

From delving into history’s darkest moments, scaling the heights of Homer’s epic poetry and exploring current issues such as global warming and extremism, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences deals with the full range of human experience. Intrinsically interdisciplinary in approach, the Faculty produces cutting-edge research that informs the Open University’s world-class teaching and inspires our students, academics and the general public. We are delighted to be welcoming you and your postgraduate project to the FASS team!

FASS was created in 2015-16 following a merger between the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Science. Our postgraduate community includes 150-200 students working on a wide range of projects, full time and part time, in every subject area. As you study with us, we would welcome your ideas about how we can build the faculty community and make the guidance for PhD students as clear and straightforward as possible. You can feed back ideas either through your supervisors or the post graduate convenor (PGC) in your subject area, or by contacting the Director of Research Degrees (DRD). You can contribute to discussions about your learning environment in other ways too- through attending events in your subject area, for example.
The Faculty is divided into Schools:

- Art History - Classical Studies - English & Creative Writing - History - Music
- Psychology & Counselling
- Development (DPP) - Economics - Geography - Philosophy - Politics (POLIS) 
  Religious Studies - Sociology - Social Policy & Criminology (SPC)

The Research Degrees Regulations can be found at the following link and will at times be a very useful resource as you study. The regulations set out the principles governing all elements of your progress: [http://www.open.ac.uk/students/charter/essential-documents/research-degree-regulations](http://www.open.ac.uk/students/charter/essential-documents/research-degree-regulations)

**Research Culture**
The Open University (OU) is world leading in its research and student support – around 900 students are registered for OU research degrees, on campus, on-line and through our global network of Affiliated Research Centres.

Our students enjoy high-quality academic and pastoral support, overseen by The Open University Graduate School, as well as access to excellent research facilities and a thriving research environment. You might be based on campus living in the Milton Keynes area, or studying part-time and coming to the campus at regular intervals to meet with your supervisors and engage with the University community.

Depending on the type of degree you are undertaking, you will be supported in a number of ways including seminars, supervisory sessions and a pre-upgrade doctoral training programme covering research methodologies and academic skills. Wherever you are, you will have access to a wide range of resources and the opportunity to be actively involved in the academic life of the Faculty. Read more in our student stories.

Many of the subject areas in FASS hold annual events aimed at the PGRS (postgraduate research students) community or invite students to seminars or conferences on campus or elsewhere. You can ask your supervisors or PGC for more information, and also keep an eye on the FASS website for information about upcoming events.

The Research Groups in the Faculty also hold regular events. See below for further information on these groups and relevant links. Do consider attending advertised events that look interesting even if not strictly speaking within your field. You can discuss this with your supervisors.
Many of our PGRSs are studying part time, and don’t come to campus very often. If you are in this position, you might consider forming a group, or exploring whether existing groups of students are working together in your subject area or related areas already, so that you can help to create your own research culture and support network, online if not in person. You can explore this with your PGC. There is space available for this kind of activity on campus, such as the Meecham common room, the Library atrium, the Green Room by The Hub, Gardiner 2 common room and The Pavilion.

**FASS Training & Skills**
The majority of the training that you undertake in your pre-upgrade year or years will be organised through the Graduate School. You’ll identify training that will best support your progress towards upgrade in conversation with your supervisors and then register online. Some subject areas offer events that will further support your development pre and post-upgrade, and more details can be found below. It’s also worth discussing other opportunities with your supervisors from time to time.

**University Induction**
There are a series of events related to your induction as a postgraduate student; the main events take place in October and March each year. Exact timings will be communicated to you by the Research School.

**Student Hot Desk Facilities**
The rooms below have been allocated for your use here at Walton Hall, all containing assorted IT equipment plus lockers:

- **Desktop PC** – you will be able to log on/log off and use all standard PC accessories associated with a typical workstation.
- **Docking Station** – you will be able to link a standard OU laptop to a docking station which will then connect to all standard PC accessories associated with a typical workstation.
- **Hook-Up** – cables provided for you to hook any OU laptop up directly to a screen, with keyboard and mouse available.
- **Power & Data** – this will be an empty workstation for you to open your laptop and work straight away. A blue data cable (for use with OU machines only) and 2 desktop power sockets will be available if required.
- **Lockers** – lockers are available for DAILY use to store personal items such as handbags or laptops, please leave the key in the locker door when finished. These lockers are not intended for long term storage and will be emptied if used for prolonged periods.
Gardiner 1
- 004 – 3x hot desks
- 016 – 3x hot desks (1 of which is of which is accessible and to be consider a priority for users with registered DSE issues)
- 012 – 5x hot desks
- 215 – 3x hot desks (1 of which has been assigned to a full-time student)

Gardiner 2
- 207 – 6x hot desks (2 of which have been assigned to full time students)

Please observe the notices in each hot desk room highlighting the relevant Fire Safety and First Aid instructions. Please leave areas clean and tidy and follow instructions regarding local IT equipment.

During your first month at The OU you should receive an invite from ‘Work Station Safety Plus’ asking you to complete a ‘Cardinus Risk Assessment’. You are required to complete this Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment from wherever you consider your main workstation to be - please add a comment in the free type section to identify whether you completed the assessment at home or at one of the Faculty's hot desk spaces. Note that The Open University will only make reasonable adjustments to workstations and facilities here on campus. ‘Priority DSE Desks’ will be set up within the hot desk facilities, therefore, if you have known DSE concerns please email FASS-Facilities@open.ac.uk.

You will receive a notification from your supervisor or line manager inviting you to a Health & Safety Induction within the first few weeks of your time on campus. This induction is part of our legal requirement as an employer and we would ask that you prioritise your attendance. (this is compulsory for all students who fit category 1 and 2 on the Homeworking form)

If you have any queries or comments regarding these facilities, please contact Cate Colborn or FASS-Facilities@open.ac.uk.

Health & Wellbeing

Schools/subject areas within Faculties have primary and initial responsibility for the pastoral care of their postgraduate research students. Upon registration students are assigned a supervisory team, and soon after they are assigned an independent third-party monitor with whom they can raise issues and seek advice in confidence. Alternatively, students can address concerns to the Postgraduate Convener (PGC), Director of Research Degrees (DRD), Deputy Director of Research Degrees or Associate Dean (Research).

Graduate School
The Graduate School is the central hub for providing postgraduate research student support. Where a student, for whatever reason, feels unable to raise issues within the Faculty they may contact the Graduate School in confidence directly.

The Graduate School Network (GSN) provides postgraduate research students with links to internal and external resources on student wellbeing.

Employee Assistance Programme
This service is currently only available to full-time directly supported students. It is a free and confidential 24/7 service that offers expert information, advice, counselling and support on a wide range of issues.
See also Wellbeing+: [http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/human-resources/wellbeing](http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/human-resources/wellbeing). This is a dedicated resource to support you through many of the challenges life may throw at you whether it be in relation to health or work issues.

**Health & Safety:**

**First Aid:**
First aid information is found in each kitchen area in Perry C and Wilson A. For Gardiner 1 & 2 and Briggs building, the information is available on the main notice boards. If you have an accident, all OU security personnel are First Aiders. You can call security on this emergency number 01908653333.

**Fire:**
The gathering point for Perry C and Wilson A is on the lawn next to St Michael’s Drive, a considerable distance away from the buildings.
The gathering point for Gardiner 1 & 2 and Briggs Building is adjacent to the Horlock Building away from the Gardiner Building.
When leaving the Briggs building you must not walk through the walled garden but walk on the path next to the ring road

*No hot drinks to be taken outside*

Full Health and safety information can be found on the Faculty Website [http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/health-and-safety](http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/health-and-safety)

**Research Funding for Postgraduate Students**

Postgraduate students have access to two sources of funding, allocated annually. The financial year commences on 1st August and ends on 31st July. The two sources of funding are as follows:

1. **Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)**
The first point of call for expenditures should be the RTSG. Full-time students have been allocated a RTSG of £1,000 per annum. Part-time students have been allocated a RTSG of £500 per annum. Access to this funding is facilitated by discipline and school support staff. All bookings and claims relating to this funding need to be made through school support staff. All spending against your RTSG must be approved by your supervisor and confirmation of this this should accompany any booking request or claim.

2. **Research Expenditure Student Support Fund (RESSF)**
The RESSF fund is available to both full-time and part-time students who have exhausted their RTSGs but require additional funding for fieldwork and other research and research-related activities. Access to this funding is facilitated by the Faculty Research Office.

All bookings and claims relating to this funding need to be made through support staff in the Faculty Research Office (FRO): [FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk)

RESSF funding is not guaranteed. There are three application deadlines: end of October; end of January; and end of April. The FRO will circulate a call for applications prior to those deadlines. All applications to this fund must be supported by a student’s supervisory team and will be subject to a scrutiny panel. Students can only apply for a maximum of £5,000 pounds *over the course of their registration period*.

Students will be notified of the outcome of their applications by email.
RESSF application forms can be found here:
http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/research/postgraduate-research-degrees/postgraduate-research-students

**How the funding can be spent**
Expenditures can include UK and overseas travel, conferences, subscriptions, and costs associated with fieldwork.

**What isn’t included?**
The following expenditures are **excluded** and should under no circumstances be claimed under the schemes:
- Paying for research assistants/consultants
- Purchasing of laptops/equipment
- Funding of grant extensions
- Anything else that falls outside of the university’s remit (if you are unsure, please check with the FRO before making the expenditure)

**Additional Guidance – transcription and expense claims**
Please also seek advice from your school support staff or the FRO regarding transcription, as there are set procedures that the university must follow when securing translation services. The university can book the service via a dedicated employment agency and has a list of approved transcription companies.

Please contact your school in the first instance to book travel from your RTSG and the FRO to book travel from RESSF. Travel must be booked by the university through a dedicated company.

You may request a travel advance if you are undertaking an expensive journey and have a funded studentship. This must be requested at least a month in advance of travel and a travel and subsistence claim must be entered no later than two weeks after the end of the trip. If your costs end up less than the travel advance you received, the balance will be deducted from your subsequent stipend payment.

Please remember that you need receipts for all expense claims and can only claim eligible expenses. Please consult with the FRO if in doubt about what is eligible.

Please also note that there is a cut-off date for submitting expenses for the year-end, which is the first week in July.

Please refer to the Open University Finance guidelines for submitting claims and remember that receipts **must be** obtained and provided for all expenditures.

**Contact details for further information**
Faculty Research Office mailbox: FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk

**Mailboxes for Subject area:**
- Art History: FASS-ArtsHum-ArtHistory@open.ac.uk
- Classical Studies: FASS-ArtsHum-ClassicalStudies@open.ac.uk
- DPP: FASS-SSGS-Development@open.ac.uk
- Economics: FASS-SSGS-Economics@open.ac.uk
International Travel Procedures
The University has implemented a comprehensive travel assistance programme supported by The Anvil Group (International) Limited. This provides a number of services for employees travelling away from their usual place of business, including medical and security assistance
https://openuniv.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-business-travel-insurance

Please note that students are covered by the university’s business travel insurance. Overnight stays or overseas trips must be registered in advance.

Useful links:
Travel advance application: http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/finance/main/policies-and-procedures?path=a#documents
Travel and subsistence claim form (part-time and self-funded students only) http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/finance/main/policies-and-procedures?path=t/travel-and-subsistence#documents

Data protection
All students must comply with the Data protection Act. This applies to aspects of research such as storing sensitive data on your computer; or on a portable device. Details of the Data Protection policy can be found here: http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/governance/data-protection/. Another useful source of information on Research Data Management can be found on the http://www.open.ac.uk/library/.

Ethics
Students conducting interviews or participant observation with human subjects are required to submit a proposal to the OU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for approval prior to undertaking such work. This includes online surveys and may include using social media as a research source. Your supervisors will provide guidance in relation to how to do this. Information about Ethical Approval for Research can be found on the GSN under forms and guidance: http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/forms-and-guidance

Important: if you start your project without ethics approval, and the methods used required that approval, you are not covered by the university’s insurance!
Holiday booking
Please notify your supervisors as far in advance as possible of the dates you intend to take leave and get them to agree to the dates.

Please do not take holidays during induction periods or when the student conference is planned.

*Your Co-ordinator (Academic Support) in the School should always know when you are on leave or out of the country.*

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<th>Holidays</th>
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<td>Full-time research students are not subject to semesters or terms. Research students are entitled, with the prior agreement of their supervisors, to take up to a total of eight weeks holiday each year (Aug 1 to July 31) including public holidays and University closure periods.</td>
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Arts & Social Sciences intranet
This is a great resource for finding out more about the Faculty such as our teaching programmes, support areas (e.g. IT support), staff interests, news updates, research etc. [http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/](http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/).

The student section has detailed advice on baseline and additional funding for research expenses, conferences, and grants on running workshops [http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/research/internal-funding](http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/research/internal-funding).

Arts & Social Sciences Research Staff
A full list of staff is on the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences intranet. Here is an overview of the FASS Research Team structure. Details can also be found on the FASS intranet site, but for any general inquiries please contact FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk.

**Professor John Wolffe**  
**Associate Dean - FASS (Research, Scholarship & Enterprise)**  
The Associate Dean of Research, Scholarship and Enterprise (ADRES) is the lead for all FASS research, scholarship and enterprise activity. The Director of Research Degrees (see below) reports to ADRES.

(01908 6) 55916  
FASS-ADR-Enquiries@open.ac.uk

**Professor Sara Haslam**  
**Director of Research Degrees (FASS)**  
The Director of Research Degrees (DRD) leads the research degree programmes within the Faculty, having oversight and responsibility for research students, and leading and advising on the Faculty’s engagement with University research degree policy.
The DRD holds a monthly “Hub Hour” to meet and talk with students about any issues, ideas and suggestions they would like to bring to a face to face meeting. The DRD is also available to students with queries via email.

Details of when the “Hub Hour” sessions will take place will be advertised on the FASS intranet site, but an email will also be sent out to students nearer the time of each session- please feel free to pop by!

(01908 6) 53453
Sara.Haslam@open.ac.uk

Dr Ursula Rothe
Deputy Director of Research Degrees (FASS)
(01908 6) 54059
Ursula.Rothe@open.ac.uk

Post Graduate Convenor (PGC)
Postgraduate Convenors are based in the subject areas in FASS and support PGRSs from recruitment through to submission. They are members of the Postgraduate Research Student Management Group (PGRSMG), chaired by DRD, which meets regularly to discuss issues and policy affecting PGRSs in FASS.

School Support Team (SST)
Your School Support Team is your first point of contact for anything academic related, travel booking and expenses relating to your Personal Research Allowance (PRA).

FASS Research Office Administration & Coordinators (FRO)
FRO is the central point of contact for enquiries relating to RESSF applications and claims and associated travel booking. They coordinate paperwork relating to Upgrades, Study Breaks, Extensions and Vivas.

FASS Research Degrees Administration Team (FRO)
FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk

Tracey DeBeer
Senior Manager (Research & Scholarship)
(01908 6) 58605
FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk

Lynne Fahey
Coordinator (Research)
(01908 6) 52589
FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk

Sara La Rocca
Coordinator (Research)
(01908 6) 59666
FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk
School of Arts & Humanities

Professor Richard Brown
Head of School
(01908 6) 54539
FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk

Art History

Dr Emma Barker
Postgraduate Convenor Art History (Reader in Art History)
(01908 6) 55718
Emma.Barker@open.ac.uk

Shazna Muzammil-Cook
Coordinator (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 32887
Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk or FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk

Yvonne Bartley
Assistant (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 32970
FASS-ArtsHum-ArtHistory@open.ac.uk

Emilda Mboh
Assistant – SFT/ST Support
(01908 6) 53282
FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk

Classical Studies

Dr Jan Haywood
Postgraduate Convenor Classical Studies (Staff Tutor in Classical Studies)
(01908 6) 52703
Jan.Haywood@open.ac.uk

Dr Astrid Voigt
Postgraduate Convenor Classical Studies (Staff Tutor)
(0121 627 6458) 64158
Astrid.Voigt@open.ac.uk

Shazna Muzammil-Cook
Coordinator (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 32887
Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk or FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk

Yvonne Bartley
Assistant (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 32970
FASS-ArtsHum-ClassicalStudies@open.ac.uk
## English & Creative Writing

Dr Siobhan Campbell  
Postgraduate Convenor English & Creative Writing (Lecturer in Creative Writing)  
(01908 6) 54567  
[Siobhan.Campbell@open.ac.uk](mailto:Siobhan.Campbell@open.ac.uk)

Shazna Muzammil-Cook  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 32887  
[Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk](mailto:Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk) or [FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk)

Jacquie Green  
Assistant (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 59664  
[FASS-ArtsHum-English@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-ArtsHum-English@open.ac.uk)

Emilda Mboh  
Assistant – SFT/ST Support  
(01908 6) 53282  
[FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk)

## History

Dr Luc-Andre Brunet  
Postgraduate Convenor History (Lecturer in History of Medicine)  
(01908 6) 32315  
[Luc-andre.Brunet@open.ac.uk](mailto:Luc-andre.Brunet@open.ac.uk)

Shazna Muzammil-Cook  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 32887  
[Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk](mailto:Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk) or [FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk)

Marie-Claire Leroux  
Assistant (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 53179  
[FASS-ArtsHum-History@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-ArtsHum-History@open.ac.uk)

Emilda Mboh  
Assistant – SFT/ST Support  
(01908 6) 53282  
[FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk)
Music

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Helen Barlow</td>
<td>Postgraduate Convenor Music (Lecturer in Music)</td>
<td>(01908 6) 61319 <a href="mailto:Helen.Barlow@open.ac.uk">Helen.Barlow@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shazna Muzammil-Cook</td>
<td>Coordinator (Academic Support)</td>
<td>(01908 6) 32887 <a href="mailto:Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk">Shazna.Muzammil@open.ac.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk">FASS-Arts-Humanities-HoS@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacque Green</td>
<td>Assistant (Academic Support)</td>
<td>(01908 6) 59664 <a href="mailto:FASS-ArtsHum-Music@open.ac.uk">FASS-ArtsHum-Music@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilda Mboh</td>
<td>Assistant – SFT/ST Support</td>
<td>(01908 6) 53282 <a href="mailto:FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk">FASS-Team-Assistants@open.ac.uk</a></td>
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School of Psychology & Counselling

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Jean McAvoy</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>(01908 6) 59847 <a href="mailto:FASS-Psychology-HOS@open.ac.uk">FASS-Psychology-HOS@open.ac.uk</a></td>
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Psychology

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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr David Kaposi</td>
<td>Postgraduate Convenor (Lecturer in Psychology)</td>
<td>(01908 6) 53105 <a href="mailto:FASS-psych-co-pg-admissions@open.ac.uk">FASS-psych-co-pg-admissions@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Meakins</td>
<td>Co-ordinator (Academic Support)</td>
<td>(01908 6) 52589 <a href="mailto:Fass-Psych-co-HoS@open.ac.uk">Fass-Psych-co-HoS@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elanor Beckett</td>
<td>Assistant (Academic Support)</td>
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**School of Social Sciences & Global Studies (SSGS)**

Dr Michael Pryke  
Head of School  
(01908 6) 54541  
FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk

**SSGS - DPP (Development)**

Dr Ben Lampert  
Postgraduate Convenor Development (Lecturer in International Development)  
(01908 6) 55434  
Ben.Lampert@open.ac.uk

Emily Smith  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 53947  
Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk or FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk

Stacey Adamson  
Assistant (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 52280  
FASS-SSGS-Development@open.ac.uk

**SSGS – Economics**

Professor Lorena Lombardozzi  
Postgraduate Convenor Economics (Professor of Economics, Decision Sciences and Philosophy)  
(01908 6) 54553  
Lorena.Lombardozzi@open.ac.uk

Emily Smith  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 53947  
Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk or FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk

Sheila Hobbs  
Assistant (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 55779  
FASS-SSGS-Economics@open.ac.uk
**SSGS - Geography**

Dr Gunjan Sondhi  
Postgraduate Convenor Geography (Lecturer in Geography)  
(01908 3) 32328  
[Gunjan.Sondhi@open.ac.uk](mailto:Gunjan.Sondhi@open.ac.uk)

Emily Smith  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 53947  
[Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk](mailto:Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk) or [FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk)

Andrea Yorke  
Assistant (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 58671  
[FASS-SSGS-Geography@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-SSGS-Geography@open.ac.uk)

**SSGS - Philosophy**

Dr Dan Cavedon-Taylor  
Postgraduate Convenor Philosophy (Lecturer in Philosophy)  
(01908 6) 53445  
[Mark.Pinder@open.ac.uk](mailto:Mark.Pinder@open.ac.uk)

Emily Smith  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 53947  
[Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk](mailto:Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk) or [FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk)

Sheree Barboteau  
Assistant (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) x 54472  
[FASS-SSGS-Philosophy@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-SSGS-Philosophy@open.ac.uk)

**SSGS – Politics (POLIS)**

Geoff Andrews  
Postgraduate Convenor POLIS (Lecturer in Politics)  
(01908 6) 64139  
[Geoff.andrews@open.ac.uk](mailto:Geoff.andrews@open.ac.uk)

Emily Smith  
Coordinator (Academic Support)  
(01908 6) 53947  
[Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk](mailto:Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk) or [FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk](mailto:FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk)

Sheree Barboteau  
Assistant (Academic Support)
SSGS - Religious Studies

Professor Graham Harvey
Postgraduate Convenor Religious Studies (Professor of Religious Studies)
(01908 6) 54033
Graham.Harvey@open.ac.uk

Emily Smith
Coordinator (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 53947
Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk or FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk

Claudia Taylor
Assistant (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 32956
FASS-SSGS-ReligiousStudies@open.ac.uk

SSGS - Sociology

Professor Marie Gillespie
Postgraduate Convenor Sociology (Professor of Sociology)
(01908 6) 59905
Marie.Gillespie@open.ac.uk

Emily Smith
Coordinator (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 53947
Emily.Smith@open.ac.uk or FASS-SSGS-HoS@open.ac.uk

Ruth Anane-Darko
Assistant (Academic Support)
(01908 6) 53544
FASS-SSGS-Sociology@open.ac.uk

SSGS – Social Policy & Criminology (SPC)

Professor Nicola Yeates
Postgraduate Convenor Social Policy & Criminology (Professor of Social Policy)
(01908 6) 52441
IT
Please contact IT-Helpdesk for loan of laptops if you require one for presentation purposes.

Laptops are not covered by insurance via the Open University. Therefore, you must take out an additional insurance policy, possibly through your own house contents insurance for “Equipment for Business Use”.

Full-time students may have a laptop on long-term loan for the duration of your studies. These should be ordered via FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk quoting if you require A Frequent Traveller Laptop (12 inch screen and lighter) or a Standard Laptop (15.6 inch screen)

You can contact the IT helpdesk for assistance with OU laptops on 54321 or at:
http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/it/main/about-us-contacts/it-helpdesk-opening-hours

Students using their own computers may have access to some free software from the university. Please contact FASS-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk to investigate. If a particular software package is required for study, the university may be able to purchase this on request.

International Travel Procedures
The University has implemented a comprehensive travel assistance programme supported by The Anvil Group (International) Limited. This provides a number of services for employees travelling away from their usual place of business, including medical and security assistance https://openuniv.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-business-travel-insurance

Paid work
Full-time students are bound by the university regulations in relation to employment. (This is in addition to any conditions that may be attached to external funding.) You cannot do more than 6 hours work in any one week, so it cannot be cumulative. You need to seek agreement from your supervisors about any paid work and the Research Degrees Office needs to be informed in advance.

Paid Employment
Full-time students may undertake a maximum of six hours per week paid employment with the agreement of their supervisor(s) and the Director of Postgraduate Studies.
Reprographics
Large amounts of photocopying or specialist copying such as coloured or adhesive postal labels, should be submitted electronically to the University’s central printing services (CPS), and located in Wilson block. Please contact your Coordinator (Academic Support) prior to placing an order. Further information can be accessed at: http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/it/main/printing-services

Research Groups and Research Centres in FASS
Research groups allow staff and students with related interests to exchange news and ideas, host external speakers, and collaborate on projects, publications and events. Research Groups are interdisciplinary and most include contributors from different Departments and Faculties, and in some cases also have external members. Our research groups include:

• Culture and Social Psychology Research Collaboration (CuSP)
• Digital Humanities
• Harm & Evidence Research Collaborative (HERC)
• The History of Books and Reading Research Group
• Innovation and International Development
• Innogen | Institute for Innovation Generation in the Life Sciences
• International Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice
• OpenSpace Research Centre
• Contemporary Cultures of Writing
• The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies
• Medieval and Early Modern Research
• Postcolonial and Global Literatures
• War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century

Research training
In addition to the subject-specific training in your department, the Research Training team in the university provides a full programme of training. You are expected to take advantage of this as much as possible. Watch the GSN for details.

Tier 1 Prevent Training
Tier 1 Prevent training is a mandatory part of your induction as a PGR student (it takes about 10 minutes to read). Please access the link below to the training and complete this module.


Room booking
Please get in touch with your Coordinator (Academic Support) if wish to book a room for an event such as a seminar or workshop.
Sick Leave and Study Breaks
If you have a period of ill health and need to take a break from study, please contact your supervisors or the Research Degrees Office (Research-Degrees-FASS@open.ac.uk).

For full-time students, absences longer than a few days should be certified by a health professional. Any student having a lengthy absence which requires you to take a break from your studies will require a note from your doctor.

If you have a stipend, the Research Degrees Office can advise how long you can be absent from your studies before your stipend is affected. In some circumstances, stipend will still be paid, but since the total duration of the stipend is limited this may mean the stipend comes to an end before submission.

The maximum period for a study break during registration is 12 months for a full-time student and 24 months for a part-time student.

If you wish to take a break from your studies you will need to complete a “Study Break” request form, which can be found on the link below, and seek your supervisor’s endorsement:

http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/forms-and-guidance

Third Party Monitoring (TPM)
The university has a system of additional support for postgraduate students called third-party monitoring. The third-party monitor is there to ensure that you are satisfied with your progress and that you are receiving optimal supervision. You are at liberty to discuss any aspect of student life with the monitor and to agree with the monitor what is confidential.

Your monitor is an experienced supervisor who is not part of your supervisory team and, often, comes from outside your department. You will be notified of who that person is, and you should receive a note of introduction from her or him in the first 3 months of your registration. Progress monitoring happens every six months, but if you have concerns, your third party monitor is available to discuss your progress at any time.

Tier 4 Students (non EU Students studying full-time and residing in UK)
The Student will be responsible for ensuring that:

- He/she provides the RDO with up to date copies of his/her passport and visa.
- He/she informs the RDO of any changes to his/her visa status
- He/she provides all current contact details – in a situation where he/she changes residential address and/or study location, he/she must ensure that the RDO is informed immediately
- He/she completes and submits the annual leave/ authorised absence forms as appropriate on any occasion where he/she will be absent from his/her normal place of study.
- He/she must ensure that all points of contact as determined by The Open University are met, for instance regular face to face supervision meetings
- He/she must comply with the annual Tier 4 document check undertaken by the RDO.

Please note the above may change if there is a no-deal Brexit.
Thank you for reading this Handbook. We look forward to supporting you with your studies at the Open University.

The FASS research team.

If you have any queries that haven’t been covered in this handbook, or have any questions please contact Fass-Research-Degrees@open.ac.uk and one of the team will be happy to help.

Buses to and from Milton Keynes Railway Station

**OU to Train Station Shuttle Bus**

Please note that this service is now run commercially by Souls Coaches. Any service issues should be reported to Souls directly (sales@souls-coaches.co.uk).

In addition to the public bus services to Milton Keynes Central Station, Souls Coaches operates a peak hour station shuttle bus. The shuttle service runs directly to the station (15 minutes) and costs £1.50 each way. Pick up/drop off points will be the south side of St Michael's Drive (library side) on campus and bus stop Y5 at the station. The fare for this service is £1.50 each journey.

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