



# MPhil in African Studies

## Prospectus 2015-16



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## 1. African Studies at Cambridge

The Centre of African Studies (CAS) was established in 1965 by the path-breaking anthropologist Audrey Richards. CAS supports teaching and research on Africa at the University of Cambridge through its library and its various [seminars and events](#). It acts as a platform for interdisciplinary and international scholarship by drawing Cambridge academics and research fellows doing research in Africa into a vibrant scholarly community. The Centre is proud to host visiting academics from African universities every year and to be associated with the [Cambridge-Africa Programme](#), a working partnership between the University of Cambridge and several African universities and institutes, which supports the training of African doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. Staff members at CAS include the Centre Administrator, the MPhil administrator, a Librarian and a Library Assistant. The Centre also hosts a number of [Visiting and Research Fellows](#), as well as [CAPREx Fellows](#). The [African Studies Library](#) attracts a steady flow of undergraduate and graduate students.

The Centre is housed on the third floor of the Alison Richard Building (ARB) on the University's Sidgwick Site, which is the main base for humanities and social science teaching and research in Cambridge. This location means that CAS is at the heart of a cosmopolitan academic community that also contains the renowned interdisciplinary Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities ([CRASSH](#)), the Department of Politics and International Studies ([POLIS](#)) as well as the Centres of [Latin American Studies](#), [South Asian Studies](#), [Development Studies](#) and the Centre of Governance and Human Rights ([CGHR](#)). This stimulating intellectual and social environment presents many opportunities for developing new research initiatives and academic networks.



## 2. The MPhil in African Studies

The MPhil in African Studies is a postgraduate degree with a substantial research component, which runs for nine months over the three terms (Michaelmas, Lent and Easter) of the Cambridge academic year. The degree provides an excellent foundation for those wanting to expand their knowledge of Africa, and is designed for students who wish to enhance their historical and contemporary understanding of Africa's

societies, politics, economies, and cultures, as well as for those who wish to apply for advanced research degrees. The MPhil thus offers a distinctive postgraduate degree in its own right, along with intensive research and language training for students planning to study for a PhD.

The MPhil aims to introduce students to the latest research topics and methodologies in African studies at an advanced level. It provides a structured introduction to key debates in African history and politics, as well as in the humanities and social sciences more broadly. It educates students in the use of printed, manuscript and other sources relevant to African studies. It provides essential language training and offers instruction in the use of library and archival facilities. Finally, it offers close supervision in undertaking an original research project.

### 3. The Academic Timetable

The academic year in Cambridge is divided into three terms. In 2015/16 the relevant dates are:

MICHAELMAS TERM: Tuesday 6 October 2015 – Friday 4 December 2015

LENT TERM: Tuesday 12 January 2016 – Friday 11 March 2016

EASTER TERM: Tuesday 19 April 2016 – Friday 10 June 2016

Lectures, classes and supervisions are suspended during the Christmas and Easter vacations, and undergraduates are not in residence. Graduate students on courses such as this MPhil, however, are required to remain in residence continuously throughout the academic year, and are expected to work during the Christmas and Easter vacations (apart from short holiday breaks and occasionally, brief fieldwork trips). Dissertations are submitted at the end of the Easter term in mid-June.

### 4. Research Resources and other Facilities

#### (i) Libraries

One of the many advantages of being at Cambridge is the superb range of library resources available to students. There are over one hundred libraries in the university system, thus finding books or periodicals on a field of study is rarely a problem. To get started, and find out information about libraries and information sources across the University visit the [Libraries Gateway](#).

For MPhil students, a key resource is the [Centre of African Studies Library](#), which is housed within CAS and contains a stock of over 30,000 books and an excellent periodicals collection. Our library places a high priority on obtaining material published in Africa, and the current acquisitions policy also focuses on meeting the academic needs of the MPhil course. The library has a good collection of bibliographies on Africa and its collection also contains a large number of television programmes about Africa, along with African films, CD-ROMs and CDs, as well as a microfilm and microfiche collection.

The [University Library](#) (UL) is another important library, and is one of the finest research libraries in the world, being entitled under legal deposit regulations to a copy of every book published in Great Britain

and Ireland (including American books with a British imprint). A huge number of foreign books and periodicals are also acquired by purchase. From its stock of about 8,000,000 volumes and over 127,000 manuscripts and 860,000 microforms it is able to supply the needs of most graduate students. The former library of the [Royal Commonwealth Society](#) is housed within the University Library, which holds rich Africana collections of published and manuscript materials, as well as an impressive photographic archive. Most of the UL's post-1850 book collection is on open access and the Library permits graduate students to borrow up to ten books at a time. Helpfully, the University Library organises orientation tours and a [research skills programme](#), which all students are encouraged to sign up for.

Most of our students usually find themselves using other specialised Faculty and Departmental libraries as well, some of them conveniently located on the Sidgwick Site. The History Faculty's [Seeley Library](#), the [Marshall Library of Economics](#) (incorporating Development Studies), and the [Squire Law Library](#) are all minutes away from CAS. The [Social and Political Sciences Library](#) and the [Haddon Library](#) (Anthropology and Archaeology) can be found across the river.

## **(ii) Computing Facilities**

Wireless internet is available throughout the Alison Richard Building and the CAS Library has two PCs available for catalogue and internet searching and for accessing e-journals and online databases.

The [University Information Services](#) provides computing facilities and related services in support of research and teaching in the University of Cambridge. It makes available PCs, Apple Macintoshes and scanners through its [Managed Cluster Service](#) and offers printing through [DS-Print](#) (subject to a charge). All graduate students are given an e-mail address (ending in @cam.ac.uk), which they are expected to use and check regularly. To find out more about the computing services offered by the University, visit [Introduction to computing in Cambridge](#) and read the [IT matters @ Cambridge Student Edition](#).

## **(iii) Facilities in the Alison Richard Building**

On the ground floor of the ARB there is the excellent Arc Café, a popular cafeteria and social space, which opens into a pleasant outdoor eating area. Students also have access to the open study spaces on each floor, as well as a shared kitchen, which are common meeting places and a hub of social activity. The CAS meeting room is available for student bookings, while an Audiovisual Room in the Centre of Latin American Studies can be booked for film screenings. All students admitted to the MPhil in African Studies join one of the University's thirty-one [Colleges](#), where they are provided with accommodation and meals, as well as membership of another thriving academic community. Students also have the opportunity to join one or more of the numerous student societies (including ASCU, the [African Society of Cambridge University](#)) or to get active with [Cambridge University Sport](#).



## 5. MPhil Coursework and Assessment

Assessed coursework consists of a core course, one option course, language training and a practice essay.

### (i) Core Course

The interdisciplinary compulsory core course introduces students to theoretical and methodological issues in African studies, whilst at the same time conveying substantive information about the histories, cultures, politics and economies of Africa. The course comprises 24 hours of class teaching and is taught as a two-hour seminar discussion class during Michaelmas term, with readings set in advance. Films, music, and novels are set alongside academic literature. In Lent term, the core course provides four research training sessions offering guidance on research techniques and fieldwork. It will provide essential background for

students as they undertake the reading for their dissertations and for options courses. Students with no background in African history would benefit from reading an introduction to African history before beginning the course. This will help situate discussion in seminars. Richard Reid's *History of Africa* is particularly recommended.

The core course is assessed by a 5,000-word essay on a topic chosen from a prescribed list of questions and counts for 20% of the final MPhil mark.

## **Core Course Outline**

### **Class 1: Africa in the Longue Durée**

This class serves as an introduction to the course. We reflect on the ways in which Africans have thought about their continent and the origins of 'Africa' as a subject and object of study, both within and outside Africa. We consider the logic of studying 'Africa', and explore the extent to which there are commonalities across the continent in terms of Africa's deeper past and pre-colonial history and the methodological challenges involved in studying Africa's pre-colonial past.

### **Class 2: Colonialism in the History and Historiography of Africa**

This class focuses on the place of colonialism in the history and historiography of Africa. How did Africans make sense of colonialism? How was the colonial experience represented in art and literature? This class will include comparative reading, placing the work on Africa alongside academic literature about other parts of the colonial world, particularly South Asia.

### **Class 3: Gender, the Family and Youth**

This class explores debates over gender, the family and youth in Africa's past and present. We explore the argument that pre-colonial Africa was a 'labour-poor' continent. How were kinship and other social relationships conceptualised in pre-colonial Africa? How did that change in the colonial period and later? What theoretical tools might we use to understand social relationships in Africa past and present?

### **Class 4: God, Gods, Missionaries and their African Translators**

This class examines the rich literature on the histories of Islam and Christianity in Africa and their relationship to pre-existing cosmologies and systems of thought. The class also examines the politics and practice of religion in colonial and postcolonial Africa.

### **Class 5: Perspectives on the State in Africa**

How should we understand the state in Africa? Are there patterns common to all post-colonial African states and if so why? Are African states simply predatory on their people? What role have pre-colonial and colonial legacies played in shaping states and conceptions of power in post-colonial Africa? How do people in Africa understand the state and interact with their governments? This class analyses debates in anthropology, history and political science over these questions.

### **Class 6: Citizenship, Ethnicity, Autochthony and Belonging**

Why is Africa said to be facing a crisis of citizenship? What is the relationship between citizenship and ethnicity and other forms of belonging? What is ethnicity and to what extent was it a colonial 'invention'? Is there a distinction to be drawn from legal categories of citizenship and 'meaningful' citizenship? This class explores the debates about citizenship in Africa from the perspectives of political science, anthropology and history.



### **Class 7: Development, Poverty and Wealth**

This class reflects critically on development in Africa. There is now a long history of development interventions in Africa, from the late nineteenth century until the present day. How did colonial regimes and post-colonial charities and international agencies conceptualise 'development'? How does thinking critically about African conceptions of what 'development' means, in African languages, challenge a concept of development as outside intervention? How have conceptions of 'development' changed over time? Has international aid benefited the people of Africa, or has it disempowered them?

### **Class 8: Popular Culture and the Post-Colony**

This class engages with African popular culture. We will consider the myriad forms of African cultural expression both past and present, and ask to what extent popular culture in Africa has offered a political critique of state and society and challenged or perpetuated negative stereotypes of Africans. What theoretical models best equip us to study popular culture in Africa?

### **Class 9: Land Use and the Environment**

In this class we will examine debates about the changing natural environments of Africa, such as discussions on environmental degradation, population growth and distribution; the impact of 'green revolution' technologies; competition over resources; gender and the environment, and the impact of structural adjustment policies on the distribution of natural resources such as water. What has been the impact both of climate change and the international politics of climate change on Africa?

### **Class 10: Health and Healing**

This class traces histories of health and disease in Africa, with a focus on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We will examine debates around the nature of African sexualities and gender relations and their role in understanding the course of the epidemic, as well as the longer-term history of disease and medical interventions in Africa. The seminar will also trace the politics of AIDS, patient activism, the creation of new forms of 'therapeutic citizenship' and the long-term impacts of HIV/AIDS.

### **Class 11: Violence**

This class explores violence in contemporary Africa. How has violence been used to create power, both in the present and the past? Where should we look to understand contemporary violence? Some have focused on colonial legacies, others on Cold War politics or competition for natural resources, or on the significance of ethnic and religious divisions within African states, others have focused on generational struggles and the role of 'youth'. In this class we reflect critically on these approaches, focussing in particular on Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

### **Class 12: Round Table Discussion: Africa in the World, Past, Present and Future**

The course ends with a concluding discussion which draws together the themes of the course. In this round table discussion we will reflect on the changing ways in which Africans have thought about the world and their place in it over the past two centuries, and reflect critically on the key concepts and methods discussed in this course and the disciplinary perspectives explored here.

### **(ii) Option Courses**

Option courses explore a specific theme in Africanist scholarship or examine the African continent from the perspective of a particular academic discipline. Such courses are usually taught across Michaelmas and Lent terms and their teaching format and structure varies according to what lecturers deem

appropriate. Normally, they are taught in small seminar discussion groups (up to 15 students), for which readings are set in advance and preparation is essential. Classes can occasionally be supplemented by optional lectures, while option courses with larger class sizes may receive mostly lectures, in addition to a few seminar classes. This variation in teaching approach reflects the fact that many option courses are based in departments and faculties beyond the Centre of African Studies, giving students the opportunity to interact with students on different MPhil programmes.

Option Courses offered vary from year to year but are mostly based around the following themes: Politics, History, Development Studies, Religion, Law and Geography

The option course is assessed by a 5,000-word essay on a topic devised by the student in consultation with their option course lecturer and counts for 20% of the final MPhil mark.

### **(iii) Language Training**

All MPhil in African Studies students are enrolled for Swahili Classes at the University of Cambridge Language Centre, which is taught over 15 weeks during Michaelmas and Lent terms. Students will receive one 50 minute class per week which must be supplemented by an additional 2 hours per week of self-study. 'Swahili Basic 1' is a Cambridge University Language Programmes ([CULP](#)) course, which means that it is open to all members of the University, both staff and students. Students will find themselves learning with a diverse group of individuals, many of whom are likely to be PhD students interested in learning Swahili for their doctoral research. Upon completing the course students will receive a Certificate of Proficiency awarded by the Language Centre, which is recorded on the MPhil degree transcript.

Language training is a formal component of the MPhil in African Studies examination regulations, but the Course Director can grant exemption from Swahili to students who present a convincing academic case (with the support of their dissertation supervisor) to learn another language. Such students may apply to study for a Certificate of Proficiency in another of the eleven CULP languages or request to learn another African language by self-training, and register for a Certificate of Attendance at the Language Centre.

Assessment of language training consists of two in-class assessments (10% each) and two exams at the end of the course in Reading Comprehension (30%) and Listening Comprehension (20%) as well as one Oral Presentation (30%).

### **(v) MPhil Dissertation**

The dissertation offers students the opportunity to devise, conduct and write up their own research project of between 15,000 and 20,000. Many students find this element of the MPhil course the most rewarding, as they enjoy the chance to work independently on a topic of great interest to them, with the benefit of expert supervision. Work on the dissertation is sustained throughout the academic year, and it is submitted at the end of Easter term.

Students should begin their dissertation reading and research as early as possible in the academic year. On the first day of Lent term, students must submit a practice essay on a topic related to their dissertation research. Its precise form will be agreed with the supervisor, but it should aim to introduce some of the key ideas and debates that will be explored in the dissertation. For example, the essay could present a literature review or, alternatively, an annotated bibliography of relevant research sources. This essay is compulsory and a pass mark must be achieved, but the numerical result does not count in the final MPhil mark. Supervision will be offered for the practice essay, enabling students to receive advice and

constructive criticism on the academic content and writing style of their work, which will help students to improve the quality of material they submit for final assessment.

The practice essay also provides a useful body of work for preparing the dissertation proposal, which is submitted in week 3 of Lent term. The dissertation proposal is not formally assessed, but is considered for approval by the CAS Graduate Education Committee. It should be 3-4 pages long and must include a title, a short literature review, a set of research questions, and a statement on their research methodology.

Work on the dissertation continues through Lent and Easter terms, and students remain in regular consultation with their supervisor. Early in the Easter term, a dissertation workshop is held, which gives all students on the course an opportunity to discuss the progress of their work with academic staff and other graduate students. Submission of the dissertation is at the end of Easter term marks the formal [end of the MPhil course](#).

Examples of dissertation topics in previous years include:

- The politics of homosexuality in Uganda
- Enemies to allies? Congo and Rwanda's dynamic relationship
- A special place for China? How Zambia has used economic zones to attract new foreign investment
- Boxing and sexuality in Lagos, Nigeria, 1950-1970
- Development of the Lamu port: Connecting Kenya or a high modernist mirage?
- Rural institutions and political (dis)order? A case study of chieftaincies in Zimbabwe
- Ending Apartheid: 'Spoilers' and violence in South Africa's transition, 1990-1994
- The soldier and the state in the Congo crisis: The unprofessional legacy of the national Congolese army [Published in [African Security](#) (Volume 6, Issue 2, 2013)]
- Exploring the elements of East African hip hop culture
- Performance and identity in Senegalese urban culture, 1930-1950
- Education and nation-building in Tanzania, 1967-1985

Throughout Lent and Easter terms, students will continue to research and write up their dissertation, in regular consultation with their supervisor. The dissertation is submitted at the end of Easter Term and counts for 60% of the final degree mark. Students are expected to remain in Cambridge until early July in case an oral examination (viva voce) is required.

## 8. MPhil Supervision

The supervisor's role is to help students clarify and develop their own ideas. They offer advice on refining a research topic, on appropriate academic literature to read, on research resources and techniques, and on writing-up the final dissertation. They should not impose their own interests upon students, nor should students expect to be 'spoon-fed'. Graduate students in Cambridge are expected to be able to think for themselves and to have the capacity and enthusiasm for organising their own research, while working mostly on their own initiative. The frequency of meetings with a supervisor is a matter for mutual agreement and will vary according to the stage of the dissertation work and each student's particular needs, but a rough guideline is around 8-10 hours of one-to-one supervision over the year. As a minimum, students should meet and agree a realistic work schedule with their supervisor at the start of each academic term, and then meet again to review progress at the end of term. Generally, the

expectation is that students should initiate supervisions by requesting appointments, rather than waiting for supervisors to contact them.

## 9. MPhil Admission Requirements

### Academic Requirements

Applications are welcome from British, EU and [international students](#). Minimum qualifications are a solid 2.1 honours degree and an excellent command of English. All candidates for admission to the MPhil are expected to be of PhD potential and to have degree results in at least the top quarter of the graduating cohort at their previous university.

It should be emphasised that the entry system for the University of Cambridge is a flexible one, notwithstanding the required minimum academic standard. The Centre of African Studies does not follow mechanical rules to judge applicants; instead, for each individual, it considers: the level of academic achievement, relevant work experience, the research proposal, the suitability of the MPhil in African Studies course to the applicant's academic and professional needs, and the applicant's academic references and writing sample. We look for evidence of the ability to write good quality essays and of the capacity to carry out and write up a research project to a high standard. The research proposal is especially important for assessing applicants' preparedness for the academic demands of the MPhil in African Studies, and consideration is also given to the 'research fit' between applicant and potential supervisor. For this reason, applicants are encouraged to plan their research carefully, and if possible to identify a supervisor with whom they would like to work. A suitable supervisor must be available for any given applicant to be offered a place on the course.

Information about the minimum academic requirements for international students seeking entry to the University of Cambridge is available from [Graduate Admissions](#).

### English Language Requirement

The University of Cambridge requires all applicants to demonstrate competence in the English language at a very high level before they begin their proposed course of study. Adherence to this requirement is strict, especially for those applying for 9-month courses such as the MPhil in African Studies. Students must be able to demonstrate that they are able to communicate in English at a level and in an idiom suitable to the subject. Full details of the University's English Language requirements are available from [Graduate Admissions](#).

The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Academic is the preferred English language test accepted by the University of Cambridge. Details of the IELTS Academic can be obtained from local British Council Offices. The minimum standard required for admission is an overall band score of 7.5, with not less than 7.0 scored in the individual elements. Please note that the University no longer accepts TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores as sufficient to meet English language entry requirements.

### Financial Condition

Course costs comprise the University Composition Fee and a College Fee; students are also expected to have 'maintenance' funds to support their living costs while studying. When an offer of admission is made, students are asked to complete a [Financial Undertaking Form](#), in order to meet the financial condition of

admission. More information about course costs is available on our [Course Fees and Funding Opportunities](#) webpage.

## 10. MPhil Admission Process and Funding Deadlines

### The MPhil Office

Prospective applicants are welcome to contact the MPhil Office in the Centre of African Studies. It can be found on the 3rd floor of the Alison Richard Building, which is located at 7 West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DT. For a map, click [here](#). The administrator of the MPhil is [Ms Judith Weik](#), who can be reached by email at [mphil@african.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mphil@african.cam.ac.uk). The MPhil Office telephone number is +44 (0) 1223 769 328. During term time, the MPhil Office is usually open from 9am to 5pm Monday-Thursday (closed Fridays), but opening times may vary slightly during term breaks. Applicants wishing to visit the Centre, please contact us in advance. More advice on visiting Cambridge is offered by the [Cambridge-Africa programme](#).

### Introduction

In addition to the guidance provided here, applicants are strongly advised to consult the [How to Apply](#) information on the Graduate Admissions website.

Students are admitted to the MPhil in African Studies via application to the Graduate Admissions office of the University of Cambridge. This office is part of the Board of Graduate Studies, and all prospective MPhil students are subject to the general admissions procedures of the Board. For guidance on these procedures, please visit the [Prospective Graduate Students homepage](#), which contains a wealth of information on all aspects of the Cambridge graduate admissions process.

The Centre of African Studies and the Graduate Admissions office work in tandem to process applications. While Graduate Admissions scrutinises each application to ensure that applicants meet the University's entrance requirements, the Centre assesses each applicant to ensure that they are academically suited to the MPhil in African Studies course and also confirms that appropriate supervision expertise is available. The two processes are then combined and a decision is made about whether the applicant will be offered admission to the University of Cambridge.

To expedite this process, it is essential that applicants upload relevant supporting documents (including transcripts, writing samples and the research proposal), immediately upon completing the online Graduate Admission and Scholarship Application Form (GRADSAF), and definitely within 14 days of submitting the application. Applicants must also ensure that their academic references are submitted within a fortnight of the GRADSAF being received by the Graduate Admissions office. Also note that it can take up to 12 weeks (or even longer) for a complete application to be processed for admission to the MPhil African Studies. Further, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application for admission to the MPhil African Studies is complete.

When a complete application is received, the Centre of African Studies considers the case for admission on academic grounds. Its decision is communicated to the Graduate Admissions office, which subsequently formally notifies applicants about the outcome of their application. Although we strive to process all applications as quickly as possible, applicants should be aware that the Cambridge admissions system is complex, and a significant period of time may elapse before learning the outcome of their application.

Nonetheless, all applicants will be sent an email from the Academic Secretary of the MPhil in African Studies, which provides an informal indication of the academic decision. At this time, applicants will be told the name of the person appointed as their dissertation supervisor, whose task it is to guide students through their studies.

Applicants are encouraged to follow progress via their [self-service account](#). When an applicant is accepted, he or she will be informed by the Graduate Admissions office of the conditions (usually academic and financial) attached to their offer. Admission is only confirmed when the requested documentary evidence is received, and all specified conditions have been met. Applicants are advised to submit all required evidence as soon as possible, in order to avoid delays and to secure their place on the MPhil in African Studies course. Once endorsed by the Graduate Admissions office, applications are considered for [College admission](#). When the evidence concerning the fulfilment of entrance requirements is received, and a College place has been secured, the offer of a place at the University of Cambridge is finally confirmed.

Places on the MPhil in African Studies are limited and the course may be full before the advertised application deadline of 30 June. Note that most [application deadlines for funding opportunities](#) close by January in the academic year preceding entry. For assistance with the application process, please contact the MPhil Administrator: Telephone: +44 (0) 1223 769 328, Email: [mphil@african.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mphil@african.cam.ac.uk)

## 11. Completing the Graduate Admission and Scholarship Application Form (GRADSAF)

The GRADSAF is for the most part self-explanatory, but some guidance notes are below:

- Section A(3): Programme of Study
- The 'Course Code' for the MPhil in African Studies is HUASM1
- The 'Programme of study or research area' is MPhil in African Studies
- The 'Department' is Faculty of Human, Social, and Political Science
- The 'Final Award' is MPhil
- The 'Duration' is nine months

Please enter 'MPhil in African Studies' even if the intention is to proceed to PhD study. These details can also be found in the [Qualifications Directory](#).

- Section A(12): Summary details of research proposal or reason for applying for the course

Provide a concise provisional title for the research project and write a brief summary (about 100 words) of the preferred topic of study.

Applicants are required to submit the following supporting documents with their GRADSAF as part of their application to the MPhil in African Studies: a research proposal; a writing sample; degree certificates and detailed academic transcripts; English language test results (if applicable); and two academic references. Inclusion of a personal development questionnaire is optional. To avoid unintentional omissions of required material, consult our [checklist](#).

[Start an on-line graduate application](#)

## 12. Supporting Documentation

See also guidance from the [Graduate Admissions office](#).

### (i) Research Proposal

The application form provides relatively little space for applicants to explain their proposed research project. Consequently, all applicants for the MPhil African Studies are required to provide a longer and more carefully argued statement of intended research on a separate page. This statement is effectively a preliminary research proposal for the dissertation that the applicant intends to write. It should be a detailed statement of 600-1,000 words (2-5 pages) in length, which outlines the area and parameters of the proposed dissertation topic. Applicants should take care that the scope and/or chronological range of their proposal is not too broad, and thus unviable for a nine-month course of study. In addition, applicants should submit a clear, short title for the proposed research topic. Applicants can, if they wish, indicate a particular member of the University by whom they would like to be supervised, although there is no guarantee that this supervisor will be available.

It must be emphasised that the detailed research proposal is an essential part of the application. Applicants are urged to consult their lecturers and advisors at their own university, or work colleagues if appropriate, during the process of preparing it.

### (ii) Writing Sample

In order for us to judge the ability of applicants, a sample of written work must be included with all MPhil applications. The writing sample should be no longer than 4,000 words in length. The piece can be an undergraduate essay, or part of an undergraduate or graduate (MA or MPhil) dissertation. If no suitable written work is available from the applicant's previous university study, an essay written specially for the Cambridge application is acceptable, but this should be clearly indicated. All work must be submitted in English and applicants must declare that the writing sample submitted with their application is substantially their own work.

### (iii) Degree Certificates and Academic Transcripts

Copies of degree certificates and transcripts of marks/grades must be supplied with the MPhil application. Applicants are reminded to request a copy of their transcript from their University as early as possible, especially since it can take time to produce transcripts. An official explanation of the mark scheme is also required.

### (iv) Evidence of Competence in English

Most non-UK nationals are normally required to upload evidence of their competence in English as a supporting document at the point of application. Details of the requirements are available from [Graduate Admissions](#).

### (v) References

Applicants must arrange for two academic references in support of their application to be submitted to the Graduate Admissions office.

#### (vi) Personal Development Questionnaire (optional)

In order to assist us to assess the generic and ancillary skills and training applicants have already gained, and also to evaluate additional skills required for the proposed research, applicants are invited to complete a personal development questionnaire. Please note, however, that the Centre cannot guarantee to meet all future training requirements if an applicant is accepted for admission. The questionnaire can be downloaded from the Centre of [African Studies website](#).

#### Withdrawing an Application

Applicants who decide to withdraw their application, or who cannot meet the conditions of their offer of admission, are requested to indicate this via their self-service account and also to notify the Centre of African Studies.

Please note that should an applicant be unable to take up their offer of admission, they are not permitted to defer or to resubmit their application for admission in the next academic year. Rather, they must reapply for the course and submit their supporting documents again. Be aware that a previous offer does not guarantee that a second offer of admission will be made, nor should applicants assume that the same supervisor will be available, due to patterns of academic leave.

### 13. Cambridge Colleges

When applying to the University of Cambridge, applicants will also be asked to record the names of two Cambridge Colleges for which they would like to be considered, in order of preference. Alternatively, if no choice is indicated, the Board of Graduate Studies will allocate a College to a student. No student will be admitted to the MPhil without being accepted by a College. Details of the thirty-one Colleges affiliated with the University can be accessed through their [individual websites](#), or via the [key facts and figures](#) information on the Graduate Admissions website. A [guide to Cambridge Colleges](#) for graduate students is also available.

Most Colleges are co-residential for men and women, but three are for women only. Some Colleges admit only graduates; most admit both undergraduates and graduates. Their main role is to look after their members' general welfare including, as far as possible, the provision of accommodation, meals and other amenities. Some Colleges provide travel and book grants, or scholarships (open to competition). Many Colleges also have substantial libraries. Students do not have to be in the same College as their supervisor, nor is it necessary to choose a College according to the proposed field of study, since Colleges are multidisciplinary institutions. Although applications will be sent first to the College preferred by the applicant, most places are awarded through an intercollegiate distribution system. There is considerable pressure on College places, thus students are advised to accept any College place they may be offered.

### 14. Fees and Course Costs

The MPhil in African Studies comes under the fee registration of *nine months* graduate courses of tuition at the University of Cambridge (there is a separate fee structure for UK and European Union students and for international students from all other countries). Applicants should ensure that they have adequate financial provision in place to pay University and College fees, maintenance costs, and to cover any research-related



costs (see below). The sum deemed to be sufficient for a nine-month stay in Cambridge (not including travel expenses and research costs) is specified by the University year by year; precise details are made available in the annual [Fees Listings](#). Students from overseas should also budget an additional sum for [settling-in expenses](#).

Students admitted to the MPhil in African Studies may also be liable for additional costs associated with research-related travel and/or fieldwork expenses. Although limited research grants are available from the Centre of African Studies, the bulk of these costs are normally paid for by students' own private funds. Students should be aware of these costs, and budget accordingly, before taking up their place. Prospective applicants should also note that the MPhil in African Studies requires full-time study; it is not possible to enrol on the course part-time while in full-time employment.

## Funding Opportunities

Application deadlines for the various scholarship schemes and funding opportunities available to support UK, EU and international students at the University of Cambridge run from October through to January each academic year. Full scholarships are highly competitive, and deadlines can be up to a year in advance of the proposed course start date, particularly for international students. Given the complexity of the various schemes on offer, it is best to visit the [Fees and Funding homepage](#) for more information about funding opportunities, eligibility criteria and how to apply. [CamFunds](#) is a useful database for searching the range of scholarships offered by the University of Cambridge (including by academic departments and colleges).

Applicants wishing to be considered for the main funding rounds, including [Gates Cambridge](#), the [Cambridge International Scholarship Scheme](#), the [Cambridge Commonwealth European and International Trust](#) and the [Cambridge Home and European Scholarship Scheme](#) should take note of the application deadlines, listed on the [Graduate Admissions](#) pages.

For applicants wishing to apply for admission only, the deadline is 30 June. Nonetheless, it is advisable to apply as early as possible because places on the course are limited.

## 15. Continuing to the PhD

*Please note: the Centre of African Studies does not offer a PhD programme. However, there are PhD students studying Africa-related topics in faculties and departments across the University, and we encourage our students to seek out the numerous opportunities available. Please see the [directory of faculties and departments](#) for more details.*

Although the MPhil in African Studies is a recognised postgraduate qualification in its own right, many students use it as a basis for proceeding to doctoral study. The course provides a thorough preparation for advanced level research, through the historiographical and conceptual emphasis offered by the taught component, and through the significant research component offered by the dissertation. Visit our [alumni page](#) to find out about the PhD projects our graduates are pursuing at universities all over the world.

Applicants who are considering continuing to a PhD at Cambridge, should seek guidance as early as possible in the academic year. Most faculties and departments offer PhD course literature via their websites; it is also advisable to consult the dissertation supervisor for specific advice. Note that if students wish to apply for funding for a PhD, they will need to do so almost as soon as they begin their MPhil course, due to strict

deadlines set by the Graduate Admissions office. Further, to be accepted on to the PhD course, a supervisor for their research project must be available within the University of Cambridge.

## 16. Contact Details

Specific questions about the MPhil African Studies should initially be addressed to:

MPhil Administrator  
Centre of African Studies  
Alison Richard Building  
7 West Road  
Cambridge CB3 9DT  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 334 396  
Email: [mphil@african.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mphil@african.cam.ac.uk)  
Webpage: <http://www.african.cam.ac.uk/mphil.html>

General information about graduate study at the University of Cambridge is available from:

Graduate Admissions Office  
Academic Division  
PO Box 338  
Cambridge CB2 1YP  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 760 606 (between 10am-4pm BST Monday-Friday)  
Email: [Graduate.Admissions@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:Graduate.Admissions@admin.cam.ac.uk)  
Webpage: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/gradadmissions/contact/>



## Checklist for Preparing Applications

Applicants for admission to the MPhil African African MUST submit the following documents (click on the headings for further information):

[Graduate Admission and Scholarship Application Form](#)

[Degree Certificate and Detailed Transcript](#)

An official explanation of the marking scheme used should also be submitted

[Two Confidential Academic References](#)

Applicants whose native language is not English are required to request their referees to comment on their command of English.

[Research Proposal](#)

The Centre of African Studies requires all applicants to provide a carefully argued statement of research plans. This statement should provide an indication of the chronological period and subject area of research within the scope of the MPhil and it should be 600-1,000 words (2-5 pages) in length. In addition, all applicants must submit a clear, short title for the proposed research topic.

[Writing Sample](#)

To help the Centre of African Studies judge the ability of applicants, a sample of written work must be included with all applications. All work must be submitted in English. Applicants must declare that the sample piece submitted with their application is substantially their own work. Writing samples should be no more than 4,000 words in length.

[English Language Test Results](#)

If applicable.

**Personal Development Questionnaire**

This form can be completed and detached from this booklet.

**Plans for PhD Research (if applicable)**

## Personal Development Questionnaire

The Centre of African Studies, particularly its dissertation supervisors, are interested to know what skills and experience applicants have gained already, and what their future training needs are likely to be. *Disclaimer: please be aware that if an applicant is accepted for admission to the MPhil African Studies, CAS cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet all their future training requirements.*

**Please detach the form below and upload the page to your Self-Service account.** If required, continue on a separate sheet.

Name:
Previous study: What general skills (e.g. IT, communication, research) have you acquired? Please specify skills (e.g. knowledge of excel), how you obtained them (e.g. attendance at a course) and how you have used them (e.g. created database). What subject-specific skills have you acquired? Please specify skills, how you obtained them and how you have used them.
Your proposed course at Cambridge: What general and subject-specific skills do you believe you will need to acquire whilst at Cambridge in order to successfully complete the MPhil in African Studies?