

MPhil in African Studies

Prospectus 2014-15



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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 through its various seminar programmes, occasional talks, public lectures and academic events. It hosts two research fellows, and also acts as a platform for interdisciplinary and international scholarship, by bringing together Africanists based in the various Faculties and Departments across the University with visiting academics from African universities, as well as sometimes visiting American and European scholars. In addition to the Director, other staff members at CAS are the Centre Administrator, a Student Administration Assistant, a Librarian and a Library Assistant, as well as the King's College Research Fellow and the Smuts Research Fellow. The African Studies Library attracts a steady flow of undergraduate and graduate students. So to does the Centre's Research Seminar Series, which takes place during the first two terms of every academic year.

The Centre is housed on the third floor of the much-acclaimed [Alison Richard Building](#) (ARB) on the University's Sidgwick Site, which is the main base for humanities/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](#)), as well as the Centres of [Latin American Studies](#), [South Asian Studies](#) and [Development Studies](#). This stimulating intellectual and social environment presents many opportunities for developing new research initiatives and academic networks.. Conveniently, the University Library is just a short walk away and a scenic ten-minute walk across the [The Backs](#) takes you to the city centre.



Photography ©Alan Williams



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. The convenor of the MPhil in African Studies is currently Dr Ruth Watson, who is based at the Faculty of History and at Clare College.

3. The Academic Timetable

The academic year in Cambridge is divided into three terms. In 2013/14 the relevant dates are:

MICHAELMAS TERM: Tuesday 8 October 2013 – Friday 6 December 2013

LENT TERM: Tuesday 14 January 2014 – Friday 14 March 2014

EASTER TERM: Tuesday 22 April 2014 – Friday 13 June 2014

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 major 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. For MPhil African Studies students, the most important is the African Studies Library, which is housed within CAS and contains a stock of over 30,000 books and an excellent periodicals collection. A high priority is placed on obtaining material published in Africa, and the current acquisitions policy also focuses on meeting the academic needs of the MPhil degree.



Current periodicals in the African Studies Library

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. In addition, the CAS library is a very pleasant working environment, and was recently voted the 'best library in Cambridge' by the Alumni magazine, [CAM 67](#). For more details about library collections and services, visit the [African Studies Library website](#).

Main reading room in the African Studies Library

The University Library 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 also housed within the University Library. Most of the post-1850 book collection is on open access and the Library permits graduate students to borrow up to ten books at a time. The University Library also networks electronic databases and e-journals, and these can be accessed from Faculty, Department and College PCs across Cambridge.

The History Faculty's Seeley Library is primarily an undergraduate resource. However, it is well stocked with essential texts on African studies and a wide range of periodicals and provides a useful complement to the University Library. In term time, it is open every day except Sunday and is adjacent to the Alison Richard Building where CAS is located. Most books can be borrowed overnight or over the weekend and graduates can have three items on loan. Graduates usually find themselves also using other specialized Faculty and Departmental libraries, many of them conveniently located on the Sidgwick site (like the Seeley Library). The Marshall Library of Economics, the Squire Law Library and the POLIS library are among those that permit borrowing by students registered on the MPhil African Studies. There are also libraries in each of the Colleges and, although these are primarily intended for undergraduate use, some have important holdings of rare books relevant to specific fields of study. The catalogues of these various libraries are increasingly integrated and available for online searching via the [Libraries Gateway](#).

Cambridge also offers easy access to research centres in London, which is less than an hour away by train. Cambridge graduate students are regular visitors to the British Library at St Pancras (including the



Asian and African Studies reading room), the LSE Library (which has a dedicated African Studies collection) and also the School of Oriental and African Studies, which has an outstanding research library for Africa-related topics. The National Archives at Kew and the excellent Africana collections of Rhodes House Library in Oxford are also within reach.

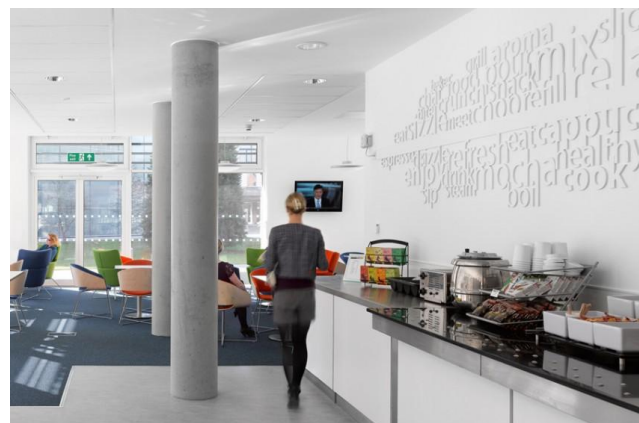
(ii) Computing Facilities

The Centre of African Studies has limited computer facilities available, which can be used by students who do not have a computer of their own. These can be used only within the Centre. Students can also access a network printer at CAS, and have an allocation of 1,500 pages of free printing available to them over the course of the academic year.

The University Computing Service (UCS) offers the use of a large number of PCs and Apple Macintoshes located at several large Public Workstation Facilities (PWF) throughout University Departments and Colleges. Laser printers are available as a pay facility at the PWF sites, as well as scanners and other specialised equipment. Most Colleges also offer convenient word-processing and printing facilities to their own students. Cheap laser printing and photocopying services are additionally available at the offices of the Graduate Union. The UCS gives all graduate students an e-mail address (ending in @cam.ac.uk). For more information on computing facilities in the Faculty of Human, Social and Political Science and across the University, as well as details on free IT training courses, please visit the [UCS website](#).

(iii) Facilities in the Alison Richard Building

The Centre of African Studies occupies part of the third floor of the Alison Richard Building (ARB). Students can work in the open study spaces and in the library. There is a meeting room and an audio-visual suite which can be booked if required, as well as a wide variety of teaching and seminar rooms. During the Easter Term, MPhil students are given use of our Fellows Room, which has several PCs, a photocopier, and printing facilities. Throughout the year, students have access to a kitchen shared with the Centre of South Asian Studies, which offers tea and coffee making facilities. The ground floor of the ARB is home to the excellent Arc Café, a popular eatery and social space with a garden, which occasionally hosts [African music performances](#) in partnership with the Centre.



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5. MPhil Coursework

Assessed coursework consists of a core course, taken by all students, and one option course selected by each student from the range offered within the MPhil degree. Language training also runs throughout the year, but it is not a formally assessed component of the degree. The core course consists of 12 weeks of seminar classes, outlined below, which take place during Michaelmas (first) term and the first four weeks of Lent (second) term. Option courses are taught for between 12 and 16 weeks during Michaelmas and Lent terms, with the format varying according to what individual teachers consider most appropriate.

(i) Core Course

The core course aims to introduce students to a number of theoretical and methodological issues in African Studies, whilst at the same time conveying substantive information on the history, culture and politics of Africa. It is taught in Michaelmas and Lent terms via weekly two-hour classes, with readings set in advance. Visual material (including film) and fictional works is set alongside academic literature. The core course is taught by the MPhil convenor, currently Dr Ruth Watson. The outline of topics is as follows:

Week 1: Africa in the longue durée

This class focuses on the importance of understanding Africa's deeper past and longer cultural history, as well as the methodological challenges of this task. We will discuss the utility of linguistic and archaeological evidence in African history, debates about oral historical methodologies and the drawbacks of 'presentism' when studying Africa, and the shifting meaning of concepts such as 'ethnicity' and 'motherhood' when seen through the long distant past.

Week 2: People, politics and power in precolonial Africa

The focus of this class is debates on the nature of the state in precolonial Africa. This will include discussions of the theory that pre-colonial Africa was a 'labour-constrained' continent, the character of labour regimes and domestic slavery, the relationship between gender, generation and power, and the role of violence and warfare in state formation.

Week 3: 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 of religion in colonial and postcolonial Africa.

Week 4: Colonialism in the history and historiography of Africa

This class focuses on the place of colonialism in the history and historiography of Africa. In the light of revisionist work on empire, and new work on African history that stresses African 'agency', how do we assess the impact of colonialism? This class will include comparative reading, placing the work on Africa alongside that on other parts of the colonial world, particularly South Asia.

Week 5: From colonialism to postcolonialism

This class examines the extent to which the postcolonial politics of Africa can be seen as a legacy of the colonial period. Has ethnicity become more politically significant in postcolonial Africa? Are African states simply predatory on their people? What has been the impact of structural adjustment and political 're-democratization' in Africa? To what extent have political solutions to Africa's problems been imposed from outside, rather than formulated on the continent?

Week 6: The African city and its hinterlands

Rapid urbanization has been a marked feature of contemporary Africa. In this class we shall investigate social, political and economic life in African cities, through history and popular culture. A key focus is the nature of urban African economies and how they not only sustain livelihoods (often in a context of acute deprivation), but also generate specific cultural forms and practices that are meaningful to urban African lives. We shall use two case studies, Kinshasa and Lagos, to explore urban Africa in more depth.

Week 7: South Africa after apartheid

This week we will examine the legacy of apartheid and histories of cultural and political struggle in South Africa. What kind of society has emerged in post-apartheid South Africa and how do South Africans relate to the rest of the African continent? We shall discuss the contested process of 'reconciliation' and debates about poverty and ongoing social and economic inequality. More specifically, we will investigate the violent 'crime wave' said to have engulfed the country after 1994 and the xenophobic attacks on 'foreign Africans' in 2008.

Week 8: Sex, gender, medicine and power: HIV/AIDS

This class traces the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. We will examine the 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.

Week 9: Poverty and wealth in contemporary Africa

Why are so many people in Africa so poor? This class examines debates over the nature of poverty in Africa, addressing its longer history as well as the impact of colonial and postcolonial policies. However, the other side of poverty is wealth. What are the historical patterns of wealth creation in Africa? How should we assess the prospects for economic growth and wealth distribution in the future?

Week 10: Aid, development, power and knowledge

This class examines the history of development interventions in Africa from the post-war period to the present day. Has international aid benefited the people of Africa, or has it disempowered them? What role have NGOs played in African politics?

Week 11: Conflict in postcolonial Africa

This class explores conflict and civil wars in Africa after independence, assessing the role of colonial legacies, Cold War politics, competition for natural resources, the significance of ethnic and religious divisions within African states, and the manipulation of 'youth'. We will compare conflicts in different regions of Africa, including Rwanda and the DRC, Sudan and Darfur, as well as Somalia and West Africa.

Week 12: Population, environment and climate change

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?

(ii) Option Courses

Throughout Michaelmas and Lent terms, students attend and participate in one of several discipline-specific graduate seminars relating to Africa. The choices in 2012/13 were in politics, history, religion and literature, but these may be different in 2013/14, depending on the changing CAS teaching programme. To complement their option course studies, MPhil students are permitted (and encouraged) to attend one or more of the various undergraduate Africa-related lecture series, which run in the Faculties and Departments elsewhere in the University. Details of these additional lectures will be made available at the beginning of the academic year. Brief descriptions of the option courses offered in 2012/13 are below:

The Politics of Africa (Convenor: Devon Curtis)

This MPhil option course explores major topics and themes in postcolonial sub-Saharan African politics, with due regard for African heterogeneity. It explores the interaction of local and international factors that have influenced social, economic and political trajectories in Africa. It assesses the relevance of theories and concepts developed in the fields of comparative politics and international relations to the study of Africa. The course is divided into two parts.

In Michaelmas term, the seminars focus on general themes in African politics. We will explore the histories and legacies of state formation in Africa, and assess theories of the state and their relevance in different parts of Africa. We will focus on key aspects of politics in Africa, including the nature of political authority and the relationship between violence, politics, economy and identity in Africa. In Lent term, students choose a module that allows them to explore a theme in African politics in more detail. In Lent 2013 the following modules were offered:

- A: Conflict, peace and intervention in the Great Lakes region (Devon Curtis)
- B: Mining and the Political Economy of Zambia (Alastair Fraser)
- C: Ethnographic and Historical Approaches to Politics in West Africa and the Sahel (Adam Higazi)

African History (Co-convenors: Emma Hunter and Adam Higazi)

This option course comprises two modules, 'Power and Authority in African History' (taught in Michaelmas term) and 'Ethnographic and Historical Approaches to Politics in West Africa and the Sahel' (taught in Lent term). The Michaelmas term module examines the social and cultural history of changing ideas about power and authority in twentieth-century Africa by exploring a number of key questions. These include: how far did competing ideas of 'modernity' frame African thinking about power and authority in the twentieth century? What did new technologies of political engagement, such as the press and political parties, mean for the exercise and understanding of power? The module focuses on late-colonial and postcolonial Africa, but this period is examined in the context of long-term historical change over the course of the twentieth century.

The Lent term module offers a broad introduction to contemporary West Africa and the Sahel and to the political and social history of the region. It takes an ethnographic and sociological perspective on existing historiography, so to analyse the workings of the state across time, as well as to explore grassroots and elite-level politics. We examine forms of social activism, rebellion, and cultural expression, and the influences and connections between politics, ideologies and social movements. Students are expected to

gain some understanding of the politics of different states in West Africa/the Sahel, and of the region's ethnic, linguistic, and social diversity, as well as current geopolitics in the area. The module also takes a critical look at categories of analysis, including ethnic and religious categories, and regional categories such as the 'Sahel' itself.

Religious Movements and Politics in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Africa (Co-convenors: Felicitas Becker and David Maxwell)

The option course covers the three major sets of African religions: Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam, with emphasis on their popular expression rather than formal theologies. The approach is historical and anthropological, examining the complex relations between the religions and their changing social and political context. A number of themes predominate: 1) the relation between the world religions, the increase in social and political scale, and the differentiation of power structures that accompanied colonialism; 2) the enduring concern of the three traditions with the search for power, prosperity and fertility; 3) the creation of alternative religious models of liberation achieved through prayer, healing, community-building and personal renewal; 4) religion as a source of political legitimacy and means of popular mobilisation; 5) religious conversion as a route to modernity, particularly through new forms of knowledge, literacy and schooling; 6) the contribution of religious ideas, practices and texts to the formation of new identities of class, gender, ethnicity, nation and religious communities that extend beyond the nation-state

Writing and Remembering in South Africa, 1994-Present (Convenor: Chris Warnes)

This course provides a critical introduction to contemporary issues in South African literature and culture. The focus will be on the period following the country's first democratic elections, and specifically on the question of change. What has changed in the wake of Apartheid's dismantling? What hasn't changed? How do literature and other forms of cultural production relate to these questions? No prior knowledge is required, but students will be expected to read broadly in South African history, politics and literature. Many of the topics discussed also explore broader issues in postcolonialism and globalisation studies.

(iii) Language Training

All MPhil students are required to devote a minimum of four hours per week to studying an African language during the three academic terms. Formal tuition in Swahili is offered at CAS, but students also have the option to study an African language of their choice, subject to the approval of the MPhil convenor. Although Swahili is not a formal component of the MPhil, students are regularly assessed and take final oral and written exams under the expert guidance of our skilled teacher, Ms Wambui Wa-Ngatho. Students who complete their Swahili training to a satisfactory standard (in practice, 90% have achieved this) are awarded a Language Certificate. Students studying other African languages



usually follow a self-taught programme, combined with formal guidance and assessment from a specialist teacher. Alternatively, if appropriate courses are available, students can attend classes at the [University of Cambridge Language Centre](#).

6. MPhil Dissertation

Students propose a research project as part of their application for the MPhil African Studies. When admitted to the degree, they are assigned to work on this project with a designated supervisor. The Centre of African Studies does not accept MPhil applicants who wish to write dissertations on topics for which no supervisor is available in the University of Cambridge. For students admitted to the MPhil, dissertation research begins immediately in Michaelmas term, and they work initially towards producing a dissertation proposal, which is submitted early in Lent term. This includes a literature review, a set of research questions, and a statement on methodology. During the Christmas and Easter breaks, and throughout Lent and Easter terms, students continue to work on their dissertation. They develop ideas and methodological approaches in conversation with their supervisor, read relevant academic literature, and simultaneously conduct detailed research. If they wish, MPhil students can claim up to £200 from the Centre towards their research costs, and the [UAC Travel Fund](#) is also available to offer financial support for travel to Africa.

The Centre hosts a workshop at the beginning of Easter term, where all MPhil students present a short research paper on their dissertation project to their peers, along with CAS-affiliated academics. Students continue writing-up intensively, before finally submitting their dissertation (15,000-20,000 words, excluding references and bibliography) on the final day of Easter term.

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

7. MPhil Assessment

MPhil assessment consists of two parts: coursework essays (part 1) and a dissertation (part 2). Part 1 constitutes 40% of the MPhil assessment, while part 2 constitutes 60%. Both part 1 and part 2 must be passed in order for the MPhil in African Studies degree to be awarded.

On the final day of Lent term, students submit an essay of 5,000 words (excluding references and bibliography) based on material covered in the core course. This essay addresses a prescribed question chosen from a list that is distributed early in Lent term. Another essay of 5,000 words (excluding references and bibliography) is submitted for the option course on the same date. This essay addresses a question previously agreed between the student and the option course convenor, and approved by the CAS Graduate Education Committee early in Lent term. Each of the two coursework essays counts for 20% of the final MPhil mark.

On the final day of Easter term, students submit a dissertation of a 15,000-20,000 words (excluding references and bibliography). The dissertation is read and marked by two examiners other than the supervisor; it counts for 60% of the final MPhil mark.

The marking scheme for coursework essays and dissertations is the same as other MPhil degree courses in the Faculty of Human, Social, and Political Science. All coursework essays and dissertations are double-marked and classed according to a scale as follows: Distinction (75% and above), High Pass (70% to 75%), Pass (60% to 69%) Marginal Fail (59%), and Fail (58% and below). If the examiners consider it necessary, they may conduct an oral examination (viva) on the MPhil essays or dissertation.

8. MPhil Supervision

A supervisor is appointed for each student at the beginning of the MPhil degree, and he or she guides the student's programme of study through the entire academic year, while also advising on all aspects of the MPhil dissertation. The supervisor will have expertise in a field of study that fits with the research project proposed by the student in their original application. The supervisor's role is to help students clarify and develop their own ideas, not to impose his or her own interests on the subject. Students must not expect to be 'spoon-fed' by their supervisors; they should have the capacity and enthusiasm for organising their own research, and aim to work largely on their own initiative. The frequency of meetings between students and their supervisors is a matter for mutual agreement and will vary according to the stage of the dissertation work and an individual's particular needs. A list of previous and current [dissertation supervisors](#) can be found on the MPhil African Studies website.

9. MPhil Admission Requirements

Applications are welcome from British, EU and overseas graduate students. Minimum qualifications are a solid 2.1 honours degree and an excellent command of English, although an upper 2.1 or first-class honours degree is normally required by the Centre of African Studies. All candidates for admission to the MPhil are expected to be of PhD potential. It is not possible to prescribe fixed minimum standards for overseas applicants, but applicants should have degree results in at least the top quarter of the graduating cohort at their previous university.

At the same time, it must be emphasised that the entry system for the University of Cambridge is a flexible one. The Centre of African Studies does not follow mechanical rules in judging applicants; instead, for each individual, it considers: the level of academic achievement, the research proposal, and the applicant's academic references and writing samples. We look for evidence of the ability to write coursework essays of sufficient quality and of the capacity to carry out and write up a research project to a high standard. Nevertheless, the following are some rough, 'rule-of-thumb' standards for guidance:

- US and Canadian students are required to submit an up-to-date transcript of their course marks and are normally expected to have a cumulative GPA of 3.7 or higher.
- German students should have their Grundstudium completed (with a 1.5 mark or better in the relevant subjects) as a minimum requirement, but the degree is better suited to those who have finished their entire Hochschulstudium.
- The equivalent requirement from Holland is a doctoraal and from Belgium a licencie(a)t (both with distinction).
- Italian students will be expected to have the laurea (cum laude grade) and Spanish students the licenciatura.
- French students may apply after having received their maitrise, or after passing the DEA.
- Israeli students are expected to have a BA with a grade of 90% or higher, and preferably an MA degree.
- Candidates from Commonwealth (or former Commonwealth) countries which follow the British system should have achieved at least a good 2:1 or equivalent.
- Candidates from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and most countries of South Asia should have a first-class degree from a good university.
- Candidates from China should have a first degree with a grade of at least 85% from a recognised and competitive university.

It is hoped that for candidates from other countries the above examples provide sufficient guidance for establishing equivalent degree and grade requirements.

Additional Requirements for Non-Native Speakers of English

Applicants who are not native speakers in English must have a fluent command of the English language. Normally, all such applicants are required to prove that they have passed one of the standard English language tests. Applicants who believe that they should be exempt from this requirement must make a case in their application, or at the time they receive their conditional offer.

The University prefers the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which is available from the British Council. In these tests, the minimum requirement is an overall band score of 7.5, with no individual element scoring below 7.0. Alternatively, TOEFL tests can be undertaken if IELTS tests are not available. The minimum overall score required for the paper-based TOEFL test is 637, with a result of 5.5 in the Test of Written English (TWE). For the internet-based TOEFL test, the required score is 110, with a score of no less than 25 in each element. Scores on English language tests are judged a reliable indicator of proficiency for about two years, thus if you took a language test several years ago and have not been working or studying in English since, you will be asked to provide more recent test results. In cases of doubt, a telephone interview may be required between the prospective supervisor and the applicant.

For further general information on entrance requirements visit the [Graduate Admissions](#) webpage.

10. MPhil Admission Process and Funding Deadlines

Students are admitted to the MPhil programme at CAS via application to the Graduate Admissions office of the University of Cambridge. This office is part of the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), 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.

CAS and BGS work in tandem to process applications for the MPhil African Studies. While BGS scrutinises each application to ensure that each applicant meets the University's entrance requirements, CAS assesses each applicant to ensure that they are academically suited to the degree and 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 BGS. Also note the following important points:

- It can take up to 12 weeks (or even longer) for CAS to process a complete application for admission to the MPhil African Studies. Applications that remain incomplete will obviously take longer.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application for admission to the MPhil African Studies is complete, although the student administration assistant at CAS will help where possible.

When a complete application is received, the CAS Graduate Education Committee considers the case for admission on academic grounds. Its decision is communicated to BGS, which subsequently informs every applicant in writing about the formal result of their application. Whilst CAS strives 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 they hear the outcome of their application. Nonetheless, all applicants will be sent an e-mail by CAS, which offers an informal indication of the academic decision, prior to formal notification being sent by BGS. All applicants are encouraged to follow the progress of their application via their Self-Service account.

When CAS accepts an applicant, he or she will be informed by BGS of the conditions (usually financial and/or academic) attached to their offer. Admission is only confirmed when the required documentary evidence is received, and all conditions specified 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. Simultaneously, BGS sends applications endorsed by the University to be considered for College admission. Colleges aim to complete their consideration of applications by 1 July, although most offers are usually processed earlier. Once the evidence concerning the fulfilment of entrance requirements is received, and a College place has been secured, the offer of a University place is finally confirmed. Students who decide to withdraw their application, or who cannot meet the conditions of their offer, are requested to inform BGS via their [Self-Service account](#) and, if possible, to write to the CAS MPhil office.

All applicants accepted on to the MPhil will be told the name of the person appointed as their dissertation supervisor, regardless of whether the offer is conditional or unconditional. It is the supervisor's task to

guide students through their studies, and all students are encouraged to correspond with their supervisors before their arrival in Cambridge, so that they can begin work on their research project as soon as Michaelmas term begins.

Given the complexity of the admissions process, CAS welcomes and encourages early applications for the MPhil. Applying early is in the best interests of all prospective students, not only because there are limited places available on the MPhil African Studies, but also because the application deadlines for the various scholarship schemes and funding opportunities are very early in the academic year. Prospective applicants are probably aware that there are many different sources of funding available to support UK, EU and international students at the University of Cambridge. However, full scholarships are highly competitive, and funding deadlines can be a year in advance of the proposed course start date, particularly for international students. Given the complexity of the various funding schemes on offer at Cambridge, it is best to visit the [Fees and Funding homepage](#) for full details on eligibility and how to apply.

Nevertheless, for information, the [funding deadlines](#) for 2013/14 are as follows:

[Gates Cambridge Trust](#): 16 October 2012 for United States applicants; 4 December 2012 for others

[Cambridge International Scholarship Scheme \(CISS\)](#): 4 December 2012

[Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and Cambridge Overseas Trust](#): 4 December 2012

[Cambridge Home and European Scholarship Scheme \(CHESS\)](#): 11 January 2013

[UK Research Councils](#): 11 January 2013

The final deadline for applications to the MPhil African Studies in 2013/14 is 30 June 2013.

11. Completing the Graduate Admission and Scholarship Application Form

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 note that you should enter 'MPhil African Studies' even if you intend 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 your research project and write a brief summary (about 100 words) of the topic you wish to study.

*Note that you are required to submit the following supporting documents with your GRADSAF: Research Proposal; Writing Sample; Transcripts; References; Personal Development Questionnaire. To avoid unintentional omissions of required material, a **checklist** is provided at the end of this booklet. Applicants*

are advised to consult this checklist, and to follow carefully the [How to Apply](#) guidance on the University of Cambridge Graduate Admissions website.

12. Supporting Documentation

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 CAS 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. In the case of EU applicants, a chapter of the *laurea*, or the *memoire* submitted for the *maitrise* or DEA, or the appropriate national equivalent, might be appropriate for this purpose. 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. Transcripts

Copies of degree certificates and transcripts of marks/grades must be supplied with the MPhil application. Please remember to request a copy of your transcript from your University as early as possible, especially since it can take time to produce transcripts. Please also remember that BGS requires the inclusion of an official explanation of the mark scheme used at the time the transcript is submitted.

iv. References

You must arrange for two academic references in support of your application to be submitted to the Board of Graduate Studies. You will find full instructions about how to do this, as well as advice about submitting other [supporting documents](#), on the Graduate Admissions' 'How to Apply' website.

v. Personal Development Questionnaire

In order to assist CAS in assessing the generic and ancillary skills and training you have already gained, and also to evaluate additional skills required for your proposed research, please complete the questionnaire at the back of this booklet and submit it electronically with your application.

13. Cambridge Colleges

When you apply for a place on the MPhil, you will also be asked to record the names of three Cambridge Colleges for which you would like to be considered, in order of preference. No student will be admitted to the MPhil without being accepted by a College. Details of the 31 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. 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 applicants are advised to accept any College place they may be offered.

14. Fees and Course Costs

The MPhil in African Studies is a nine-month degree programme and applicants will be liable to pay both a University Composition Fee and a College Fee to cover the costs of their graduate tuition (there are separate fee structures for UK/EU and for international students). It is thus essential that applicants ensure that they have adequate funds to pay these fees, and also to cover living expenses in Cambridge, along with the cost of any research-related travel and/or fieldwork expenses (notwithstanding the limited research grants offered by CAS). Before an applicant's admission is finally confirmed, he or she is required to prove that they have the means to pay both the University and College fees, and also maintenance costs for the duration of the degree. The sum deemed to be sufficient for a nine-month stay in Cambridge (not including travel/fieldwork expenses) is specified by the University each year; precise details are available on the [Graduate Course Costs](#) page of the Student Registry website. Prospective applicants should also note that the MPhil demands full-time study, and students are not permitted to take any employment, even part-time, while fulfilling their course requirements at the University of Cambridge.

15. Continuing to the PhD

The MPhil in African Studies is a freestanding degree, but many of its graduates proceed to pursue a PhD in one of the Humanities or Social Science Faculties in Cambridge, or at another university. CAS does not currently offer a doctoral programme, but the MPhil offers thorough preparation for PhD-level research,

through the historiographical and conceptual training in the coursework components, and through the skills learned in researching and writing up the dissertation. MPhil students who wish to continue to a PhD should initially seek guidance from their supervisor or the MPhil convenor early in their first term of graduate study. Graduate Studies offices in most Faculties provide literature on 'leave to continue', as well as additional specific advice about their doctoral programmes.

Students who are considering applying for a PhD should be aware that it is a demanding mode of study. There are no specific coursework requirements and the PhD is pursued entirely through individual research and supervision. The student focuses on the research and writing of the dissertation (up to a maximum of 80,000 words) from the very beginning of their doctoral studies; they are expected to complete by the end of their third year (and definitely not later than in their fourth year).

The MPhil African Studies provides an excellent basis for students who intend to pursue a PhD degree, either in Cambridge or at another university. It is helpful if prospective MPhil students who intend to proceed to doctoral-level study indicate this when they apply to Cambridge, by submitting a **brief statement detailing plans for PhD research**. Furthermore, applicants should be aware that if they wish to be considered for funding for a Cambridge PhD, they might need to apply for leave to continue almost as soon as they begin their MPhil degree. Applicants should also note that it is not always possible to secure a PhD supervisor within the University of Cambridge, which is a requirement for admission. In such cases, applicants will be informed as soon as possible. To avoid disappointment, students are advised to apply for PhD programmes at other universities, at the same time that they apply for leave to continue at Cambridge.

16. Resubmission and Withdrawal

It is not possible for applicants who have received an offer of admission to the MPhil, but are unable to take up their place, to re-submit their application for the following year.

Applicants who are unable to start in the term they have applied for, must re-apply for the following year and submit their documents again.

If you have been offered a place on the MPhil African Studies, but are unable to take it up, and do not wish to reapply, it would be appreciated if you could notify the MPhil Office as soon as possible that you have decided to withdraw. Please also submit this information through your CAMSIS account.



17. Contact Details

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

Student Administration Assistant
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

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

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 you are accepted for admission to the MPhil African Studies, CAS cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet all your 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?