

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Legal Research 2026/2027

This module is designed to guide and inspire you through your first year of registration as a MPhil/PhD candidate. Sitting alongside discussions with, and feedback from, your supervisors, the main aim of this module is to introduce you to those elements of a PhD thesis that tend to be the most significant, i.e. (a) the identification of research questions that can be clearly articulated, are feasible in scope and make an original contribution to knowledge; (b) the selection and use of conceptual frameworks to inform the context in which you situate your research questions and the ways in which you will approach their analysis; (c) the identification of research methods that will enable you to address and respond to your research questions, and the appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of alternative methods that might have been used (or are used by others); and (d) the presentation of written work in a well-supported and well-structured manner.

The module will assist in preparing you for the end-of-year upgrade processes, giving you an opportunity to present and receive feedback on your research proposals and plans in an informal environment. It will also provide a vital opportunity for you to connect on a regular basis with fellow PGRs, to share challenges encountered and techniques for overcoming them, and to create a wider intellectual community of PhD scholars. An ability to engage critically and constructively with others' scholarship is a key academic skill, and the module will be designed in a way that will expect this from all participants.

The module will be taught over 2 terms, via a 2-hour weekly seminar. There will be no formal assessment for the module. Readings for each seminar will be notified in advance.