PhD Programme
2018/19
Welcome to Politics and International Studies

We hope you decide to join us at Warwick to study on one of the largest PhD programmes in politics and international studies in the UK. We pride ourselves on producing excellent research that engages with contemporary issues, reflects the latest developments in theory and practice, and challenges you to think critically.

You’ll be joining a community of students from across the globe in a diverse, cosmopolitan department. You will have opportunities to test your ideas, develop your advanced research skills and interact on a daily basis with scholars renowned in their field for their innovative ideas and policy-relevant research.

A large proportion of our PhD students go on to secure postdoctoral funding from government agencies and private foundations and we have an outstanding track record of placing our PhD students in faculty positions in top universities around the world. We look forward to reading your application and welcoming you to the department.
Why Politics and International Studies at Warwick?

We were ranked 1st for research environment in the UK in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework and 1st for the student experience in the entire Russell Group of top UK departments. We rank 44th among all politics and international studies departments in the world, according to the QS World University Rankings 2017. Nationally, we are placed 3rd in the UK by the Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017 for the second year running, 3rd by The Guardian University Guide 2018, and 4th by The Complete University Guide 2017. Our department attracts top postgraduate students from around the world.

Our department is home to over 100 PhD students, and many of our graduates now hold academic posts across the world. The range of expertise represented in our 50+ academics means we can supervise a wide variety of research projects, allowing you to personalise your degree according to your interests and career goals.

Broad-spectrum expertise

You’ll be working with experts on a wide variety of topics within politics and international studies. Our broad research agenda coheres around four clusters:

- International Political Economy
- International Relations and Security
- Comparative Politics and Democratisation
- Political Theory

Whether your research project falls within a single area or you take a cross-cluster approach, you will have a high degree of intellectual freedom to cross ‘traditional’ disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries and go where your research leads.

An international community

The research community in our department includes people from over 40 countries at all stages of their academic careers, creating an atmosphere of diverse opinion and mutual support. Lively debate and exploration of hot-topic issues from multiple viewpoints is the norm. Cast against a background of critical analysis and respect for a diversity of thinking, the department encourages you to ask searching questions and bring something fresh to debates within the field.
What is a PhD?

Technically speaking, the PhD, or ‘Doctor of Philosophy’, is the highest qualification that a student can achieve. Practically speaking, it’s a 3 to 4 year individual research project involving advanced scholarship focusing on a specific area of interest to you within the field of politics and international studies, and which makes an original contribution to knowledge.

Each student’s experience of the PhD is unique – some will undertake primary data collection through fieldwork and interviews, while others will do all their research in the library or archives – but all PhDs require a high degree of self-motivation, self-reflection and self-discipline in order to be completed on time and in a way that accomplishes all they set out to do. Contrary to the stereotype of a PhD being a lonely experience, in PAIS you’ll have plenty of opportunity to reach out to your peers, supervisors or other colleagues through conferences, workshops and study groups both on and off campus—and through these, you’ll get important insights into your own topic and stay engaged in the wider academic community.

Throughout this process, all PhDs also gain valuable skills in research, writing, public speaking, networking and critical thinking which are important not only in academic careers, but also in many other professions.

What is a PhD in the UK?

As opposed to undertaking the degree in other countries, a PhD in the UK is based more around individual research. In our department, it does not include any taught element outside of the first year seminar and second year research training courses, though you are able and encouraged to pursue additional training through the University (see details on page 7). Instead of examinations, your progress will be marked through yearly written reports and presentations, culminating in the final submission and viva process.

Normally you will be expected to complete your thesis in three years, with a maximum registration period of four years if you require additional time. In contrast with some other countries, where a PhD can stretch to 7-8 years full time, a PhD in the UK is shorter because there is no significant taught component to the course.

There are also opportunities for PhD students to take up sessional teaching of undergraduate seminars within the department; many of our PhD candidates take advantage of this opportunity. Teachers are appointed by the University only on the recommendation of the Head of Department after completing an application and consulting with their supervisors. Current PhD students are given priority for teaching. Teaching can provide you with valuable experience if you wish to pursue a career in academia.
I applied to do a PhD in Politics and International Studies department (PAIS) at Warwick after being encouraged by the positive experience I had whilst doing an MA here in 2013. In particular, I was inspired by the research culture within the department, which boasts not only a large number of world-leading topic experts but also a commitment to being a centre of debate; hosting regular talks and presentations by academics, dignitaries and speakers from across the world. It also had a strong representation of experts from my own field of interest - US foreign policy - and this has opened many doors for me during the PhD; being able to draw upon PAIS and Warwick’s strong reputation and network connections when doing field research in the US.

The department has also been very committed in its support for PhD students: there is a structured program of weekly workshops and classes that you attend during your first year that give you a grounding in research at this level and give you the confidence to go out in the field on your own. In addition, I have been able to draw on financial resources provided to me by the department as well as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) - who fund my research project - to present my work at academic conferences as well as pay for my flights and accommodation when doing field research in the US.

I have also had ample opportunities to develop my skills and gain experience of working in higher education: I have been an associate tutor on two modules in the department which has given me experience of teaching and marking undergraduate work, as well as providing training and support to further my skills as a teacher and providing opportunities to take part in the department’s outreach work with their network of secondary schools. In addition, I also had the opportunity to edit the department research blog, which gave me first-hand experience of the administration and marketing side of academia.

Beyond all of that, what I have appreciated most has been the strong atmosphere of support found in both the department and the ESRC team at Warwick: During times of stress I have been able to turn to my supervisor as well as my fellow PhD students and the wider Warwick community, who have consistently provided the necessary personal and professional encouragement needed on my PhD journey.

Ben Gannon
Current PhD candidate
The PhD programme

Undertaking a research project that spans at least three years* can be a daunting task. While not as structured as a taught postgraduate programme, the PhD is segmented into four stages, each with distinct milestones to help you monitor your progress and pursue your research at the best pace.

Year 1
Your first year lays the foundation for your research. On the bespoke PhD training module, Doctoral Thesis Writing in Politics and International Studies, you will develop doctoral researching skills and collaborate with your peers to overcome the challenges of PhD research. This seminar will also prepare you for the first year review, which takes place each May. This review, involving both written and presentational elements, is used to determine whether you are ready to upgrade from MPhil student to a full PhD.

Year 2
During your second year, you will continue to attend advanced training seminars in the department on subjects ranging from interviews to academic writing for publication while you dig into the heart of your research. Many candidates use part or all of the second year to conduct fieldwork elsewhere in the UK or abroad. The second year culminates in a review consisting of a written report on your progress and a ‘Pitch to Peers’ workshop in which you’ll have 15 minutes to present and pitch your thesis to your peers and a core panel of staff, followed by a short Q&A.

Year 3
While you should be in the habit of writing from day one, the process of tying your thesis together and finalising it for submission begins in earnest during year 3 and normally continues into the first part of year 4. A final progress check is conducted at the end of this year.

Year 4
Although you should aim to finish in year 3, realistically most students submit their thesis in year 4. The University does not normally allow an extension beyond year 4.

Submission and the viva
You should aim to submit your finished thesis in the first six months of your fourth year. After you submit, you will defend your thesis in front of internal and external examiners as your final assessment for the degree (the viva).

*Full-time students are registered for four years initially, the fourth year being a writing-up period not subject to fees; part-time students are initially registered for five years. Part-time students are still expected to submit First Year Review documents during year 1 of their studies.
Additional training

Additional research training and personal and professional development are available through the department, the ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership, the Graduate School and the Library, which is home to the Wolfson Research Exchange (a study space uniquely dedicated to research students). You can also sit in on key MA modules by arrangement with your supervisor and relevant module director if appropriate. Warwick provides additional support through the Careers & Skills Office to help you build your CV and enhance your employment prospects well ahead of graduation.

PO961: Doctoral Thesis Writing in Politics and International Studies

This is a PhD training module, rather than research methods training. The seminars provide a forum in which students can discuss the experience of the research process; I sometimes describe it as ‘PhD therapy’. Week by week, we will seek collaborative solutions to common problems encountered in PhD research. Discussions with the module leader and your peers will enable you to visualise your PhD as a single, integrated piece of work and talk about it authoritatively in public. You will become more aware of its scope, its parameters and its limits.

Understanding these limits and achieving sufficient clarity and specificity of focus for your doctoral project are very important issues for a successful PhD. Sessions will cover such central issues as: specifying your intended contribution to a specialist literature; the mix between theory and empirics in research design; how to integrate primary data collection into doctoral study; recognising the limitations of data gathering techniques; and appreciating what (if anything) can be done about these. Along the way, you will acquire insights and develop your skills in how to hone, narrow and develop your research question; you will come to understand better what a ‘contribution to the literature’ might look like; and you’ll begin to sketch out what yours will be. The weekly sessions will enable you to present your ideas in academic forums with confidence. This will prepare you for successful completion of the compulsory First Year Review and for future public presentations of your doctoral research.

Professor Ben Clift
Module director
The PhD experience

It is part of the Department’s philosophy to encourage graduate students to participate fully in its intellectual life. This includes a considerable range of activities from peer study and support groups and themed writing workshops among students, to Departmental Research Seminars involving both staff and students. There are also a variety of seminar series involving guest speakers that are organised by Research Centres both within and outside of the Department at which you will be very welcome.

Our research activities

Our department is home to three research centres (the Centre for the Study of Democratisation, the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation and the Centre for Ethics, Law and Public Affairs) and one research group (the Interdisciplinary Ethics Research Group) that are led by members of the department. These interact across our research cluster areas – as well as across disciplines within the University and beyond – and frequently play host to guest workshops, conferences and seminars that you are welcome to join. In addition, Warwick’s Global Research Priorities programme provides a platform for cross-departmental collaboration, enabling students to work together on important issues such as global governance and sustainable cities.

Finally, we also offer limited funding for students to attend conferences outside of Warwick and present their research to a wider audience.

Student-led initiatives

There’s more to life as a PhD student than research—in fact, we offer many opportunities for you to engage with the academic community in the department and participate in university-wide activities. One of these is through student-led groups such as the Critical International and Political Studies (CRIPS) Graduate Working Group, which regularly organises different activities including the PhD Research Seminar series, the Mock First Year Review for first year PhD students, professional socialisation workshops, as well as social events. There is also the East Asia Study Group, which holds events on subjects specific to the East Asian region.

PAIS is very supportive with regards to teaching, conferences, research programmes, and other research- and career-related opportunities. I particularly enjoyed the familial community created by the friendly PAIS staff, post-docs and PhD students, with whom I felt inspired every day through our conversations on both academic and non-academic topics.

Jue Wang
PhD 2014
The PhD experience

Working as a member of the CRIPS’s organising committee has been an incredible personal and collective experience. CRIPS has long provided a platform for PhD students and early career scholars to present their work and discuss it with each other. This is extremely important, as young researchers may not have many opportunities or the network required to present their in-progress research to an academic audience. During the academic year, CRIPS hosted a number of extremely interesting early career scholars from both the UK and elsewhere in Europe. The turnout and overall participation has been pretty staggering, especially considering how busy PhD students can be. CRIPS has also delivered career advice and professionalisation workshops where established academics from the department have been providing invaluable advice to PhD students. In an ever more competitive academic labour market, it is crucial to be strategic when it comes to start sketching out a career plan by the end of your PhD. That is why this year CRIPS has organised multiple workshops and seminars with this objective in mind. Of course, CRIPS has also been very active in organising social events. With after-presentation drinks and summer BBQs, one of CRIPS’s greatest achievements for this academic year has been to strengthen the social interaction of the PhD community at PAIS.

Overall, this year’s experience at CRIPS has provided me with an excellent understanding of how things actually work within the department. I learned how to organise research seminars, apply for departmental funds, request seminar rooms and catering, etc. Finally, being in close contact with so many people in the department has strengthened my relationships with the whole PAIS community.

Events and societies

We also host a number of events featuring staff members and guest speakers, including our Departmental Seminar Series, the focal point of research culture and activity in the department. Past presentations have covered topics including ‘Twisting Arms and Sending Messages: Terrorist Tactics in Civil War’ and ‘International Election Observers and the Credibility of Elections’.

There are also many social activities offered by our department throughout the year, including Christmas dinner and the end-of-year barbeque, where you can meet up and chat with fellow students and staff members in a relaxed atmosphere.

Beyond the department, there is a vibrant campus atmosphere, with many societies and initiatives to get involved with including the Warwick International Development Society, Politics Society, China in Focus and the Warwick Emerging Markets Forum. You can also write articles for Pinpoint Politics, a political commentary website jointly run by postgraduates from our department and King’s College London.
Finding a supervisor

The relationship with your supervisor is of crucial importance to your research and progress as a PhD candidate. The department will normally allocate two supervisors, at least one of whom will be actively engaged in, or has had experience of, research in the field of your thesis. Your supervisors will be your guides and mentors as you design, research and finally write up your PhD project.

Making contact

Before you submit your application, you should ensure we have a member of staff who shares your research interests. You should consult our staff research directory to find out who is doing what in the department and identify potential supervisors. Applicants are encouraged to make contact initially via email with potential supervisors prior to submitting an application. While individual academics cannot make a decision to accept a given application, most successful applicants have contacted potential supervisors to ensure that there is an interest in supervising their particular research project. If you have an expression of interest, we strongly encourage applicants to speak with their potential supervisor as soon as possible as part of the process. You can do this by phone, Skype, or in person.

Please note that if the department does not have a member of staff in your specialist area, or if all academics in your area are currently at full supervisory capacity, we will not be able to make an offer no matter the quality of your application as a whole.

Also note that an expression of interest from a supervisor, or even their involvement in refining your proposal, is not a guarantee that your application will be successful—particularly if your submitted proposal is not up to scratch.

One of the primary reasons for unsuccessful applications is an inadequately specified research proposal which does not go far enough in convincing potential supervisors that the applicant has it within them to write a successful PhD. In order to get your prospective supervisor(s) to say ‘yes’, you really do have to submit an excellent proposal!

Find an expert through our staff listing online:

warwick.ac.uk/pais/people
The relationship with my supervisors is one of the key highlights of doing my PhD at PAIS. They encourage me to critically engage with my field and explore new avenues of research. This not only challenges my thinking but also encourages me to explore different ways of looking at my research. I also have freedom to debate with my supervisors and explore ideas which has really augmented the process of writing my PhD. In addition to the PhD, my supervisors have been key in supporting me with additional academic requirements such as conferences and ensuring that I maintain a work life balance.

Shahnaz Akhter
Current PhD candidate
The research proposal

The research proposal is arguably the most important element of your PhD application. You need to submit a fully specified research proposal at this stage; while we fully acknowledge that your project will evolve as you conduct your research, you must submit a convincing proposal, worked up in full, which is sufficiently rigorous and of sufficient quality before you will be allowed entry onto our programme.

The points you must address in your proposal are:

Central research question
This should be simply stated in the first instance and then suitably fleshed out to show why it is timely and important – both intellectually and politically – for you to be writing a PhD on this topic. The central research question is your first chance to make the case for being accepted onto our programme by capturing the attention of potential supervisors.

Context
You must show how your central research question relates to existing academic studies in your field. This requires a short literature review which will situate your proposed research within the framework of the dominant perspectives on similar issues in the existing literature. Ideally, you should be able to demonstrate how your proposed research fills a gap in the literature and therefore adds substantively and can make a lasting contribution to academic debates. One key criterion for writing a successful PhD is that it is original work, so you must try to avoid setting up your analysis in a way which simply replicates work which can already be found within the literature.
Theoretical framework

The Department has a reputation for prioritising doctoral work which has a strong grounding in theory. As a consequence, you are much more likely to be successful in your application if you are authoritative in your treatment of theoretical debates. You need to say which body of theory will underpin the explanatory framework to be used in your PhD, why that particular theory was chosen and what advantages it gives you for addressing your central research question.

Case studies and methodology

You must convincingly discuss the type of research you will need to conduct in order to empirically ground your research. The only exception in this respect is for projects centred on matters of abstract political theory. It is important to draw attention to the links between your chosen body of theory and the substantive case study (or studies) you will be using. To do so, you will need to name your case studies and demonstrate why they are appropriate to your central research question, outline the methodologies you will adopt, and comment on the relevance of those methodologies to meeting your central research aims through focusing on their generic strengths.

Problems

You should reflect on the types of problems you are likely to encounter whilst undertaking your research and how these might be overcome. This will demonstrate that you are forward-thinking in your approach to doctoral studies and that you are aware of the fact that writing a PhD often requires you to activate a secondary plan at some stage of your studies.

Finally, the research you propose should be realistic, neither under nor over-ambitious for a three-year project.
Examples of current PhD project titles include:

- **Turkey’s private sector:**
  A stabilizing element in northern Iraq

- **The (bio) politics of technology in an age of drone-warfare:**
  Security, ethics and ‘human life’

- **From whistleblowing to Wikileaks:**
  Secrecy and Power in the information age

- **Social democracy in post-crisis Britain and France:**
  Still a viable alternative?

- **Overcoming obstacles to nuclear disarmament:**
  Transforming state identities through co-operation and trust-building

- **Citizenship in flux:**
  A comparative study of political participation of young citizens in Taiwan and the United States

**Thesis title: The Political Economy of Commodity Regions: the case of soybean in South America Studies**

My research focuses on the emergence in South America of a transnational economic area specialized in the production of soybean, fostered by the high global demand for this commodity and by the creation of a single value chain within the region, generating de facto integration. Literature on regionalism has recently offered a focus on ‘bottom-up’ regional identities and practices. Much of this work nonetheless remains heavily state-centric, and research on the dynamics of regional integration beyond the state remains scarce. The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the emergence of this new unity, the conditions of its emergence and the structure of this ‘commodity region’ as a cross-border entity.

Maria Giraudo
Current PhD candidate
The fieldwork experience

At the end of the second year of my PhD, I spent six weeks in ‘the field’. Having spent the last two years refining my research design and analysing existing literature, I finally got to move on to the data collection phase of my PhD. During my stay in Lebanon, I spent most of my time contacting possible interviewees and conducting interviews with former combatants, party members, civil society representatives, researchers and journalists. Doing research in a post-conflict country is not easy, which is why it is necessary to gain ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee before undertaking fieldwork. My research is situated in the field of conflict and terrorism studies, so you hear many disturbing stories, but it was still a great experience. After two years of exploring my topic from an academic perspective, it was incredibly rewarding to be able to go to ‘the field’, to speak to the people who have experienced all of this themselves and to see that this project you came up with is actually working—that you do get answers to the questions you came up with and that everything is coming together as you had hoped it would.

I also liked the flexibility you have during fieldwork, where your daily schedule very much depends on the availability of your interviewees and thus changes every day. I could even take my daughter, and even though I was very busy with work, we managed to squeeze in regular trips to the park, the beach and some of the many restaurants and sights Beirut and its surroundings have to offer. I am now back in England analysing the data I have gathered and very much looking forward to my next field trip in a few months’ time.

Jennifer Philippa Eggert
Current PhD candidate

Thesis title: Female combatants, non-state political violence and organisational decision-making

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Jennifer Philippa Eggert
Current PhD candidate
Careers

Whether your aim is to join academia, engage in other professional research or otherwise put your expertise and research skills to use, your Warwick PhD will prepare you for life after study. A high proportion of our PhD alumni have secured research fellowships, academic posts and positions as experts in think tanks and other organisations around the world.

Examples of PAIS PhD graduates’ job titles include:
- Lecturer in Politics; International Politics; Political Science; Sociology and Business
- Post-Doctoral Research Fellow
- Teaching Assistant/Fellow
- Consultant
- Diplomat
- Parliamentary Assistant
- Political Consultant
- Research Assistant in Publishing
- Widening Participation Officer

Organisations where PAIS PhD graduates work include:
- Aberystwyth University
- The University of Birmingham
- City University Hong Kong
- City University London
- The University of Warwick
- The University of Exeter
- New York University
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus
- 9/11 Memorial and Museum, New York, USA
- Searching Finance

To learn more about where some of our other alumni have ended up, check out our Employability & Alumni pages online:

[warwick.ac.uk/pais/beyondpais](http://warwick.ac.uk/pais/beyondpais)

For more information on careers that our graduates have gone on to check out the latest stats:

[warwick.ac.uk/services/careers/options/gradstats](http://warwick.ac.uk/services/careers/options/gradstats)
Programme Associate at the Sigur Center for Asian Studies, The George Washington University

I came to Warwick having developed a lifelong interest in Asia, specifically Japan. My PhD thesis was based on US military bases in Okinawa. Under the guidance of my supervisor, Chris Hughes - a world renowned expert in the field of Japanese Studies - I was able to delve deeply into topics I had just skimmed the surface of during my undergraduate degree (US military bases in Japan, the US-Japan security relationship, Japanese foreign policy), and expand my knowledge in political theory with the help of my second supervisor, Nick Vaughan-Williams. Currently, I am the Program Associate at the Sigur Center for Asian Studies, at the Elliott School of International Affairs, at The George Washington University. With Asia being the focus of my studies at Warwick, I am now well-equipped to act as an administrator for grant applications from faculty members centred on this region. Knowledge gained from my PhD has been useful in researching potential donors for projects in Asia and planning Asia-related events at the Elliott School. One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is participating in these events and staying abreast of new developments in the region, all while bringing to them my own unique experience and expertise gained from my studies at Warwick.

Miriam Grinberg
PhD 2017

Lecturer in Political Theory, University of Essex

For me, the best thing about the PhD programme in PAIS is the strong sense of community that I feel with both other PhD students and Faculty members. The PhD students are very sociable and frequently meet up to discuss work or (more often than not) simply go out for a few drinks. It’s great also that many Faculty members tend to work in their offices rather than from home, and so can regularly be seen around the Department.

My supervisors were the best. I have benefited enormously from the supervision they have provided. As a result of their supervision, I have improved the quality of my arguments, learned to write more clearly, and become more marketable in the job market. I have benefited not only from formal supervisions, but also from countless discussions in seminars, workshops and over lunch.

Tom Parr
PhD 2016
Funding opportunities

Funding is one of the biggest challenges when considering postgraduate study, which is why we are working to increase the number of part- and fully-funded scholarships every year.

You can find links to all available opportunities (and their deadlines) on the PAIS website. The Graduate School and International Office websites also host scholarship listings and advice on funding. Check back often as new opportunities arise throughout the year.

Funding opportunities evolve year on year, but normally include ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership funding for home/EU candidates, Chancellor’s International Scholarship for Overseas candidates, and a selection of prestigious country-specific awards for candidates from outside the UK. PAIS also offers a competitive Departmental Scholarship, which is open to any PAIS PhD applicant.

**Warwick PAIS:**
warwick.ac.uk/pais/study/studyphd/funding

**Warwick Graduate School:**
warwick.ac.uk/services/academicoffice/gsp/scholarship/typesoffunding

**Warwick International Office:**
warwick.ac.uk/study/international/admissions/finance/scholarships
Other options
Aside from these, the Graduate School and external funders offer other options each year for both Home and Overseas candidates. You can find links to these and to two Warwick databases of scholarship opportunities on our website, as well as further details on eligibility, the application processes and deadlines.

Check back often as new opportunities arise throughout the year.

warwick.ac.uk/phdpolitics/funding

Next steps
Although there is no strict deadline for applications, you are strongly advised to submit your application at least two weeks before any funding deadlines at Warwick, and no later than 31 July if you are not applying for university funding.

Entry requirements
The PhD programme has strict entry requirements in addition to a strong, viable research proposal that academics in the department are willing to supervise:

► A good Master’s degree in politics or a related subject is required; however, applicants with an unrelated Master’s degree and academic experience relevant to their research proposal will be considered. You should include both your undergraduate and postgraduate transcripts with your application materials.

► Two academic references. Please note that professional references will not be accepted unless you have been out of education for over two years.

► English language proficiency. For non-native English speakers, please note that we require a minimum IELTS score of 7.0 or equivalent.
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This course information was accurate at the time of printing. Our course and module content and schedule is continually reviewed and updated to reflect the latest research expertise at Warwick, so it is therefore very important that you check the website for the latest information before you apply and when you accept an offer.