

EXTRACTS FROM RESEARCH PROJECT HANDBOOK

Overview of the Research Project Modules (p. 6)

The Modern Languages Research Project (SML005), European Studies Research Project (SML014) and Comparative Literature Research Project (SML303) are two-semester modules (30 academic credit points) at Level 6 that are optional for all students in the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film (SLLF). Students are not permitted to take more than one Research Project module. These modules are assessed principally by a 8,000-word research project (including footnotes, but excluding the bibliography). In planning, writing, and completing your research project, you will have the guidance of a supervisor, who will normally be an established member of the SLLF. From the beginning of semester one of your final year, you will meet your supervisor regularly for a series of research project supervisions (more detailed guidance is supplied elsewhere in this handbook). The Research Project modules are worth 25% of your total mark for your final year. Depending on the length of your degree programme (3 or 4 years), this means that this single piece of work is worth between 11% and almost 15% of your entire degree. As such it is the most important piece of writing you will complete as an undergraduate.

The Single Semester Research Project (SML310) is a module open to Associate students that are enrolled at the College for the first Semester only, not to full-year Associate nor Queen Mary students. This one-semester module (30 credits) at Level 6 is assessed by a 7,000-word research project (including footnotes, but excluding the bibliography). As for the other Research Project modules, students will have the guidance of a supervisor.

The Research Project modules are convened by a member of the academic staff, who is responsible for the formal and administrative aspect of the module. If you have any queries relating to these matters, they should be directed to the module convenor; but note that s/he is not able to provide academic guidance relating to your specific topic. Note further that the convenor for SML310 is not necessarily the same as for the SML005, SML014 and SML303 modules. Students are advised to verify who the module convenor is in Module Directory. For the academic year 2013-14, the course convenor for the Modern Languages Research Project (SML005), the European Studies Research Project (SML014) and the Comparative Literature Research Project (SML303) is Dr Olga Makarova (o.makarova@qmul.ac.uk).

Prerequisites of the Research Project Modules (p. 7)

Entry to the Research Project modules is not automatic. For the academic year 2013-14, students will be admitted on the basis of four criteria:

1. Previous attainment: a minimum 2.1 grade is needed
2. The letter of support of the adviser
3. The letter of support of the supervisor
4. The acceptance of the research project proposal

All students who wish to take one of the Research Project modules and who satisfy the previous attainment criterion must first ask their adviser to send the module organiser a letter of support in which it is confirmed that the student has a minimum 2.1 grade (i.e. minimum of 60%). The letter should also include the student's name, as well as the module title and code (SML005 for the Modern Languages Research Project, SML014 and SML303 for respectively the European Studies and the Comparative Literature one). Letters of support should be sent to **Dr Olga Makarova by May 30, 2013** at the latest. The subject of the email should be 'Letter of support from adviser'.

The student also needs to find a supervisor that is willing to oversee the proposed research project. Ideally students should meet with their potential supervisor before writing their proposal to discuss a possible topic. Once a topic has been agreed, the supervisor is expected to send a letter of support to the course organiser by **June 15, 2013** confirming that s/he agrees to supervise the student in question and that s/he has pre-approved the proposed research topic. The letter of support should mention the student's name, module title and code, as well as the provisional title of the research project. The subject of the email should be 'Letter of support from supervisor'.

Finally, the student needs to send a research project proposal to the module organiser at the latest by **June 15, 2013**. The subject of the email should be 'Research project proposal' followed by the module code (SML005 for the Modern Languages Research Project, SML014 and SML303 for respectively the European Studies and the Comparative Literature one). The proposal should be included as a PDF or a Word attachment. For further guidelines on the content and format of the research project proposal, see below.

Research Project Proposal Guidelines

Writing a Research Project Proposal will help you clarify and delimit the topic you wish to explore in your research project. You are advised to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Your Research Project Proposal should be sent as a PDF or a Word file
- It should be min. two and max. three pages in length
- Ensure that the proposal is written in Times New Roman 12 pt, is double-spaced and has margins of at least 2.5 cm
- Ensure that the pages are numbered
- Add at the top of the first page:
 - your name
 - student number
 - module code
 - name of your supervisor(s)

The following information should be included in your Research Project Proposal:

1. **A provisional project title.** Include a provisional project title. It should be concise, yet clearly reflect the research topic of your proposal.
2. **A statement and significance of research question.** State clearly what you will be exploring in your research project and how you plan to do this. Explain why this research question is important and interesting. The research question should be formulated in such a way that a reader who is not familiar with the field of study can understand the research question that you are proposing and the significance of this research in a larger context. If need be, define terms.
3. **Aims and objectives.** Describe the aims and objectives of the proposed research project.
4. **Background.** Demonstrate how your background gives you sufficient knowledge and skills to successfully complete the project. Explain how the proposed research project fits into your larger goals at university and what you hope to have learned by the end of it.

Do not forget to include a bibliography of the references you have mentioned in your proposal.

Assignment Guidelines (p. 9)

The Modern Languages Research Project (SML005), European Studies Research Project (SML014) and Comparative Literature Research Project (SML303) modules are examined via two differently weighed components:

1. A 1,500-word **Project Progress Exercise**, submitted in the second week after Reading Week: for the academic year 2013-2014, the deadline is **November 18, 2013 before 4pm**. Failure to submit this assignment will result in exclusion from the module through de-registration.
2. A 8,000-word **Research Project**, submitted during the Exam Period after the spring vacation: for the academic year 2013-2014, the deadline is **April 28, 2014 before 4pm**.

The Project Progress Exercise will make up **10 %** of the final mark.

The Research Project will make up **90 %** of the final mark.

Supervision and How it Works (p. 18)

The most important contact you will have with your supervisor will take the form of a series of one-to-one supervisions during the two semesters of the academic year. The SLLF imposes a minimum requirement – equally applicable to supervisees and supervisors – that every student will receive an appropriate supervision **at least twice**

each semester for 30 minutes or longer. It may be the case that you are offered a greater number of supervisions over the course of the year, but as this can vary from person to person it makes sense to find out about your supervisor's availability and approach as soon as possible. Supervisions will normally be convened in your supervisor's office during regular working hours, unless otherwise agreed.

How your supervisions work will depend on you and your supervisor, but they will usually be organised around one or more of the following documents or discussion points:

- A **detailed research plan** that you have prepared in advance, and which is revised to clarify key objectives during the course of your supervision meeting;
- A **report** (verbal or written) that addresses the research and writing you have completed to date, in the light of the research plan agreed at the previous meeting;
- A **piece of critical writing** (around 1000-2000 words in length) that you have produced (perhaps a draft of part of a research project chapter), and that you have sent to your supervisor in advance of the supervision;
- A **draft** of the submission you are preparing for the **Project Progress Exercise**.

A supervisor can expect a research project student to

1. Turn up to appointments, having prepared adequately for them.
2. Develop a plan for research, and perform the research tasks as agreed.
3. Write regularly, and to submit draft material according to an agreed timetable.
4. Tell the truth about the work s/he has done and has not done.
5. Keep in touch about work patterns, holidays, illness, etc.
6. Work independently, and to be excited by and interested in the research project.

Students can expect their supervisors to

1. Turn up to appointments, having read any drafts submitted by agreement.
2. Help to develop an appropriate plan for the research and writing process.
3. Help to identify appropriate resources (books, libraries, articles, theories).
4. Provide written / verbal feedback on the drafts submitted, and in reasonable time.

Can I expect my supervisor to read drafts of my work?

Yes, your supervisor will expect to read substantial drafts of your work (sections of 1,000-2,000 words long). His / her comments and discussion of your work will guide you to improve that section by revision, and help to plan how to approach the next section. Nevertheless, supervisors cannot be expected to read the same section more than once. This means that when you submit a 'draft', it must observe high standards of intellectual rigour and formal presentation, with no spelling mistakes, typos, or grammatical errors. Your supervisor is not a copy editor. Don't waste your supervisor's time (and your own supervision resource) by submitting unfinished or messy drafts.

Can I expect my supervisor to read the whole research project when finished?

No, your supervisor helps you to develop your plans and ideas, but the final responsibility for the submitted research project is yours. But you are advised to get somebody – a fellow student, a member of your family – to read your final draft, both in terms of content (argument, expression) and form (presentation, citations).

How Long Will It All Take? (p. 23)

Students should consider somewhere around **12 working weeks** (60 days) as a rough guideline for how long it takes to produce a 8,000-word undergraduate research project. As much as a third of this time (4 weeks) will be given over to primary research – to reading (or re-reading) and annotating the literary and/or theoretical texts that are the main focus of your research project. Hopefully you will have completed most or all of this already, during the summer vacation. The remaining 8 weeks can be split more or less equally between research and writing; 40 days, in other words, is the bare minimum that you need to incorporate into your work schedule between late September and early May during your final year. It will be hard to achieve this. Even if you factor in one whole day during each week of the two 12-week semesters, you will still need to find a further 16 days – more than 3 working weeks – during the Christmas and Spring vacations (when you'll inevitably have other extended research and writing projects to complete). And if you haven't yet finished your primary reading tasks, you'll need to fit this in elsewhere – in evenings, at weekends, whenever you have a chance.

While 8 weeks may sound like a lot of time to spend on an essay of 8,000 words, when you break it down it amounts to just 1 day to research (from scratch) and 1 day to write (in polished and coherent prose) each integrated 400-word segment of your research project. In other words, for a main chapter of 2,500-2,750 words you will have a total of just 12-13 days (including all the final redrafting, editing, and troubleshooting tasks that you put off to the last minute), which you might allocate as follows:

- 3 days of (secondary) research, focusing on broad contextual issues
- 2 days of exploratory writing, identifying questions for additional research
- 2 further days of more specific and targeted research
- 2-3 days to write up a full draft of the chapter
- a supervision, in which the draft is reviewed and analysed
- 2-3 days of further research and re-writing, in response to supervision
- 1 day of editing, polishing, tying up loose ends, sourcing images, etc.

You don't need to plan the whole of your project in this much detail at the start of the final year. However, what you should do is make an **outline plan** for your research project with anticipated word counts for each main section, and then to apportion between them the total time you have available for research and writing.