

Information on the MSc Research Project

The research project is a key component of your MSc programme, counting for 60 of the 180 credits. Therefore, it is very important that you spend sufficient time planning your project so that it is as successful and rewarding as possible. The information below addresses the questions commonly asked about the MSc project. If you have any further queries, each programme has a designated member of staff responsible for the organisation of projects. You can find their contact details on our web site on the appropriate programme page.

Where can I do my project?

You can complete your project in Liverpool, either by carrying out experimental work in one of our laboratories or by undertaking a desk-based study (e.g. a literature-based study or analysis of data). Alternatively, you can go overseas to collect your data provided you have additional funds to cover the costs involved (see below) and subject to a satisfactory risk assessment and ethics approval (if applicable). International students may return to their home country to conduct their data collection if they wish. Students typically spend around 8 weeks in the field.

How much does a project cost?

The standard MSc fee covers the cost of a desk-based study conducted in Liverpool.

If you wish to conduct a project overseas, you will be asked to pay a fee of £3500 in addition to the standard fee. Payment of this fee at the beginning of the programme is to assure us that you have the necessary funding to conduct an overseas project before we make commitments with overseas hosts but it will be returned to you in full when you need to make the arrangements for your project. The figure of £3500 is based on the experience of previous students and allows maximum flexibility in choice and design of project. However, costs vary widely depending on the location and the nature of the work and it is usually possible to design a project at a lower cost if your budget is restricted. Typically, students pay £700 - £1000 for their flight, visa and insurance. All students are required to book travel through the LSTM approved travel agent and take out travel insurance through the LSTM approved scheme (current cost is £100, which is significantly cheaper for our students and is part of the duty of care for students in the field). Other expenses to take into account are visas, accommodation, medical costs (vaccinations / anti-malarial drugs), costs of obtaining local ethical clearance and local travel. Clinical or laboratory-based projects may involve purchase of chemicals, whilst projects involving interviews often require the services of a local interpreter / research assistant.

You can also opt to pay this over 2 instalments of 50% in September and January.

How do I organise my project?

There are a variety of projects depending on which MSc programme you are following and your individual research interests. You are advised to give some thought before arriving in Liverpool as to the type of project you might like to carry out, including approaching potential overseas hosts if appropriate. The School keeps a database of potential projects, some with overseas partners. Shortly after the start of the programme, we share our projects with you so you can find out more about the research interests of the LSTM staff and the potential projects on offer. You can devise your own project provided a suitable LSTM supervisor can be identified.

In Semester 1, you will follow a module in Research Methods, during which you will get help in designing and costing your project, completing your risk assessment and obtaining ethics approval (if necessary). You will also meet with your supervisor to get one-to-one advice.

Can I change my mind about the type of project I want to do?

If you have paid the £3500 project fee but subsequently decide to undertake a project a desk-based project, the project monies will be refunded. Likewise, switching from a project based in Liverpool to one involving overseas data collection is not a problem provided you have the necessary funding and allow sufficient time to make this change and to complete project preparation. However, please note that overseas projects are inevitably more expensive than those based in Liverpool and you will need access to additional funds.

If you are hoping to obtain sponsorship to help with your fees, you should include the full overseas project fee of £3500 in any sponsorship application in order to keep your options open regarding choice of project. Otherwise, you are likely to have difficulty in obtaining additional funding from your sponsor once the programme has started. It is very rare for sponsors to support overseas projects so please do bear this mind when choosing projects.

Options:

1. You pay your £3,500 up front and develop your overseas project. Monies are refunded to you in April to fund your flights, etc... less insurance cost.
2. You pay your £3,500 over 2 instalments in Sept & Jan so the monies are available to you in April – same as above
3. You decide you have the funds but don't want LSTM to hold these for you – that's acceptable. However, please bear in mind that projects are developed from very early in Semester 1. There are pieces of assessed work based on this project such as a Project Proposal, various ethics processes, etc... Please be advised that if you find yourself in a position where you don't have the funds anymore and need to switch to a desk-based project, that you will need to produce additional pieces of work for the new project and may be subject to delays in ethics by switching projects late. This will not count as mitigating circumstances for additional time.

DISSERTATION PROJECTS FOR MSc HUMANITARIAN STUDIES (MHS) AND MSc HUMANITARIAN HEALTH PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (MHHPM)

Overseas Field Based Projects

The majority of students on the MHS and MHHPM carry out an overseas field-based research project for their dissertation. Students typically spend 8-12 weeks in the field. International students may return to their home country to conduct their data collection if they wish. The MHS/MHHPM faculty actively seek student research placements with leading humanitarian NGOs, matching the interests of our students with the needs of the NGOs. This provides students with a great opportunity to work in the field with a reputable organisation and produce work that will be relevant to future practice. Students are advised to engage in the process of planning their research project placement as early as possible and are welcome to approach MHS/MHHPM faculty for advice and guidance as soon as they have received an unconditional offer of a place at LSTM.

The cost of an overseas field-based project ranges from £1,500 - 3,500. Costs are variable between projects but this would typically cover the following: flights, visas, health and travel insurance, vaccinations, accommodation, local ethics committee costs, local travel, research assistant/interpreter stipend costs and possibly an honorarium to the host institution.

Students who are employed by and sponsored by humanitarian NGOs and other appropriate organisations may, subject to LSTM academic, ethical and administrative approval, undertake a field-based project with their organisation. In such cases, the additional overseas field-based project fee will not be required, provided that the sponsoring organisation provides written confirmation that it will be responsible for all arrangements and costs associated with the project.

Desk or 'Home' Based Projects

As an alternative to an overseas field-based project, students can carry out a 'desk based' study such as a narrative literature review or a critical analysis of existing data. It is also possible to conduct a 'home' based project with an NGO or other appropriate organisation that does not require travel outside the UK (or, in the case of non-UK students, the student's home country). Students undertaking these projects are not required to pay an additional research project fee in advance but are required to meet whatever costs may be incurred in undertaking such a project themselves.

Some projects carried out by previous students have been published in peer reviewed journals:

- Bridges, K.M. (2010), *Between Aid and Politics: diagnosing the challenge of humanitarian advocacy in politically complex environments—the case of Darfur, Sudan*. *Third World Quarterly*, 31, 8:1251–1269
- O'Keefe, M. (2010), *Chronic Crises in the Arc of Insecurity: a case study of Karamoja*. *Third World Quarterly*, 31, 8:1271–1295
- Blackwell, P.J. (2010) *East Africa's Pastoralist Emergency: is climate change the straw that breaks the camel's back?* *Third World Quarterly*, 31, 8:1321–1338
- Martin, M-L. (2010) *Child Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction: the case of flood-affected children in Bangladesh*. *Third World Quarterly*, 31, 8:1357–1375
- Shannon, R. (2009) *Playing with principles in an era of securitized aid: negotiating humanitarian space in post- 9/11 Afghanistan*. *Progress in Development Studies*, 9, 1:15–36
- Whittall, J. (2009) *'It's like talking to a brick wall': humanitarian diplomacy in the occupied Palestinian territory*. *Progress in Development Studies* 9, 1: 37–53
- Towle, M. S. (2009), *Scaling up beyond 'pills and skills': preventing parent-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission and the public/private divide in southern India*. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 24: S30–S51.
- Stott, K. (2009), *Out of sight, out of mind? The psychosocial needs of children formerly associated with armed forces: a case study of Save the children UK's work in Beni and Lubero territories, North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo*. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 24: S52–S72.
- Villacorta-Linaza, R. (2009), *Bridging the gap: the role of pharmacists in managing the drug supply cycle within nongovernmental organizations*. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 24: S73–S86.