



The University of Manchester

Faculty of Humanities

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

Postgraduate Taught

**SALC60000 Skills Training
and Academic Development Handbook**

2024-2025

Please Note:

Information relevant to all postgraduate taught programmes in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures (SALC) can be found in the School Postgraduate Taught Handbook, which should be read and used as a reference in conjunction with this Handbook.

The School Handbook, along with all subject-specific Handbooks, is available online here:

<https://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/student-intranet/study/handbooks>

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SALC60000 Skills Training and Academic Development

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures (SALC)

2024-2025

Introduction

Welcome to SALC60000 – your course unit for academic development as a Master's student in the School of Arts, Languages, and Cultures (SALC).

SALC60000, the Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Skills Training and Academic Development programme, is only available to PGT students in SALC and is designed to support your academic and professional development, alongside your core programme of studies.

The course offers non-assessed, non-compulsory lectures, workshops, peer review sessions and events available for all Master's-level students in SALC. Alongside the course's core programme of training activities, the course also supports and advertises events targeted to SALC PGTs from university partners, including the University Centre for Academic English, the Careers Service, the University Library's Teaching and Learning Team, the Alumni Association, and the Arts Methods Programme in the Graduate School.

SALC60000 is a core and essential part of the School's offer to you as PGT students undertaking Masters-level study at the University of Manchester.

The course is designed to enhance your academic and professional development – specifically in the areas of *academic writing*, *study skills*, and *using theory* – both to complement and expand upon the training you receive at departmental level.

The course is innovatively interdisciplinary, drawing upon ideas and information from across the subject range of the School. Sessions include examples from *art and art history*, *classics and ancient history*, *drama*, *digital humanities*, *English literature and creative writing*, *American studies*, *film studies*, *history*, *humanitarianism*, *modern languages and cultures*, *music*, *religions and theology*, and *translation and intercultural studies*.

In this way, when we examine the theory of 'powerful knowledge', the course explores examples such as Beethoven's 9th Symphony and the novel *Fahrenheit 451*; when we consider 'Marxist theory', we will explore music by Tracy Chapman, the symbolist paintings of Gustav Klimt, and Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*; when we consider the importance of structure and planning, we will also explore the Code of Hammurabi and the Jewish mitzvot; and when we look at key elements of academic writing in the humanities, we will take into consideration key issues such as the Holocaust and the Atlantic Slave Trade.

This approach is relatively unique and, I hope you will find, offers you a fascinating and interdisciplinary approach to your academic development.

In this way, the course provides you with structured and supported processes to develop transferable skills, experience and knowledge relevant to your academic studies and future career, and to help you plan for your own personal, educational and career development. Though you are not required to attend sessions offered on the Programme, the workshops and events are aimed directly at our School's PGT students and so they are particularly useful to further develop your professional and academic profile. These workshops complement the training events organised by your individual departments and divisions. Ultimately, the course provides you with training activities, resources, workshops, events, and tools to boost your confidence, challenge you, to empower you to succeed and to successfully complete your programme of study with us.

I hope by the end of this course, you will have a better understanding of arts, histories, languages, and cultures as an interdisciplinary whole, as well as your disciplinary subject area; theories that you may not have encountered before; the wider world around us, and perhaps even yourself; and, most importantly, how to think and write about all of these things effectively as a Master's graduate.

This Handbook contains a preliminary list of all sessions for 2024-25, along with further information about the programme and working at Master's level.

A complete list of skills training sessions, including full description and sign-up details, for all events, will be distributed at the start of each semester and will be available to download from our SALC60000 Blackboard. The Blackboard also contains advice sections and session materials (handouts, presentations, readings, etc).

The key to enjoying and maximising your time as a Master's student is getting involved and taking part in as much as you can, so we encourage you to participate in the learning and development activities provided to complement your studies and aid your academic development. To this end, I look forward to having you join the events designed for you as part of SALC60000.

If you have any questions about SALC60000, I welcome all enquiries and will be available to you throughout the year via in-person and online office hours, detailed below. Wishing you all my best for your Master's studies with us here at Manchester.

Dr David Firth



SALC60000 PGT Skills Training Programme 2024-2025

List of sessions – Semester 1

Study Skills / Academic Writing (Monday 4 pm – 6 pm)

Week 1: Introduction to SALC60000: Study Skills and Academic Writing at Master's Level

Week 2: Study Skills: Planning and Time Management Skills

Week 3: Study Skills: Research and Academic Reading Skills at Master's Level

Week 4: Academic Writing: Academic Writing at Master's Level

Week 5: Study Skills: Critical Thinking at Master's Level

Week 6: *Reading Week*

Week 7: Study Skills: Impostor Syndrome

Week 8: Study Skills: Mindfulness for Academic Writing

Week 9: Academic Writing: Constructing and Structuring Your Argument in Essays

Week 10: Academic Writing: Introductions and Conclusions in Essays

Week 11: Academic Writing: Precision and Objectivity in Essays

Week 12: Academic Writing: 20 Tips to Improve Your Essays

Using Theory (Tuesday 4 pm – 6 pm)

Week 1: Introduction to the Scholarly Method

Week 2: Introduction to the History of Writing

Week 3: Introduction to Powerful Knowledge

Week 4: Introduction to Form and Content

Week 5: Introduction to Logical Fallacies

Week 6: *Reading Week*

Week 7: Introduction to Poetry

Week 8: Introduction to Capitalism

Week 9: Introduction to Imperialism

Week 10: Introduction to Marxist Theory

Week 11: Introduction to Postcolonial Theory

Week 12: Introduction to World-Systems Theory

Peer Review (Wednesday 2 pm – 4 pm)

Week 1: Expectations / University as a Workplace

Week 2: Improving Your Study Habits

Week 3: Grade Descriptors at Master's Level

Week 4: Generative AI – Using it Appropriately in Research

Week 5: Generative AI – in Writing, Assessment, and Academic Malpractice

Week 6: *Reading Week*

Week 7: Getting Started with Essays

Week 8: Applying for a PhD

Week 9: Writing your PhD Funding Proposal

Week 10: Essay writing – Introductions

Week 11: Essay writing – Main Body

Week 12: Essay writing – Conclusions

SALC60000 PGT Skills Training Programme 2024-2025

List of sessions – Semester 2

Study Skills / Academic Writing (Dissertation) (Day/time tbc)

- Week 1: Dissertation: Proposal, Planning, Presenting
- Week 2: Study Skills: Research Ethics for PGTs
- Week 3: Study Skills: Academic Presentations and Conferences
- Week 4: Study Skills: Impostor Syndrome (repeat session)
- Week 5: Dissertation: Preparing for Supervision and Feedback
- Week 6: Study Skills: Research Ethics for PGTs (repeat session)
- Week 7: Dissertation: Planning and Time Management
- Week 8: Dissertation: Conducting Effective Literature Reviews
- Week 9: Dissertation: Writing, Formatting and Presenting Your Dissertation
- Week 10: Dissertation: Preparing, Planning, and Reviewing
- Week 11: Dissertation: Shaping Your Argument, Introduction, and Conclusion
- Week 12: Dissertation: Honing an Effective Argument, Redrafting and Submitting

Using Theory (Day/time tbc)

- Week 1: Introduction to Feminism: Formations of Feminism
- Week 2: Introduction to Feminism: Thinking Beyond the Binary
- Week 3: Introduction to Intersectionality
- Week 4: Introduction to Allegory
- Week 5: Introduction to Radical Candour
- Week 6: Introduction to Shakespeare
- Week 7: Introduction to Decolonising Education
- Week 8: Introduction to Queer Theory
- Week 9: Introduction to Myth
- Week 10: Introduction to Ethics
- Week 11: Introduction to Censorship
- Week 12: Introduction to Artificial Intelligence

Peer Review (Day/time tbc)

- Week 1: PhD applications
- Week 2: PhD applications
- Week 3: Dissertation proposals
- Week 4: Dissertation proposals
- Week 5: Essay writing – Methods & good habits
- Week 6: Essay writing – Introductions
- Week 7: Essay writing – Main Body
- Week 8: Essay writing – Conclusions
- Week 9: Dissertation outlines
- Week 10: Dissertation outlines
- Week 11: Dissertation methodologies
- Week 12: Dissertation literature reviews

About SALC60000

Teaching

To support you as a Master's student, SALC60000 has three core areas of teaching and provision:

- Academic Writing
- Study Skills
- Using Theory

Academic Writing and Study Skills sessions run in tandem within one stream of seminars throughout the year. Using Theory sessions run as a separate stream of seminars. These streams are also supported by a stream of Peer Review sessions. These sessions are only provided to PGT students in SALC, and are designed specifically for you, making SALC60000 a unique feature of the School's provision to its Master's students. More information about each of these three streams is provided below. All sessions are delivered by Dr David Firth.

Weekly Bulletins

You will receive weekly bulletin emails at the start of each week, listing the sessions available and their key details in each given week. These emails will also contain information about relevant events across the university, including from partners in the Careers Service, the University Centre for Academic English, the Alumni Association, the University Library's Teaching and Learning Team, the Alumni Association, and the Arts Methods Programme in the Graduate School.

Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity is a cornerstone of SALC60000 and a key part of its delivery. The course unit is available and applicable to all PGT students in the School and draws upon ideas and information from across the School's subject range. Sessions include examples from *art and art history, classics and ancient history, drama, digital humanities, English literature and creative writing, American studies, film studies, history, humanitarianism, modern languages and cultures, music, religions and theology, and translation and intercultural studies*. The interdisciplinary nature of the course is designed to be interesting and support you in your own studies and beyond. More information about interdisciplinarity is provided below.

Duration

SALC60000 is a year-long course unit. It runs in both Semester 1 and Semester 2.

There are also additional events after the formal end of teaching in Semester 2, to support your dissertations.

Interactivity

All primary SALC sessions take place online and feature a range of interactivity. You will be invited to take part either through voice/text chat features or other functions, such as polling and word clouds for group analysis and shared critical thinking. There will also always be time for Q&A at the end of each session.

Motto

“Be Inspired. Stay Active. Succeed.”

This is the motto for SALC60000. The motto sets my intention for the course and my expectation for you.

Be Inspired. This is what the School offers you – to be inspired by high-quality innovative teaching, research-informed, accessible and inclusive practices, effective feedback, fascinating content, and a real enthusiasm for learning.

Stay Active. This is what you bring to the School – to stay active in your learning, to attend your core and optional course units, to attend SALC60000 to support your studies and widen your knowledge, and to develop your own active learning and research habits as a Master’s student, alongside your other activities and commitments.

Succeed. Bringing both of these together equates to the successful completion of your Master’s degree.

Remember that achieving success as a Master’s student, and reaching your highest potential on your programme of study and beyond, entails a significant commitment of effort and dedication. You will most likely have come to us with a sincere passion for your chosen subject area – match that passion with:

- purpose and intention – set yourself meaningful, achievable goals that guide and direct the effort you’re putting in and the pathway you’re leading to.
- structure – manage your time effectively and plan your success.
- consistency – make sure that your effort is consistent and sustained over time. Regular, focused work is more likely to yield positive results than sporadic bursts of effort.
- resilience – remember that success is rarely linear and setbacks are common, which can be difficult to navigate, so it’s helpful to build up your ability to bounce back, not be deterred by challenges, and learn from mistakes.
- support – make use of the support and resources provided to you so that you make the most of your time with us.
- mentality – visualising your goals, staying focussed on your purpose, and maintaining a positive mindset can help you stay motivated and will support you on your path to success.
- continuous learning – complement your passion and effort with a commitment to continuous learning and self-improvement can lead to ongoing growth and development.

Success is the result of a combination of factors, and though some factors may be out of your control, remember that many factors are in your control. It’s important to recognize that the path to success can be different for each person and may involve various strategies and resources. The only level of success you should concern yourself with is your own set of experiences and expectations informing what you want to achieve. Adapting your efforts to your unique goals and circumstances is key to achieving meaningful and sustainable success. And I’m wishing you all my very best in this pursuit.

More broadly, the motto supports and underlines the University of Manchester’s Student Charter, which was developed jointly by the University and the Students' Union, to establish and maintain clear mutual expectations for the experience of all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The Charter provides an overview of the Manchester experience, refers to regulations, policies, and procedures, and sets out what students and staff can expect from each other as partners in a learning community. For more information on the Student Charter: <http://www.yoursay.manchester.ac.uk/student-charter>

Accessibility

Accessibility is a cornerstone of SALC60000 sessions.

All primary SALC60000 sessions are hosted online via Zoom / Teams. This is due to the size of the PGT student cohort registered for the course unit, and therefore allows flexibility for all learners to join, whether from campus, from home, for part-time students, for distance learners, and learners with disabilities. Other sessions will be hosted on campus, including sessions from partner providers in the University. The location of SALC60000 sessions, and partner events, will always be clearly marked as either “Online” or “On Campus” (followed by specific location), so that it is fully clear how an event is being hosted and where.

Live transcription will be available for primary content on SALC60000 sessions.

All primary sessions will include on screen visual PowerPoint presentations. Key information will be available on the slides and, as I expand on that key information, the live transcription will caption what I am saying. If you find there is an issue with the captioning, or it becomes unclear, please don't hesitate to let me know.

All of the visual information on slides will be verbalised. This means that any written text will be verbalised, so if you're not able to see the screen, this won't affect the provision you receive. Equally, any images, artworks, videos, or diagrams, etc, that are used in presentations will be described verbally as I present the information. If anything is unclear, please don't hesitate to let me know.

All of the SALC60000 sessions involve some degree of interactivity. I use a range of features, including the Zoom chat function, and add-on functions that will invite you to interact through live polls, Q&As, and word clouds. This can be a lot of fun, as we can analyse a key text, source, or piece of writing with every student all contributing points of analysis that can then be visualised on screen. I will also verbalise anything that's visual in this capacity and verbalise any comments shared as part of the group discussion. If the interactivity in any way inhibits your full participation, please contact me as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Due to their interactive nature, sessions are not recorded.

You don't have to participate if you don't wish to or aren't able to. Please don't feel that you have to participate. There can be a whole host of reasons why you may not wish to on a given day or time, and there's no judgment at all about that. If you wish to simply join a session to listen or read, that is absolutely fine.

Please note:

- For Study Skills, Academic Writing, and Using Theory sessions, you do not need your microphone or camera unless you wish to use them.
- For Peer Review sessions, after the first ~30-minute key information presentation element to the session, a microphone, camera, and/or text option will be required to interact.

I am passionately committed to ensuring that every student and all learners can fully participate in SALC60000 sessions, so if you require any additional facilities or resources to make the course fully accessible for you, please get in touch as soon as you can. I will do everything possible to help.

Working at Master's Level

From Undergraduate to Postgraduate

Working at Master's level is different to studying for a Bachelor's degree, and it's important to understand what those differences are and what to expect as a Postgraduate Taught (PGT) student.

In some ways, a Master's degree builds on modes of teaching and learning that you will have become familiar with over the course of your Bachelor's degree programme. Your Master's programme will involve modular teaching and independent learning (such as reading and research). However, the crucial component of any Master's programme is developing your academic independence and your depth of specialisation. In this way, a Master's degree constitutes your enhanced 'mastery' of your discipline.

Whereas Bachelor's programmes generally consist of a relatively structured curriculum with a set of required courses for all students in the entire intake, Master's programmes are more flexible to your interests, with an emphasis on undertaking longer and more advanced academic writing and research, both in the form of article-length essays and a dissertation. This is reflected in the marking criteria for Master's work – an assignment that got you a top mark at undergraduate level will not score as highly at Master's level because there is a step-up in expectation and requirement. Producing work with original research and well-constructed arguments may be highly praised at undergraduate level but these things are considered a basic requirement at Master's level.

In this way, while a Bachelor's degree provides a broad foundation in a disciplinary field of study and is usually the first step in higher education, a Master's degree represents a higher level of specialization and expertise in a specific area. This mastery involves having a more advanced theoretical understanding of your subject and the ability to pursue and produce original research. A Master's programme at Manchester therefore not only delves deeper into the subject matter, it gives you the freedom to explore your particular interests, and advances your academic development and confidence.

For these reasons, and because a Master's degree is a much shorter course (undertaken either as 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time), there is a much greater need to focus your time, develop your academic skills and independence, and expand your understanding and application of theoretical knowledge.

For all of these reasons, the SALC60000 course unit is incredibly useful to you, as it offers you a very broad range of lectures and workshops that cover all of the key areas to support your academic development and mastery of your subject – including academic writing, study skills, and using theory – as well as one-on-one support and peer review sessions.

Expectations

As a Master's programme is shorter and carries higher expectations, it can be a much more intense experience. Your lecturers will expect you to turn up prepared and to take an active lead in discussions. It is important to understand their expectations, the expectations of the university, and to set expectations for yourself. Here are some key expectations to help you flourish as a Master's student at Manchester:

- **Advanced Knowledge** – you will be expected to deepen your knowledge of your subject area, building on the solid foundation of your Bachelor's degree, leading to a deeper understanding of fundamental concepts and theories in your discipline and across disciplines. SALC60000 Using Theory sessions are a great way to introduce yourself to a range of key concepts, issues and theories that you'll encounter, or may wish to consider, as part of your studies.
- **Critical Thinking** – you will be expected to demonstrate critical thinking and analysis in your Master's assignments. Being critical involves the ability to question, evaluate and critique existing literature, research, sources, and theories, as well as to generate original insights and ideas in response. Come along to the SALC60000 session on critical thinking to understand what is expected and help develop your own critical thinking skills.
- **Independent Research** – you will be expected to conduct independent research and produce well-written essays and a dissertation that demonstrate your research abilities and mastery of the subject at hand. Lecturers will help you foster this independence by prompting you to formulate your own essay questions and supporting you through the design, research and writing of your dissertation. SALC60000 offers you peer review sessions to discuss your ideas with students from across the School and offers you a range of dissertation-related lectures and workshops to help scaffold you up to independent research.
- **Active Participation** – lecturers appreciate active participation in seminar discussions, and you will be expected to contribute to the academic discourse by sharing your perspective, asking questions, and engaging in constructive debates. Don't overthink this or worry – they won't expect you to be a Jedi Master of your field, but they will expect you to have prepared for every seminar and be ready to discuss. SALC60000 sessions feature a range of interactivity to help you develop your active participation and think about academia as a collaborative interdisciplinary undertaking. Equally, you're also very welcome to come along and simply listen, if you so wish.
- **Professionalism** – a Master's degree is a stepping stone, either to your career pathway or further study for a PhD, and you should treat it accordingly – the university is a workplace and you are mastering your subject as part of that workplace. In this way, make sure to meet deadlines, respect academic integrity, follow research ethics guidance, and maintain a respectful and collaborative attitude toward fellow students and faculty.
- **Formality** – a key part of professionalism is formality. Just as you are expected to use academic formality in your written work, so too is it important to maintain a certain level of formality in your communications and behaviour. Formality can be helpful to establish respect, to navigate boundaries, apply consistency in professional practices, and encourage you to think about your level and precision of communication.
- **Writing and Communication Skills** – effective written and oral communication skills are essential. You will be expected to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely, both in seminars and in coursework. Being able to articulate yourself and communicate your ideas in a clear and precise manner, with

technical, conceptual and theoretical command, is crucial to achieving the best result in your Master's degree.

- **Time Management** – a Master's is demanding and a key skill is managing your time effectively to meet your academic requirements and develop your own academic skills and theoretical knowledge, which can be especially challenging if you have other commitments, such as part-time work or caring responsibilities. Staff will be on time for seminars and appointments and expect the same of you. Come along to the SALC60000 time management session for a range of practical tips and suggestions on how to manage your time effectively and keep on top of all your commitments. If you find that you're habitually or perpetually late, there will probably be an underlying reason for this, so come along to my office hours and we can talk it through and, if needed, I can point you in the direction of further support in the university.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility** – you may encounter subject matter that is challenging and requires adaptability and an openness to different perspectives. You may encounter different views or ideas as part of your seminar discussions that you strongly dislike or disagree with, but a basic expectation of a diverse classroom is to allow space for different views and outlooks. While controversial topics may come up, and there may be disagreements, everyone should be treated courteously.
- **Research, Theory, Methods** – you will be expected to develop your research skills, your theoretical knowledge, and to use different methods in your studies. Don't rely on one source or resource. Make sure that you get accustomed to using library resources, databases, and scholarly search engines, and be open to different approaches and methods.
- **Engagement with the Field** – to gain mastery of your subject as a Master's student, you are encouraged to stay up to date with current developments in the field. Start by thinking about which academic journals and associations are most important for your studies, and consider ways in which you conduct library searches, such as sorting results by those most recently published. Look for new publications of key journals, edited collections and monographs. You can also attend research seminars hosted in your department and in the School, and may want to consider attending an academic conference.
- **Self-motivation** – Master's degrees require independent study and research, and to succeed at this you need to stay motivated towards achieving your goal and purpose. Lecturers will expect you to be self-motivated and proactive in seeking out opportunities for learning and research. You should also want this for yourself – so make sure your purpose remains in focus.
- **Feedback** – you can expect to receive both formative and summative feedback on your work as part of your studies, particularly as you prepare for your dissertation, which will receive more close feedback than you may be accustomed to. The best feedback you will receive as students will be feedback that is explicit in what needs to be improved and gives clear guidance on how to make those improvements, i.e., effective feedback should be productive and something you can take action on to improve. In this way, see feedback as a gift – effective feedback equates to someone devoting their time to support you and help you understand what you need to do to improve. Feedback is a natural part of learning, and a fundamental part of both the scholarly method and rigorous academic inquiry – the peer review process is a cornerstone of academia – it's something that all academics receive for their own work. SALC60000 helps prepare you for this by offering formative feedback on your work at key stages, including in workshops and 1-1 support, and through peer review sessions, where you will be guided on how to develop effective feedback practices to support your own and others' work.

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – at the University of Manchester, diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly, regardless of gender, gender identity, disability, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or transgender status, age, or nationality. The University is a diverse institution and a ‘diverse classroom’, a pedagogical phrase that essentially means learning spaces include students from a wide range of backgrounds, such as different racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, linguistic, and academic backgrounds. In a diverse classroom, please be aware that students may vary in terms of their identities, experiences, abilities, and perspectives. A diverse classroom should provide an inclusive, accessible and equitable learning experience for all students – and achieving this benefits all students.

- Ethics and Integrity – you will be expected to follow the University’s guidelines on research ethics and standards of academic integrity, which include avoiding any form of plagiarism or cheating and maintaining an honest approach to scholarship. SALC60000 provides and highlights key guidance on integrity and ethics throughout the year, so please make sure to come along to keep yourself informed.

- Dignity at Work – The university is a workplace, and all users of that workplace should be treated with courtesy and dignity. You should expect to be treated fairly and with dignity, and please remember to treat everyone you encounter with dignity as well. The aim is to ensure that our institution is a friendly, welcoming place for all.

- Expertise – Remember that experience and expertise comes in many forms and is not necessarily connected to position or title. The bus driver who drove you to campus, the support staff who helped you register for your course units, the librarian who helped you find the book you need, the cook in Lime Café who got the soup for lunch just right, the lecturer who leads your seminars, and the cleaner who helped make sure our rooms are clean and safe, all have their own forms of expertise and knowledge that make our University run smoothly. Each and all should be highly valued. This principle is as true in life as it is for our institution.

- Lifelong learning – consider your Master’s programme as not simply 1 or 2 years of study but as part of your lifelong learning, to cultivate a curious mindset and a love for learning beyond your coursework. Lifelong learning, as a principle and practice, is the foundation for your own continual growth and higher education is just one part of that process. To this end, SALC60000 supports both your continuous academic development and continuous professional development (CPD).

- Future pathways – as your Master’s programme is relatively short, be prepared to think ahead towards your next steps after completing your degree. SALC60000 offers several sessions with guidance on pathways, and the processes involved, that take you from Master’s to PhD level – and will also advertise to you, throughout the year, careers-focussed activities for Master’s students run by the Careers Service. The University of Manchester’s Careers Service is an award-winning UK-leading service with a wealth of expertise and support available, so make sure to visit their Careers Library and book a consultant appointment for further support and guidance.

- Manage your expectations – make sure to familiarise yourself with your subject-specific expectations and guidelines as set out in your programme handbook and in guidance provided by your programme directors. If you are unsure of their expectations on a certain matter, ask them to clarify it for you, so that they can help you align with what is expected and required. This also helps them know if something could be communicated more clearly, which will help other students too. Additionally, set expectations of yourself – think about what standards you want to set and maintain for yourself to achieve your goals.

While this list is expansive, it is not exhaustive, so always remain open to new and different approaches, particularly as culture plays a role in shaping norms, values, and expectations.

Academic Writing

Developing your academic writing is key to your success as a Master's student, from your essays to your dissertation. Supporting you in thinking about and articulating the complex ideas and theories that you will grapple with as a Master's student through Academic Writing is a cornerstone of SALC60000.

The course unit therefore offers you a range of Academic Writing sessions to help you hone and develop your writing, as well as the opportunity to receive formative feedback on examples of your work.

SALC60000's Academic Writing sessions will help you meet the requirements and expectations of your assignments, with support on all the key elements and components that make for a strong essay and dissertation. The introductory academic writing session in Semester 1 will cover all of the essential expectations of academic writing at Master's level, including how to craft and articulate clearly-defined arguments, balance your use of formal and sophisticated language without straying into verbosity and jargon, and demonstrate depth, complexity and critical thinking. Subsequent sessions will focus on individual elements of academic writing, including introductions, conclusions, transitions, and structure. The final session of Semester 1, 20 Tips to Improve Your Essays, is not to be missed.

In Semester 2, the focus shifts to supporting the development of your dissertation, from the proposal stage all the way through to submission. The Master's dissertation will, for almost all of you, be the most important piece of academic writing you will have produced in your academic career so far – it's something to be excited about and look forward – and something to reserve as much time as possible to plan for and attend the foundational support provided by SALC60000.

Study Skills

Developing your study skills is another important part of successfully completing your Master's degree, particularly as the emphasis increasingly shifts towards your own independent management of your studies.

Study Skills sessions cover a wide range of topics that will support your development as a student and professional person. The introductory sessions on planning, time management, academic reading skills, and critical thinking, offer crucial starting points to level up the entire cohort and set you up for the rest of the year. Every academic year, when I run a repeat session of the time management session later in Semester 2, students say they wish they had come to the original session at the start of Semester 1 – if you think you may need the support, come along in the first instance.

The Study Skills sessions are designed to be highly practical – the focus is not on conceptualising study skills but on giving you practical advice and a plethora of tips and techniques to aid your studies.

Study skills topics also feed into the peer review sessions, where I'll provide extra information on a range of key study skills and concerns that students tend to have. This is entirely flexible to your needs – so feel free to let me know if there's a study skill that isn't mentioned but you'd like more support on.

Using Theory

Using theory is a key part of succeeding at Master's level. In your writing, you will be expected to go beyond description. In most cases, you will be expected to establish a theoretical foundation for your work and critically engage with different elements of the theory you use.

To support you in this, SALC60000 runs its stream of Using Theory sessions throughout Semester 1 and 2. Using Theory sessions offer you an introduction to key theories that will be relevant to your subject and studies, and help you develop interdisciplinary ways of thinking about and applying those theories.

In this way, SALC60000 helps to equip you with key analytical tools and concepts to consider, theorise, critique, and articulate different approaches to your subject matter. You'll get the chance to consider and study key topics, including postcolonial theory, Marxist theory, feminism and intersectionality.

You will learn about different theoretical frameworks that will be useful to your studies. And, as SALC60000 is non-assessed, you can come along and listen and ask questions without any worry – theory should not be seen as a scary or lofty obstacle but, rather, as something that will broaden your understanding of diverse perspectives and your ability to engage in wider discourse on social issues and global challenges. In so doing, Using Theory offers you a broader intellectual toolkit to approach your writing and research, fostering critical thinking, a deeper engagement across subjects, and the ability to construct well-informed, persuasive arguments in your academic work.

One of the liberating aspects of pursuing a Master's degree is the autonomy you have in choosing whether or not to incorporate a specific theoretical framework into your work. At Master's level, you have the freedom to decide whether a particular theory aligns with your research or creative work, and you are not obligated to apply it if it doesn't enhance your work or resonate with your objectives.

SALC60000's Using Theory sessions therefore empower you to make informed choices about the theoretical foundations of your work, fostering intellectual independence and encouraging critical thinking – to support you in developing criticality and critical thought in your coursework and your dissertation, and on your wider academic and professional journey.

Essentially, Using Theory offers you an introductory Critical Theory course as a bonus addition to your Master's studies – that's a massive boost to what a Master's degree at Manchester offers you.

Peer Review

Peer review sessions explore key themes related to your studies by focusing on and sharing your experience, challenges, and writing in a collective setting. Each theme starts with an information presentation (usually up to 30 minutes), building up to collaborative discussion and shared practice with other Master's students from across the School.

The format of the peer review discussions will be a mixture of facilitator-led whole- group discussion and student-led breakout groups. Guidance will be provided in session on how students should engage in peer review together effectively.

You're welcome to come and stay only for the first 30 minutes, if you only have time for the information element of the session.

Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity refers to the practice of integrating knowledge, methods, and approaches from multiple academic disciplines to address complex issues or questions that cannot be adequately understood or solved within the boundaries of a single discipline. This is a cornerstone approach to sessions in SALC60000 and interdisciplinarity is particularly important for Master's degree students in Arts, Languages and Cultures for several reasons.

Many of the topics, texts, and theories that you will encounter, study, and research as part of your programme are inherently complex and multi-faceted. Taking an interdisciplinary approach can therefore be useful, as you draw on insights from different subject areas to build a more nuanced, comprehensive, and complicated understanding of a particular issue.

Many real-world problems do not neatly fit into one disciplinary framework. Interdisciplinary skills and thinking therefore help equip you to approach complex challenges with a broader toolkit of analytical and problem-solving methods.

Indeed, many of the pressing global issues that the world faces today, such as the climate crisis, the threat of global pandemics, responses to international conflict, environmental collapse, and disaster management, require innovative, interdisciplinary solutions. Humanities students who can work across disciplines are better equipped to contribute meaningfully to addressing these challenges in their studies and beyond.

In this way, interdisciplinarity can be useful for your future career opportunities, as employers are likely to value the versatility and adaptability of graduates who can draw from multiple disciplines to solve problems. At the same, those who continue to further study, such as a PhD, will likely find that their research increasingly relies on the ability to think in interdisciplinary ways, even if you stay rooted in your particular subject area. In academia, many research projects, initiatives and publications involve collaboration across disciplines, and UK research councils and frameworks have become increasingly keen to support interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.

For all these reasons, interdisciplinarity can be intellectually stimulating, rewarding for your studies, and personally enriching – it can also be fun too – and this informs why interdisciplinarity is embedded into SALC60000. By bringing together ideas, methods and examples from the diverse subject areas in our School, SALC60000 helps you to develop innovative approaches to your studies, coursework and dissertation.

Contact time

As a PGT student, you will have timetabled contact time with your seminar leaders, academic advisors and tutors as part of your course, both for your core and optional course units, and for other events throughout the year, such as department-specific events related to your dissertation.

As you progress to the dissertation stage, similar to students on a research Master's programme, you'll notice a shift toward a less frequent form of interaction with your tutors and supervisors. You will have a dissertation supervisor and be entitled to at least three dissertation supervision meetings, but the emphasis will very much shift to you managing your work and producing material ready to be discussed.

It's therefore very important that you establish a clear plan for contact time and expectations.

Supervisors are unlikely to be available for immediate meetings, so it's good practice to coordinate a schedule for your meetings in advance and ask them what their expectations are. Some supervisors may be up front about their availability and expectations but some may sit back and expect you to ask – taking a proactive approach ensures that you get it right for them and for you, so that you have the guidance and support that you need even as the nature of your academic engagement becomes more independent.

You can also drop in to see a member of staff in their office hours or ask for an appointment. Make use of this if there's something that you wish to discuss or would like support on.

Contacts

SALC60000

Dr David Firth (SALC60000 Course Convenor)

Email: D.H.Firth@manchester.ac.uk

Office: SG5, Samuel Alexander Building

Office hours for 2024-25: Tbc – this information will be confirmed to you in the welcome session.

I will run a combination of virtual and on campus office hours throughout the year and, if these times aren't suitable, you're welcome to contact me for an appointment.

SALC60000 Blackboard

You will be automatically enrolled as students onto the SALC60000 Blackboard, which should be visible in your Current Courses as "SALC60000 Postgraduate Skills Training 2024-25 Full Year".

The Blackboard will be updated throughout the year with useful information, resources, and texts.

For direct access to Blackboard, please use: <https://online.manchester.ac.uk>

The University Centre for Academic English

The University Centre for Academic English (UCAE) provides academic support workshops and resources for student across the University from a range of disciplines. A key source of provision, particularly for international students, is the UCAE's Academic Success Programme:

"At the UCAE, we believe clear academic English is key to your success. Our Academic Success Programme enhances your academic writing to help you to reach your study goals. We offer a blended programme of workshops and online support, and our experienced tutors will help you get the most out of your studies by exploring the key features of written academic English. A particular emphasis is placed on communicating well with your intended audience. We also aim to boost your confidence to work independently in English."

Please visit the following website to find out more and to register for workshops:

www.manchester.ac.uk/academicsuccessprogramme

Careers Service

The Careers Service offers a range of activities for UG and PG students from practical help with CVs, applications and preparing for interviews through to helping students decide what they want to do after graduation and help with getting work experience/placements along the way. By visiting the University of Manchester's [CareerConnect](#) portal, students can access the Careers Service's full menu of events, book 1:1 appointments and find part-time jobs, placements, work experience/internships and graduate job opportunities. Colleagues from the Careers Service also deliver activities at Faculty and School/Programme level, which includes the opportunity to chat to the team at school drop-ins.

For further information, please visit the Careers Service website:

<https://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk>

University Counselling and Mental Health Service

The Counselling and Mental Health Service is available to all students at the University of Manchester. The service provides confidential counselling by a team of professional counsellors for students who want help with personal problems affecting their studies or well-being. It is a free service. You can contact the Counselling Service via their website to make an appointment.

For further information, please visit the Counselling Service website:

<http://www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/counselling>

University Disability Advisory and Support Service

The University has a Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS), whose aim is to assist students, both prospective and current, who are affected by substantial and long-term conditions. If you register with DASS the team can assess and identify your needs whilst studying at the University. DASS offer a wide range of support to students and they will meet with you to discuss the support that suits you as an individual. The Disability Advisory and Support Service will inform the School of your condition (with your consent) and suggest ways in which the School and academic staff can support you throughout your duration of your studies. When discussing your support, DASS will ask whether you would prefer not to disclose details of your disability/support needs to the School. Please note that if you choose to limit disclosure in this way, it will affect the support that the School is able to provide.

Further information can be found here: <http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/what-support-can-i-get>

In addition to this, the DASS also:

- a) Deal with enquiries from prospective students with regard to all aspects of their disability-related support whilst at the university
- b) Assist students with applications to their funding body (e.g. LEA, NHS, GSCC) for Disabled Students' Allowance and undertake assessments of their support needs
- c) Liaise with other members of staff in the university to ensure that they can facilitate the needs of disabled students
- d) Operate an Equipment Loan scheme for students
- e) Assist students to organise personal helpers and support workers, if appropriate
- f) Undertake dyslexia screenings for students who think they may have dyslexia
- g) Advise on external sources of financial support and assistance and help with application to these funds

For further information, please visit the Disability Advisory and Support Service website:

<http://www.dass.manchester.ac.uk>

If you register with DASS, you may receive automatic extensions for written work as part of your University Support Plan. More information about these is available here: <http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/autoext>

Examinations support may be put in place, if it is identified as appropriate during your assessment with DASS. In order to be considered for exam support you will need to be fully registered and have your University Support Plan in place. If you are not already fully registered with DASS and you wish to be considered for Examinations Support, or you feel that your existing support recommendations should be reviewed, please note that there is a deadline before each of the main examination periods in January,

May and August. In order to be considered, you will need to ensure that you meet with an adviser before the deadline. Deadline dates for 2024-25 will be circulated by email and available on the DASS website: <http://www.dass.manchester.ac.uk/what-support-can-i-get/exams>

The School has a Disability Support Coordinator who is based within the Student Support and Wellbeing team. The Disability Coordinator acts as a central contact point for students within the School who have queries about their support and as a liaison between the DASS and the School. For further information please refer to our website: <http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/studentintranet/support/disability>

Students Union Advice Centre

The Students' Union has advisers who can help with all kinds of matters ranging from finances to housing and welfare issues. The Advice Centre is on the first floor in the Student Union Building, and is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, term time and vacation. Appointments can be made via the Student Union Reception.

Further information is available here: <https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice>

Main Library – My Learning Essentials

The University Library has an award-winning study skills programme called My Learning Essentials.

Full details are available on the Library's website:

<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/academicsupport/mylearningessentials>

University support for mature students

The Burlington Society is the University society for mature students and postgraduate students.

For further information about the Society, please see:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/burlington.society>

For further information on University support for mature students, please see:

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/mature-students>

University Support for international students

The International Society is a busy centre for international students based in the Greater Manchester area. It is located on Oxford Road (see map of campus). Manchester has more students from abroad than anywhere else in Britain, other than London, and International Society members come from all over the world.

Website: <http://www.internationalsociety.org.uk>

Feedback

Your feedback matters, both pedagogically and practically, to help best support your studies with us here at Manchester. Feedback is crucial to providing and maintaining high-quality learning experiences and staying attuned to the changing needs of learners.

My approach to feedback differs to what you may be accustomed to in other experiences of university life. In my view, simply asking you to complete an end-of-course survey is insufficient – because this does nothing for you as a student. Instead, I like to think of feedback as an organic process, by which I mean it should be agile and regular. In practical terms, this means I will regularly ask for feedback and check the pulse of understanding during sessions. For example, if an explanation of key content wasn't clear and needs explaining in another way, I want to know about it. This way, you know I care about *your* experience, as well as what your experience means for someone else in the future.

As you participate in SALC60000, you will notice that I ask for feedback primarily in four ways:

- There will always be time at the end of every session for questions and answers, and this is a good opportunity to discuss any thoughts you have about the content or anything you found difficult.
- During sessions, I will check if understanding is clear, particularly on key or difficult content.
- You may receive a short post-session survey asking you three simple questions:
 - What did you enjoy?
 - What do you want more of?
 - What do you want less of?

This model can be particularly useful because it asks you for feedback that is positive, supportive, constructive, focused, and actionable, and in that order. In this way, it incorporates balance – in any situation where feedback is being given, starting with something positive, followed by something constructive, is a good practice to be mindful of. This model is also holistic, giving me a full picture of your experience, which therefore makes it student-centred.

In equal measure, your voice is important but I also want you to use it wisely – so that we all participate in a constructive feedback culture that supports continuous improvement at all levels. This type of feedback culture empowers students to have a voice in shaping their educational experiences and reflect on how to use that voice thoughtfully, and helps instructors tailor their instruction to better meet student needs and expectations organically.

- You may receive a longer post-session form asking you a longer set of more complex questions. These will usually either be in person or via email.

Your feedback is the final cornerstone to SALC60000. Your voice matters. I want you to turn up and use it.

Be inspired.
Stay active.
Succeed.