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Note: The modules offered and their timing are conditional upon the availability of faculty and may be subject to change.
The Organisational Behaviour PhD pathway: Course outline

The Organisational Behaviour PhD pathway at Cambridge Judge Business School runs over a period of four to five years and includes a foundation year, when you will be registered as a research masters student, followed by three to four years as a PhD student. The programme is specifically designed to prepare you for a successful academic career in the Organisational Behaviour department of a business school. The PhD programme is formed of a coursework component and an individual research component.

Coursework

The coursework component comprises a suite of foundational and methodological courses, which are complemented by research seminars that introduce you to current debates and research streams in the field. The coursework component comprises nine modules, of which a dissertation counts for three and a research project counts for one. Your coursework will be completed during your foundation year (when you will be registered as a research master’s student) and the first year of your PhD. Typical coursework for a PhD in Organisational Behaviour includes the following modules:

ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR MODULES

- Organisational Behaviour
- Organisation Theory

FOUNDATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL MODULES

- Qualitative Research Methods or PhD Research Practicum: Advanced Qual. Methods
- Organisational Research Methods
- Econometrics I
- Econometrics II

MODULES FROM COGNATE DISCIPLINES

- Social Psychology (Psychology department) *
- IS, Innovation & Organisational Change *
- Seminar in Strategy Content *
  or Seminar in Strategy Process *
- Consumer Behaviour *
- or Game Theory & Information Economics *
  or Quantitative Market Models*
  or PhD Research Practicum: Advanced Qual. Methods*

Students who can demonstrate sufficient competency in some of the above modules, may be allowed to take alternative modules after consultation with the Master’s director and PhD pathway rep.

Students may replace courses indicated with * with another module from the list of research courses specified in the MPhil handbook.

Students who write a dissertation as part of their master’s year do not need to take the courses indicated with *.
MPhil SMO students who do not write a master’s dissertation may, after consultation with the programme director, replace any course indicated with * with an individual research project or another module from the list of research courses specified in the MPhil handbook.

Research

The research component builds on the coursework and normally consists of two or three supervised research projects connected by a common theme. These projects will lead to two or three papers for journal publication and constitute the core of your PhD thesis. They will also form the basis of your academic job applications.

Foundation year: research masters

During the foundation year you will be registered for a master’s degree – a Master of Research (MRes) or an MPhil in Strategy, Marketing & Operations (SMO).

MPhil in Strategy, Marketing & Operations (SMO)

The SMO MPhil is the standard route to a PhD in Organisational Behaviour. If you are registered for an SMO MPhil, you will be required to take:

- nine coursework modules (MPhil SMO), or
- eight coursework modules and a short individual research project (MPhil SMO), or
- six coursework modules and a master’s dissertation.

You can find more details about the individual research project and master’s dissertation below.

Master of Research (MRes): Six modules plus a dissertation

If you are registered for an MRes degree, you will take six courses from the above list and write a master’s dissertation under the close supervision of a faculty member. This dissertation will have a maximum length of 16,000 words and count for 50 per cent of the overall assessment in this year. A good MRes dissertation demonstrates a developing aptitude for the formulation of sharp research questions, the critical assessment of relevant academic literature and the appropriate choice and application of research methods. We will expect you to expand on and refine your MRes dissertation as part of your first-year report during the first year of your PhD.

We will agree on the broad theme of your dissertation as well as your dissertation supervisor before you start your MRes year. If you apply for an MRes degree, you will be required to submit a brief dissertation proposal before the final admission decision is taken. You will then work with your supervisor to fine-tune your proposal further after you are admitted to the programme. This means that you can start working on your dissertation from the very beginning of your MRes year.

Preparatory Mathematics & Statistics (September)

The MPhil in Strategy, Marketing & Operations offers a pre-term mathematics refresher course, which starts in mid-September. Its aim is to review the mathematical and statistical methods required for the modelling and econometrics modules. Students with strong and appropriate prior training may apply for exemption from this preparatory course. Otherwise, the course is mandatory.
Individual research project

MPhil SMO students may undertake a supervised individual research project (IRP). This project will provide first-hand research experience and prepare you for the individual research activity during the first year of your PhD. You are encouraged to propose a theme for your IRP. Faculty members will also advertise a number of themes that you can choose from. If you intend to do an IRP, you will need to agree on a theme with the MPhil director and a supervising faculty member at the beginning of the Lent term. The IRP is equivalent in weighting and workload to one course module.

Masters dissertation

MPhil SMO students may choose to write a dissertation during their MPhil year (for MRes students, the dissertation component is mandatory). The dissertation is a more substantial individual research component than the IRP and is equivalent in weighting and workload to three course modules. This dissertation will be conducted under the supervision of a faculty member. If you wish to write a dissertation, you will have to apply for this route prior to the start of the academic year and provide a well-defined research plan, which has to be approved by the MPhil SMO director and a supervising faculty member. MPhil students that choose to write a dissertation cannot undertake an IRP.

PhD continuation requirements

If you are registered for an SMO MPhil during your foundation year, you will need to develop an initial research proposal during the first term of your master’s year and apply for continuation to the PhD in December. Your application will be assessed by the PhD admissions committee in January on the basis of your research proposal, an admissions interview and your module performance during the first term. Continuation to the PhD will be conditional on your overall performance in the MPhil or parts thereof; the usual condition is a mark of 70 per cent overall and 70 per cent in a dissertation.

If you are registered for an MRes degree during your foundation year, you will proceed to PhD registration without a further application process, provided you achieve a mark of 70 per cent in your dissertation and a mark of 60 per cent in each module separately in your MRes year (the dissertation counting for 50 per cent of the mark).

Entry from the MPhil in Psychology

Students with an MPhil in Psychology from the University of Cambridge may qualify to enter the Organisational Behaviour PhD pathway via the MRes degree route.
First year of the PhD

The first year of the PhD is probationary and has one assessed component:

First year report

You will work with a faculty supervisor to produce a first year report. This research can take the form of a draft scientific paper addressing a specific research question, which will eventually form the basis for one of your two PhD papers.

Your first year report should demonstrate your ability to formulate sharp research questions, summarise relevant academic debates, critically assess the extant literature and apply appropriate research methodology. While you are not required to, you can incorporate parts of your master's work, such as your module essays, IRP, dissertation or a summer project (if applicable), into your first year report.

Second year continuation requirements

To proceed to the second year of the PhD you will have to gain a mark of 70 per cent for your first-year report and pass all required courses (60 per cent pass mark).

Second year of the PhD

During the second year, you will focus on producing your first research paper. Most students do this by 'learning on the job' – by joining a project proposed by a faculty member or working closely with a faculty member to define a project to work on jointly. This usually results in a co-authored paper. You will be expected to present your progress to your subject group frequently and submit the paper for presentation at a top Organisational Behaviour conference in the autumn of that year.

Third year of the PhD

During your third year you will focus on completing your first paper and begin working on your second paper. You may continue to work with your co-author or another co-author or choose to work on your second paper independently. You can expect your advisors to play a significant role in helping shape the idea for this paper, but you will be expected to take the lead in executing it and be the clear primary author. This paper will normally be your job market paper. You will be expected to submit this paper for presentation at a top Organisational Behaviour conference in the autumn of that year. In parallel with the development of this second paper, you will revise your first paper and continue to present it at seminars and conferences.

Fourth year of the PhD

The fourth year is your job market year. You will be expected to present your paper or papers at top American and European job market conferences and continue to revise and polish them. We encourage you to spend part of your fourth year as a visitor in an Organisational Behaviour department of another top university, typically in the USA, to build closer ties with potential collaborators and the global Organisational Behaviour community. You will submit your PhD thesis during your fourth year.
Optional fifth year

Good research requires you to take risks, to explore avenues and tackle issues that are new and original. Research may therefore not unfold as planned and your work may require substantial revision. In fact, many of the most influential research projects ended up taking considerably longer than anticipated. We encourage students to be aspirational and take risks – and we work with them to manage these risks. To accommodate early “wrong turns” and unforeseen delays, we sometimes recommend that a student delays entering the job market by a year and spend an additional year at CJBS (and possibly another university) to work on paper revisions with faculty and strengthen their portfolio of research paper before applying for a junior faculty position. This optional fifth year is typically funded through a combination of post-doc research grants (which are contingent upon progress toward publication) and targeted teaching opportunities, which further strengthen the student’s job market prospects.