

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). 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.

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. A few weeks after the start of the programme, we hold a Project Fair at which 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 in Liverpool, the fee 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.

Please be advised that it would be unusual for an external sponsor to support the costs of an overseas research project.

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 INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH (including specialist pathways)

The majority of students on the *MSc International Public Health* (MIPH) – all streams, carry out an overseas field-based research project for their dissertation, learn from it, and enjoy it. Project topics can come from staff, who identify topics by consulting with our research partners overseas, or by consulting with clients, such as Ministries of Health or NGOs. Some topics are initiated by students, sometimes in discussion with their employer or funder. All projects are highly applied and practical, and use methods taught during the course. Alternatives to field-based projects include students carrying out desk based analyses, narrative literature reviews, or formal systematic reviews, which can be completed based in LSTM.

Our experience is that the cost of an overseas field-based research project for MIPH is about £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.

This is paid in addition to the standard Masters tuition fee. Alternatively, we do try to be flexible and can also offer you the opportunity to pay this in 2 instalments in September and January.

Below are examples of overseas projects carried out by previous MIPH students, some of which have been written up for publication in peer reviewed journals.

O'Gorman, D. Nyirenda, L. Theobald, S. (2010) Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV infection: Views and perceptions about swallowing nevirapine in rural Lilongwe, Malawi *BMC Public Health*, 10:354

Raven JH, Chen Q, Tolhurst RJ and Garner P. Traditional beliefs and practices in the postpartum period in Fujian Province, China: a qualitative study. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 2007, 7:8. doi: 10.1186/14712393-7-8.

Coope, C. & Theobald, S. (2006) „Children at risk of neglect: Challenges faced by child protection practitioners in Guatemala City" *Child Abuse and Neglect* 30 (5): 523-536

Sangala, W., Briggs, P. Theobald, S. Squire, S.B., Kemp, J. (2006) „Screening for pulmonary tuberculosis in ante-natal clinics: An acceptable intervention for ante-natal care clients and their providers?" *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease* 10 (7):789-94

Van der Kooi, V. & Theobald, S. (2006) „Traditional Medicine in late pregnancy and labour: Perceptions of *kgaba* remedies amongst the Tswana in South Africa" *Afr. J. Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 3 (1):11-22

Squire, S.B., Belaye, A., Kashoti, A., Salaniponi, F., Mundy, C., Theobald, S. & Kemp, J. (2005) „Lost" smear positive pulmonary tuberculosis cases; where are they and why did we lose them?" *International Journal of TB and Lung Disease* 9(1):1-7

Heidi Lynn Giesbrecht (2010) Communities" perceived barriers to accessing Maternal and Newborn Health services in Kuria and Siaya districts, Kenya. *Unpublished MSc Dissertation, LSTM*

Trung Nguyen (2010) Young Female Migrant Factory Workers: Needs, Barriers and Enablers in Accessing Reproductive Health Services in Jiulongpo District, China. *Unpublished MSc Dissertation, LSTM*

Rugiatu Kanu (2010) Assessing availability, utilisation and quality of basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric care in Bombali district, Northern province, Sierra Leone *Unpublished MSc Dissertation, LSTM*