

LSE GROUPS: building an undergraduate research project



This resource has been devised for staff interested in setting up an undergraduate research project.

It is based on our experience of delivering LSE GROUPS, a project for undergraduates at the London School of Economics and Political Science. LSE GROUPS has run annually since 2011, created by Dr Claire Gordon (Director, LSE Eden Centre for Education Enhancement) and Dr Jane Pritchard (Head of Educational Development at the University of Oxford).

It has since been facilitated by the LSE Eden Centre and LSE LIFE, the LSE's centre for academic, personal and professional development.

GROUPS has some core characteristics:

- Students work in groups
- The research they conduct is interdisciplinary, within the social sciences
- The project takes place over two full-time weeks
- The experience is optional and non-accredited

(Some are for pedagogic reasons – see [guiding principles](#) – and others are more practical.)

If you'd like to develop a project along these lines, the [day-by-day description](#), [administration](#) and [sample timetables](#) will be helpful.

However, the project you're planning may be different: more connected to the curriculum; formally assessed; rooted in one discipline; over a longer period. You are welcome to take and adjust whatever is useful from this resource.

If you're considering a different project format, you may find these of most use:

- [A research project in your discipline](#)
- [What appeals to students about group research?](#)
- [Critical incidents](#)
- [Multipurpose milestones](#)

And the sections on [ethics](#) and [supervision](#) are relevant to any research project.

The LSE GROUPS organisers are happy to offer information or discuss:

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Guiding principles of LSE GROUPS

The project draws on ideas from:

- **Enquiry-based learning** - students set their own question to investigate, and learning as a result of that investigation.
This is perhaps the strongest expression of active learning, and can have positive results in motivation, learning outcomes, and the practical application of theoretical frameworks (Öztürk et al., 2022).
- **Groupwork** – students work in groups of 6-7.
This also supports motivation, develops communication and cooperative planning skills, and requires elaboration which aids critical thinking (Slavin 2024).
- **Interdisciplinarity** – students work with peers from other departments, exploring the project through diverse disciplines and research methods.
Complex real-world challenges (for which [LSE has committed to preparing students](#)) require disciplinary collaboration. The capacity for interdisciplinary communication in turn requires specific skills and attitudes (Horn, Urias and Zweekhorst, 2022).

LSE GROUPS demonstrates that these are all feasible ways for undergraduates to learn, despite often being preferred for postgraduates or professional practice.

(See [Bibliography](#) for more.)

A research project in your discipline

LSE GROUPS is based in the social sciences. Below is a set of key questions to consider, if you'd like to use a similar project in your discipline

What counts as 'research' in your discipline?

- What specific tasks do researchers perform in your discipline?
- Can an undergraduate student undertake (some of) these tasks?
- Is there a sequence of tasks common to most research projects?

What pre-existing knowledge is needed to carry out research?

- Can students get 'up to speed' on necessary concepts and debates? How?

How far could a project be student-led?

- If students can't undertake all research tasks, can they perform some?
- How far could students steer the project? When would they need guidance from academics (when setting up their project; when interpreting results)?

The project could begin with a pre-determined research question, rather than a student-developed one; this is also sometimes described as Problem Based Learning, rather than Enquiry Based Learning.

Group work

- Do researchers in your discipline traditionally work alone, or in teams?
- If in teams: can students replicate conventional team roles? Would this distribute work, interest and development of skills evenly?
- If solo work is more normal, how would group-work enable the research, or make it harder? Can the research tasks be undertaken as a group, or divided up and allocated to individuals who then share their results?

Time and resources

- What resources, access, equipment or specialist spaces are needed?
- What is the minimum amount of time a research project would take?
- Where is the majority of time required? (developing research tools; locating participants; gathering data; analysing and interpreting data)
- Do other process require additional time (awaiting responses from organisations, gaining access to archives)
- Which parts of the process require contact time with academics, and which can be undertaken without direct supervision?

What appeals to undergraduate students about group research?

Each year, we ask applicants to describe what interests them about LSE GROUPS. Students have highlighted the following:

- **The chance to research**, deepening an existing interest, or 'getting a taste' when deciding whether to pursue graduate studies

I am eager to immerse myself in an intensive research environment as I hope to become a researcher one day.

I desire to gain a greater insight into the nature of research work and publishing an academic paper.

- **Applied use of what students have learned** (including both 'theory' and analytical approaches) to a real-world problem

The primary reason I've applied is to understand how to employ statistical and data analysis tools I've learned in my degree [...] I have limited experience in using quantitative analysis in a political context. I'll be able to use the knowledge I have from my department and combine it with other people to create a fantastic piece.

- **Meeting peers from other departments**, and other countries, both as a positive experience and to build workplace skills.

From my experience in LSE Centre for Economic Performance, working with a great mixed group allows me to learn a lot from different perspectives.

This allows me to build my team building skills and enhance my understanding of the world around me.

- Working in a group again as both a positive and a skill.

I think it is particularly interesting to work with people from different degrees. I thoroughly enjoyed doing this in my LSE100 group project.

LSE Groups interests me as an opportunity to build on the group-working and project development skills I have been developing.

- The optional aspect suggests working with individuals with similar aims:

The opportunity to achieve a tangible project while working on a research project with like-minded and motivated peers.

This word-cloud, created from applications, indicates other motivations.



Ethics

Working on ethics with groups

Our ethics work begins on the first day of GROUPS, with an introductory talk. Supervisors then help students develop ethical awareness. Students are asked to evaluate risks of harm and distress for students and researchers. Supervisors can also find out if a student has previous experience or personal contacts in an area which may make the project either more feasible or more hazardous. Students may not see alternatives to directly contacting and surveying or interviewing individuals, and supervisors can suggest alternative methodologies: media analysis, policy analysis, analysing blogs or online communities. One useful principle is that an ethics question is also often a methodology question: a less ethical practice will often provide less good data.

Students directing their own research are often drawn towards:

- 'Hot topics' which may be significantly controversial or involve the potential for harm (e.g. political extremism)
- Working with groups who are significantly disempowered (e.g. people who are homeless)

These kinds of project may require careful handling.

Supervisors can remind groups that group members may be affected by an issue in a way that is not visible, and that they may not wish to disclose it. It's useful for a supervisor to propose some kind of anonymous vote on a topic, or offer to field anonymised objections, to prevent these students from being excluded.



Ethics approval

Some parameters for research ethics are set in advance; the organisers work with LSE Research Ethics Committee, and set some specific restrictions (e.g. no projects working with vulnerable populations). Groups are then required to complete an ethics form before they start to gather or work with data. The form is a simplified version of the LSE research ethics self-evaluation form, and includes a question about which of the overall restrictions relate to their project. The supervisor and the project coordinator approve the form.

Researching sensitive topics: a case study

In 2018 some GROUPS students aimed to research a sensitive topic: rates students who had experienced sexual harassment. Students had initially intended to ask other students if they had been sexually harassed; supervisors helped them to identify reasons why this would be ethically difficult. Supervisors also discussed whether their intended approach would actually serve their research question (as mentioned above, an ethics question is also often a methodology question); students had been hoping to gain a sense of the scope of the problem, but conceded that a low response rate and using self-report made a robust answer unlikely.

Much of the research advice in sexual harassment is directed at professional researchers, and is necessarily weighty and thorough, which made it hard for students to quickly grasp. Organisers located material which was accessible (For example, [this article on a controversial project](#) - see the last two sections in particular).

Supervisors then worked with the group intensely to help them find a constructive way through the ethical concerns.

Investigating the institution

Students are often keen to use their critical tools on their home institution (for instance, researching how socioeconomic background impacts the student experience). GROUPS commit to publishing all student papers. We cannot ethically exempt our own institution from the kind of investigation that we encourage students to make elsewhere. It is therefore useful to:

- Identify projects which may reach controversial findings early and (through their supervisor) check that they are well-designed and rigorous.
- Get buy-in from senior staff about critical engagement with the institution.
- Position student research as a valuable resource for the development of the institution, and a chance for the student voice to be heard.

Supervision

Supervisors are recruited from existing Graduate Teaching Assistants. As this is a facilitative role, supervisors do not need specific disciplinary or subject expertise. However, appointing a supervisor team with qualitative and quantitative expertise is vital.

Supervisors have two student groups, who they support in conducting their projects. Responsibilities include:

- Meeting groups most mornings and afternoons, to check their progress and help them determine their next steps
- Delivering resource sessions on specific skills and methodologies (see [Resource sessions](#), and the list of resource sessions in [Appendix A](#))
- Mark student papers on the final Thursday evening of the project

Supervisors are free to do other work during the day and are not expected to be immediately 'on call' for all queries. Supervisors set expectations for contact when they first meet their groups (see [Appendix C](#)).

Supervision approaches

A key area of supervision is helping students to ask useful questions about their project: what are the relevant issues; where might there be data to support their hypothesis; what other approaches or explanations might there be.

See *First day activities* in [Appendix C](#) for other examples of supervisor activities

Students choose their own direction for the project, but supervisors steer them through the various stages of the project. This can mean slowing students down (if, for instance, they don't have a valid set of questions before they want to survey the public) or speeding them up (requiring students to make a decision by a specific time). Supervisors keep students aware of deadlines (see [Multipurpose milestones](#)) and will also set additional smaller-scale targets.

During the first meeting supervisors have with student groups, they are encouraged to set ground-rules. Ideally, these are generated by the groups, rather than imposed by the supervisor. An open-ended question might be: how do you want to work together? What expectations do you have of each other?

Supervisor development

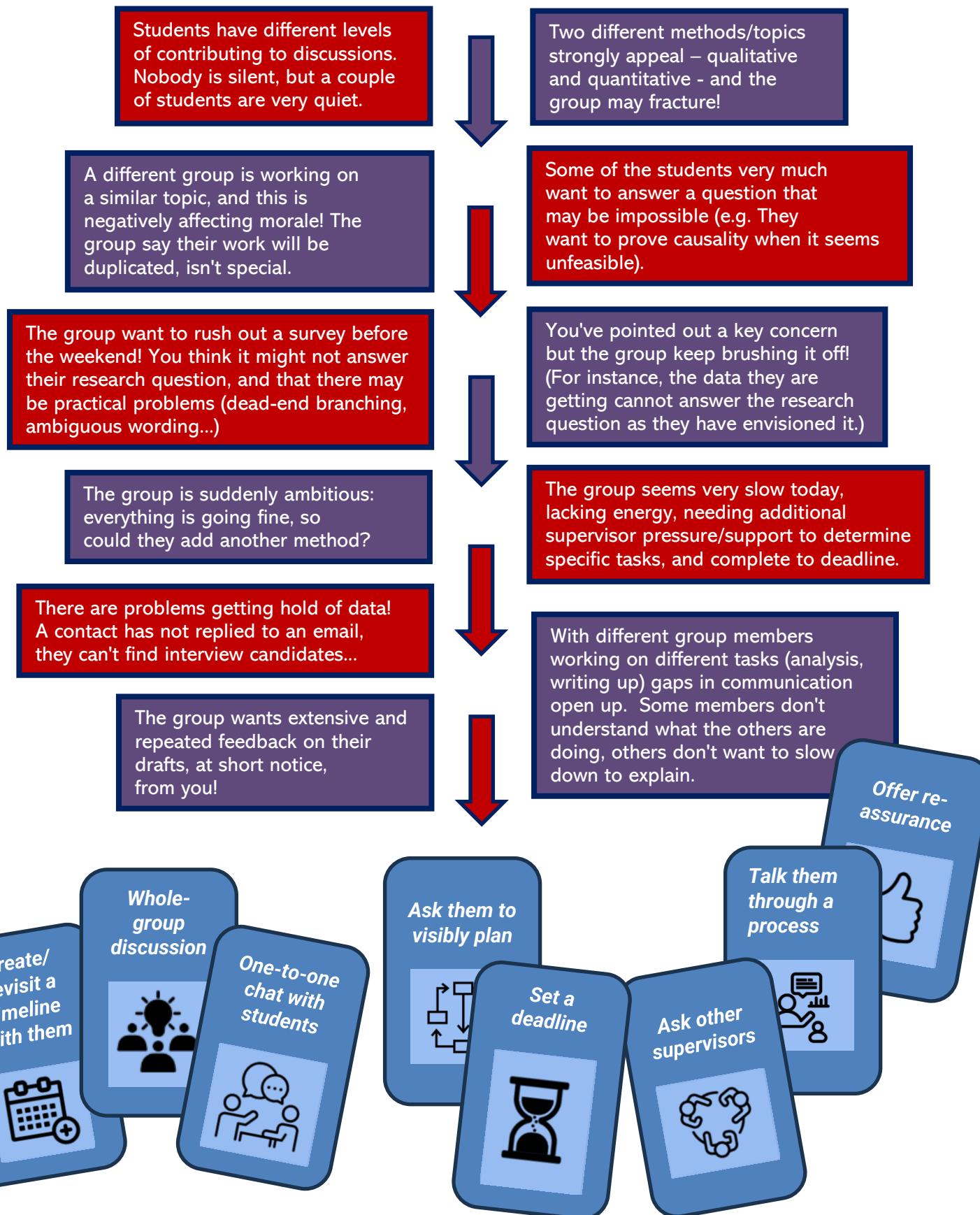
GROUPS is often very much a learning experience for supervisors as well. They may be used to more conventional teaching roles. They also bring their own expertise and approaches which everyone (including the project team) can benefit from their sharing.

- Supervisors meet for developmental sessions in advance of the project beginning, to have an overview of the project and also discuss its principles, and [critical incidents](#) from previous years.
- Supervisors and organisers continue to meet and support each other during the project, mainly at daily meetings of the whole team.
- A Teams group (with mobile chat app) enables short notice requests and questions.



Critical incidents

For the supervisor development sessions, we created this 'game' – a timeline of potential challenges, moving through the two weeks, and some cards/tools to address them.



Critical incidents (contd.)

Conceptual problems

Interdisciplinarity brings problems in terms of students trusting their own 'home' discipline's particular methods and ways of looking at the world (Horn, Urias and Zweekhorst, 2022).

This can express itself in terms of disagreements over using quantitative versus qualitative data, or positivist versus interpretivist perspectives. These positions can feel so intuitive that students are unable to work through the disagreement.

- Try to keep the debate open and make implicit assumptions explicit - ask students to make a case for a particular approach.
- If supervisors spot an epistemological disagreement, they can highlight it, and point out that these are unsettled issues in social science (for example, nobody has 'proved' that ethnography is better than experimentation - they still both continue and exist as useful tools).
- After any dispute, the 'losers' can become disenchanted. Can there be a compromise?
 - Splitting into a mixed-methods approach is fine, as long as both 'halves' of the group continue to communicate with one another and work towards a common goal.
 - The paper can include a quick discussion of the approaches/methods not used. It could mention them as limitations, or as avenues for potential further research.

Group dynamics

It helps for supervisors to establish quick one-on-one chats with group members early on, when there are no problems! This allows them to discuss any problems later on less obtrusively.

The most common problem with group dynamics has been a dominant group member steering the direction of research and/or monopolising tasks.

- Open up discussions during office hours to other voices - use a round-the-circle to gather contributions, and start with a non-dominant member.
- Remind the group of any ground-rules about including all group members
- Suggest groups use more explicit roles - e.g. each day, a different person is the 'chair' and facilitates discussions
- Use non-spoken response routes e.g. Post It notes, digital channels

A dominant duo can be even trickier as they can perform dialogue but still override other voices. Set brief tasks that split them up.

Group wants excessive supervisor attention - or none

- Supervisors should set ground-rules as to their role at the start.
- These can be reinforced during the project ('I'll be here for half an hour and we'll talk through [task], then I won't be available until office hour')
- The students' sense of self-efficacy can be reinforced through positive feedback on their own abilities and judgment.
- For groups who reject supervision, supervisors should keep checking in - a project can get a long way down an unproductive path.
- It may help to remind the group that they need to be able to communicate their research to non-specialists, and that discussing their project with the supervisor will be a good first step in this.

Failure to gather (enough) data

- If an obstacle to gathering data (or a surprisingly low response) happens during the first week, there many possibilities for intervention - groups can change their scope or focus, find other methods or populations. Groups can analyse existing datasets instead, where relevant.
- If the data is low later in the project, students can include a reflection on the barriers to gathering data.
- Possibly a different kind of analysis can be attempted, such as using descriptive statistics rather than regression analysis.

Groups can support whatever it's possible to produce with a more in-depth discussion of findings from their literature review.



LSE GROUPS outputs

These papers from the last ten years show the breadth of LSE GROUPS methods and topics. [Papers are published in our online archive.](#)

<p>Database creation, quantitative analysis and interviews</p>	<p>Relationship between the Share of Women GPs and Patient Satisfaction</p> <p>Danil Agafiev Macambira, Gabrielle Lee, Yannick Kauffmann, Zining Yuan, Rayan Gherib, Jonathan Lee</p>	<p>Polls and Profits: Share Price Performance of Companies Funding Winning US Presidential Parties</p> <p>Flore Charbit, Hong Li, Shiqi Chen, Jessie Fung, Hassan Duffaydar, Leon Madakbas</p>
<p>Social media sentiment analysis + secondary database on compliance</p>	<p># ShutdownLockdown: A mixed method investigation of decreasing tendencies to comply with lockdown restrictions in the UK</p> <p>Nuzhat Choudhury, Sachin Tissera, Aalyan Malik, Mastura Omar, Shimin Zhang, Wange Li, Shiqi Lu, Magnus Yeung</p>	<p>Trust Nobody: To what extent does interpersonal trust correlate to the interest in and action of Cryptocurrency investment?</p> <p>Cai Hui Lien, Gracie Coulwill, Hei Tong Tang, Jiaxi Hu, Prachi Pachisia, Shanaya Kapoor</p>
<p>Mapping using physical and digital data collection</p>	<p>Hipsters and Spikes: Mapping gentrification and Defensive Architecture in Tower Hamlets</p> <p>Tatiana Pazem, Sofia Lesur Kastelein, Sally Park, Robert Clark, Xinyang Li</p>	<p>Eating Your Way to Integration: The Making of a Diverse Community at LSE</p> <p>Aneta M Pavliukevic, Jennifer Fernandez, Owsianka Kealeboga, Madise Michelle N Dyonisius, Frances Li, Yuhan Ji</p>

Evaluating LSE GROUPS

We use different routes to evaluate, with existing data and fresh information.

- **Final submitted papers** indicate the academic level projects were able to achieve, and any conceptual and practical limitations.
- **Notes from the daily supervisor meetings** are reviewed by the organisers to spot 'pain points' in the process.
- **Student surveys** are distributed on paper at the final conference (as we found electronic surveys had a poor response rate). Questions check student satisfaction, identify useful elements and encourage reflection:

In what ways was GROUPS what you expected?

How did it differ from your expectations?

Please tell us something that you learned about: groupwork; research

How has GROUPS been different from your studies to date?

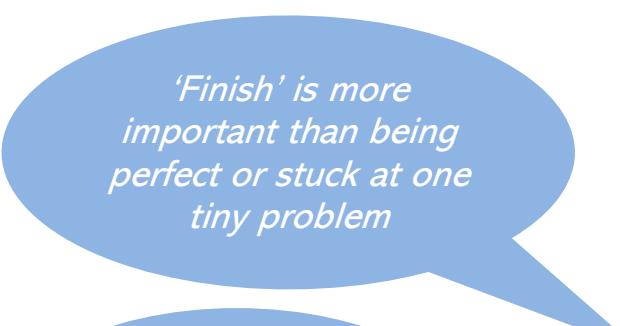
In future years of GROUPS, what should we do differently?

Surveys are anonymous, but students can include supervisor names if they want their feedback shared with their supervisor.

- **Supervisor debriefs** give insights and enhancements.
- **Organiser debrief** allows organisers to pool observations and recommendations.



In an environment where everyone has different expertise, things need to be explained to everyone



'Finish' is more important than being perfect or stuck at one tiny problem



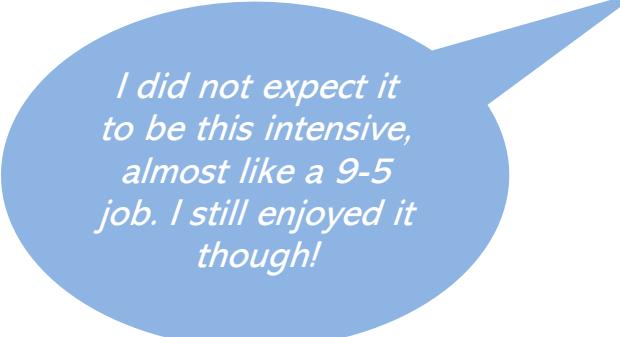
I did not expect it to be so interdisciplinary, but this was a good thing! Got a range of views.



I was happily surprised! I enjoyed my time there more than I expected



[GROUPS was] hands-on/empirical – [my studies were] focused on theory



I did not expect it to be this intensive, almost like a 9-5 job. I still enjoyed it though!

Day by day through LSE GROUPS

Choosing a theme

A broad theme is chosen, to spark the students' interest and create coherence, but allow students to pursue their own interests.

Students then develop a more specific research question within the theme.

Previous themes have included *Power and Politics* (2024), *Resilience* (2022), *Belongings* (2018), *Uncertainty* (2017), *Poverty and Inequality* (2016), *Social Change* (2015), *Identity and Place* (2014).

Themes can reflect contemporary concerns, or coordinate with institutional events (such as Beveridge 2.0, which looked at the problems identified in the Beveridge report, as did the LSE research festival).

In the early years of GROUPS we asked students to specifically investigate London or the LSE itself, to increase both the feasibility of the project and the interest for participants.

Creating the student groups

At the start of the project, students are placed in groups of six or seven, small enough for full communication but large enough to withstand illness.

Groups are created to balance disciplines, genders and years of study (e.g. three students from quantitative disciplines and three from qualitative; three first years, two second years and a third year.)

Each student group has a room of their own to use for the duration of the project.

Each supervisor supervises two student groups.



First Day

An example student timetable is available in [Appendix B](#)

The first day of the project begins with all participants meeting.

Students sit with their groups during the morning's talks and activities.

The morning includes:

- An overview of the project from the coordinator.
- Writing a research question by a colleague from LSE LIFE, our student skills division.
- 'Taster' talks: 15 minute lectures by LSE academics about their own research, on the year's theme. These are chosen to broaden student understanding of the theme e.g. for the topic *Belongings*, two academics spoke: a researcher of physical belongings and the psychology of spending, and a researcher of national identity and a 'sense of belonging'. The speakers are asked to foreground their methodologies.
- An introduction to research ethics: most of the work around ethics is done with supervisors but some basics are discussed here. (See [Ethics](#))

In the afternoon, groups go to their study rooms. See **First day activities** in [Appendix C](#) for how supervisors continue topics from the morning's talks, set ground-rules and facilitate initial idea generation.



Subsequent Days

An example student timetable is available in [Appendix B](#)

Student groups meet in their rooms, and supervisors come to the rooms to hold an office hour each morning at 09:30. The groups report back on any progress, and discuss their next steps. (As the supervisors are supervising two groups, there is room for them to pose a question and leave a group to discuss for a set period, while meeting with the other group.)

During the day, resource sessions are offered to give students the tools or information they need for the next stage of the project (see **Resource sessions**, below).

Some students may go off-campus to collect data.

Supervisors return for an afternoon office hour from 15:00-16:30 (leaving time for some work between the end of the afternoon office hour and the start of next morning's meeting).

Resource sessions

The resource sessions offer information to students at the point in their project when it becomes useful, and include:

- Devising a research project
- Conducting a literature review
- Specific methodologies
- Additional quantitative support
- Communicating your findings

Materials from previous years are available to supervisors, to assist with preparation. *A list of resource sessions is available in [Appendix A](#).*

Multipurpose milestones

An example student timetable is available in [Appendix B](#)

Throughout the projects, milestones and submission deadlines have multiple purposes:

- **Focusing:** helping students plan, and keeping projects progressing
- **Monitoring:** giving feedback to supervisors and organisers on the progress of projects
- **Fixing:** students can sometimes return to previous decisions (such as their choice of methods). Requiring a submission can discourage this.
- **Celebrating:** deadlines give students a chance to celebrate their work. This can be in their group, or more widely; for the submission of the research question, all students meet and share their ideas, and other students can feed back or ask follow-up questions.

First Friday – progress showcase

An example student timetable is available in [Appendix B](#)

On the afternoon of the first Friday, the cohort splits in two, and groups present for ten minutes each on their research question, literature review and chosen methodology.

This is a chance to celebrate progress and get critical feedback from other students and supervisors. Groups are often at very different stages, so some care is needed to generate enthusiasm for all projects and preserve morale.

The progress showcase concludes with all groups coming together for snacks and soft drinks. Students are officially free to leave for the weekend, but often stay to discuss further and socialize, or return to their rooms to record insights from the event.

Final Friday – conference

An example student timetable is available in [Appendix B](#)

The project concludes with a full conference.

Titles and abstracts have been submitted on the preceding Wednesday, allowing organisers to group papers by theme and print a conference programme.

Each student group has 10 minutes to present, then 5 minutes for questions, and can use a maximum of 7 slides per group. All students are expected to contribute to the final presentation, but not necessarily to speak (they could develop visual resources or write a script).

LSE staff connected to GROUPS, or interested in research-led teaching, are invited to the event. Participants can invite family, friends and lecturers.



Assessment

LSE GROUPS does not currently contribute to a students' degree result.

Each project is assessed through a short group-authored research paper (3000 words) and conference presentation (10 minutes).

- Papers are marked by the supervision team, and the strongest paper given an award.
- Presentations are watched by a panel of judges. Judges offer multiple awards, recognising both the difficulty of comparing projects, and the different ways a research project can excel; the awards are for *most creative and ambitious project; most persuasive delivery; most impressive methodological rigour*.
- The presentations are also voted for by the audience at the conference and the winner of the vote given an award.

All group members who complete this process receive a certificate which gives a brief overview of the project. Award winners receive certificates specifying their achievement.



Administrating LSE GROUPS

Room booking (see timetable in [Appendix B](#))

Communal events on the opening day, first Friday afternoon and final Friday take place in large rooms on campus.

Each student group has a study room of their own to use for the duration of the project. Supervisors meet their groups in their study rooms during office hours.

Online support

LSE GROUPS uses a virtual learning environment (Moodle), hosting:

- Student timetable
- Assessment criteria for the first Friday presentations, the final paper and the final presentations
- Slides, handouts and materials from the Resource Sessions (students who have attended can use the slides to report to their group)
- Submission links for students to upload abstracts, titles, their papers and slides for both Friday conferences
- Communications - a forum for announcements from organisers

Costs

The main resources required for the project are:

- Supervisors: six supervisors, for 60 hours each (see [Supervisors](#))
- Room-space (see [Room booking](#))

Some expenses are not provided:

- Student travel (to the project, or off-campus for research)
- Expenses or rewards for research participants
- Literature, databases or software not available through the institution

Projects must therefore be possible to complete with minimal funds.

To aim at inclusivity, we discourage groups from choosing projects which would incur a large cost in terms of travel or other resource.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Resource sessions

These one-hour workshops aim to give a practical introduction to the topics. Not every methodology is included every year, as they draw on the expertise of the supervisors (and other LSE staff, including the Library and LSE LIFE). In past years, these have included

Planning your project

- Introduction to project management
- Effective literature searching

Methodologies

- Survey and questionnaire design
- Textual and visual analysis
- In-depth interviews and focus groups
- Ethnographic observation and digital ethnography
- Archives and oral history
- Statistical analysis software
- Researching sensitive topics
- Thematic analysis
- Case studies

Communicating your findings

- Writing an abstract and title
- Writing a research paper
- Effective conference presentation



Appendix B: Draft schedule for students

Week 1: Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09.00-09.30 Refreshments and registration	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour
09.30 – 12.30 Welcome Introduction to GROUPS Research design, ethics, groupwork and taster talks	12.00 Deadline: Initial research question submission	Methods resource sessions 12.00-13.00 Archives and oral histories In-depth interviews and focus groups	12.00-13.00 Resource session Introduction to STATA / R / Python	13.30-16.00 Presentation of research projects and progress made
12.30-13.00 LUNCH	12.00-13.00 Resource session Literature searching	Ethnographic observation and digital ethnography 13.00-14.00 Survey design Case studies		
13.00-17.00 In group workrooms – see list in info pack				
Groups begin research with input from supervisors	15.00-16.00 In workrooms Afternoon office hour	15.00-16.30 In workrooms Afternoon office hour	1500-1630 In workrooms Afternoon office hour Finish reading for your literature review	
17.00 END OF DAY	16.00 Reconvene to share research questions	16.30 Deadline: Research method(s) submission	17.30 END OF DAY	17.00 END OF DAY
	17.30 END OF DAY	17.30 END OF DAY		

Week 2: Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09.30-10.00 Welcome back coffee 10.00-11.00 In workrooms Morning office hour	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour	09.30-10.30 In workrooms Morning office hour	10.00 Deadline: Conference presentation slides submitted to Moodle 10.30 -16.30 FINAL CONFERENCE
12.00-13.00 Resource session Thematic analysis of qualitative data 12.00-13.00 Resource session Further STATA / R / Python	12.00-13.00 Resource session Writing an abstract and title 14.00-15.00 Resource session Quantitative data analysis – drop in clinic	12.00-13.00 Resource session Writing a research paper 12.00-13.00 Resource session Quantitative data analysis – drop in clinic	12.00-13.00 Resource session Effective conference presentations	Welcome Group presentations LUNCH Group presentations Presentation of awards and certificates 16.30 END OF DAY
15.00-16.30 In workrooms Afternoon office hour	15.00-16.30 In workrooms Afternoon office hour	15.00-16.30 In workrooms Afternoon office hour	15.00-16.30 In workrooms Afternoon office hour	16.30 Deadline: Abstract and title submitted to Moodle 17.30 END OF DAY
17.30 END OF DAY	17.30 END OF DAY	17.30 END OF DAY	17.30 END OF DAY	

Appendix C: First day activities

As outlined above, the morning of the first day has all students gathered together, while during the afternoon groups work with their supervisors. Below is an outline of the morning content, and suggestions for activities in the afternoon for individuals groups, devised by supervisors.

Morning activities

Overview of GROUPS including:

Milestones

Shape of each day

Resource sessions

Your supervisors, their role

Research design

Writing a research question – group activity

Picking a method – group activity

Students will get a research question, and consider how their discipline would tackle it, what would the advantages and limits be.

Research ethics – group activity

Students will think about the methods mentioned in the previous activity.

What would the ethics risks be when gathering and analysing data, and how might they reduce the risks?

Working as a group – including strategies for conflict management

'Taster' talks from relevant academics

Afternoon suggested activities

What to investigate

Generating big general ideas, and digging in to specifics – the morning activities will include suggestions on ways to approach this.

Alert students that they should have an idea by end of Monday

Brainstorming - keep track on whiteboard and/or invite students to do so

Help students to concretise 'big ideas'

Ask specifics: when, how, what, where

OR help them to generalise from specific narrow examples

What appeals about the example, what would it enable them to do

Handle competing topics/an indecisive group:

Pick out the key topics, ask them to compile evidence – opportunities, resources, feasibility, substance, where would you get data; what people, orgs, texts, tools available

– leave them to compile this, or stay with them to assist

Give them guidance on what would be successful/possible

Help make sure all students have input

When students make a decision, celebrate, record it and move on

Plan out a timeline

Encourage students to work backwards from final presentation/ submission; have them estimate the time needed for each stage

Ask more questions or directly advise if they under- or over-estimate

You can use digital format, or paper

Ice breaking / community-building activities

Students briefly interview and present each other

Agreements for the project

Create a group agreement with practical elements and some more values-based aspects (e.g. respectful discussion)

Could include: decision-making processes, daily attendance and hours, keeping records, communication methods

Let students pick their own approaches for records/communication/decision-making as long as they seem workable and everyone has fed in

Offer students some scenarios to prompt the discussion – how would they want to handle things?

Set expectations of how/how often the group will be in contact with the supervisor

Groups are often reluctant to agree things like decision-making, or penalties for absenteeism, but appreciate later on having discussed in advance.

Encouraging positive group dynamics

(on first afternoon, and throughout the project)

Ask students why they've signed up, what they're hoping to experience

Put students in pairs for different activities of the first session (e.g. brainstorming) – allow everyone to meet someone else 1-2-1

Normalise disagreeing or objecting – try regularly inviting everyone to think of objections, problems, contrary views. Hold regular round-the-room contributions.

Normalise having individual chats with students before problems arise.

Ensure that everyone has the chance to speak/contribute to decisions.



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