

# MPhil & PhD in Asian Urbanisms

A Uniquely Interdisciplinary Approach  
to the Study of Asian Cities



SMU

SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT  
UNIVERSITY

POSTGRADUATE



COLLEGE OF  
INTEGRATIVE STUDIES





## Message from the Programme Director



**Associate Professor  
Orlando WOODS**

Associate Dean (Research and  
Postgraduate Programmes)

Programme Director, MPhil  
and PhD in Asian Urbanisms

Lee Kong Chian Fellow

Our postgraduate programmes in Asian Urbanisms offer a blend of taught core and elective courses, followed by a sustained period of independent study, which culminates in a dissertation. Students will be primarily supervised by faculty from the College of Integrative Studies but have the option to be co-supervised by faculty from SMU's other Schools as well. In this vein, we offer a uniquely interdisciplinary approach to advancing the study of Asian cities. That is, an approach that starts from the urban studies paradigm, but which reaches out into other disciplinary fields as well.

Our graduates will comprise a new breed of urban scholars who are trained to develop empirical insights and theoretical perspectives that speak from Asia. Whilst our PhD graduates will be trained to fill either academic roles, or those that speak to the policy and research-related domains, our MPhil graduates will be equipped with the skills needed to make an impact as urban professionals working in research, policy or consulting-oriented domains that span the public, private and people sectors.

Whether you are interested in studying the effects of changing food consumption practices on sustainability in Singapore, the economics of ride-hailing apps in Bangkok, the effects of sea-level rise on Jakarta, or how the state competes with other political structures to plan smart cities in China, our students will have access to world-class faculty that boast a wide range of research interests in, and expertise on, Asian cities.

The College of Integrative Studies offers two full-time postgraduate research programmes: an MPhil and a PhD in Asian Urbanisms. As Asia continues to urbanise at pace, these programmes are designed to meet the scholarly need for new understandings of Asian cities.

## Distinctive Features

### Interdisciplinary & Integrative

We offer a uniquely interdisciplinary approach to the study of Asian cities; one that starts from the urban studies paradigm, but which reaches out into cognate disciplines. Students will be equipped with the knowledge and ability to tackle the most complex urban problems.

This new paradigm of study is designed to actively and purposively go beyond the traditional urban studies paradigm and focus – both theoretically and empirically – on the uniqueness of Asian cities. This is what sets our programmes apart from other postgraduate offerings.

Through a combination of taught courses and independent research, students are exposed to ideas emerging from various disciplines that span:



Humanities & Social Sciences



Climate Science



Business & Management



Public Policy



Economics



Information Systems/  
Computer Science

## Study Asia, From the Heart of Asia

As the only university located in the centre of Singapore, itself located in the heart of one of the most dynamic regions in the world, SMU is uniquely positioned to offer students the opportunity to study urbanising Asia.

## World-Class Faculty

Taught by world-class scholars working on some of the most urgent problems facing Asian cities, our interdisciplinary MPhil and PhD programmes in Asian Urbanisms offer students unrivalled immersion into the theoretical debates and empirical insights that are shaping Asia's future. Primarily supervised by faculty members from the College of Integrative Studies who are committed to building an understanding of the pasts, presents and futures of Asian cities, students will have the chance to tap into SMU's vibrant intellectual community and secure co-supervision from faculty in other Schools, thus maximising their chances of securing employment in academia, research, consulting, or government.



**Lily KONG**

SMU President  
Lee Kong Chian Chair  
Professor of Social Sciences

**Research Areas:**

Inter-communal Relations |  
Cultural Industries/Creative Cities  
| Smart Cities | Urban Heritage  
& Conservation



**LIM Sun Sun**

Professor of Communications  
and Technology

**Research Areas:**

Digital Transformations &  
Workforce Resilience | Public  
Understanding of Smart City  
Technologies | Digital Literacies



**Orlando WOODS**

Associate Professor of  
Geography  
Associate Dean (Research and  
Postgraduate Programmes)  
Lee Kong Chian Fellow

**Research Areas:**

Smart Cities | Critical  
Infrastructure Studies |  
Superdiversity & Multiculturalism



**Winston CHOW**

Associate Professor of  
Urban Climate  
Lee Kong Chian Fellow

**Research Areas:**

Urban Climate Risks in  
Asian Cities | Climate Change  
Adaptation & Mitigation |  
Sustainable Tourism & Climate  
Change



**Fiona WILLIAMSON**

Associate Professor of  
Environmental History  
Associate Dean  
(Undergraduate Education)  
Lee Kong Chian Fellow

**Research Areas:**

Environmental History |  
Climate History & Urbanism |  
Colonial Meteorology



**Terry VAN GEVELT**

Assistant Professor of Urban  
Sustainability

**Research Areas:**

Climate Change | Urban  
Resilience | Risk Perceptions  
& Behavioural Change



**Aidan WONG**

Assistant Professor of Urban  
Studies (Education)  
Deputy Director, Wee Kim Wee  
Centre

**Research Areas:**

Circular Economy & Urban  
Waste Management | Informal  
Economies & Labour | Urban  
Citizenship



**Jonathan CHASE**

Assistant Professor of Computer  
Science

**Research Areas:**

Urban Computing & Smart Cities  
| Public Safety & Security |  
Digital Transformation through AI

# MPhil in Asian Urbanisms

## Programme Structure

Year	Curriculum	
1	<b>Core Courses* (4 Course Units)</b>	<b>Elective Courses* (4 Course Units)</b>
	Any 4 from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Studies: Theory and Method</li> <li>Cities in Asia: Planning, Policy and Praxis</li> <li>Principles of Sustainability</li> <li>Studying Cities: Research Methods</li> <li>Introduction to Interdisciplinary Research</li> <li>Graduate Seminar with Invited Industry Partners</li> </ul>	Any 4 from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative Urbanisms</li> <li>Urban Sustainability</li> <li>Urban Technologies/Geographic Information Systems</li> <li>Social Life of the City</li> <li>Urban Economics &amp; Policy</li> <li>Urban &amp; Regional Economics</li> <li>Independent Study</li> <li>Urban-related courses offered by Visiting Fellows</li> </ul>
	Ongoing: develop thesis proposal	
2	<b>Thesis and Oral Defence (12 Course Units)</b>	
	Term 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare and defend thesis proposal</li> <li>Conduct research</li> </ul>	Term 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct research</li> <li>Prepare and submit thesis</li> <li>Conduct defence for thesis</li> </ul>

Students will typically focus on coursework in the first year, followed by thesis research in the second year. The minimum duration of the programme is two years and the maximum duration is three years.

# PhD in Asian Urbanisms

## Programme Structure

Year	Curriculum	
1 and 2	<b>Core Courses* (6 Course Units)</b>	<b>Elective Courses* (6 Course Units)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Studies: Theory and Method</li> <li>Cities in Asia: Planning, Policy and Praxis</li> <li>Principles of Sustainability</li> <li>Studying Cities: Research Methods</li> <li>Introduction to Interdisciplinary Research</li> <li>Graduate Seminar with Invited Industry Partners</li> </ul>	Any 6 from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative Urbanisms</li> <li>Urban Sustainability</li> <li>Urban Technologies/Geographic Information Systems</li> <li>Social Life of the City</li> <li>Urban Economics &amp; Policy</li> <li>Urban &amp; Regional Economics</li> <li>Independent Study</li> <li>Urban-related courses offered by Visiting Fellows</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissertation Proposal</li> <li>Qualifying Exam</li> </ul>	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissertation Research</li> </ul>	
4	Dissertation (28 Course Units) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct research</li> <li>Complete and submit dissertation</li> <li>Complete dissertation defence</li> </ul>	

\* The Graduate Research Professional Development (GRPD) programme (1 Course Unit) is compulsory.

The minimum duration of the programme is three years. Most students, however, are expected to take about four years to complete the programme. The maximum duration of the programme is five years.

+ The courses offered vary each term.

# Financial Assistance Schemes

SMU awards three types of scholarships and fellowships on a competitive basis. We assess applicants for different award schemes either at the time of admission based on qualification and suitability for these schemes or during their MPhil/PhD journey based on their outstanding academic performance.



## SMU Research Scholarship

The scholarship covers registration and subsidised tuition fees. This scheme also provides successful recipients with monthly living stipends\*. The scholarship is renewed yearly, conditioned on good academic performance. The scholarship for the PhD is tenable for up to four years, while the scholarship for the MPhil may be awarded for a maximum of two years. Beyond the scholarship duration, students who have been on the scholarship may receive continued support through research and teaching assistantships or industry grants.

## SMU Presidential Doctoral Fellowship

The SMU Presidential Doctoral Fellowship\* is awarded to existing PhD students who have outstanding academic performance. The Fellowship is a one-year award.

## SMU Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship

The SMU Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship\* is awarded to existing PhD students who have shown exemplary pursuit of research that crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries. This Fellowship is also a one-year award.

## SMU Incentive Package for Interdisciplinary PhD Programmes

SMU will provide support for purchase of research-related items in broad categories. SMU strongly encourages interdisciplinary PhD students to go for an overseas exchange in their 4<sup>th</sup> year. SMU's Incentive Package comprises travel support and a discretionary research fund.

\* The stipend rates are published on the SMU PhD website and are subject to change.

# Admission & Application

## Admission Requirements

MPhil in Asian Urbanisms	PhD in Asian Urbanisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bachelor's degree in a related discipline (such as, but by no means limited to, urban studies, architecture, urban planning or urban geography), from a reputable undergraduate programme with excellent academic performance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bachelor's and Master's degree, at least one of the two in a related discipline (such as, but by no means limited to urban studies, architecture, urban planning or urban geography), from a reputable undergraduate programme with excellent academic performance.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Good GRE results</li><li>Good English Proficiency Test (TOEFL or IELTS) scores</li><li>Statement of Purpose, up to 1500 words</li><li>Research Proposal, up to 2500 words</li><li>Curriculum Vitae</li><li>At least two Referral/ Recommendation letters</li></ul>	

## Application Information

The MPhil in Asian Urbanisms and PhD in Asian Urbanisms are full-time programmes. The University's application window is listed as follows:

Intake	Opening Date for Application	Closing Date for Application
August	1 August (of prior year)	31 December (of prior year)

*Details of the application procedure are available on the website.*



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<https://cis.smu.edu.sg/postgradresearch>



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