Politics and International Relations

Guide to Supervisions for Undergraduate Students 2024-5

Supervision in Politics & International Relations

Supervisions are an essential part of teaching in Cambridge. They provide the opportunity for students to discuss particular topics in depth with individuals who are knowledgeable in the field. In them, students develop their understanding and analysis of a topic that they have been working on, and engage with broader issues associated with that topic. Supervisions provide a focus for students' reading and written work and an opportunity to get detailed feedback on their essays. Supervision essays are not formally marked, and so do not contribute directly towards an end-of-year result. They are therefore an opportunity to learn, to try out different writing styles and arguments, and to seek further advice on things you have been reading.

For supervisions, students write essays (normally of around 2,000 to 2,500 words) in advance, which are reviewed by the supervisor and then discussed, usually in groups of two or three. For most papers, students will be offered 6 supervisions and 1-2 revision supervisions.

Students often find it useful to take occasional notes during supervisions, and so bringing a notepad and pen with you is necessary. Nevertheless, they are not lectures, and their primary purpose is to enable a discussion between you and the supervisor. Try not to hold back from explaining, often in detail, your thoughts, or from asking questions about matters you do not understand as well as you'd like to – all the while remaining aware that other students in the supervision should also have the opportunity to participate fully. If you use a laptop for note-taking, be particularly careful not to allow yourself from being excluded from the discussion.

Arrangements for Supervisions

In Cambridge, lectures and classes are the responsibility of the Faculties or Departments, and supervisions are formally the responsibility of the Colleges. All students have a Director of Studies in their College, and it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to oversee the supervision arrangements for each of the papers taken by his or her students.

The way in which supervision is organised in practice varies from paper to paper. For first year courses, Directors of Studies organise students directly into supervision groups and allocate a supervisor to each group. Supervisors should arrange your supervisions well in advance, and will notify you of any changes to the time, date or venue in good time. Students should expect to be contacted by their supervisor in the first week of term, or notified directly about when this will be arranged.

While supervisions are the responsibility of the Colleges, in practice for second and third year courses in Politics & International Relations supervisions are normally organised by each Course Organiser – the person responsible for running each paper. We call this 'centralised supervision.' In all cases, Directors of Studies provide clear guidance about supervision and help to ensure that all students have adequate supervision arrangements for the paper. If you have not heard from a supervisor by the second week of term you should first alert your Director of Studies, followed by the Course Organiser for second and third year papers.

The Department's expectations

Good essays in Politics & International Relations require you to have command of the texts or sources recommended, and an understanding of the facts or theories in them. You have to consider the issues that arise from these texts, and the debates about them. Often this involves expounding the different arguments made about these issues, and deciding between them. Then, in answer to a specific question, essays should deploy what they need to, in a well-developed and reasonably conclusive (or if the issue should require it, conclusively inconclusive) way, to formulate an answer. This is the kind and degree of intellectual ability that is expected in the Tripos.

Essays that go beyond these standards of adequacy do more than this. It is difficult to be exact about qualities that are signs of excellence, but two aspects that can be cultivated over the course of the Tripos are independence of mind and originality. 'Independence' will consist in bringing unusual examples to bear on an existing argument, or in clarifying or in some other way cutting through existing arguments to produce a more elegant or economical or otherwise arresting formulation. 'Originality' can consist in offering a new reading of a text, or producing fresh facts, or arranging the known facts in a novel way, or advancing an argument or interpretation that is one's own. Of course, the unusual examples have to be telling, the arresting formulation persuasive, the new reading illuminating, the fresh facts true and relevant; the new argument plausible. Mere showiness is self-defeating. It is accordingly wise to exercise your independence of mind and possible originality in supervisions and supervision essays before committing them to pieces of work for assessment. It is also worth

building up this sense over time, experimenting with, and seeking feedback on, attempts to write more compelling essays until you find a style that you are comfortable with.

As a rough guide, students should expect to work in their first and second years for around 20 hours on any supervision essay and around 24 hours per essay in the third year. This amounts to 40-48 hours per week during term time (including attendance of lectures, reading, writing essays, and the supervisions themselves). It may be useful to decide if you are studying for approximately that amount of time per week, and if not, whether you should change your approach or speak to your director of studies for further advice. It is important not to set yourself unrealistic expectations. Often working through an entire reading list is simply not practical in advance of committing your thoughts to paper for an essay; knowing when to stop reading, in the awareness that you have already done enough to develop a rounded understanding of a topic, is often important. If time is short, keeping a record of what to catch up on reading during the next vacation can be helpful.

Writing

The supervision essay is the medium in which, in answer to a question, you develop your views about what you have read and perhaps also heard in lectures or discussed in earlier supervisions. It is a medium you should master. But there is no one way of doing so. Different people write in different ways on similar subjects, and different subjects may prompt the same person to write in different ways. In some cases, for instance in analysing a statistical dataset, you may be asked to set out your findings and ideas in a prescribed fashion. In most, however, you will not. For most topics, and especially in Politics & International Relations, there is no formula for writing good essays: often the approach you take to structuring a particular essay follows from the nature of the topic, the sort of evidence you are able to marshal, and the conclusion you aspire to reach.

In every piece of written work, the point is to convey what you want to say as clearly and persuasively as you can and be aware of what you are doing. Good writing can be good for many reasons. Good writers, which we can all aspire to be, are never less than clear. They avoid unnecessary jargon, and say what they wish to in a reasonably short space. They also strive to be exact, and where appropriate, precise. Exactness turns on vocabulary as well as syntax. Do not unthinkingly adopt the terms of the authors you read. For some essays, it will be these terms that are at issue: you should ask yourself whether they are the most appropriate and effective. If you believe they are not, do not be afraid to point this out, to break them apart, or to propose alternatives.

If the title of your supervision essay is a question, you should give an answer, and if you cannot do so, say why. The central purpose of a supervision is to discuss the question and your answer and how you have arrived at it. If, at the end of the hour, you are still unclear, ask. It is your supervisor's duty to explain. An almost equally important purpose of supervision is to give you a response to your style. Listen to what is said. It can be instructive. Occasionally, however, it will not. If this is so, and it puzzles or even distresses you—remarks on how one writes are as personal as remarks on how one looks—ask a friend or two for their views. These can be usefully frank. If neither your supervisor nor a friend can help, talk to your Director of Studies. But do have confidence in the fact that your style is an extension of your voice and thoughts, and that like these, is your own; although it is worthwhile to try out different modes of writing, do not unthinkingly mimic the style of your peers if it does not fit your own way of reasoning.

Argument

There is no ideal essay. Nonetheless, essays in Politics & International Relations are usually answers to questions, and answers to all but the most flatly factual questions are arguments. A good essay will indicate what is at issue in the question that it's addressing, the important positions that have been taken on it by others, and contain a defence of the writer's own. Some essays will be more conceptual or theoretical, some more empirical, many will be a mixture of the two. Some, in political philosophy, for instance, or in parts of political economy, may pursue a formal argument; others will be more discursive. Some will stay close to the texts or evidence at issue; others may range more widely. All, however, will develop arguments, and in these, once you make your starting point clear, you are free to pursue whatever line you find persuasive. Essays are your own expression, and for this reason alone, the active voice, 'I argue …', is much to be preferred to the professional passive, 'It is argued that …'. The passive is invariably ponderous; it can also make the reader wonder whether you are expressing your own view, or someone else's, or indeed the view of what you take to be everyone in general and no-one in particular.

Successful essays engage with their subject, of which they should naturally show a grasp, and engage their reader with an effective juxtaposition of argument and evidence. They often work towards a definite conclusion, but do not need to do so. A supervision essay is not the final word on a subject. (In politics & international relations, as in philosophy, history, literary criticism and even the more putatively 'scientific' of the social sciences, there can be no final word.) You, like your supervisor, should regard your essay as evidence of thought and work in progress, to be revised or extended in discussion and perhaps later in private. Prepare for it by reading as widely but also as

intensively as you can, and beware of deciding too soon on the argument you will make. You may also want to question the question itself. Reflective openness and uncertainty on all these matters are characteristics to encourage, and to convey through essays. Dogma—this is the one point on which we can be dogmatic—never is.

Sources and evidence

It is *essential* to read the texts of the theorists and philosophers you are writing about, and it is usually desirable also to read the original in an important argument in practical politics. Never be tempted by resumés in textbooks, book reviews or Wikipedia until you have. Supervisors should give guidance, directly and through the relevant *Paper Guide*, on what primary texts to read, and if these are extensive, which parts. They will also advise on secondary sources, especially where (as in the papers on the history of political thought) a reading list suggests many. It will often be important to understand how others have approached an issue, and even where it is not, to do so can be useful in guiding your own thoughts. But you should never be content merely to report what the authors of primary texts or commentators have said. It is important also to engage with them. You will usually be asked to read authors who take different points of view. You should understand what these are, be able to expound and explain them, and if you can, decide between them. In supervision essays, as much as in examination answers, you should not presume that your supervisors know each source well, and will need no more than an allusion to each. Even if they are familiar with what you have read, they will want to see what it is that *you* take from that.

The range of reading you do depends quite markedly upon the sort of topic you are exploring. Essays on authors in the history of political thought often revolve a small group of key texts, upon which your main attention will focus. Their themes will be developed through secondary texts; after initial consultations with your supervisor, you will learn to decide for yourself how broadly to engage with those. Essays about practical politics and about the historical context of theories may have texts that are especially recommended, but for these essays, the diversity of reading is to be prized. Complex processes or events in politics cannot be appreciated through reading a single source: a single book, however confidently written, will not enable you to reflect critically upon its arguments. All texts about politics, past or present, are both making an argument and presenting factual evidence to support that argument. If you rely upon a single text, therefore, you are only drawing upon the evidence the author uses to support his or her own argument.

The importance of appreciating and evaluating different viewpoints is crucial to most essays that you will write. In general, if you are defending an author's argument, you will need to draw upon material from outside that author's own writing in order to do so persuasively. This requires you to look for multiple sources. The greater the variation between sources, the more suspicious you should be of each. You should accordingly ask yourself whether you are satisfied by them. If doubts persist, supervision essays are useful vehicles for explaining how so, as this can feed into useful discussions in supervisions.

Quotations

You may wish to quote. There are two main purposes to quotation: to act as evidence for a particular interpretation or position, and to bring out an author's key terms, often for subsequent critical analysis. For a quotation to act as evidence, you must be clear as to what it is evidence *for*, and this always requires your own explanation. When using a quote to bring out key terms, you will usually need to describe how an author uses that term, what they mean by it, and, sometimes, how their use is different from those of others. For both purposes, do not use quotations as substitutes for your own argument; they should never be used as a way to avoid the mental exertion that is required in formulating an argument in your own words.

Two brief examples may help. Both makes the obvious but important point that the choice of what (if anything) to quote depends on the purpose to which you are putting that quotation.

In Chapter XIV of *The Prince*, Machiavelli wrote that:

'A ruler, then, should have no other objective and no other concern, nor occupy himself with anything else except war and its methods and practices, for this pertains only to those who rule. And it is of such efficacy that it not only maintains hereditary rulers in power but very often enables men of private status to become rulers. On the other hand, it is evident that if rulers concern themselves more with the refinements of life than with military matters, they lose power. The main reason they lose it is their neglect of the art of war; and being proficient in this art is what enables one to gain power.[1]

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1 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, edited by Quentin Skinner, translated by Russell Price, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp.51-52.

If your purpose is to explain Machiavelli's understanding of how power is maintained, you might quote much of this text, except perhaps the final sentence, in which Machiavelli does no more than repeat himself. If you do this, you should also explain in your own terms what his point was: what was he arguing against? What sorts of 'refinements of life' was he referring to? What sorts of examples (handily contained in Machiavelli's subsequent paragraph) would Machiavelli have used as evidence for this belief? If your purpose is to comment on the context in which Machiavelli was writing, that is to say on when he wrote, what he presupposed, and whom he was writing to, you might quote only the first sentence, gloss the rest, and add observations from elsewhere in *The Prince* and the literature on the history of political thought. If your purpose is to compare views of the importance of war to power, you might quote the phrase 'the art of war' from the final sentence, explaining how Machiavelli is using it in a way that distinguishes his conception from that of other authors. In short, quotations of different kinds, and different length, suit different purposes.

A second example is drawn from the Cuban missile crisis. In October 1962, President Kennedy and his advisers were considering how to respond to the discovery that the Soviet Union was placing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba. When this discovery was reported, on the 16th of the month, there was a range of reactions. One adviser, McGeorge Bundy, advocated doing nothing; Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, suggested diplomacy; Maxwell Taylor, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, urged a pre-emptive military strike; one, Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defence, suggested blockading Soviet ships sailing to the island. Two days later, after Kennedy had a further meeting with his advisers, he privately taped his own reflections. 'During the course of the day', he said, 'opinion had obviously switched from the advantages of a first strike on the missile sites and on Cuban aviation to a blockade ... Everyone else [apart, that is, from Bundy, who still advocated doing nothing] felt that for us to fail to respond would throw into question our willingness to respond over Berlin [which the United States feared the Soviet Union might move against], [and] would divide our allies and our country ...'[2]

If you were writing about the response that the United States government eventually made to the Soviet move, you would have to discuss how the decision to impose a blockade was taken. One way to do this would be to set up alternative explanations. A common approach to explaining strategic decisions is by making an appeal to 'rational choice', explaining that a blockade would generate a lower risk of war than that of a pre-emptive strike, but would have a better chance of preserving the

2 Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes: inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp.163-72.

position of the United States against the Soviet Union than a purely diplomatic or inactive stance. This approach may be questioned by looking in depth at *exactly* how decisions of this kind come to be made, and how these particular men made this particular decision at this time; in other words, by examining the elements of contingency that went into the making of the decision. As evidence for this, you may want to quote Kennedy's words about how 'opinion had … switched' on the 18th. Even so, to make the quotation work in the context in which you give it, you will need to intersperse it with explanations, both about the options available to Kennedy, and the changing circumstances in which he found himself. If however you are writing about the key US interests during the Cold War, it is the final part of Kennedy's quote that you may be drawn to: the defence of Berlin, the preservation of international alliances, and the maintenance of national unity are invoked there. This may be worth quoting in that context, but you would need also to explain what each of these three interests amount to. It may also be useful to identify the potential interests to which Kennedy does *not* make reference. For both purposes, quotations are being used as evidence, but in both cases deliberation over the meaning and value of that evidence is required if the argument is to be successful. Also, in both cases, quote as much as you need to make your point, and no more.

More prosaically, there are reasonably well-established conventions of presentation and punctuation. A quotation of more than three sentences or their equivalent, as in the first case here, should be indented, without quotation marks. A quotation of lesser length should be included in a sentence of your own, with single quotation marks. A quotation within a quotation should be marked in the first case by single quotation marks, in the second by double quotation marks. Even in supervision essays, which are not for examination, you should attribute all quotations (see *References and bibliographies* and guarding against suspicions of plagiarism, below).

References and bibliographies

There are two common conventions for references: (1) full references in notes at the foot of the page or the end of the document, with a bibliography at the end of the work; or (2) 'author-date' citations in the text, with a bibliography at the end of the work. Follow just one of these, and in whichever you use, *make sure that your referencing is complete and consistent*.

1. **The full referencing convention.** If using this approach, references are included in the notes, which should be numbered serially from 1 from the start of the essay. For references in notes, give full details at the first mention in the

chapter, at subsequent mentions in the essay, a brief citation will do. Notwithstanding their widespread use, avoid *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*, and *ibid.*; these can confuse. The bibliography should include the full references in alphabetical order.

For books -

Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p.36.

Thereafter: Putnam, *Making Democracy Work,* pp 12-13.

For journals -

Sidney Tarrow, 'Making social science work across space and time: a critical reflection on Putnam's "Making Democracy Work"', *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996), pp.389-98.

Thereafter: Tarrow, 'Making social science work', pp.389-98.

For chapters in edited volumes -

Maud Eduards 'Sweden', in Joni Lovenduski and Jill Hills (eds), *The Politics of the Second Electorate: Women and Public Participation,* Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, pp.208-27.

Thereafter: Eduards, 'Sweden', pp. 208-27.

For corporate authors -

Economist, 'Between the Caudillo and the Democrat', 17 April 1999, pp.39-40.

Thereafter: Economist, 'Between the Caudillo and the Democrat', pp.39-40.

For edited and/or translated volumes -

Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life', in *Untimely Meditations,* edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1874], pp.57-123.

Thereafter: Nietzsche, 'On the uses and disadvantages', pp.57-123.

For internet links -

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB), 'Keynes, John Maynard', Sept 2004, *www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34310,* accessed 20 July 2012.

Thereafter: Oxford DNB, 'Keynes, John Maynard'.

2. **The author-date system.** Footnotes and endnotes, including the references in such notes, count towards the total number of words in long essays and dissertations in Politics & International Relations; references in a bibliography at the end of the work do not. For this reason, you may prefer to adopt the second convention - the 'author-date' or 'Harvard' style. In this, references are included in the text or the notes. There should then be a complete list of references at the end of the dissertation, in which the items should be arranged alphabetically by author's surname (or where there is no author listed, by corporate author).

For books -

In text: ... elite political culture in Italy changed dramatically over the course of the 1970s (Putnam 1993: 33) ...

or: Putnam (1993:33) argues that elite political culture in Italy changed dramatically over the course of the 1970s...

In bibliography: Putnam, R. D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

For journals -

In text: .. although others have questioned his measurements of institutional performance (e.g., Tarrow 1996: 389-98) ...
or: Tarrow (1996: 389-98) is critical of the measurements of institutional performance that are used...

In bibliography: Tarrow, S. 1996. Making social science work across space and time: A critical reflection on Putnam's 'Making democracy work'. *American Political Science Review* 90: 389-98.

For chapters in edited volumes -

In text: ... whereas in Sweden, female parliamentarians had a significant role in raising the profile of distinctively women's issues in debates about legislation (Eduards 1981) ...

In bibliography: Eduards, M. 1981. Sweden. In Joni Lovenduski and Jill Hills (eds) *The Politics of the Second Electorate: Women and Public Participation.* Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

For corporate authors -

In text: (Economist 1999: 39-40)

In bibliography: Economist. 1999. Between the Caudillo and the Democrat. 17 April, 39-40.

For edited and/or translated volumes -

In text: (Nietzsche 1994: 176-86)

In bibliography: Nietzsche, F. 1994. The Greek State. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson, trans. C. Diethe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 176-86

For internet links -

In text: (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 2004)

In bibliography: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. 2004. Keynes, John Maynard, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34310.

For supervision essays, it is best to have a single bibliography, ordered alphabetically by author. Only include the works that you have referenced in the text. With longer pieces of work, such as dissertations, there is some variation. With the full referencing system (**1**), it may be useful to have separate lists of primary (archival and unpublished texts, interviews) and secondary (including those on the web, which are counted as 'publications') sources in the bibliography. With the author-date system (**2**), a single bibliography is usually to be preferred. It is never advisable to divide bibliographies between types of secondary sources (eg separate list of books, articles, items on the web etc.).

Plagiarism[3]

Plagiarism is presenting, as your own, words and thoughts that are not your own. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and regarded as such by the University's Ordinances. At the beginning of each academic year you must sign a form saying that you have read the Faculty's document on the matter and fully understand what plagiarism is. If you are in *any* doubt, ask your Director of Studies to talk you through the issue.

Below, three different forms of plagiarism are explained. Most students will be aware that the first two are wrongful. The third form, involving copying text that is otherwise referenced from a book or article, still generates confusion in some students, and therefore it is important to read this section, even if you are confident that you know what plagiarism is.

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3   This section draws upon documents on plagiarism prepared by the Faculties of Law, Music and Divinity, and the Boards of Graduates Studies and Examinations. Students should also ensure that they read and understand the University-wide statement on plagiarism, www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk.

What Constitutes Plagiarism

1. Copying text from unpublished sources. Submitting essays to your supervisor that have been obtained in whole or in part from Internet sites or from other students is plagiarism. There are no grey lines. This always constitutes a deliberate attempt to deceive and shows a wilful disregard for the point of a university education. Each piece of work is expected to be the original, independent work of the student, and so if this is not the case it must be declared in the essay.

Proofreading, reading drafts, and suggesting general improvements to other students' essays, and receiving such help from others, is not collusion, and is often helpful. However, if for example another student carried out detailed redrafting of the entire conclusion of an essay, this would be considered collusion. If this is not acknowledged in the essay, it is considered a form of plagiarism.

Reproducing the thoughts of lecturers and the advice from a supervisor is not regarded as plagiarism. Merely reproducing lecture notes, however, is always obvious and takes away the purpose of writing essays.

2. Copying from published literature without acknowledgement. This applies, without distinction, to material from the internet and from printed sources. Work that is drawn upon in your essays must be referenced appropriately. If you quote from a source, or draw from a particular section of a text, you should reference the relevant page numbers. Avoiding plagiarism means getting into the habit of careful referencing, and it is useful to start developing this habit, if you haven't already, from your first essay here.

3. Copying text without using quotation marks. This is a form of plagiarism even if you acknowledge the source of the text. That is, if you are including text that is not in quotation marks, you are asserting that you have written these words yourself; if this is not so, it is passing off someone else's words as your own.

This is the most common form of plagiarism found in this university, and so requires a few more words of explanation. Take the following passage from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB):

> For two years from the autumn of 1941 Keynes was mainly occupied with proposals for the post-war international monetary system. In the immediate post-war years the existing system of exchange controls and bilateral payments agreements would have to continue, but in the long term these arrangements should be superseded by a multilateral scheme with currencies freely convertible.

Keynes prepared a plan for an international clearing union to supersede the gold standard and put forward a set of rules for balance of payments adjustment that required creditor countries to take the main initiative. His plan underwent many revisions before being submitted to the Americans, who had prepared a plan of their own—the White plan—for a stabilization fund and (in the initial version) an international bank for reconstruction and development.

If you quote from any part of this, you must put it in quotation marks and attribute it as: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34310*. If you paraphrase any part, you must reference it in the same way.

To write something like what follows is plagiarism:

From 1941 to 1943 Keynes was mainly occupied with proposals for the post-war international monetary system (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 2004). Immediately after the Second World War, the existing system of exchange controls and bilateral payments agreements by necessity had to endure, but ultimately these arrangements would be superseded by a multilateral scheme with currencies freely convertible. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004) relates how Keynes' plan underwent many revisions before being given to Washington, where White had devised his own plan for a stabilization fund and in the initial version an international bank for reconstruction and development.

In this text, there are five phrases that are repeated word-for-word from the original source, or with only tiny amendments: 'Keynes was mainly occupied...', 'the existing system of exchange controls and bilateral payments agreements', 'superseded by a multilateral scheme...', 'underwent many revisions before', and 'for a stabilization fund and in the initial version...'. Even though the ODNB is referred to twice in the text, these words are not in quotation marks, and therefore this would constitute plagiarism. One could put each of these phrases in quotation marks, but of course much better would be to put the text in your own words.

This form of plagiarism may sometimes occur due to poor note-taking. If you are reading a book or article and taking notes on paper or on your computer, you may sometimes find yourself copying out apt sentences or paragraphs mechanically. When it comes to turning your reading into an essay, students may in a hurry string their notes together into an essay. The result is an unintentional, but serious, form of plagiarism. It is important to guard against this, and to develop a way to distinguish in your own notes

the legitimate paraphrase from the quotation, for example by including quotation marks in your own notes or by highlighting such text.

This form of plagiarism is often from texts that have technical language, and students may take someone else's words because they are unsure of their precise meaning. In the hypothetical example above, students who are not quite sure what exactly is meant by 'the existing system of exchange controls and bilateral payments agreements' in the ODNB entry may be tempted just to copy the entire clause. Again, this is something to guard yourself against. If you are reading a book or article with language in it that continues to mystify, it is worthwhile to read around the topic, to make an effort to put it into your own words, and to use the supervision to discuss the terms themselves until you are satisfied that your understanding is solid.

AI Generated Content

In view of the emergence of AI tools such as chat GPT which are able to generate essay-like content, it is important to stress a number of points:

1) The use of AI-generated text in any assessed work including exams constitutes an instance of academic misconduct analogous to plagiarism, and would lead to same procedures and penalties outlined here
https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/

2) Under current exam regulations, examiners are entitled to 'summon a particular candidate or particular candidates for interview on any aspect of the written work examined which in the opinion of the Examiners requires elucidation'. The examiners will use this power to interview any candidate whose work they have reason to suspect may have been generated in part or whole by using AI.

3) Last but not least, AI-generated text provides an extremely poor analogue for human-produced work, particularly in disciplines such as those represented on the HSPS Tripos, in which analytical skill, structural clarity, and originality are important qualities. Put simply, essays which use chat GPT will be extremely poor essays.

Use of originality checking software

The University subscribes to the service 'Turnitin' that provides an electronic means of checking student work against a large database of material from the internet, published sources and other student essays. This service also helps to protect the work submitted by students from future plagiarism and thereby maintain the integrity of any

qualifications you are awarded by the University. The copyright of the material remains entirely with the author, and no personal data will be uploaded with the work.

Difficulties with supervisions

If you have any difficulties with supervisions, you should in the first instance talk to your Director of Studies. If the issue cannot be resolved by your Director of Studies, you can contact the Director of Undergraduate Education, who is Dr Giovanni Mantilla on gm633@cam.ac.uk.

Supervisions rely upon an atmosphere of trust and respect that is upheld by both the supervisor and the students. If this is not being upheld, it is important to take steps immediately. If you do not wish to take action through your College, and you'd like to talk to someone in POLIS who can help you find a suitable source of support, contact Alice Jondorf, on talkaboutit@polis.cam.ac.uk. The University takes all instances of harassment and sexual misconduct extremely seriously. More information about these issues can be found on the Breaking the Silence website: https://www.breakingthesilence.cam.ac.uk/.