

# Dr Michael Stephen Cole

BSc • MSc • MPhil • PhD

## *Senior Lecturer in Organisation and Management*

University of Liverpool Management School

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences



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## PROFILE

I am a governance and public administration specialist at the University of Liverpool Management School, where I have taught and researched since 2007. My work asks how power is structured, exercised and — above all — held to account: from quangos and the modernisation of British local government to UK devolution and committee scrutiny, and latterly to public leadership in China and the net-zero agenda. I have published over ninety research outputs, supervise doctoral research across these fields, and collaborate with colleagues in the UK and China.

## CURRENT APPOINTMENT

2018–present	<b>Senior Lecturer in Organisation and Management</b> University of Liverpool Management School, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
2007–2018	Lecturer, University of Liverpool Management School.

## EDUCATION

2008	<b>PhD</b> , University of Plymouth (LGC Elections Centre). Thesis: <i>Accountability and Democracy in the New Local Governance</i> (supervisor: Prof. Michael Thrasher).
1991	<b>MPhil</b> , University of Southampton. Thesis: <i>Quasi-Government: The Issue of Accountability</i> (supervisor: Prof. Dilys Hill).
1990	<b>MSc</b> in Information Science, City University.
1985	<b>BSc (Hons)</b> in Politics (Upper Second), University of Southampton.
2009	Certificate of Professional Studies (Distinction), University of Liverpool.

## PREVIOUS ACADEMIC & RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS

2001–2003	Research Associate, Department of Sociology, University of Plymouth.
1999–2001	Research Fellow, Department of Politics, University of Exeter.
1998–1999	Research Associate, Department of Politics, University of Northumbria.
1994–1997	Research Fellow, Business School, University of Glamorgan.
2003–2007	Independent consultancy on councillor allowances, alongside doctoral study.

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

- **Governance, Public Administration & Local Government.** The accountability of quangos and quasi-government, and the modernisation of British local government — executive and scrutiny reforms, member allowances, councillor roles and local elections.
- **Devolution, Scrutiny & Constitutional Reform.** How devolution reshaped the way legislatures

hold the executive to account — committee scrutiny in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, studied comparatively and across constitutional settings.

■ **Public Leadership & Governance in China.** Provincial perspectives on the promotion and performance of political leaders, the Chinese stock market, and the state’s use of social media — much of it with Dr Jiajing Sun.

■ **Net Zero, Innovation & Decarbonization.** Global, comparative work on the links between innovation, governmental capability and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and on decarbonization as the ‘ultimate super-wicked problem’.

■ **Students’ Unions, Workplace & Higher Education.** The changing functions of university students’ unions in UK and comparative perspective, and the ‘shared workplace’ agenda.

Recurring threads also include the NHS, the UK Parliament, national and regional elections, and the UK Civil Service.

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

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‘Cole’ is shown in bold. A complete, filterable record of 92 outputs is at [mscole.com/publications](https://mscole.com/publications).

Jiang, W., Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Zhang, Y. (2026). Virtual water in global supply chains: Trade structure, industrial, and policy levers. *Ecological Economics*, forthcoming.

**Cole**, M., Sun, J., Jiang, W., & Zang, L. (2025). **Governmental Capabilities and Responsiveness: Global Investigations into CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Decarbonization. The ultimate super wicked problem!** *International Journal of Public Administration*, 48(8), 532–550.

Smith, A., **Cole**, M., & Küsters, A. (2024). How do speaker characteristics influence use of rhetorical history? Insights from text mining analysis of discourse about Brexit. *Management and Organizational History*, 19(4), 249–281. doi:10.1080/17449359.2024.2436377

Jiang, W., **Cole**, M., Sun, J., & Wang, S. (2022). Innovation, carbon emissions and the pollution haven hypothesis: Climate capitalism and global re-interpretations. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 307, 114465. doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2022.114465

Shao, C., Guan, X., Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Liu, G. (2022). Social media interactions between government and the public: A Chinese case study of government WeChat official accounts on information related to COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 955376. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.955376

Sun, J., **Cole**, M., Huang, Z., & Wang, S. (2019). Chinese leadership: Provincial perspectives on promotion and performance. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37(4), 750–772. doi:10.1177/2399654418791580

Guan, L., **Cole**, M., & Worthington, F. (2016). University students’ unions: changing functions, a UK and comparative perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(12), 2095–2109. doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1010076

**Cole**, M. (2014). Devolution and the enhancement of scrutiny: A case study of the committees of the National Assembly for Wales. *Public Policy and Administration*, 29(1), 3–20. doi:10.1177/0952076713494218

## TEACHING

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2025–26 **Current modules** (Module Co-ordinator): Government and Business (ULMS205, undergraduate); Government and Business (ULMS530, postgraduate); The Formal and Informal Institutions of Public Administration and Governance (POLI557, postgraduate).

2007– **Selected modules taught:** Multi-Level Governance and Administration (MPA); Public Policy (MPA); Comparative Local Government; EU and Business; Globalization, Global Governance and the Global Economy; the ULMS Placement Year. Regular supervisor of postgraduate dissertations since 2008.

## DOCTORAL SUPERVISION

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**Current** **First supervisor:** Yuchen Xiao — political and economic integration in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area; Prabowo Imansantosa — supreme audit institutions and anti-corruption in Indonesia; Diana Madibekova — big business and peace (since 2023).

**Completed** Lu Guan (2012, first supervisor) — university students’ unions, leading to an article in *Studies in Higher Education*; Yidan Liu (2021, second supervisor) — fiscal decentralization in China.

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

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Memberships	Political Studies Association of the UK (member since 2000); Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (2018).
University	Chair, ULMS Undergraduate Exam Board (2018–19); Postgraduate Assessment Officer (2012–14); Deputy Programme Director, MPA (2009–12); ULMS Ethics Committee (2008–23).
Examining	External Examiner, BSc Management, University of Leicester (2021–24); External Examiner (PhD, local government), Teesside University (2017, 2019); course validation, De Montfort University (2017); internal PhD examiner, University of Liverpool (2009, 2019).
Esteem	Judge, Walter Bagehot Prize, Political Studies Association (2022); invited speaker, PSA Conference (2018). Conference papers at the Public Administration Committee, EURAM, the PSA (UK & Ireland), APSA and IRSPM.
Peer review	Referee for <i>Urban Studies</i> , <i>Political Studies</i> , <i>Policy &amp; Politics</i> , <i>Public Policy and Administration</i> , <i>Local Government Studies</i> , <i>Public Administration</i> and <i>Studies in Higher Education</i> , among others.
Awards	Certificates of Teaching Excellence, ULMS (2016, 2018); Departmental Research Award (2017); listed in <i>Who's Who in the World</i> (2005–2010).

## RESEARCH GRANTS, IMPACT & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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2012	UK Changing Union Project — the capacity of the National Assembly for Wales (£1,500).
2008	University of Liverpool Research Development Fund — comparative committee scrutiny at the National Assembly for Wales, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly (£4,000).
2003–07	Caradon, Kerrier & Wansbeck District Councils — councillor allowances, seven projects (£32,000).
1999	MacDougall Trust — councillor attitudes to elections by thirds (£150).
Impact	Contributor to Prof. Laura McAllister's 4* REF 2014 impact case study on Welsh governance (co-author on two of the cited papers).
Engagement	Written evidence to the UK Parliament on trade policy and net zero, with J. Sun, K. Tian & W. Jiang (ref. NZT0001); consultancy reports on member allowances and for the UK Changing Union Project.

## COLLABORATIONS

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**Dr Jiajing Sun**, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences — Chinese governance and leadership, the Chinese stock market, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and decarbonization. [jjajing-sun.com](http://jjajing-sun.com)

**Prof. Laura McAllister**, formerly University of Liverpool — Welsh devolution, elections and the National Assembly for Wales.

Recent co-authors include Wei Jiang, Liwen Zang, Kailan Tian, Andrew Smith, Anselm Küsters, Chunyu Shao, Xin Guan, Gang Liu, Zhuo Li, Zhuo Huang and Shouyang Wang.