

Quality Assurance

Masters, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Politics and International Relations

Programme Specification: Postgraduate

This programme specification applies to students starting the programme from September 2021 onwards.

Information for students: the programme specification is the definitive document summarising the structure and content of your degree programme. It is reviewed and updated every year as part of Keele’s Annual Programme Review process. The document aims to clarify to potential and current students what you can expect from the study of the subject over the course of your programme.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the main features of the Masters in Politics and International Relations. It explains what a student can expect from studying Politics and International Relations at Masters level at Keele University, and includes information about what a student will be able to do if s/he takes full advantage of the opportunities provided during the course of this programme.

Names of programmes	<p>MA/MRes Politics and International Relations</p> <p>With pathways in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Security • International Relations • Politics • US Politics <p>Postgraduate Diploma in Politics and International Relations</p> <p>Postgraduate Certificate in Politics and International Relations</p>
Mode of study	Full time and part time
Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award:	Level 7
Duration	One-year full time / two years part time

1. What is the philosophy of the Programme?

The educational aims of the MA/MRes in Politics and International Relations are to provide students with an intensive period of study, in which they can engage with specific issues connected to their pathway (Global Security, International Relations, Politics, and US Politics) in a systematic and disciplined manner; and for students to gain a thorough grounding in the philosophical and practical issues underpinning study and research in Politics and International Relations. While the MA and the MRes have similar overall aims, the MRes has a higher component of dedicated research training modules designed to equip students with the additional skills required to carry out research in social science (as a consequence of this research focus, students on the MRes are expected to complete a dissertation which is 15,000-20,000 words in length, whereas the target is 15,000 for MA students).

The MA/MRes in Politics and International Relations in SSPG is distinctive as it is one of the most diverse collections of Masters pathways in the UK. Students are primarily taught in a seminar format and through assessments which aim to develop their independent research skills. The programmes are distinctive as they offer the possibility of developing an individual specialism as well as learning about broader issues in the pathway, and in wider fields of Politics and International Relations.

The programme uses a pathway structure to achieve the twin aims of research training and subject specialisation, so the student receives core teaching in research skills and specialist modules in their chosen pathway. The School of Social, Political and Global Studies (SSPG)'s modules are taught by research specialists, offering students their subject-specific knowledge and delivering the programme in engaging ways. The programme will provide students with the opportunity to develop their own research and study interests within this framework, while also providing students with access to learning about a broad range of important issues within their chosen field of study.

Intended Learning Outcomes

The principal purpose of the MA/MRes in Politics and International Relations is to equip students with the tools to undertake independent research, as well to provide students with an understanding of important issues in their chosen area.

- By the end of their studies, students will have a critical understanding of issues, debates and themes in their chosen pathway.
- They will also have a critical understanding of the philosophies and practices underpinning different research methodologies within Politics and International Relations, as well as a critical understanding of the relationships between politics, knowledge and power in the world.
- Students will be able to apply key research methodologies and research strategies in order to develop their own subject-specific interests and to undertake independent research work.
- Students will be able to gather and to evaluate appropriate evidence and to analyse scholarly debates.
- Students will be able to manage their own time effectively, will have developed their communication skills (written and oral) and enhanced their group work skills, as well as improved their capacity to discuss and comment upon important issues in their pathway.

SSPG's courses equip students for further study or employment through the generation of subject-specific knowledge that is central to the pursuit of careers related to these pathways (for instance, but not exclusively, civil service, NGOs, charities, think tanks, specialised journalisms, security services, political work, central or local government, environmental movements). The specialised pathways also provide students with higher level research, analytical and study skills necessary for students intending to pursue further academic research, and also useful for those intending to pursue a range of professional careers within which the gathering, assessment and analysis of data and evidence is of importance. The pathways also provide students with the opportunities to enhance their oral and written communication skills, as well as their team working and individual organisational capabilities. Students registered on the MRes have dedicated research training modules which further embed social science research skills – quantitative and qualitative – in their chosen area of specialisation.

Graduate Attributes

Engagement with these programmes will enable students to further develop their intellectual, personal and professional capabilities. At Keele, we call these our ten Graduate Attributes and they include independent thinking, synthesising information, creative problem solving, communicating clearly, and appreciating the social, environmental and global implications of one's studies and activities. The MA/MRes in Politics and International Relations is designed to help students develop further as accomplished postgraduates capable of making a positive and valued contribution in a complex and rapidly changing world, whichever spheres of life they engage in during and after their studies at Keele. Further information can be found at www.keele.ac.uk/journey.

Please refer to the programme webpages for a statement of how to achieve the Keele Graduate Attributes through full engagement in the programme and other educational opportunities at Keele.

2. How is the Programme taught?

The MA/MRes programmes are delivered through taught sessions for each module, and comprise seminar work (in large and small groups), lectures and guided independent study.

The taught sessions are critical to the delivery of the MA/MRes programmes as they provide a forum to:

- Develop a structure for the critical analysis of empirical evidence, theoretical or practical debates in the pathway
- Share ideas with tutors and fellow students
- Develop further, in a supportive atmosphere, a mutual support network
- Learn co-operatively in a general forum for active learning, discussion and debate.
- Pursue further various key elements in your study programme

Further support is provided through self-study materials that comprise both traditional text-based and electronic resources that are accessed through the Keele Learning Environment; this latter resource will also be used to enhance student support during the period of the course.

The programmes have three innovative compulsory modules, plus a dissertation. The first module, 'Research in Action', enables students to gain hands-on experience of a chosen research method. Through this module, students will gain higher level critical research skills relevant to research and a range of professional careers. Research in Action, Quantitative Research Data Analysis and Qualitative Research Methods provide students registered on the MRes with further knowledge of research methods in the social sciences.

The second compulsory module, 'Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations', enables students to engage with the mainstream philosophies and approaches governing research within Politics and International Relations, whilst developing their theoretical and research-design skills. This module enables students with or without an undergraduate background in Politics and International Relations to develop an understanding of these fields. The module also incorporates training for students to understand the process of applying theoretical concepts and frameworks to researchable projects. Through this module, students gain the knowledge and experience to prepare for the dissertation.

The third compulsory module is a pathway-specific module designed to enhance the student's knowledge and expertise in their chosen pathway. Usually, students will be able to choose one compulsory pathway specific module from a list of available pathway specific modules (see below for a list of modules) either in the Autumn or Spring semester.

Programme Team

All of the current teaching staff in SSPG are available to contribute to teaching on the MA/MRes programmes, as either convenors of optional modules, contributors to the team-taught compulsory modules, or as prospective supervisors for individual research proposals and dissertations.

The current staff group has extensive experience of teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and at conducting supervision at Masters and PhD level, in universities in the UK, continental Europe and North America. All of the current teaching staff contributing to the Masters have completed training as part of their induction to University teaching. 70% of them are members or associates of the Higher Education Academy and/or have a formal teaching qualification.

3. What is the Structure of the Programme?

For MA in Politics and International Relations (for all pathways), see pages 5 – 7.

For MRes in Politics and International Relations (for all pathways), see pages 8 – 10.

MA in Politics and International Relations (for all pathways)

The MA requires 180 credits, made up of taught modules (120 credits) and a 60-credit dissertation.

The 120 modules credit consists of the following:

- 3 compulsory modules, altogether 60 credits.
- 4 optional modules, altogether 60 credits

The compulsory modules are as follows (60 credits):

- Research in Action (15 credits)
- Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations (30 credits)
- A pathway specific module (15 credits).

Research in Action offers an in-depth and hands-on introduction to different methods of knowledge generation, and opportunity to experience a particular research method through the accomplishment of a chosen task. This module is key to the development of the students' methodological expertise.

Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations is an intensive workshop-like approach. It provides students with a foundation in the mainstream philosophies and approaches to studying Politics and International Relations. It examines how scholars have approached the issues of what to study and how to study, and the ways in which these issues are bound up with historical and current power structures within the world. It further enables students to develop their research-design skills and their independent research proposal.

The third compulsory module is pathway specific. The student can choose one pathway specific module from a list of available pathway specific modules in either the Autumn or Spring semester.

In addition to the three compulsory modules, students choose four optional modules of 15 credits each. These modules complement the compulsory modules, providing students with access to in-depth scholarly debates, leading theoretical perspectives, and relevant practical issues, in particular pathway-specific topics.

The SSPG optional modules and their pathway classification include (depending on availability):

- Human Rights and Global Politics (International Relations)
- The Changing International Agenda (International Relations)
- The Theory of Global Security (Global Security)
- Comparative European Politics (Politics)
- Dimensions of Environmental Politics
- Foundations of Human Rights (Politics/International Relations)
- Race and Justice: Civil Rights in the US (US Politics)
- The US Presidency and Public Policy (US Politics)
- International Diplomacy
- Equality, Discrimination and Minorities (Law School module)

- Crises, Conflict and Diplomacy
- International Environmental Law (Law School module)

In order to graduate with a degree in the chosen pathway, students must undertake a dissertation on a topic that falls within the subject remit of that pathway (at the discretion of the Programme Director). For example, a student taking the pathway in Global Security must take a dissertation that could be considered a subject falling under the disciplinary and academic boundaries of Global Security.

The MA structure in tabular form for Full-Time Students

There will normally be two entry points: September and January.

September-start students will take the semesters in this order: Autumn, Spring and Summer.

January-start students will take the semester in this order: Spring, Summer, Autumn. Where a student has reassessment from their first semester at Keele, the exam board may permit the dissertation to be undertaken in the following Spring semester (rather than during the summer period).

	Autumn semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Compulsory	Research in Action (15 credits) One pathway specific module (15 credits) either in the Autumn Semester or Spring Semester*	Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations (30 credits) One pathway specific module (15 credits) either in the Autumn Semester or Spring Semester*	Dissertation (60 credits; 15,000 words)
Options	*Two optional modules if the student is taking the pathway specific module in the Autumn semester and three optional modules if the student is taking the pathway specific module in the Spring semester (15 credits each)	*One optional module if the student is taking the pathway specific module in the Spring semester and two optional modules if the student is taking the pathway specific module in the Autumn semester (15 credits each)	

Pathways for students registered part-time on the MA

Students registered part-time may take 60 credits from taught modules in their first year of study, and 60 credits in their second year of study. Any variation in this balance must be authorised by the Programme Director. Students undertake the dissertation (60 credits) in the second year of study, submitting the dissertation at the same time as the cohort of students in that second year.

The MA structure in tabular form for Part-Time Students

Part-time students joining the programme in September will begin the academic year in the Autumn Semester and complete it in the Summer Semester. Students joining the programme in January will begin the academic year in the Spring Semester and will normally complete it in the Autumn Semester.

Autumn Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year One		
Research in Action (15 credits) Pathway specific module (15 credits)	Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations (30 credits)	
Year Two		
Two optional modules (15 credits each, 30 credit total)	Two optional modules (15 credits each, 30 credit total)	Dissertation (60 credits; 15,000 words)

MRes in Politics and International Relations (for all pathways)

All students on the MRes take three compulsory modules (for a total of 60 credits), four optional modules (for a total of 60 credits) and write a dissertation (60 credits).

The compulsory modules are as follows (60 credits):

- Research in Action (15 credits).
- Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations (30 credits).
- *Either* Quantitative Research and Data Analysis *or* Qualitative Research Methods (15 credits).

Quantitative Research and Data Analysis and Qualitative Research Methods are dedicated MRes modules designed to equip the students with additional skills in social science research.

In addition to the three compulsory modules, students choose four optional modules of 15 credits each. These modules complement the compulsory modules, providing students with access to in-depth scholarly debates, leading theoretical perspectives, and relevant practical issues, in particular pathway-specific topics.

The SSPG optional modules and their pathway classification include (depending on availability):

- Human Rights and Global Politics (International Relations)
- The Changing International Agenda (International Relations)
- The Theory of Global Security (Global Security)
- Comparative European Politics (Politics)
- Dimensions of Environmental Politics
- Foundations of Human Rights (Politics/International Relations)
- Race and Justice: Civil Rights in the US (US Politics)
- The US Presidency and Public Policy (US Politics)
- International Diplomacy
- Equality, Discrimination and Minorities (Law School module)
- Crises, Conflict and Diplomacy
- International Environmental Law (Law School module)

In order to graduate with a degree in the chosen pathway, students must undertake a dissertation on a topic that falls within the subject remit of that pathway. For example, a student taking the pathway in Global Security must take a dissertation that could be considered a subject falling under the disciplinary and academic boundaries of Global Security.

The full-time MRes structure in tabular form

There will be two entry points: September and January. Students joining the programme in September will take the semesters in this order: Autumn, Spring and Summer. Students joining the programme in January will take the semester in this order: Spring, Summer, Autumn.

	Autumn semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Compulsory	Research in Action (15 credits)	Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations (30 credits) And EITHER: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis OR: Qualitative Research Methods (15 credits each) Students may take either Qualitative or Quantitative modules as an optional module if they have not selected it as a compulsory module	Dissertation (60 credits)
Options	Three optional (15 credits each, total 45 credits)	One optional module (15 credits)	

Pathways for students registered on the part-time MRes

Part-time students registered on the MRes will typically take Research in Action in the Autumn semester of the first year. In the Spring semester of their first year they will take Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations and either Qualitative or Quantitative Research Data Analysis. In the Autumn semester of the second year they will take two optional modules. In the Spring semester of the second year they will two optional modules.

The part-time MRes structure in tabular form

Part-time students joining the programme in September will begin the academic year in the Autumn Semester and complete it in the Summer Semester. Students joining the programme in January will begin the academic year in the Spring Semester and complete it in the Autumn Semester.

Autumn Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year One		
Research in Action (15 credits)	<p>Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations (30 credits)</p> <p>And EITHER: Quantitative Research Data Analysis</p> <p>Or: Qualitative Research Methods (15 credits each)</p> <p>Students may take either Qualitative or Quantitative modules as an optional module if they have not selected it as a compulsory module</p>	
Year Two		
Two optional modules (15 credits each, 30 credits total)	Two optional modules (15 credits each, 30 credits total)	Dissertation (60 credits; 15,000-20,000 words)

Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome	Module in which this is Delivered	Principal forms of assessment (of the Learning Outcome) used
Demonstrate systematic knowledge of and critically evaluate advanced scholarship and recent research in pathway specific themes, issues, theories and debates, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the academic discipline	All modules	Essays, critique, literature review, reflective portfolio, research proposal, dissertation
Demonstrate systematic knowledge of and critically evaluate the techniques and methodologies applicable to research and advanced scholarship in the academic discipline	Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations Research in Action MRes only: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis OR Qualitative Research Methods Optional modules, where appropriate Dissertation	Essays, critique, literature review, reflective portfolio, research proposal, dissertation
Systematically and creatively assess the relationships between methods of and approaches to knowledge generation and interpretations of that knowledge in pathway specific themes, issues, theories and debates	Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations Research in Action MRes only: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis OR Qualitative Research Methods Dissertation Optional modules, where appropriate	Essays, critique, literature review, reflective portfolio, research proposal, dissertation

Demonstrate self-direction and originality in employing strategies to address problems, issues, theories or debates in the academic discipline	All modules	Research proposal Dissertation Various
Systematically evaluate complex issues and critically evaluate evidence and data to reach sound judgements, in the absence of complete data, about a chosen research topic or discipline specific area	All modules	Essays, critique, literature review, reflective portfolio, research proposal, dissertation
Communicate appropriately through use of higher level writing skills, aimed at specialist and non-specialist audiences, with appropriate use of academic referencing	All modules	Essays, critique, literature review, reflective portfolio, research proposal, dissertation
Communicate appropriately, convincingly and fluently, in oral presentation	Optional modules, where appropriate	Presentations
Systematically apply research or methodological skills and knowledge in order further to advance knowledge of a chosen research area	Dissertation	Dissertation

Exit Awards

Postgraduate Certificate in Politics and International Relations

A student can be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate when they have successfully accumulated 60 credits. This could be achieved by any combination of taught modules, optional or compulsory.

Postgraduate Diploma in Politics and International Relations

A student can be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma when they have accumulated 120 credits. This can be achieved by taking any combination of taught modules, optional or compulsory.

Dissertation credits are excluded from the award of a Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma.

MA in Politics and International Relations (Named Pathway)

To be awarded an MA in Politics and International Relations (named pathway) students must have accumulated 120 credits of taught modules, comprised of three compulsory modules (Research in Action, Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations, and one pathway specific module for a total

of 60 credits), a number of optional modules (for a total of 60 credits), *and* completed the dissertation (60 credits). The name of the final award is determined by the topic of the dissertation. For example, to be awarded an MA in Politics and International Relations (US Politics) a student must have completed a dissertation in US Politics.

MRes in Politics and International Relations (Named Pathway)

To be awarded an MRes in Politics and International Relations (named pathway) students must have accumulated 120 credits of taught modules, comprised of three compulsory modules (Research in Action, Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations, and *either* Quantitative Research and Data Analysis *or* Qualitative Research Methods (for a total of 60 credits), a number of optional modules (for a total of 60 credits), *and* completed the dissertation (60 credits). The name of the final award is determined by the topic of the dissertation. For example, to be awarded an MRes in Politics and International Relations (US Politics) a student must have completed a dissertation in US Politics.

4. How is the Programme assessed?

The programmes are primarily assessed through written work, mainly essays on particular topics (optional modules), but also through specific critiques or commentaries on chosen topics. The written work enables assessment of the student's understanding of the module content; and also enables assessment of the student's analytical abilities, and of the student's evaluation of particular debates, material or evidence. Oral presentations further enable assessment of the student's spoken communication skills. The research proposal and dissertation facilitate assessment of the student's ability to select, apply and evaluate appropriate research methodologies to a chosen field of study.

Students are also supported through formative assessment in the compulsory module, Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations. The first assessment for this module, conducted early in the second semester, will be an opportunity to address generic study skills issues such as referencing, quoting, selecting relevant material, answering the question set, and any issues of written English that may arise.

Students are further supported in the preparation of their dissertation by the module Advanced Approaches to Politics and International Relations, in which they will, with guidance, develop a research proposal for their dissertation.

5. What are the typical admission requirements for the programme?

Prospective students should have a first or good second-class honours degree, or its equivalent. This first degree should be in Politics or International Relations, or any other social science subject (e.g. Law or Sociology), or a humanities subject (e.g. History, Philosophy, English, or Modern Languages). For students who fall short of this requirement, relevant work experience, or evidence of experience in the field, can be considered as an alternative.

Where English is not the first language, proof of English language competence will be required (IELTS 6.5 or equivalent, with a minimum of 5.5 in each sub-test).

6. How are students supported on the programme?

Each student is allocated a member of the programme team as a Personal Tutor. Meetings are arranged for the tutee to meet with their tutor, normally face to face, to review overall progress. Extra meetings can be scheduled following the completion of the formative assessment in the first semester in order to discuss any issues that arise.

Students are given written feedback on their written work and are encouraged to meet with their module tutor to discuss the feedback. Students can also consult their personal tutor about any feedback or any academic issue about which they require further clarification.

Students for whom English is not their first language are offered language classes, facilities and services by the University's Language Centre, particularly through the [Academic English for International Students](#) classes. In addition to credit-bearing modules on English for academic study, students also have access to one-to-one tutorials for individual help and advice, and to a wealth of resources for self-study and practice.

7. Learning Resources

The main body of the course is delivered through self-study materials, which comprise mainly traditional text-based resources available in the library and through e-journals, supported by, where appropriate, electronic resources accessed through the Keele Learning Environment. The latter resource is also used to enhance student support during the period of the course, in particular through SSPG's online study skills module, StudyWrite (e.g. referencing, avoiding plagiarism and more).

The university also offers one-to-one support to identify and enable students to achieve their academic goals through good academic writing. This is done through [Write Direction](#), a service which students can book online at their convenience. Moreover, SSPG will usually run 1-2 designated study skills workshops with the assistance of a member of the Write Direction team in order to strengthen students research skills such as how to read and summarise academic scholarship, proper use of referencing systems and more.

Keele University Library

The Library has many resources for your subject, both on campus and online. Further information about the library can be found at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/library>

To access online library services off campus you will need an Athens username and password, which is available from the computer help desk. The School's liaison librarian is also happy to offer one-to-one support.

Computer facilities

The IT Services Department is responsible for the computing infrastructure in the university and for the support of all staff and students undertaking academic computing tasks. There are a large number of open access PCs available for students. All student PCs use a standard platform, which includes software such as Microsoft Office, web browsers, and other standard applications you may need. Printing facilities are available in the library building. Further information can be found at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/it/>

8. Other learning opportunities

Each academic year, SSPG organises a series of Research Seminars at which researchers present their work. Students are encouraged to attend in order to access current research in a range of areas. The programme for this is published in the autumn and new year. SSPG students are also able to attend the renowned [World Affairs](#) series, at which nationally and internationally recognised speakers give lectures on international and political topics. Other lectures and research seminars take place within the School and across the faculty that may also prove interesting for the students. Students will be kept informed via their Keele email addresses.

9. Quality management and enhancement

The Programme Board, which comprises the academic staff who are responsible for the taught modules, is responsible for the day to day management of the programme; the Programme Director chairs this body and reports to the school's Education Committee, where programme specifications, Annual Programme Review and minutes of the Student Voice Committee are considered.

The programme is monitored and reviewed in the following ways:

- Student evaluation of teaching; students have the opportunity to evaluate each module and the programme. Data from the evaluations is reported at regular programme board meetings.
- Peer observation of teaching; the academic staff responsible for delivering the programme undertake regular peer observation of teaching that is used to identify teaching strengths and areas of development.
- Postgraduate Student Voice Committee; this is an integral part of the monitoring and review procedures and provides a valuable source of management data for the programme team.
- Annual Programme Review; a range of data is used to inform the annual programme review, it comprises student evaluations, external examiners report, academic and pastoral tutor reports and internal programme review and monitoring data.

Students are represented in the management of the programme through representation at the Postgraduate Student Voice Committee, and through attendance at relevant programme boards (e.g. Annual Review).

10. The principles of programme design

The MA/MRes Programme in Politics and International Relations is designed to complement the University's Learning and Teaching assessment strategies, extending the University's emphasis on inter-disciplinarity and internationalisation in the undergraduate curriculum to postgraduate studies. The programme's structure reflects the University's commitment to providing flexible learning environments for both recent graduates and students with substantial professional experience. It aims to develop varied skills and capacities in a dynamic learning environment, using multi-media resources and drawing on significant research and teaching expertise, in a manner that complies with the Quality Assurance Agency's standards for Higher Education programmes, such as its Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The programme has also been designed with reference to, and in accordance with, the guidance set out in the following documents:

- a. Keele University Learning and Teaching Strategy to 2020
- b. UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency
- c. There is no subject benchmark in this area.
- d. The degree is not linked to a professional association for accreditation.
- e. Feedback has been sought from student representatives through Staff-Student Liaison Committee/Student Voice Committee.

11. Date on which programme specification was written or revised

Version History	Date	Changes/Notes	Owner	Date approved by FLTC
Date first created				Approved by SLTC March 2016
Revision History	April 2016		Helen Parr	3rd May 2016
	May 2018	Major modifications including revised MA pathway structure	Moran Mandelbaum	May 2018

Revision	January 2019	Modifications to available pathways	Barry Ryan	Approved by FEC January 2020
Revision	June 2021	Update of Modules	Jon Herbert	