

Quality Assurance

Masters, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Social Science Research Methods

Programme Specification: Postgraduate

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 they can expect from the study of the subject over the course of your programme.

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

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| Names of programmes | - Master of Research - Postgraduate Diploma - Postgraduate Certificate Social Science Research Methods |
| Mode of study | Full time and part time |
| Duration | 1 year full time 2 years part time Modular degree (maximum period of 5 years, including any periods of leave of absence and reassessments) |

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the main features of the postgraduate taught Masters in Social Science Research Methods (MRes Social Sciences). It explains what you can expect from studying this programme at Keele University, and includes information about what you will be able to do if you take full advantage of the opportunities provided during the course of this programme.

The MRes Social Science Research Methods is located in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The programme offers generic research training in the social sciences, and this is brought in conversation with each students’ subject-specific interests, both theoretical and methodological. The MRes. is recognised as fulfilling the requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council’s (ESRC) postgraduate social science research training and development guidelines (ESRC, 2015) and as the first year of 1+3 awards made by the ESRC North West Social Sciences Doctoral Training Partnership to students registered at Keele University.

What is the philosophy of the Programme?

The overarching educational aim of this programme is to provide you with systematic introductory and interdisciplinary research and researcher training. The programme offered at Keele maps onto the profile of the

effective researcher developed by Vitae through its Researcher Development Framework.¹ The framework brings researcher development together in the four domains of *Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities*; *Personal Effectiveness*; *Research Governance and Organisation*; and *Engagement, Influence and Impact*. Training delivered at Masters level (level 7) focuses especially on the first two domains by developing the early researcher's knowledge base whilst stimulating her or his personal effectiveness. This is, however, embedded in an acknowledgement that social research takes place in social environments, and the programme also develops the skills of communication, collaboration, ethical and professional conduct.

The programme is distinctive in its focus on research methodology and methods of the social sciences. It follows principles set out by the ESRC in its Guidelines on post-graduate research training and development, and to the guidance specifying research training content. Students on the programme receive comprehensive research training, with equal attention given to the principles and practices of social research. Thus, the programme offers you the opportunity to engage with the problematic of social research at a theoretical level, but places equal emphasis on the development of the practical skills base characteristic of the effective social science researcher. The programme illustrates how theory and practice always converge in the pursuit of social research.

As well as developing your methodological knowledge and your repertoire of research methods and skills, the programme encourages you to bring your subject-specific interests actively into your work. This is achieved through the dissertation. In addition, modular assessment provides opportunities for incorporating subject-specific content. After all, social research is also and always embedded in the specific disciplines and subject-specific interests that together form the social sciences. The programme thus offers insight into generic principles and practices in research in the social sciences, but also allows you to think about the specific theoretical and methodological issues that are debated and applied in your disciplinary or interdisciplinary field and the themes and topics that comprise it.

The modules are delivered by research specialists from Keele. They bring their research expertise into the programme in engaging ways, offering a rich environment for you to develop your own knowledge, both methodological and subject-specific, and competencies. The learning environment is enriched through the international qualities of teaching staff and students on the programme. The modules of the programme attract Keele's social science postgraduate research students, and the representation of mature and international students is excellent, feeding breadth of perspective into discussion and debate throughout the programme.

By the end of the programme, you will be able to:

- Identify appropriate evidence and to evaluate critically current research and scholarship in the social sciences to an advanced level.
- Demonstrate systematic understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of approaches at the forefront of researching the social world and the principles of research methodologies and practices in the social sciences, and to apply these effectively in your own work.
- Critically distinguish between different research designs and understand the conditions that make specific research designs appropriate in research in the social sciences.
- Systematically appraise theoretical and practical knowledge of quantitative research design, sampling, operationalization, instrument design, and data handling and analysis.

¹ Vitae is an initiative for the Research Councils UK, and provides an online hub for researcher training in the UK. For details, see <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Researcher-Development-Framework.html>

- Appraise systematically theoretical and practical knowledge of qualitative research designs, the identification of and access to samples, fieldwork practices and conduct, and data management, handling and analysis.
- Fully comprehend theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, including the way in which they have formed distinctive research traditions and are applied at the forefront of different subjects or disciplinary fields, including your own, and to apply this knowledge in a discriminating manner in your own work.
- Critically engage with the relationships between knowledge, politics and power in the world, including the socially embedded qualities of research practices, ethics and safety.
- Demonstrate comprehensive understanding of the context-specific complexities of ethical issues in social science research and of the institutional frameworks that guide ethical research conduct, and to apply the principles and understanding appropriately in your own research practices.
- Appraise your own abilities and working style reflectively, and identify areas for personal development in order to enhance your personal effectiveness as a social researcher, and with specific reference to the Keele priorities of leadership and internationalisation.
- Identify relevant software and IT tools in your field of practice and to learn to work with these effectively.
- Communicate appropriately through use of higher-level writing skills, to diverse audiences and with the use of appropriate academic referencing.
- Design your own research project, to conduct the associated research in accordance with appropriate ethical standards, analyse the results and provide a written account of the study at an advanced level of analytical engagement.

Along the way, the programme develops a range of transferable skills that may be employed in a diverse set of contemporary professions. It is especially suitable for those wishing to work in various professional fields in the public, private or third sectors in which social science research and social problem solving are salient components. Through its engagement with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines, the programme provides suitable training for those intending to conduct doctoral research in the social sciences. The programme equips you for future research employment and more advanced research training through engagement in discussion, reflection and independent learning of debate and practice that focuses on cutting edge theoretical and epistemological questions intrinsic to the approaches social scientists adopt to study the social world. Social science research is a dynamic field of practice and debate, characterised by consolidation and innovation as research problems evolve in an ever changing world. This Masters in Social Science Research Methods meets the challenges of an uncertain future by stimulating adaptability and initiative, and innovative and creative capacity. It does this through its provision of independent and guided learning opportunities related to the theoretical tools and practical skills necessary for designing, conducting, analysing and disseminating social research in different social settings.

Graduate Attributes

Engagement with this programme will enable you to further develop your intellectual, personal and professional capabilities. At Keele, we call these our ten Graduate Attributes and they include independent thinking, synthesizing information, creative problem solving, communicating clearly, and appreciating the social, environmental and global implications of your studies and activities. Whilst you will undoubtedly have already developed these skills and abilities to varying degrees, such existing capabilities can always be deepened and enriched. Our educational

programme and learning environment is designed to help you to develop further as a well-rounded postgraduate who is capable of making a positive and valued contribution in a complex and rapidly changing world, whichever spheres of academic or professional life you engage in during and after your studies at Keele.

Please refer to the programme webpages for a statement of how you can achieve the Keele Graduate Attributes through full engagement in the programme and other educational opportunities at Keele. Further information about the Keele Graduate Attributes can be found here: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/journey/>.

How is the Programme taught?

The MRes Social Science Research Methods combines different teaching modes. Taught modules are delivered through sessions led by a range of academics from different disciplinary backgrounds; all of whom are specialists in particular approaches to theory and research in the social sciences. You will meet a range of academic tutors on each module, with the module leaders responsible for ensuring an appropriate range of contributions from methods specialists and, where appropriate, Honorary and associate staff and guest speakers with links to research in policy and professional fields. Staff teaching on the MRes are members of Research Centres within the Social Sciences <https://www.keele.ac.uk/humssr/research>. Their individual profiles can be found on the School web pages.

Modules are delivered via weekly workshops, incorporating a variety of learning and teaching methods, including lectures, small group work, discussions, and individual and group presentations. You will also be introduced to different types of data analysis software in an IT lab environment. Progress on the dissertation is aided by one-to-one supervision. Learning and teaching on the programme is supported by the University's online learning environment (KLE) and/or Microsoft Teams. The combination of different delivery modes equips you for the next phase of research or professional career development by providing experience of multi-method and multi-disciplinary approaches. The learning experience on the MRes is enhanced by the mix of Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students attending its various modules.

What is the Structure of the Programme?

The programme is made up of a compulsory core leading to 165 of the 180 credits you will need to qualify for the MRes degree. The core component of the programme ensures that ESRC Guidelines on postgraduate training and development are met and that benchmark criteria in social sciences research and researcher training at Masters level, as set out in the Vitae and HEFCE descriptors, are attained. The programme offers the possibility for students to specialise through the selection of one additional 15-credit module that provides advanced or specialist training in an aspect of social research. As outlined above, you are actively encouraged to bring your subject-specific interests, whether disciplinary or inter-disciplinary, into your work, for instance, through small group discussion and activities, and in the shaping of assessment content and the dissertation.

Structure and Awards

Table 1 gives an overview of the organisation of work on the programme leading to different qualifications.

- A **Postgraduate Certificate** will be awarded to any student gaining 60 credits at any stage (excluding the dissertation).
- A **Postgraduate Diploma** will be awarded to any student gaining 120 credits (excluding the dissertation).
- An **MRes in Social Science Research Methods** will be awarded to any student who has completed 120 credits of modular content in accordance with the structure as outlined in table 1, and who has in addition gained 60 credits for their Dissertation work, bringing their total credit value to 180.

Students graduating with an MRes in Social Science Research Methods may do so with a Pass, a Merit or a Distinction. Please consult the university website under Regulation D2 (item 4: Postgraduate Master’s Degrees): <https://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations/regulationd2/>.

Table 1: The Overall Structure of the MRes in the Social Science Research Methods

| Stage | Module/Unit |
|-------------------|---|
| Semester 1 | <p>GRT-40023: Approaches to Research Design and Process [15]</p> <p>GRT-40028: Researcher Skills [15]</p> <p>SOC-40014: Philosophies of Social Science Research [15]</p> <p>ETH-40051: Ethics in Research [15]</p> |
| Semester 2 | <p>GRT-40020: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis [15]</p> <p>GRT-40021: Qualitative Research Methods [15]</p> <p>GRT-40026: Using Theory in Social Science Research [15]</p> <p><i>Option Module:</i></p> <p><i>GRT-40018: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods [15]</i></p> <p><i>GRT-40019: Ethnographic Research [15]</i></p> <p><i>GRT-40016: Independent Subject Specific Research [15] (for full-time students wishing to pursue an advanced quantitative methods option)</i></p> <p><i>HLT-40002: Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis [15] (available as second year of part-time route or as part of modular degree)</i></p> |
| Semester 1, 2 & 3 | GRT-40017: Dissertation [60] |

Notes: **Core/compulsory** components are in **bold**. *Optional* components are in *italics*. Credit values are in [square brackets].

Duration of programme

1 year full time; 2 years part-time and modular route (students have up to 5 years to accumulate their MRes credits by taking individual modules, including any periods of leave of absence and reassessments).

Full time students will complete the programme in 12 months, with their work spread evenly across the year (table 2a). If you study full time, your programme commences in the Autumn Semester when you will be attending modules that provide researcher skills, ethics in research, research design and philosophies of social science. The Spring Semester continues with training in quantitative and qualitative research methods and how to use theory in social science research. In the Spring Semester you will also choose one 15-credit module from a range of available options through which you will develop your methodological specialism. The programme finishes with the submission of your dissertation in the middle of September. Table 2a acknowledges that you will start the planning work on your dissertation early on. However, much of the fieldwork and writing up will take place in the period between May and August.

Table 2a: The organisation of the full-time mode of study on the MRes Social Science Research Methods

| Autumn Semester [60 credits] | Spring Semester [60 credits] | Summer |
|---|---|--------|
| GRT-40023: Approaches to Research Design and Process [15] GRT-40028: Researcher Skills [15] SOC-40014: Philosophies of Social Science Research [15] ETH-40051: Ethics in Research [15] | GRT-40020: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis [15 credits] GRT-40021: Qualitative Research Methods [15 credits] GRT-40026: Using Theory in Social Science Research [15 credits] <i>One Option [15] from:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>GRT-40016: Independent Subject Specific Research [15] (for full-time students wishing to pursue an advanced quantitative methods option)</i> • <i>GRT-40018: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>GRT-40019: Ethnographic Research</i> | |
| GRT-40017: Dissertation [60 credits] | | |

Note that core/compulsory components are in **bold**. *Optional* components are in *italics*.

For **part-time** students, the training programme is spread over 24 months (table 2b). Students pursuing a quantitative methods research topic must choose to take GRT-40020, Quantitative Research and Data Analysis, in their first year of study to proceed to the Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis option module in the first semester of year 2. Preparation of the dissertation will begin in your first year of study and continue over the final 12 months, leading to the submission of the work by the middle of September of the second year of training.

Table 2b: The organisation of the part-time mode of study on the MRes Social Science Research Methods

| Year One [60 credits] | | |
|--|--|--|
| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | |
| GRT-40023: Approaches to Research Design and Process [15] SOC-40014: Philosophies of Social Science Research [15] | GRT-40021: Qualitative Research Methods [15] OR GRT-40020: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis [15] GRT-40026: Using Theory in Social Science Research [15] | |
| Year Two [120 credits] | | |

| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | Summer |
|---|---|--------|
| GRT-40028: Researcher Skills [15] ETH-40051: Ethics in Research [15] <i>Option for students on quantitative methods route:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>HLT-40002: Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis [15]</i> | GRT-40020: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis [15] OR GRT-40021: Qualitative Research Methods [15] <i>One Option [15] from:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>GRT-40018: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>GRT-40019: Ethnographic Research</i> | |
| GRT-40017: Dissertation [60 credits] | | |

Note that core/compulsory components are in **bold**. *Optional* components are in *italics*.

Students studying **via the modular route** can accumulate their degree credits over a period of maximum 5 years (including the dissertation, any re-assessments and periods of leave of absence). The modular route is based on a rolling programme of modules. The number of modules taken each year will depend on candidates' individual needs and capabilities. It is however important to consider that in some years students will need to take more than one module to allow accumulation of all 180 taught credits within 5 years. It may also be advisable to reserve one full year for the dissertation module. A sample model for the modular route to MRes in Social Science Research Methods is suggested below (table 2c), including the maximum period of 5 years (students can however complete the course earlier, by choosing more modules in a given year). The model below is only a suggestion and should not be taken to mean that it is the only option, as students can take as many modules as they feel is suitable in a given year of study, provided they accumulate all 180 credits over 5 years)

Table 2c: Example organisation of the modular mode of study on the MRes Social Science Research Methods to be completed over the maximum period of 5 years (including any periods of leave of absence and re-assessments)

| Year One [30 credits] | | |
|--|--|--------|
| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | Summer |
| GRT-40028: Researcher Skills [15] | GRT-40020: Quantitative Research and Data Analysis [15] | |
| Year Two [30 credits] | | |
| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | Summer |

| | | |
|--|---|---------------|
| GRT-40023: Approaches to Research Design and Process [15] | GRT-40021: Qualitative Research Methods [15] | |
| Year Three [30 credits] | | |
| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | Summer |
| SOC-40014: Philosophies of Social Science Research [15] | GRT-40026: Using Theory in Social Science Research [15] | |
| Year Four [30 credits] | | |
| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | Summer |
| ETH-40051: Ethics in Research [15] <i>Option [15] from either:</i> • <i>HLT-40002: Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis [15]</i> | <i>OR one Option [15] from:</i> • <i>GRT-40018: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>GRT-40019: Ethnographic Research</i> | |
| Year Five [60 credits] | | |
| Autumn Semester | Spring Semester | Summer |
| GRT-40017: Dissertation | | |

Learning Outcomes, Modules and Assessment

The achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme is demonstrated in table 3 below. It starts with a list of the learning outcomes, and illustrates in which modules these learning outcomes are applicable, and in which assessments they are developed. Note that the modules in **bold** in table 3 are core components of the programme. This includes the dissertation. The modules in *italic* are optional.

Table 3: Intended learning outcomes, modules and assessment

| Learning Outcome | Module in which this is delivered | Principal forms of assessment (of the Learning Outcome) used |
|---|--|--|
| Identify appropriate evidence and evaluate critically current research and scholarship in the social sciences to an advanced level. | All modules | Portfolio, essay, research proposal, report, exam, exercise, mock research ethics approval, dissertation |
| Demonstrate systematic understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of approaches at the forefront of researching the social world and the principles of research methodologies and practices in the social sciences, and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to Research Design and Process • Philosophies of Social Science Research • Quantitative Research and | Research proposal, essay, report, exam, exercise, dissertation |

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| <p>apply these effectively in your own work.</p> | <p>Data Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative Research Methods • <i>Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis</i> • <i>Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>Ethnographic Research</i> • <i>Independent Subject Specific Research</i> • Dissertation | |
| <p>Critically distinguish between different research designs and understand the conditions that make specific research designs appropriate in research in the social sciences.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to Research Design and Process • Quantitative Research and Data Analysis • Qualitative Research Methods • <i>Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis</i> • <i>Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>Ethnographic Research</i> | <p>Research proposal, essay, report, exam, exercise</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Systematically appraise theoretical and practical knowledge of quantitative research design, sampling, operationalisation, instrument design, and data handling and analysis.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative Research and Data Analysis • <i>Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis</i> • <i>Independent Subject Specific Research</i> | <p>Research proposal, exam, exercise, essay</p> |
| <p>Appraise systematically theoretical and practical knowledge of qualitative research designs, the identification of and access to samples, fieldwork practices and conduct, and data management, handling and analysis.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative Research Methods • <i>Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>Ethnographic Research</i> | <p>Review, report, portfolio</p> |
| <p>Fully comprehend theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches; those that form the traditions of your subject-specific or disciplinary field and those which are at, or informed by, the forefront of that field, and to apply this knowledge with</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophies of Social Science Research • Using Theory in Social Science Research • Dissertation | <p>Essay, dissertation</p> |

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| discrimination in your own work. | | |
| Critically engage with the relationships between knowledge, politics and power in the world, including the socially embedded qualities of research practices, ethics and safety. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher Skills • Ethics in Research • <i>Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>Ethnographic Research</i> • Dissertation | Portfolio, essay, mock research ethics approval, report, dissertation |
| Demonstrate comprehensive understanding of the context-specific complexities of ethical issues in social science research and of the institutional frameworks that guide ethical research conduct, and to apply the principles and understanding appropriately in your own research practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics in Research • Dissertation | Mock research ethics approval, dissertation |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Appraise your own abilities and working style reflectively, and identify areas for personal development in order to enhance your personal effectiveness as a social researcher, and with specific reference to the Keele priorities of leadership and internationalisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher Skills | Portfolio |
| Identify relevant software and IT tools in your field of practice and to learn to work with these effectively. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher Skills • Qualitative Research Methods • <i>Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis</i> • <i>Advanced Qualitative Research Methods</i> • <i>Ethnographic Research</i> • <i>Independent Subject Specific Research</i> • Dissertation | Portfolio, report, exam, exercise, essay, dissertation |
| Communicate appropriately through use of higher level writing skills, to diverse audiences and with the use of appropriate academic referencing. | All modules | Portfolio, essay, research proposal, report, exam, exercise, mock research approval, dissertation |
| Design your own research project, to conduct the associated research in accordance with appropriate ethical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to Research Design and Process • Dissertation | Report, dissertation |

| | | |
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| standards, analyse the results and provide a written account of the study at an advanced level of analytical engagement. | | |
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Subject-specific training

The embedded quality of subject-specific training in the overall programme is explained in the philosophy of the programme above. As indicated in the learning outcomes, there is an expectation that this training includes attention to subject-specific theory, methodology or a combination of this. A subject is a field of inquiry that may be within a discipline (e.g. behavioural economics; sociology of the family) or across disciplines (e.g. children’s policy, rural poverty, community arts and wellbeing). It may be a broad field of inquiry or, potentially, a specific topic.

With the programme director, in an initial workshop and then in one-to-one discussions, students will agree the subject of interest for which dissertation supervision can be provided. The dissertation supervisor plays a key role in the progress made by students on the programme: one important dimension of the guidance they will offer is to examine, with the student, the intersections between the generic research training and its translation and application to subject-oriented research.

How is the Programme assessed?

The programme is assessed through a broad range of methods of assessment, including: portfolio, essay, research proposal, report, exam and dissertation. These enable assessment of the student’s analytical abilities, and of the student’s evaluation of particular debates, material and evidence. The research proposal, the report and the dissertation facilitate assessment of the student’s ability to select, apply and evaluate appropriate research methodologies in their chosen field of studies.

The portfolio: the programme contains two types of portfolio. The first is a personal development plan, in which you illustrate understanding of the assessment of your own skills base in relation to the skills of an effective social science researcher. The portfolio then brings together your self-analysis with a personal development plan and evidence of your skills development. The second portfolio is found in the optional module Ethnographic Research, and it brings together student’s conceptual work, a report of their fieldwork and a reflection on their group work.

The essay: essays provide students with the opportunity to formulate arguments and develop ideas using evidence from library research or other valid sources. As such, the essay assessment enables you to develop your research skills and attune you to the conventions of academic writing, such as referencing. On this programme, essays are used as a means for you to illustrate your theoretical comprehension.

The research proposal: developing a research proposal is a complex but essential skill in social science research. The research proposal brings together the theoretical underpinnings of an intended research project with the projects aims and objectives. This makes it possible to design the intended research. The research proposal is a comprehensive plan of the intended research and its rationale.

The report: this is a component of assessment on Qualitative Research Methods and Advanced Qualitative Research Methods. The report allows you to assess the merits of existing research in the form of academic journal articles, and existing qualitative datasets. It is also an invitation for you to develop your theoretical understanding of debates in qualitative research and to develop reflective writing whilst at the same time providing some additional context for your research.

The mock research ethics approval: this is part of the assessment strategy on Ethics in Research and is designed to help you work through the ethical issues of your research project and provide practice for your ethical approval application prior to commencing fieldwork for your independent research project.

The exam: is used in the Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis module and is a means of assessing your ability to conduct complex statistical analysis and interpretation.

The dissertation: the dissertation is the final assessment on the programme that brings together your learning through the development and implementation of a significant piece of research, the focus of which is determined by you. This assessment is guided by the supervisor. The outcome is a substantial research report that contains discussion of the rationale and outcomes of the research project.

What are the typical admission requirements for the programme?

Applicants should normally have a good honours degree (2.i or above) in a relevant Social Science subject. For students who fall short of this requirement, relevant work experience, or evidence of other experience in the field, may be recognised as an alternative. Students with specific subject interests within the broad purview of Social Sciences are encouraged to discuss possible admission to the programme with the Programme Director. Where very specific subject interests are central to inquiries about the programme, entry onto the MRes will be subject to the availability of suitable staff to supervise the subject specific work and the dissertation.

The MRes Social Sciences adheres to the University's policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), whereby people of all ages and backgrounds can receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past through formal study and through work and other life experiences. Anyone wishing to have their prior learning taken into consideration when admitted onto the programme may consult with the Programme Director for guidance on the University's procedure for doing so.

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/programmesandmodules/accreditationofpriorlearning/>

Anyone applying from a country where English is not the first language is required to take one of the internationally recognised English language tests. The minimum entry level is IELTS 6.5 or equivalent.

How are students supported on the programme?

Your primary academic supervisor will be the programme director of the MRes, or an appropriate member of the MRes team. The Programme Director will provide academic guidance on the different modules you take. A dissertation supervisor will be allocated at the start of the year based on your intended primary research topic. Dissertation supervisors may be drawn from social science academics across the Faculty.

Students on the programme are further supported through the personal tutoring system. All students will be provided with a personal tutor at the start of their studies. There is an expectation that students meet with their personal tutor at least five times during the 12 months of the programme (for part-time students, this is spread over 24 months). Students may also contact to see their personal tutor outside of these meetings, when the need arises. The role and functions of the personal tutoring system will be discussed during the first meeting, which takes place at the start of the programme. Support structures for students on this programme are regularly reviewed and where necessary modified to comply with University wide policies on support for PGT students and as these policies develop.

The MRes programme is hosted by the School of Social, Political and Global Studies and managed by the MRes Programme Director supported by professional service staff in the School. The Programme Director organises the programme, chairs the meetings of the Programme Board and the Student:Staff Voice Committee, and generally ensures liaison between the programme and the administering School, and between the different modules that form

the programme. When you experience personal problems that affect your overall work on the programme, you should consult the Director.

You can contact the MRes Programme Director, professional service colleagues and module tutors by e-mail. Face-to-face contact may be sought with staff working on the programme by visiting them during their office hours, or by emailing for an appointment. Contact information can be found in the welcome information pack and module guides.

Key information and guidance on structure, content and assessment, including the dates of classes and submission dates of your assessments for the period of your chosen studies, is accessed via School and module documentation accessed via the University's online learning environment (KLE) and/or Microsoft Teams. The KLE provides access to module handbooks, lecture notes, power-point presentations, reading lists, tutorial hand-outs, assessment guidance and marking criteria. Study skills resources, Library Information Services and IT services are all accessed via the Keele web pages.

Students for whom English is a second language are offered language classes, facilities and services by the University's Language Centre. 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.

Learning Resources and Opportunities

Keele University has a range of social science interests reflected in the various Schools in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, and in Schools outside of the Faculty. The Faculty has four Schools in the Social Sciences, which administer the University's undergraduate and taught postgraduate student population. Further information about the Faculty may be found at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/hss/>.

Research in the social sciences is administered through Research Centres and the Schools. Seven research centres bring together the research interests of academic social scientists, including PhD students. Further Information may be found at <https://www.keele.ac.uk/humssr/researchcentres/>.

MRes students are encouraged to participate in the activities of the Research Centre of which their supervisor is a member. The Faculty has an extensive website containing information on postgraduate research and other activities and initiatives, and runs a number of seminar programmes. Students interested in continuing their studies at Keele by progressing towards Postgraduate Research after their year on the MRes are advised to speak with their Academic Advisor, the MRes Programme Director, or one of the Postgraduate Research Directors of the Social Science Research Centres at their earliest convenience. This is to ensure that there will be sufficient time to pursue funding possibilities in order to start once the MRes has been completed.

Quality management and enhancement

Overall responsibility and oversight of the MRes Social Sciences is held by the School of Social, Political and Global Studies, on behalf of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Each of the research and researcher training modules is subject to oversight by the MRes Social Science Research Methods Programme Board and the School of Social, Political and Global Studies Education Committee (via module evaluations, regular reports to the Programme Board by the relevant Programme Director and related strategies, including Student:Staff Voice Committee meetings and the External Examination process). The Programme Board annually conducts an Annual Programme Review, the outcome of which is scrutinised by the School of Social, Political and Global Studies Education Committee.

The principles of Programme design

The MRes Social Science Research Methods has been designed with reference to, and in accordance with, the guidance set out as follows:

ESRC (2015) Postgraduate Research Training and Development Guidelines. 2nd edition.

Vitae Researcher Development Framework. Vitae is a researcher training initiative funded by the Research Careers and Diversity Unit of Research Councils UK. Information about the Researcher Development Framework, which Keele has also adopted for Level 8 training, may be found at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Researcher-Development-Framework.html>

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education August 2008 – the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7: Master's degree.

Programme Version History

| Version History | Date | CHANGES / NOTES |
|--------------------|----------|--|
| Date first created | 25/6/13 | Move from 20 credit modules to 15 credit modules. |
| Revision history | 02/06/17 | For SLTC, SSPP: deletion of pathways throughout; rebalancing place of subject specialisation in the prog spec.; inclusion of advice from QA and DLTC |
| | 08/06/17 | |
| | 4/7/17 | For submission to FLTC – transfer onto new postgraduate programme specification 17-18 form, consistency of terminology (tutor, supervisor); thoroughness of inclusion of ESRC guidance as key reference point; |
| | 1/5/18 | Following feedback from FLTC: i) clarification of IELTS English Language proficiency scores in Admission Requirements section (p12); and ii) removal of reference to Independent Subject Specific Research Module as a 'placeholder'. This becomes the module title to be displayed on the degree transcript. |
| | 13/06/19 | Revision to Programme Specification to take account of proposed change to 15 credit core module in semester 2. |
| | | Modular delivery (up to maximum 5 years, replacing the current part-time route lasting 2 years) is proposed by the programme team to respond to applications from those in full time employment (includes revised programme structure for part-time attendance, moving one core module into second year of study). |

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|----------------------|------------|--|
| | 22/03/2021 | Revisions: (1) to remove the 30 credit modules in semester one and replace with their 15 credit components (pp5-11) ; (2) to incorporate changes made as part of the (Covid-19) variation revisions which reflected the semester change of HLT-40002 and the reintroduction of GRT-40016 to support students on a quantitative methods route (pp5-11); (3) to incorporate assessment change on ETH-40051 (pp9-12); (4) to reflect recent changes to administrative processes in the School and University (pp13-14). |
| Date approved by FEC | May 2021 | |