



Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from
The University of Sheffield

1	Programme Title	Contemporary China
2	Programme Code	LAST002
3	JACS Code	T130, T100
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Master of Arts (MA)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters
6	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert); Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Arts & Humanities
9	Department	East Asian Studies
10	Other Department(s) involved in teaching the programme	None
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	4 months (PGCert); 9 months (PGDip); 12 months (MA)
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	March 2014, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

China is playing and will play a major role in the world, whether from the point of view of economics, politics or culture. The central task for the world system in the twenty-first century will be the accommodation of the rising economic, political and cultural influence of China and Chinese.

The MA in Contemporary China is one of the programmes offered by the School of East Asian Studies, which was founded here at the University of Sheffield in 1963. Established originally as a Centre for Japanese Studies, the School has expanded over time, adding Centres for Korean Studies and Chinese Studies in 1988 and 1993 respectively. With a large number of research-active staff, who combine teaching with research at the frontiers of knowledge on subjects as diverse as business, economics, international relations, politics, film, identity, literature, migration and history, the School has grown to be one of the largest and most distinguished departments of its kind in the world. Its teaching, renowned nationally for its focus on contemporary East Asia, on the acquisition of practical language skills and on the use of social science methodologies, was rated 'excellent' in the most recent government-sponsored survey of teaching quality.

China's fast-developing economy and changing society are creating a growing need for persons with a sophisticated understanding of Chinese society and culture; graduates who combine this with a good knowledge of the Chinese language are particularly employable. The MA in Contemporary China provides students with training in research techniques, and a knowledge of a range of aspects of contemporary Chinese economy, business and society and (for some students), Chinese language skills to upper-intermediate level. Depending on a student's individual interests, s/he may choose to focus on society and culture, or on business and the economy. The degree is designed as both a bridging degree for those who want to do specialised post-graduate research on China and for those who wish to pursue other China-related activities. No knowledge of Chinese is required; the language may be taught from beginner's level. The non-language ('studies') modules are suitable for those with a first degree in any subject; no prior knowledge of China or its institutions or social practice is assumed.

The growing influence of China in the world means that graduates with a sophisticated understanding of contemporary China are becoming still more sought-after across the entire spectrum of careers in business, finance, administration, communications and education. More generally, there is a strong and growing need for the combination of analytical, cultural and linguistic expertise that the MA in Contemporary China provides. Our Masters students are highly regarded by a wide spectrum of employers, including governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international agencies, schools and universities, newspapers and marketing and advertising agencies.

16. Programme aims

The MA in Chinese Studies offered by the School of East Asian Studies has the following general aims consonant with the Mission Statement of the University of Sheffield:

1. To provide high quality postgraduate teaching that is informed and invigorated by the research and scholarship of its staff and alert to the benefits of student-centred learning that fosters the development of transferable analytical and communicative skills;
2. To provide for the acquisition of Chinese language skills alongside awareness and understanding of the appropriate cultural context;
3. To sustain a culture of research and teaching that is able to foster the free pursuit of knowledge, the impartial analysis of values, and the acquisition of intercultural awareness, and informed and professional attitudes to China and Chinese;
4. To respond to the diversity of student interests by allowing a level of student choice within the MA Contemporary China appropriate to that programme;
5. To widen access to Chinese Studies to the extent permitted by the intellectual and linguistic aptitudes which the programmes demand;
6. To enable students to maximise their potential in all aspects of their programme;
7. To assess students over a range of knowledge, understanding and skills, and to identify and support academic excellence.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Having successfully completed the MA in Contemporary China, a student will have acquired:

Knowledge and understanding:

K1	A sound knowledge and critical understanding of aspects of the politics, economics, business and media cultures and society of China (depending on the options chosen).
K2	A critical, comparative understanding of the politics, economics, business culture and society of other East Asian societies (depending on the options chosen) (depending on the options chosen).
K3	A sound knowledge and practical and critical understanding of the methodologies used to analyze language and society.
K4	A sound knowledge and critical understanding of the structures and usage of modern Chinese (depending on the options chosen).
K5	A sound understanding of general and specific research methodologies.

Skills and other attributes:

S1	A high level of inter-cultural awareness, derived from the study of the language and society of China - leading to professional and informed attitudes to China, its language, culture and society.
S2	Skills in acquiring, using, and critically evaluating information about language and culture gained from a variety of sources, including teachers, native speakers, newspapers, broadcasts, books and works of reference, and electronic sources.
S3	Familiarity with the essential primary and secondary source material appropriate to a taught post-graduate programme of Chinese language and studies, along with a regard for the impartial analysis of the values expressed therein.
S4	Competence in writing and speaking modern Chinese.
S5	Competence in understanding the written and spoken forms of modern Chinese.
S6	The ability to carry out individual study and research, and to participate in group activities such as seminars.
S7	Familiarity with bibliographic and research skills, including the use of Chinese in word-processing, e-mailing and online (depending on the options chosen).
S8	Further transferable skills, valuable for employment, including information gathering, the development of individual resourcefulness, analytical thinking, the ability to identify problems and ways of resolving them, the critical appreciation of Chinese source material, the ability to construct and sustain logical argument on the basis of such material, and the ability to present such argument clearly in both oral and written forms.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

1. **Formal lectures** are used throughout the programme to impart essential knowledge (K1-K5 above), especially for non-language modules. However, as befits an MA programme, the primary mode of teaching and learning is the seminar.

2. **Seminars**, which may be either staff-led or student-led, are used throughout the programme. The ability to give a seminar presentation, complete with either handouts or the use of overheads, is regarded as being an essential skill. Regular practice in giving seminars, on which written and oral feedback is provided by staff, allows students to acquire and develop their skills until they are proficient. Seminars are also designed to reinforce information imparted through lectures by allowing students to work through, analyze, understand and respond to that information. Seminars devoted to Chinese language acquisition may take the form of classes devoted to reading or listening comprehension, written and spoken language production, translation both from and into Chinese, or the teaching of formal grammar backed up by exercises and drills. In all cases the aim is to expose students to as much authentic material in Chinese as possible, both written and spoken. Language seminars may therefore be conducted partly or wholly in Chinese. Seminars contribute both to the achievement of knowledge and understanding (K1-K6) and to the development of key skills (S1-S5, S7-S8).

3. **Tutorials** are meetings arranged between a tutor and an individual student in order to clarify a particular problem experienced by that student in the understanding of material or in the process of preparation for a seminar or an assessment, but they are especially important for the completion of the dissertation over the summer months. By means of discussion and staff feedback on drafts of the dissertation, tutorials in play a crucial role in developing knowledge and understanding (K1-K5) and in the development of key skills (S1-S7). Tutorials thus play an important role throughout the programme in developing knowledge and understanding (K1-K6) and enhancing key skills (S1-S7).

4. **Independent study** is essential to the successful completion of this postgraduate programme. The amount of independent study broadly expected for each module is clearly set out in the programme information, although it is recognised that this will vary from student to student. Independent study is generally geared towards the assimilation and further clarification of material gleaned from lectures, preparation for seminars, preparation for written assessments, and the broader development of knowledge of the field of study. It is especially important for the completion of the 15,000 word dissertation taken during the summer months. Independent study thus contributes to the development of all the programme learning outcomes (S1-S7).

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

Regular formative assessment – As part of the tuition in Chinese language, these assessments are usually in the form of periodic tests or weekly exercises designed to reinforce knowledge and skills in such areas as vocabulary acquisition, written and spoken language production, written and spoken language comprehension, translation to and from the Chinese language. By these means, the department is able at all levels to monitor carefully the student's progress through the language component of the programme and to pick up and rectify areas of potential weakness in linguistic competence (K1, S1, S2).

Summative assessment of the student's knowledge of and skill in using the Chinese language is achieved through several different methods. However, at all levels a student's ability to demonstrate productive and receptive skills is assessed in both formal written examinations and face-to-face oral examinations. These assessment methods support S4.

Assessment of 'studies' modules in disciplinary subjects including sociology, cultural studies, politics and economics use appropriate combinations of the following methods:

- i. written examinations designed to test subject knowledge (K1, K2, K4);
- ii. essay writing and project work designed to test subject knowledge, autonomy in student learning, and the development of transferable skills (K1-K5, S3-8);
- iii. oral and seminar presentations designed to test organisational and communicative skills (S6, S8).

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Subject Benchmark Statements

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx>

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2008)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx>

University Strategic Plan

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/strategicplan>

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2011-16)

http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/strategy/lts11_16

The research interests of departmental staff and the research strategy of the School of East Asian Studies

20. Programme structure and regulations

The MA in Contemporary China provides a multi-track programme for the study of the language, culture and society of modern China. Designed as both a 'bridging' degree and a higher taught qualification on China, the degree provides general research training, the study of Chinese culture and society, and the opportunity to conduct original research. The student's study and research may be focussed on business and economics, linguistics and literature, or culture and society.

More specifically, a student must take:

- a **core** of 60 credits which cover disciplinary modules on Chinese political economy, society and business practice;
- **approved modules** (60 credits), which allow students to choose from a range of subjects which cover political or socio-economic issues in China, another East Asian society, or the East Asian region, research training, or Chinese language.
- a **dissertation** (60 credits) over the summer months on some aspect of Chinese Studies.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/govern/calendar/reggs.html>.

21. Student development over the course of study

In **Semester 1**, the programme provides:

- (a) study of Chinese political economy, and politics/international relations.
- (b) general training in research methods.
- (c) other social science options exploring East Asia as a region, or other East Asian societies, or (where appropriate) Chinese language

This pattern is designed to introduce students to research methods on general Chinese topics, and to study social science topics in Chinese Studies. Seminars and tutorials provide the student with the opportunity to study a subject more deeply, to refine research skills, and to develop skills in the presentation of a specialised subject before a group and to lead a discussion on the subject.

At this point, a student who has successfully completed 60 credits may exit the programme with a Postgraduate Certificate in Chinese Studies.

In **Semester 2** the programme provides:

- (a) study of Chinese society and media culture, or of Chinese business practice.
- (b) other social science options exploring East Asia as a region, or other East Asian societies, or (where appropriate) Chinese language.

This pattern is designed to apply the student's practical knowledge of general research methods, to his or her knowledge of specialised social science topics in Chinese Studies. Seminars and tutorials provide the student with the opportunity to study a subject more deeply, to refine research skills, and to develop skills in the presentation of a specialised subject before a group and to lead a discussion on the subject.

At this point, a student who has successfully completed 120 credits may exit the programme with a Postgraduate Diploma in Chinese Studies.

The **summer three months** following the completion of formal academic training during Semesters 1 and 2 allows the student to pursue a research topic in depth using original and secondary sources. The general research and specialised research topic modules will have given the student the opportunity to learn general research procedures and a knowledge of specialised topics and sources. The experience gained through those modules will be built upon by the student to demonstrate the ability to independently research a topic, to analyse source materials, and to write a thesis which demonstrates critical thought and insight.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/>

23. Additional information

For further information students are directed to the Departmental web pages at <http://www.seas.ac.uk/> which contains full information on programmes and provides access to the student handbook

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching departments and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.