

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	Politics
2	Programme Code	SPRU001
3	JACS Code	L200
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Honours / FHEQ Level 6
6	Intermediate Qualification(s)	None
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	Politics and International Relations
10	Other Department(s) involved in teaching the programme	None
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	3 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Not applicable
14	Date of production/revision	January 2010 / January 2018 / February 2021 / February 2024, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The study of politics involves the development of knowledge and understanding about governance in human societies. Politics is concerned with ideas, institutions and practices from the local and regional levels to the national and international domains. Issues such as power, democracy, and rights are central to its pre-occupations. Politics graduates are equipped to pursue a variety of careers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. At Sheffield, the politics curriculum is structured around five strands of the discipline: political analysis; political economy; political theory, comparative politics and international politics. Teaching is organised to provide a challenging learning environment that reflects the research interests and expertise of staff. Particularly at Level 3, students are required to take specialist taught and project modules that engage them with research and scholarship at the frontiers of the discipline. Students also actively engage with the research process through the construction of a dissertation and/or projects.

The Department of Politics and International Relations at Sheffield has gained an international reputation as one of the top Politics research departments in Britain, ranked in the top three for research excellence in the most recent (2014) Research Excellence Framework. In terms of teaching the department was awarded a maximum 24 points in the last Quality Assurance Agency Subject Review. Many prominent scholars in the field of Politics and International Relations have been members of staff and a number of leading figures in the discipline currently work in the Department.

Further information on programmes can be found on the Department's website at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/politics>.

16. Programme aims

1. to produce graduates with broad knowledge and understanding of political phenomena, and of the concepts, theories, approaches and methods employed in the study of politics.
2. to enable students to evaluate different interpretations of political processes, events and controversies, and to critically assess issues of contemporary public concern.
3. to enable students to develop a range of important intellectual, practical and key skills.
4. to prepare graduates for employment in a wide range of contexts, or for continued studies.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding: By the end of the programme students will be able to demonstrate:	
K1	broad-based knowledge and understanding of political ideas, institutions and practices.
K2	specialised knowledge and understanding of specific research areas informed by staff expertise.
K3	the ability to apply a range of concepts, approaches and methods to analyse political phenomena.
K4	the ability to evaluate critically differing interpretations of political processes, events, and debates.
Skills and other attributes:	
Intellectual and practical skills: by the end of the programme students will have demonstrated (in relation to political subject matter) an ability to:	
SIP1	collect data and information from a variety of sources including printed and electronic media.
SIP2	understand and interpret qualitative and basic quantitative data.
SIP3	organise and synthesise information, arguments, and evidence.
SIP4	analyse issues, construct reasoned arguments, and exercise critical judgement.
SIP5	consider issues within local, national and international contexts and appreciate the importance of diverse cultural settings.
SIP6	conduct an extended, self-directed, investigation of a specific issue (including project design and investigation followed by analysis and interpretation and concluding in the presentation of findings).
SIP7	appreciate and be respectful of a range of perspectives and be considerate of diversity.
Key skills: By the end of this programme students will be able to:	
SK1	communicate information and ideas effectively in both oral and written forms.
SK2	work independently, demonstrating responsibility, initiative, foresight and the capacity to manage time.
SK3	collaborate effectively with others to achieve common goals.
SK4	use information and communications technologies to retrieve and present information and analyse data.
SK5	undertake self-directed learning to develop further knowledge and skills.
SK6	manage learning effectively, including self-assessment and the constructive use of feedback.
SK7	translate and adapt knowledge and apply lateral thinking in problem solving.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Knowledge and understanding (K1-4) are acquired in a variety of teaching and learning environments including lectures, seminars, small group interactions, and project/dissertation work. Specialised knowledge and understanding of specific areas of national and international politics, informed by the expertise of staff (K2) is particularly acquired through Level 3 seminars and Level 3 project/dissertation work. For all such learning outcomes (K1-4) considerable emphasis is placed on individual study – on reading and note taking, exploring printed and electronic sources, reflecting on material, and preparation. Assessment (see below) forms an integral part of the learning process, with essays, projects and other course work designed to focus the learner's attention on critical issues, and feedback provided to allow the learner to further improve their understanding, knowledge and performance. The balance among teaching methods varies as the programme progresses. Lectures play a significant role at Levels 1 and 2. Seminars and small group interactions are important at all Levels. Individual supervision of self-directed learning projects and dissertations is central to Level 3.

Lectures and seminars provide guidance and a framework to assist the progressive development of **intellectual and practical skills** SIP1-7. Seminars, group work and class assignments provide a context to practice these skills, receive feedback from peers and staff, and gain confidence and proficiency. Modules across the curriculum promote cumulative learning of intellectual and practical skills SIP1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Explicit instruction in particular skills is provided by the compulsory Level 1 module 'Political Analysis: An Introduction to Research and Scholarship', (SIP 1, 2 qualitative, 5), and the compulsory Level 2 module 'Political Analysis 2: How to do Empirical Research' (SIP 1, 2 quantitative, 3).

The numerical dimension of SIP 2 may be further developed at Level 3 (in special subject, project or dissertation modules) depending upon the student's choice. Acquisition of SIP5 is ensured in particular through Level 3 project and dissertation modules, but these modules also allow students to develop further their capacities to collect and interpret data (SIP1 and 2), organise and synthesise information (SIP3), and to extend their analytical and critical skills (SIP4).

Promotion of specific **key skills** occurs in different combinations across the curriculum at all Levels. Preparation for, participation in, and feedback from, seminars provide a context for developing capacities for oral communication (SK1 oral), independent working (SK2), and self-directed learning (SK5). Preparation of, and feedback from, written assignments provide a context for developing skills of written communication (SK1 written), independent working (SK2), and self-directed learning (SK5). Explicit guidance on essay writing (SK1 written) is provided in the Level 1 'Political Analysis 1: An Introduction to Research and Scholarship:'. Use of information and communications technologies to retrieve, present and analyse data (SK4) is dealt with in 'Political Analysis' modules at Levels 1 and 2. All modules require students to display their capacities to undertake self-directed learning (SK5), with the Level 3 project and dissertation modules particularly extending this capacity to the fullest extent. All modules contribute to SK6 and SK7, with the Level 3 project and dissertation modules particularly important for managing learning (SK6).

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

Knowledge and understanding (K1-4) are assessed in a variety of methods appropriate to the specific material. Many modules involve both essays and unseen examinations. Some require the preparation of short written assignments (for example, book reviews or reading memos), oral presentations and group exercises. Marks on project modules are determined on the basis of the written submissions. Formative assessment is provided in seminars, and structured feedback is provided on all written and oral forms of assessment for which marks are awarded.

Assessment of intellectual and practical skills (SIP1-7) is closely linked to that of knowledge and understanding. Written feedback returned after graded work provide feedback on the range and use of sources (SIP1 and 2), and the structure and quality of analysis and argument (SK3 and 4). Feedback on SIP6 is provided by project and dissertation supervisors in one-to one sessions and further advice and feedback from module leaders at dissertation and project workshops.

Assessment of key skills is integrated with the evaluation of coursework at all Levels of the programme. SK1 and SK2 are assessed formatively within seminars and the successful and timely completion of coursework. The capacity to use information and communications technologies (SK4) is demonstrated through assignments across the curriculum with the 'analyse data' element explicitly assessed on Level 2 'Political Analysis: How to do Empirical Research'. SK5 is not assessed independently, but demonstrated by student attainment on the programme, especially in the preparation of Level 3 projects and dissertations.

19. Reference points

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

Internal:

The Sheffield Graduate Attributes

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffieldgraduate/studentattributes>

University Vision and Strategic Plan

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision>

Departmental research interests

External:

Subject Benchmark Statements

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

20. Programme structure and regulations

The curriculum enables students to develop both broad-based knowledge and more specialised engagement with specific topics. It is designed to progressively promote greater depth of understanding over the three years of undergraduate study. Teaching, especially at Level 3, is closely linked to the research interests of staff, and all students are required to complete a dissertation and at least one research project module, enabling them to actively engage with the research process. Some modules and/or types of modules are compulsory at each Level, but substantial choice is built into the programme to enable students (in consultation with staff) to devise a programme of study tailored to their individual needs and interests. 'Political Analysis' modules (at Levels 1 and 2) and the dissertation module at Level 3 provide a central core to the degree.

Students are required to take modules in four important strands of the discipline (comparative politics, political analysis, political economy and political theory) at Level 1. A specialised understanding of specific topics is ensured by the requirement at Level 3 for students to take a dissertation module and prepare a project closely linked to one of the specialist subject modules.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available online at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/regs>.

21. Student development over the course of study

The curriculum is designed to allow students progressively to achieve the specified learning outcomes. Compulsory modules and/or types of modules at each Level have been structured to enable students to extend systematically their knowledge and skills. Section 20 above (Programme structure and regulations) highlights key concentrations of study at each of the three Levels.

Level 1 provides a foundation, encouraging reflection on the complexity of political life, introducing the approaches required for its comprehension, and developing a range of skills to assist with independent learning.

Level 2 develops a solid core of student understanding, allowing students to extend their knowledge and skills base.

Level 3 enables students to accumulate in-depth knowledge in particular areas and to engage in independent learning through researching and writing a dissertation and at least one project module under individual supervision.

Coherence, a balance between breadth and depth of study, staged progression over the period of study, and flexibility and choice, are promoted by a combination of compulsory and option modules. At all Levels, advice is available to help students choose coherent programmes of individual study.

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

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 department(s) 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>.