



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	International Relations and Politics
2	Programme Code	POLU05
3	JACS Code	L250
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Honours
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	February 2018, February 2021, February 2024, July 2024

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The study of Politics and International Relations (IR) involves the development of knowledge and understanding about governance in human societies. Politics and IR scholars are concerned with ideas, institutions and practices from the local and regional levels to the national and international domains. Issues such as power, democracy, anarchy, security, economy, globalisation and rights are central to their pre-occupations and these concepts and topics are applied or studied differently across a number of sub-disciplines, including, for example, the study of governance, public policy, political theory, and political economy. International relations also take a sharp focus upon how the world is divided into multiple polities, and the conflictual and cooperative engagement between states.

International Relations and Politics (IRP) graduates are equipped to pursue a variety of careers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Teaching is organised to provide a challenging learning environment that reflects the research interests and expertise of staff. Particularly at Level 3, students have the opportunity 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 ten for research excellence in the most recent (2021) Research Excellence Framework. In terms of teaching, the department was awarded a maximum 24 points in the 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 and global political phenomena, and of the concepts, theories, approaches and methods employed in the study of politics and international relations.
2. to enable students to evaluate different interpretations of political processes, events and controversies, and to critically assess issues of contemporary public concern in world politics.
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 the significance of political ideas, institutions and practices at the local, national and the global level; questions of political and international order and disorder; and the dynamics of decision-making and contestation at the centre of any political analysis.
K2	The ability to apply a range of concepts, approaches and methods employed in the study of politics and its sub-disciplines in order to analyse global political phenomena and communicate the character of world politics from both the system and actor perspectives.
K3	The ability to evaluate critically differing interpretations of the origins and development of local, national and global political processes, debates and events.
K4	Specialised knowledge and understanding of specific research areas in a range of sub-disciplines such as governance, public policy, political theory, political economy and international relations, as informed by staff expertise.

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 quantitative data.
SIP3	organise and synthesise information, arguments, and evidence.
SIP4	analyse issues, construct reasoned arguments, solve problems, 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, investigation, analysis, and presentation of the 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 staff expertise (K4) is particularly acquired through Level 3 seminars and 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 practise 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 and 5. Explicit instruction in particular skills are provided by the compulsory Level 1 module 'Political Analysis 1: 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 SIP6 is ensured 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 problem-solving skills (SIP4), and their capacity to manage their learning (SIP5).

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'. 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.

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. Most modules involve both essays and unseen examinations. Some require the preparation of short written assignments (for example, book reviews or briefing reports), 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. Electronic written feedback on assessed work provides 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 is given at project and dissertation workshops.

Assessment of key skills is integrated with the evaluation of course work at all Levels of the programme. SK1 and SK2 are assessed through seminar participation and the successful and timely completion of oral and written course work. Assessed group work (SK3) is a feature of the core 'Political Analysis' module at Level 1. 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'. 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:

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 (2024)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks#>

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 the 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 have the option to take 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, 2) and the dissertation module (Level 3) provide a central core or 'skills spine' to the degree.

At Levels 1 and 2, students are required to take modules in four important pathways of the discipline (political theory, political economy, international politics/relations, and governance, public opinion, parties and participation). At L1, students must take a core 'foundational' module in at least three of these areas. At L2, students must take a core 'intermediate' module in at least two of these areas. At all levels, optional modules are badged to match appropriate pathways, which enables students to link up their learning within and across levels. At each level, students can also choose to take cross-cutting optional modules that examine topics from multiple pathways. A specialised understanding of specific topics is ensured by the requirement at Level 3 for students to take a dissertation module and the option to prepare a research 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 an extended piece of work 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 optional modules as well as pathway badges. 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>.