



## 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	<b>Programme Title</b>	International Public and Political Communication
2	<b>Programme Code</b>	IJCT024
3	<b>JACS Code</b>	P500
4	<b>Level of Study</b>	Postgraduate
5a	<b>Final Qualification</b>	Master of Arts (MA)
5b	<b>QAA FHEQ Level</b>	Masters
6a	<b>Intermediate Qualification(s)</b>	Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert)
7	<b>Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)</b>	Not applicable
8	<b>Faculty</b>	Social Sciences
9	<b>Department</b>	Journalism Studies
10	<b>Other Departments involved in teaching the programme</b>	None
11	<b>Mode(s) of Attendance</b>	Full-time
12	<b>Duration of the Programme</b>	1 year
13	<b>Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body</b>	None
14	<b>Date of production/revision</b>	November 2019, April 2021, January 2022, December 2022, March 2026

### 15. Background to the programme and subject area

Communication of both political and public nature has become increasingly important in various complex civil and political settings. Whereas public communication is a form of public service orientated around civil values and intended to inform or educate the public on behalf of a perceived public good or benefit (for example public health, environment and science, culture and education), political communication is the way in which governments, politicians, political associations and other institutions construct and shape their message in order to shape public opinion and popular discourse, or promote specific forms of political identity. The MA International Public and Political Communication (IPPC) aims to form experts in both the analysis and the development of public and political communication strategies. Themes covered in this course (both theoretically and practically) include:

#### **The role and significance of political and public communication**

- Comparative analysis of public and political communication activities both internationally/historically, visually and verbally;
- The impact of the contemporary digital media environment on public/political communication activities;
- The historical role of propaganda in public/political communication and rise of online mis/disinformation and conspiracy theories;
- Critical analysis of political and public communication activities/campaigns;
- Practical development of political and public communication activities/campaign materials.

#### **The scope of international political communication**

- International relations, public diplomacy and soft power statecraft;
- Understanding the practicalities of (visual/verbal) rhetoric, propaganda, lobbying and advocacy, online mis/disinformation and conspiracy theories;
- Political journalism including the diverse journalistic forms and contexts of political coverage;
- Representation (visual/verbal), the construction of gender and political identity, and the framing of social/political groups.

### **Media relations, media content and political marketing tools**

- The value, use and design of public and political marketing tools;
- The importance of grass-roots campaigning, political activism, advocacy and lobbying;
- Practical development of media and campaign material;
- Media relations and how to communicate with the media (including media training).

Students completing the MA will have the skills and expertise to work in diverse public and political settings: international agencies, governments, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, political parties, single-issue groups and charities, media and media monitoring organisations, the health and cultural sectors as well as in lobbying and for pressure groups. They will be able to work in the following capacities: communication directors, media relationship managers, campaign managers, press officers, media advisors and consultants, spokespersons.

For more information visit [www.sheffield.ac.uk/journalism](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/journalism)

### **16. Programme aims**

This programme aims to:

- Enable students to understand the role of public and political communication in a comparative perspective both internationally and historically.
- Enable students to gain an in-depth knowledge of how to analyse and develop public and political communication activities and campaign materials.
- Enable students to develop their analytical and practical skills in real-life scenarios.
- Enable students to acquire knowledge of research methods and the analytical ability to carry out research.
- Enable students to acquire basic skills in communicating with the media, media-training, media activism and producing campaign materials.
- Enable students to understand how mis/disinformation and conspiracy theories arise, how they are used and how they influence public and political communication.

### **17. Programme learning outcomes**

#### **Knowledge and understanding**

Upon successful completion of the Masters' programme students will have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

<b>K1</b>	The role and significance of both political and public communication in contemporary society.
<b>K2</b>	How both political and public communication are undertaken internationally and how they have been historically.
<b>K3</b>	How to develop successful political and public communication activities including campaign materials.
<b>K4</b>	Strategies for communicating effectively with and through the media.
<b>K5</b>	The processes, theory and practice of international public and political communication.
<b>K6</b>	Contemporary developments and debates concerning the relationship between civil society, the media and politics as well as between public institutions and their publics.
<b>K7</b>	Key research methods of both quantitative and qualitative nature.
<b>K8</b>	The existence of various communication strategies, target audiences and messages.
<b>K9</b>	The rise of online mis/disinformation and conspiracy theories, why they are successful and how they can be combated and prevented.

<b>Skills and other attributes</b>	
Upon successful completion of the Masters' programme students will have demonstrated the ability to:	
<b>S1</b>	Devise and carry out an individual piece of research in the format of a dissertation.
<b>S2</b>	Produce communication and media material.
<b>S3</b>	Work independently and in groups (specific group work training provided).
<b>S4</b>	Produce academic work in a variety of formats such as essays, reflective writing, case studies, critical comments, digital media, dissertations, research proposals, seminar presentations etc.
<b>S5</b>	Apply practical communication and political marketing skills.
<b>S6</b>	Work according to specific marking criteria and assess their own work in relation to these.

### **18. Teaching, learning and assessment**

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

This programme uses a wide range of teaching and learning methods that happen in the classroom and include lectures, seminars, workshops, surgeries, one-to-one tutorials and skills training (in collaboration with the 301 Academic Skills Centre). The teaching within this environment is supported by the use of learning technologies, other classroom assessment techniques, digital tools and social media. The teaching and learning methods in this programme extend beyond the classroom and further include a conference for students with, for example, political advisors, lobbyists, spokespeople, political journalists and speechwriters. The extra-classroom activities aim to provide students with insights into the 'real' daily professional life of political and public communicators and will provide them with valuable lessons and insights from experienced professionals.

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

A variety of assessment methods will be used to allow students to achieve the learning outcomes. These include essays, reflective writing, case studies, critical comments, dissertations, research proposals as well as the production of communication material and media content. It is via these that students are formally assessed. Constructive/formative feedback is offered via email, surgeries and one-to-one sessions.

### **19. Reference points**

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

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>

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

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2016-21)  
[https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.661828!/file/FinalStrategy.pdf](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.661828!/file/FinalStrategy.pdf)

Department aims and objectives

Department Learning and Teaching Strategy

Faculty of Social Sciences Learning and Teaching Strategy  
<https://sites.google.com/a/sheffield.ac.uk/fss-landt/strategies-and-policies/faculty-level?pli=1>

External examiners' reports

## 20. Programme structure and regulations

The MA International Public and Political Communication comprises a set programme with four (15 credit) core modules in the first semester, alongside one (15 credit) core module and three (15 credit) optional modules (total of 45 credits) in the second semester. Students also complete a dissertation over the course of semester two (60 credits).

The first semester aims to provide students with the theoretical understanding of the role and significance of public and political communication and introduce them to how these are undertaken internationally and historically. The second semester continues to engage and develop these conceptual and theoretical themes, but also enables students to apply this knowledge to campaigns and develop their practical skills to produce communication material and media content. The dissertation is tied in with students' research methods training in semester 1 and will require students to undertake an in-depth analysis of an instance of international public or political communication.

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/calendar/regs>

## 21. Student development over the course of study

The first semester of the programme lays the conceptual, methodological and theoretical foundations for the rest of the year. Lectures, seminars and workshops are the means to build students' confidence and knowledge through tutor-directed discussion and study.

In the second semester, the focus shifts to more autonomous project work geared to exploring more fully the links between theory and practice in international political communication and effective communication with and through the media. Theoretical knowledge will be applied to practically develop public and political communication campaigns. During the second semester, students also take part in a week-long conference-style event, which involves practitioners of public and political communication. In the final third of the programme, students will be expected to undertake tutor-guided, individual research. This work should show strong analytical skills and knowledge, expressed in the ability to conceptualise, devise and execute a complex, rigorous piece of research.

## 22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available from the University's On-Line Prospectus at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/courses/>.

## 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>.