



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

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

Programme Details

1. Programme title	International Relations and Politics with Foundation Year
2. Programme code	POLU39
3. QAA FHEQ level	6 (this specification relates to the Foundation Level 0)
4. Faculty	Level 0 within APSE / Extra-Faculty LTC Levels 1-3 (4-6) within the Department of Politics
5. Department	Level 0 within the Department for Lifelong Learning Levels 1-3 (4-6) within the Department of Politics
6. Other departments providing credit bearing modules for the programme	25% of ACE0349 (20 credit Extended Project module) provided within the Department of Politics
7. Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Not applicable
8. Date of production/revision	November 2019

Awards	Type of award	Duration
9. Final award	BA	4 years Full-time inc. Foundation Year
10. Intermediate awards		

Programme Codes

11. JACS code(s) <i>Select between one and three codes from the HESA website.</i>	L250	L200	
12. HECoS code(s) <i>Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.</i>	100490	100491	

Programme Delivery

13. Mode of study	Full-time
14. Mode of delivery	Face to face (on campus) (refers to Foundation Year)

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Please refer to the Programme Specification for the BA in International Relations and Politics. This Programme Specification is for the addition of a Foundation Year to the above programme. The Foundation Year in the Department for Lifelong Learning provides students with both generic and subject-specific skills and knowledge, along with the confidence and familiarity with the academic environment, to equip them to succeed on a University of Sheffield degree programme.

16. Programme aims

The Foundation Year of the BA International Relations and Politics with Foundation Year aims to:	
A1	Provide students with subject based knowledge and skills of the required standard for a successful undergraduate career at the University of Sheffield.
A2	Develop students' familiarity with different methods of learning, teaching and assessment employed at the University of Sheffield.
A3	Build confidence in students' academic ability and develop understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses.
A4	Develop students' ability to adapt knowledge and skills in new situations.
A5	Increase students' awareness of the opportunities as well as the challenges of studying as an undergraduate student throughout the University year.
A6	Provide strategies for managing the conflicting demands placed upon mature students.
A7	Provide information and guidance relating to students' chosen degree programme.
A8	Develop students' awareness of the key attributes of the Sheffield Graduate.
A9	Encourage students' enthusiasm and motivation for future degree level study.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding		
On successful completion of the Foundation Year of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:		
		Links to Aim(s)
K1	Knowledge and understanding of Academic English of a standard necessary for successful progression to Level 1 HE study.	1, 3, 9
K2	Knowledge and understanding of Mathematics and descriptive statistics of a standard necessary for successful progression to Level 1 HE study.	1, 3, 9

K3	Subject knowledge and understanding of the Social Sciences sufficient for successful progression to Level 1 of BA International Relations and Politics.	1, 3, 7, 9
K4	Knowledge and understanding of the opportunities as well as the demands placed on students by university style methods of learning, teaching and assessment.	2, 4, 5, 9
K5	Knowledge of personal study strengths and weaknesses.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9
Skills and other attributes		
On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:		
S1	Relevant skills in the acquisition, evaluation and use of subject-related information in different circumstances.	1,2,3,4,8,9
S2	Essential skills in oral and written communication.	1,2,3,8,9
S3	Problem-solving and presentation skills sufficient to develop and sustain a coherent line of argument.	1,3,4,8,9
S4	Ability to participate effectively in group work activities, both assessed and non-assessed.	1,2,3,8,9
S5	Ability to carry out small-scale independent study and research.	1,2,3,4,8,9
S6	Familiarity with basic techniques of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.	1,2,3,8,9
S7	Information literacy skills sufficient for effective study at Level 1.	1,2,3,8,9
S8	Reflective learning skills which promote self-awareness and appropriate responses to feedback.	1,2,3,4,5,6, 8,9

18. Learning and teaching methods

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

- Lectures and seminars.** Most modules rely largely upon a mixed lecture/seminar format in order to impart essential subject knowledge, build confidence and encourage individual student participation. The latter is achieved through regular question and answer sessions and the use of small-group work to stimulate discussion on particular issues. The balance between tutor- and student-led discussions varies from subject area to subject area. (K1-3, S1-4).
- Problem solving classes.** These are an integral part of the Maths and Statistics module, allowing students to develop their problem solving skills with individual support from tutors where necessary. The work carried out in these classes allows students to apply and practice their theoretical knowledge, as well as their examination technique, in a supportive environment. (K2-3, S1, S3, S6).
- Field studies.** Short field study trips to specific landscapes, places or buildings (e.g. museums) are employed in modules in order to introduce particular concepts, ideas and techniques best understood in context. These also provide an opportunity to practice basic recording methods in some instances. (K2-4, S1, S4-6).
- Independent study.** This is the most important part of the learning process for most Foundation Year students. The extent to which independent study is formally guided by the tutor through the setting of specific weekly "private study tasks" will vary from subject area to subject area. In many natural science based subjects, for example, formal or informal question papers and tasks

may be set on a regular basis. In other subjects, the emphasis will be more upon the location, reading and analysis of suitable primary or secondary sources, often in preparation for particular formally assessed essay questions or projects. All students take a core Extended Project module which specifically develops their independent study and research skills. Within this and the Academic Literacy and Communication Skills module, students are also encouraged to monitor and reflect on their learning and performance in a number of different contexts (K3-5, S1-8).

5. **Skills and subject-based tutorials.** These are provided as part of the core Extended Project and Academic Literacy and Communication Skills modules. All students are also assigned a personal tutor for the duration of their studies on the Foundation Year with whom they are encouraged to discuss their progress and degree choice. (K3-5, S8).
6. **Group work.** Throughout the Foundation Year students are encouraged to work together and support one another both within and outside the classroom – sharing knowledge and experience in a creative way in order to develop support networks during their time on the Foundation Year which they can continue to draw upon in their future degree level studies. (K4-5, S4, S8).
7. **On-line activities.** All Foundation Year modules make use of MOLE courses to develop familiarity with the use and potential of virtual learning environments to enhance and structure learning, and as a tool for effective communication. (K1-5, S2, S4, S7-8).
8. **Revision workshops.** All those modules which include substantial summative assessment by formal written examination will include specific workshops tailored to prepare students for this particular form of assessment. This is an area of assessment which mature students often find particularly challenging, but is also a key assessment tool used at level one and above on most degree pathways (K4, S2-3, S8).

The Foundation Year is taught by subject specialist academic tutors within the Department for Lifelong Learning, augmented by Extended Project supervision by an academic in the student's destination department, in teaching spaces across campus which are as far as possible selected for their suitability for appropriate delivery methods.

As well as Blackboard, the Foundation Year makes extensive use of Encore, and numerous digitally mediated activities and interactions, both in and outside of face to face classroom sessions.

19. Assessment and feedback methods

Assessment

The assessment on the foundation year of the BA International Relations and Politics with Foundation Year is designed to provide experience of all key forms of assessment method which students are likely to encounter at higher levels of study. Early exposure to these different assessment methods, including formative assessments delivered through Academic Literacy and Communication Skills, as well as the opportunities provided through feedback and tutorial discussion to reflect on these experiences, helps build students' confidence in their ability to succeed, and to identify strategies for future success. Assessment on the Foundation Year is informed by DLL academics' engagement with and contribution to research and academic literature in this specialist field.

The assessment methods employed are as follows:

1. *Essays.* A common method of assessment across most Social Science based modules. In preparing for and writing their essays, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1, K3, S1-3, S5 and S7.
2. *Oral and/or poster presentations.* Individual and group presentations, supported by Powerpoint or posters, are assessed as part of the core Academic Literacy and Communication Skills and Introduction to the Social Sciences modules respectively. They provide an important opportunity for students to demonstrate to their peers their achievement of all learning outcomes.
3. *Reflexivity exercises:* these exercises can take various forms (e.g. learning journal, feedback action planning, critical reflection on individual extended essay/project) and are an important element of the Academic Literacy and Communication Skills and Extended Project modules. They provide students

with the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1, K3-5, S1-8.

4. *Unseen examinations:* End of module examinations are an integral part of all 'Foundations of ...' and the Introduction to the Social Sciences modules. In preparing for and sitting examinations, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1-3, S1-3 and S6.

6. *Extended project.* The core extended project module gives all students the opportunity to develop their independent research and communications skills, whilst further exploring subject matter relevant to their chosen degree programme in more depth. The successful completion of this module enables students to demonstrate achievement of all learning outcomes.

Feedback

Students receive both formative and summative feedback, and feed-forward, throughout their Foundation Year.

The core Academic Literacy and Communication Skills module is specifically designed so that feedback received on this module can be used to improve and develop work on subject-based modules. Assessment on ALCS is incremental, and takes account of the particular needs of our student body, informed by pedagogical research.

All students have the opportunity to sit a mock exam as part of ALCS, and feedback is given on this through engagement with the markscheme.

Summative feedback is usually provided through Turnitin, with a mix of annotations and summary feedback. On some modules, voice feedback is also provided. DLL is currently developing a departmental policy on feedback, informed by research in the field, which will include recommendations about providing positive pointers for improvement, and providing an appropriate amount of feedback (i.e. not too much for a student to engage with).

Formative feedback is provided face to face on developing work through tutorials on the Extended Project module, and through personal tutorials. Individual tutorials are also a timetabled part of ALCS, enabling students to receive personalised formative feedback on the ALCS assessments which then feed into their assessment on subject-based modules; likewise, group tutorials are used to deliver face-to-face subject-based feedback. Summative written feedback on ALCS also serves as formative feedback for other assignments.

Students are encouraged to reflect on their feedback as part of an ALCS assignment, and DLL is shortly launching an assignment cover sheet which is designed to encourage students to engage with feedback.

Various forms of instant feedback are also used in class through the use of Socratic quizzes, Plickers &c. to check and reinforce learning.

We aim to tailor our feedback to our particular student cohort, mindful of their (usually) mature status and/or previous experiences of education.

20. Programme structure and student development

Please refer to the regulations/diet for details of the programme structure.

Our Foundation Years are carefully designed to ease transition back into study for people who have often not studied in a formal academic environment for a long period of time. In this respect, the key subject matter and assessments students encounter in the first semester are intended to introduce and refresh key study skills and practices, to build confidence, but also to open up their thinking to the wider field of learning and knowledge which is the life blood of any University degree. We also place a strong emphasis upon group and peer-assisted learning at this stage, through the inclusion of different group tasks and assessments which are designed to ensure students can share and develop skills and support networks together which will serve them well throughout their University career.

As the year progresses, the nature of the challenges we present intensifies, with an increasing emphasis placed upon those forms of assessment which mature students often find most rewarding (more in-depth project work) or most difficult (end of year exams). Through the project work,

departmental visits and other means, we also create a range of opportunities to become increasingly engaged in the life of the Department of Politics. In this way, we aim to ease students' second critical point of transition from foundation year student attached to Department for Lifelong Learning to a successful undergraduate student ready to flourish in their new departmental home.

Before the end of the year's study, all students are offered clear advice and guidance around progression options from Foundation Level to Level One, including appropriate careers advice, and through their final pieces of assessment in the Academic Literacy and Communication Skills and Project modules, are encouraged to reflect carefully upon their learning over the course of their foundation year, and their preparedness for level one study.

In the case of students who do not achieve the threshold in their Foundation Year required to progress onto level one of their chosen degree programme at the University of Sheffield, we provide in depth support, advice and guidance to help them pursue an alternative progression route, either through the Department for Lifelong Learning's own Certificates of Higher Education, or by applying for other degree level study at Sheffield or elsewhere.

The regulation allowing for progression at the discretion of DLL and the destination department was introduced with the aim of avoiding a stark arbitrary cut-off point and allowing consideration of a small contextual element, and maintaining student motivation, particularly for those (as is often the case) whose performance has improved through the course of the Foundation Year. The lower end of the discretionary zone was set at 57 so that a student who is getting an average of sixty across the board but performing less well in - but still passing - an outlying module (potentially Maths and Stats or a module taken outside DLL or not directly relevant to their degree) could have their performance considered on an individual basis.

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/>.

21. Criteria for admission to the programme

The entry requirements and admissions processes for this programme follow the model developed for all degrees with Foundation Year delivered through DLL. These non-traditional entry pathways are specifically designed to help mature applicants make a successful transition to full-time undergraduate study. Some applicants will have few or no formal educational qualifications above GCSE level, and most will typically not have studied full-time for A-Level (or equivalent) qualifications within the last three years.

All applicants are usually asked to attend an interview. This may happen remotely if an applicant is residing some distance from Sheffield and they hold appropriate level GCSE or equivalent qualifications (C in English, D in Mathematics) which have been gained within the last 5 years. On the interview day all applicants' Maths and English abilities are assessed via tests. These form part of the selection processes, alongside an academic interview which assesses applicants' understanding of and commitment to their chosen subject, their potential to succeed (assessed by reference to prior work, life and educational experience) and their current preparedness for study. The interview is integral to the selection process, as it is the key tool in assessing a candidate's aptitude for study and understanding of the demands that will be placed upon them.

Applicants must be proficient in written and spoken English, normally demonstrated by grade C or above in GCSE English Language or performance in interview assessment. Non-native English speakers may demonstrate proficiency through the attainment of IELTS 6.0 with 5.5 in each component. Applicants must also demonstrate a sufficient level of numeracy skills, normally demonstrated by grade D or above in GCSE Mathematics (or equivalent) and performance in interview assessment.

22. 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

23. Additional information

None

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>.