



MSc Digital Politics and Sustainable Development Programme Specification

Programme Title and Award	MSc Digital Politics and Sustainable Development		
Programme Level	Level 7	HECoS Code	100489 100490 100488
Relevant QAA Benchmark Statements	Politics and IR	Programme Code	NCHDPSSMF (FT) NCHDPSSMP (PT)
Awarding Body	NCH at Northeastern Limited	Language of Instruction	English
Teaching institution	New College of the Humanities	Date approved	January 2021
Mode of study	Full Time Part Time	Duration of Study	1 Year (FT) 2 Years (PT)

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

This programme responds directly to processes afoot of power shifts and power diffusion in International Relations (IR). These processes are fundamentally changing the organisational structure of IR. Specifically, the programme responds to questions of agency, action and accountability of governance networks by deploying systems-based approaches. The programme contributes directly to our understanding of and engagement with fundamental organisational changes in IR which are set to shape our present and future lived experiences.

The programme advances applied skills in political risk analysis and political risk assessment, digital transition management (for example, green politics, biopolitics, digital politics), sustainable development, and understandings of traditional and non-traditional security.

By embedding core courses in green politics and digital politics, and optional courses in the fields of technology, sustainability and security, this programme prepares learners to engage with the processes underpinning current and future power shifts in IR. The emphasis on digital technologies and sustainability as a distinct pathway of the programme is designed to advance our understanding of governance, policy and process in a changing global environment (for example, through social activism, employment preferences or consumer choices).

A key area of particular salience and impact for the survival of many aspects of life as we know it, is sustainable development and resilience studies. This area of IR can enhance our understanding of the utility of traditional and non-traditional power tools. The programme not only offers engagement with different sustainability frameworks but through applied courses (for example, Extended Dissertation, Research Methods, Sustainable Development) offers learners the opportunity to develop transferable and employability skills in this new area of job creation and job growth.

A further area of interest for this programme and where the transition towards digital technologies is making a significant impact is that of Security Studies. The development of the digital space has radically changed, for example, the way we understand 'territory' in IR, and by logical inference, the relationship between the state, sovereignty and security. What is more, other recent developments related to globalisation, emerging technologies and (global) environmental degradation, to name but a few, have forced us to develop different conceptualisations of what security means within the discipline of IR; a move away from the strict militarisation of security concerns is now afoot.

PROGRAMME INTEGRATION

There are four courses (Green Political Thought, Global Politics in the Digital Age, Research Methods and the Extended Dissertation) which provide the core knowledge, skills, and resources that any graduate student needs to master and that (more generally) support an informed, reflective and thoughtful approach to life.

The remainder of the courses between them constitute a representative mix of the pathways along which this programme develops, with some cutting across them. They were designed with an eye both to their centrality to further postgraduate study and to the special expertise of the faculty at the College.

The Extended Dissertation is a sustained piece of independent research on an agreed topic of the student's choice in the area of Politics and International Relations.

FULL-TIME PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

MICHAELMAS TERM

NCHPIR775 Green Political Thought (PGT) (15 credits)

NCHPIR776 Global Politics in the Digital Age (15 credits)

NCHAI749 AI and Data Ethics (15 credits)

HILARY TERM

NCHAI750 Minds and Machines (15 credits)

NCHPH757 Technology and Human Values (15 credits)

EITHER MICHAELMAS OR HILARY¹

NCHPIR777 Sustainable Development (PGT) (15 credits)

NCHPIR778 Human Security, Globalization and Sustainable Development (15 credits)

NCHPIR779 Research Methods (15 credits)

¹ The courses listed here will be delivered in either Michaelmas or Hilary. For further information please speak to the Head of Faculty.

TRINITY TERM

NCHPIR780 Extended Dissertation (60 credits)

PART-TIME PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

YEAR 1

MICHAELMAS TERM

NCHPIR775 Green Political Thought (PGT) (15 credits)

NCHAI749 AI and Data Ethics (15 credits)

EITHER MICHAELMAS OR HILARY²

NCHPIR779 Research Methods (15 credits)

NCHPIR777 Sustainable Development (PGT) (15 credits)

TRINITY TERM

Begin NCHPIR780 Extended Dissertation (60 credits)

YEAR 2

MICHAELMAS TERM

NCHPIR776 Global Politics in the Digital Age (15 credits)

HILARY TERM

NCHAI750 Minds and Machines (15 credits)

NCHPH757 Technology and Human Values (15 credits)

EITHER MICHAELMAS OR HILARY³

NCHPIR778 Human Security, Globalization and Sustainable Development (15 credits)

TRINITY TERM

Complete NCHPIR780 Extended Dissertation (60 credits)

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Entry requirements - our typical offer for postgraduate study is an upper second-class honours undergraduate degree (or the equivalent) in an academic subject such as Economics, English, History, Languages, Philosophy, Politics, Sociology, Psychology; but each applicant will be assessed on an individual basis, including relevant professional experience where applicable. If English is not an applicant's native language, they will need to demonstrate proficiency in English in order to study at the College. For a list of equivalencies, please check here.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Where a student wishes to apply for the recognition of prior learning on the basis of certificated or experiential learning, they should follow the College's [Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer Policy](#).

² The courses listed here will be delivered in either Michaelmas or Hilary. For further information please speak to the Head of Faculty.

³ The course listed here will be delivered in either Michaelmas or Hilary. For further information please speak to the Head of Faculty.

AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

The overall aims of the programme are to:

- Give a thorough grounding in the discipline and practice of International Relations and to encourage critical evaluation of how the past is represented, constructed, debated, and contested in relation to the present and the future, in different settings, and at different unit levels of analysis.
- Develop an awareness and understanding of the different approaches to, and theories of, sustainability and development, security, digital transition, and global citizenship in contemporary global politics.
- Give students an appreciation of the complexity of research within Political Science and International Relations.
- Foster the technical skills involved in research and writing substantive pieces of work to the highest standard.
- Give students the knowledge and understanding of, and skills to, analyse and evaluate information from various levels of engagement in global politics.
- Through individual supervision, guide students to deliver a substantial piece of original research, presented in clear, coherent, well referenced, and persuasively argued prose.
- Improve students' applied skills in the areas of critical questioning/reasoning, information gathering, synthesis, and analysis, and oral and written communication.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

A student will be able to:

- K1d Examine and analyse information from various levels of engagement in international politics, sustainability, and security.
- K2d Distinguish between, and assess, different perspectives in recent debates in international relations, international sustainability, and security.
- K3d Critically evaluate the usefulness of inter- and cross-disciplinary approaches to international sustainability and security.
- K4d Critically appraise the means by which the academic study can contribute to a wider public engagement with, and appraisal of, the media, and/or public policy and the challenges and complexities of reconstructing the past for a public audience.

SUBJECT SPECIFIC SKILLS

A student will be able to:

- S1d Formulate and structure coherent arguments in a critical, lucid, and conceptually sophisticated manner.
- S2d Identify, examine, and evaluate primary and secondary sources, and critically analyse evidence derived from such sources.

- S3d Synthesize a large amount of information from different disciplinary and methodological perspectives, consistent with approaches to political science and international relations.
- S4d Locate their work within the existing corpus of interdisciplinary scholarship, and identify key issues and worthwhile questions within this corpus.

TRANSFERABLE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

A student will be able to:

- T1d Gather, organise, and deploy a range of evidence and data in support of a clearly defined line of argument.
- T2d Synthesise and analyse large amounts of information to produce pertinent and critical conclusions.
- T3d Closely read and engage critically and analytically with texts.
- T4d Develop and sustain a coherent, original, and persuasive written and oral argument.

For the exit awards see [Appendix A](#).

MAP OF COURSES TO PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES

COURSE TITLE	KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING				SUBJECT-SPECIFIC SKILLS				TRANSFERABLE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS			
	K1d	K2d	K3d	K4d	S1d	S2d	S3d	S4d	T1d	T2d	T3d	T4d
NCHPIR775 Green Political Thought (PGT)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NCHPIR776 Global Politics in the Digital Age	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NCHPIR777 Sustainable Development (PGT)	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
NCHPIR778 Human Security, Globalization and Sustainable Development	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	
NCHPIR779 Research Methods	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	
NCHPIR780 Extended Dissertation	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NCHPH750 Minds and Machines	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	
NCHPH757 Technology and Human Values	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NCHAI749 AI and Data Ethics	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

TEACHING METHODS

- Lectures/seminars, including some with student presentations
- Directed reading
- Introduction to libraries
- Online discussion forums
- Individual dissertation supervisions (which support both written and oral communication skills)
- (Structured) independent study and research

The College teaches in small groups and is committed to providing individual attention and guidance. Seminars always include student interaction and dialogue. Seminars are normally in groups of no more than twelve people. Each student will receive an approximate minimum of 20 contact hours per course. As indicated below, they can also participate in the Faculty's reading and policy discussion groups and audit other lectures and seminars of their choice. Assessment, as indicated below, is in a variety of modes: formative and summative coursework, research proposal, and dissertation, amongst others.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Faculty's reading and policy discussion groups offer a lively and varied menu of talks and discussions involving both internal and invited speakers. Students are invited and encouraged to attend these in all terms.

Students will also be encouraged to attend the broad programme of liberal-arts professorial lectures at the College given by our [visiting professors](#).

INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Politics and International Relations Faculty is deeply committed to widening participation in the field of Political Science and International Relations, both through outreach activities and through a teaching environment that is inclusive towards a variety of backgrounds and learning styles. Members of the Faculty are much engaged in the public dissemination of their discipline, visiting a wide range of schools, hosting open lectures, engaging with the media, and publishing in accessible formats.

The staff-student ratio at the College is especially important to the Faculty's ability to give individualised attention to students, and thus to be inclusive towards a variety of backgrounds and learning styles. The Faculty facilitates a wide range of academic and social events in which academics and students are brought together.

The College will make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, in accordance with the recommendations of the Student Wellbeing Team. Where necessary, following consultation with the Student Wellbeing Team, alternative forms of assessment may be offered.

Students with accessibility requirements will benefit from the programme's varied assessments (oral, written, participation). Furthermore, students will participate in small groups in which it is possible to accommodate different learning and accessibility requirements. The College has a Student Wellbeing Team that supports students with their learning experience, including supporting students with Specific Learning Differences/Disabilities and individualised learning strategies. Finally, students will work closely with academic supervisors, who can further assist with accessibility needs. We strongly welcome applications from international and BAME students, as well as students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Each application will be reviewed by an experienced Admissions Tutor from the lead Faculty, in conjunction with

Admissions. The Faculty is strongly committed to the creation of a diverse and international programme, in keeping with its own composition and undergraduate offering.

E-LEARNING

The College ensures students are supported outside of class contact time by means of a virtual learning environment, through which students access learning materials and communicate with fellow students and faculty. Students can additionally access general study information, on such topics as time-management skills and how to read effectively.

RESEARCH-LED PRACTICE-DRIVEN TEACHING

All members of the Politics and International Relations Faculty have been recruited on the basis of their teaching talents and research activity and are encouraged to remain active in their research field. The PIR curriculum, across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, has been developed and allocated on the basis of research interests and expertise. The Faculty is committed to supporting a lively, open, and interactive teaching environment, in which teaching and research are mutually complementary.

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT METHODS

- Formative and summative written assignments
- Research proposal
- Dissertation
- Oral presentation
- Project
- Experiment

[Appendix B](#) is the programme structure and assessment summary.

ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

The College's Assessment Regulations for Taught Awards can be found [here](#).

STUDENT SUPPORT

DISABILITIES AND/OR SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SPLDS)

Students are strongly encouraged to inform the College of any medical conditions, disabilities, specific learning difficulties (SpLD) or neurological differences as soon as is practical. Students will be asked to submit supporting documentation from a doctor, clinical or educational psychologist detailing the nature of their disability and the impact it is likely to have on their studies in order to help us put in place appropriate support and accommodations. More information can be found in the Student Disability Policy [here](#). This data is managed and securely stored by Student Support and Development (SSD). During Freshers' week, a number of talks and events are held which are designed to support and inform students with regard to mental health, disabilities, safety and learning support.

SSD meet with students as soon as possible, and preferably before the start of the academic year, to discuss their needs and draft a Learning Support Plan (LSP) which outlines the support to be provided both within the College (if appropriate) and externally. If requested by the

student, the SDD will then arrange to inform relevant faculty of the student's needs and any reasonable adjustments required.

If a student is undiagnosed but believes they may have a SpLDS (e.g. Dyslexia) the SDD will help them to access diagnostic services. If the assessment confirms a SpLDS, the SDD will work the student in preparing a LSP and will provide advice about accessing additional funding and support through the Disabled Students Allowance, where a student may be eligible.

For more information, please click [here](#).

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

- Work independently, creatively, and to deadlines
- Conduct independent research and explore relevant existing knowledge
- Analyse, contextualise, and interpret complex policy issues and multiple sources of evidence
- Synthesise and evaluate information against a backdrop of uncertainty
- Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Develop teamwork and leadership skills
- Present findings and opinions in a clear, structured manner, whether orally or in writing
- Engage in collaborative and constructive discussion

CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Masters students will have access to the College's Careers Advisory Service. This includes employer receptions with representatives from a wide range of sectors and our electronic Careers Centre, containing features and functionality for careers guidance, interview advice and job searching.

In addition, Careers Advisers, supplemented with support from tutors, offer advice, often one-to-one, on securing a professional future tailored to students' skills and ambitions.

QUALITY EVALUATION AND ENHANCEMENT

AWARD STANDARDS

Every programme of study is developed by the Faculties, utilising their subject specialists and approved by Academic Board.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS

The College has robust procedures, as described in [AQF4 Programme and Course Approval and Modification](#) and [AQF5 Annual Monitoring and Reporting](#), in place to assure the quality of the programme development, delivery, management, systematic monitoring and ongoing review and enhancement of all College programmes. Enhancements are made as necessary to ensure that systems remain effective and rigorous.

The College utilises constructive feedback from a variety of sources, internal and external, to inform its decision-making process to enhance the programme and student experiences. These feedback sources are listed below:

- Annual Course Reviews, written by the Course Leader, are prepared to enable the Course Leader to reflect on the course, using a variety of data and student/faculty feedback to enhance the course and support the Head of Faculty in writing the Annual Faculty Review.
- Annual Programme Reports, written by the Programme Director, are prepared in order to enhance individual programmes and to plan ahead.
- Annual Examiner reports are prepared by independent External Examiners, as appointed by the College, to confirm that a programme has been assessed in accordance with the approved documentation and that the student performance meets the appropriate academic standards.
- Formal student feedback mechanisms consist of termly student representatives attending Faculty Meetings and Student-Staff Liaison Committee meetings; course satisfaction surveys; and annual programme satisfaction surveys.
- Informal student feedback is also valued by the College and this can take the form of students talking to their Programme Director, Head of Faculty or professional staff.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Title: MSc Digital Politics and Sustainable Development Programme Specification					
Approved by: Academic Board					
Location: Academic Handbook/programme specifications and handbooks/postgraduate programme specifications/Digital Politics and Sustainable Development MSc (Hons) Specifications					
Version number	Date approved	Date published	Head of Faculty	Proposed next review date	Modification (As per AQF4) & category number
3.0	May 2022	May 2022	Diana Bozhilova	January 2026	Category 2: Change of assessment method
2.2	February 2022	February 2022	Diana Bozhilova	January 2026	Category 1: Corrections/clarifications to documents which do not change approved content.
2.1	November 2021	November 2021	Diana Bozhilova	January 2026	Category 1: Change in term of delivery
2.0	September 2021	October 2021	Diana Bozhilova	January 2026	Category 2: Change to Teaching and Learning
1.0	January 2021	May 2021	Dr Diana Bozhilova	January 2026	
Referenced documents	AQF7: Assessment Regulations for Taught Awards Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer Policy AQF4: Programme and Course Approval and Modifications AQF5: Annual Monitoring and Reporting				
External Reference Point(s)	Subject Benchmark Politics and International Relations.				

DISCLAIMER

The College has checked the information provided in this Programme Specification and will aim to deliver this programme in keeping with this Programme Specification. However, changes to the programme may sometimes be required arising from annual monitoring, student feedback, and the review and update of courses and programmes. Where this activity leads to significant changes to courses and programmes there will be prior consultation with students and others, wherever possible, and the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to students. It is also possible that the College may not be able to offer a course or programme for reasons outside of its control, for example, due to the absence of a member of staff or low student registration numbers. Where this is the case, the College will aim to inform applicants and students as soon as possible, and where appropriate, will facilitate the transfer of affected students to another suitable programme.

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APPENDIX A – EXIT AWARDS

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE

4 x 15 credit Level 7 courses = 60 credits

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA

8 x 15 credit level 7 courses = 120 credits

APPENDIX B - PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Code	Course Title	Credit	Type	Mode	Assessment Weighting % & Activity Type (code overleaf)					
					AE1	Activity Type	AE2	Activity Type	AE3	Activity Type
FHEQ Level 7										
NCHPIR775	Green Political Thought	15	C	CD	35	R	65	A		
NCHPIR776	Global Politics in the Digital Age	15	C	CD	40	Oral	60	R		
NCHPIR777	Sustainable Development	15	C	BL	15	Oral	15	Pract	70	A
NCHPIR778	Human Security, Globalization and Sustainable Development	15	C	CD	30	A	70	Exam		
NCHPIR779	Research Methods	15	C	BL	100	A				
NCHAI750	Minds and Machines	15	C	CD	100	A				
NCHPH757	Technology and Human Values	15	C	CD	100	A				
NCHAI749	AI and Data Ethics	15	C	CD	30	A	70	A		
NCHPIR780	Extended Dissertation	60	C	CD/DL /EX	100	A				

COURSE TYPE: C = Compulsory; O = Option.

COURSE MODE: CD = Campus Delivery; BK = Block Delivery; BL = Blended Learning; DL = Distance Learning and Self-Directed Learning; EL = E-Learning; EX = Experiential; PL = Placement; WB = Work Based Learning,

ASSESSMENT WEIGHTING: AE1 = Assessment Element 1; AE2 = Assessment Element 2; AE3 = Assessment Element 3;

AE4 = Assessment Element 4

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY TYPE	CODE
Written exam	Exam
Take home exam	TEx
Written assignment	A
Report	R
Dissertation	Diss
Portfolio	F
Project output (other than dissertation)	P
Oral assessment and presentation	Oral
Practical skills assessment	Pract
Set exercise	Set