UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Programme Specification (Postgraduate)

FOR ENTRY YEAR: 2026/27

Date created: 15/03/2022 **Last amended:** 08/10/2026 **Version no.** 3

1. Programme Title(s) and Award Code(s):

MA/Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate Intelligence and Security

HECOS CODE	%
100471	100

2. Awarding body or institution:

University of Leicester

3. a) Mode of study

Part-time and Full-time

b) Type of study

Distance learning

4. Registration periods:

For a full-time MA:

The normal period of registration is: 1 year
The maximum period of registration is: 2 years

For a part-time MA:

The normal period of registration is: 2 years
The maximum period of registration is: 4 years

For a part-time PG Diploma:

The normal period of registration is:
October intake: 19 months
January intake: 24 months
The maximum period of registration is:
October intake: 38 months
January intake: 48 months

For a part-time PG Certificate:

The normal period of registration is:
October intake: 7 months
January intake: 13 months
The maximum period of registration is:
October intake: 16 months
January intake: 24 months

5. Typical entry requirements:

Either a first or a good second class honours degree from a British university or its equivalent in Politics, International Relations, European Studies, History, Law or other related subjects. In certain cases, equivalent relevant professional experience will be considered.

Where English is not a candidate's first language, applicants will be required to provide evidence of appropriate language skills, equivalent to IELTS 6.5.

Students must have access to regular and reliable internet access in order to follow this programme.

6. Accreditation of Prior Learning:

There are no exemptions on the basis of APL.

7. Programme aims:

This programme aims to equip students with an understanding of key concepts and debates in relation to intelligence and security and the current state of knowledge in the field, and also to enable them to contribute to these debates going forward. The opening module provides a solid academic grounding in current debates around core principles and issues (what is 'intelligence'? the intelligence cycle; counter-intelligence, oversight and accountability, etc.). The second module focuses on the professional practice of intelligence and the issues that arise, the third focuses on the key question in the study of intelligence - how to avoid, or minimise the risk of, intelligence failure by applying theoretical approaches to a number of case studies - and the fourth module considers the issue of intelligence ethics, again with reference to a range of case studies. Finally, the dissertation allows students to explore and critically evaluate an issue of particular interest to them. In sum, the programme aims provide a full understanding of a range of key issues that will enable students to contribute to the study of and thinking about intelligence in the future.

As such, the programme will be of interest to those working in the fields of intelligence and security who wish to take the award as a formal or informal type of CPD, both in the UK and internationally. It will also be of interest to those wishing to develop their academic understanding of intelligence with academic backgrounds in Politics, International Relations, History, War Studies, Criminology, etc. and considering careers with an intelligence and security focus or dimension.

8. Reference points used to inform the programme specification:

- QAA Quality Code
  Periodic Developmental Review (February 2014)
- University of Leicester Education Strategy
- University of Leicester Assessment Strategy [Login required]

9. Programme Outcomes:

N.B. Programme outcomes specific to the MA are in bold, and those specific to the Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma are in italics.

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
(a) Subject and Professional skills		
Knowledge		
Graduates should have a detailed knowledge and critical appreciation of the key literature and debates relating to intelligence and security.	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	**A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; research proposals; essays; dissertation.** *A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; essays.*
Concepts		
Graduates should possess an understanding of key concepts relating to intelligence and security, and be able to identify and critique a range of positions within key debates.	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	**A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; research proposals; essays; dissertation.** *A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; essays.*

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
Techniques		
Mastery of key theories and concepts, methodological tools and bibliographic, writing and critical skills *Mastery of key theories and concepts, methodological tools and bibliographic, writing and critical skills*	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	**A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; research proposals; essays; dissertation.** *A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; essays.*
Critical analysis		
Ability to identify and apply relevant concepts and techniques with independence and rigour	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	**A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; research proposals; essays; dissertation** *A range of on-line activities (E-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and Wikis; literature reviews; essays.*
Presentation		
Ability to organise research material in a manner appropriate to the medium that is to be assessed; to distinguish between relevant and non-relevant material; to write up and deliver written work to a professional standard	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	**Essay plans; dissertation outline; dissertation** *Essay plans*
Appraisal of evidence		
Ability to assess the relevance and evaluate the quality of a substantial range of primary sources and secondary literature **Ability to mount and sustain an independent level of inquiry at an advanced level** *Ability to assess the relevance and evaluate the quality of a range of primary sources and secondary literature*	Guided private study; independent research	**A range of on-line activities (e-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and wikis; literature reviews; research proposals; essay; dissertation** *A range of on-line activities (e-tivities) including online presentations, podcasts, interactive message boards and wikis; literature reviews; essay*

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
(b) Transferable skills		
Research skills		
Ability to: plan research projects, and locate, extract, produce and analyse relevant evidence; conduct significant background research and literature surveys; organise and marshal evidence and report on findings; analyse complex ideas and competing viewpoints; and construct informed critical arguments at an advanced level *Ability to: locate, extract, produce and analyse relevant evidence for essays; organise and marshal evidence and report on findings; analyse complex ideas and competing viewpoints; and construct informed critical arguments*	**Online resource-based learning; study-skills activities; directed critical reading of research methods literature; dissertation supervision** *Online resource-based learning; study-skills activities*	**Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays; dissertation** *Essay plans; essays*
Communication skills		
Ability to: respond with focus and clarity to written questions; write clearly and concisely; make effective use of graphical and statistical summaries, where appropriate; produce properly structured, clear essays and dissertations. *Ability to: respond with focus and clarity to written questions; write clearly and concisely; make effective use of graphical and statistical summaries, where appropriate; produce properly structured clear essays.*	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; electronic seminar/forum; and independent research	**Essay plans and dissertation outline; essays; dissertation; participation in on-line activities** *Essay plans; essays; participation in on-line activities*
Data presentation		
Ability to synthesise research data into coherent and sustained arguments using appropriate IT resources	Online resource-based learning (e.g. use of EU documentation); electronic seminar/forum; independent research	Use of numerical evidence in support of activity such as an essay where relevant
Information technology		
Advanced ability to retrieve and present information using appropriate information technology, for example, bibliographic software, data archives, data analysis software *Ability to retrieve and present information using appropriate information technology, for example, bibliographic software, data archives, data analysis software*	Induction; online resource-based learning; activities	**Use of Blackboard and participation in on-line activities; essays; dissertation** *Use of Blackboard and participation in on-line activities; essays*

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
Problem solving		
Ability to identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems	Guided private study; online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum	**Essay; dissertation; participation in on-line activities** *Essay; participation in on-line activities*
Working relationships		
Ability to work collaboratively as part of a team. Knowing how and when to draw on the knowledge and expertise of others; ability to contribute and comment on ideas in learning groups	**Electronic seminar/forum; dissertation supervision** *Electronic seminar/forum*	Participation in on-line activities: message boards and Wikis
Managing learning		
Management of an extensive literature and familiarisation with key issues and concepts Ability to plan and implement tasks and manage work-loads	**Guided private study; independent research; dissertation supervision; career management training** *Guided private study; independent research; career management training*	**Essays; dissertation; Personal Development Planning** *Essays; Personal Development Planning*
Career management		
Ability to take charge of one's own progress and development Reflection on one's strengths, interests, motivations and skills; recognition of one's achievements	Personal Tutor System; PDP training (on-line)	Personal Development Planning

10. Special features:

The programme has been constructed to complement the Department's existing DL MA degrees, which build on the University's Learning Innovation Strategy, and are subject to on-going collaborative development with Learning Design, CDDU, and Institute of Learning Innovation. The programme is based on a social constructivist learning model.

The programme is designed to meet the requirements both of those seeking to study intelligence and security as a formal or informal form of CPD and those who wish to pursue the academic study of intelligence and security within a social science framework as an extension of their earlier studies. In short, it provides a solid social science framework for studying and understanding intelligence that is also relevant to career development in a range of professional contexts.

10a. Research-inspired Education

Students on this programme will advance through the four quadrants of the University of Leicester Research-inspired Education Framework as follows:

RiE Quadrant	Narrative
Research-briefed Bringing staff research content into the curriculum.	**Research-briefed** The programme is led by academics who are research active in intelligence studies, particularly in the core areas of each module. As a result, articles and other works by staff appear throughout the module. The core book for the entire programme was co-authored by a now-retired member of staff, as was the central text for the Intelligence Ethics module. Articles by the current programme leader are in use on

	most modules, and students are directed to these in the course material and in the weekly discussion groups.
Research-based Framed enquiry for exploring existing knowledge.	**Research-based** Students explore existing knowledge and critique published research content in three ways. Each week they are expected to critically assess the key readings in order to answer guiding questions on the topics. This takes place in an online discussion group, with feedback from the module tutor as well as discussion with their fellow students. At the end of each module they write a Reflective Statement discussing how the literature has helped them understand its core themes. Finally, an essay asks them to address a key debate, exploring and critiquing current published research. The Intelligence Failure and Intelligence Ethics modules take a case-based approach, examining historical and recent intelligence activity using the latest scholarship and theoretical approaches. The cases are reviewed and updated every year.
Research-oriented Students critique published research content and process.	**Research-oriented** Our students are taught the key skills necessary to analyse and critically engage with published research, including how it is conceived, produced, used and communicated.
Research-apprenticed Experiencing the research process and methods; building new knowledge.	**Research-apprenticed** MA Students finish the programme with a capstone 15,000 word dissertation on a topic of their choice. They are supported with a dissertation module, to develop their research skills, which helps them transition from being students to independent researchers.

As part of studying at a research-intensive university, students on this programme have the following extra or co-curricular opportunities available to them to gain exposure to research culture:

During the course of the programme students are invited to participate in online webinars, some hosted by programme staff and some hosted by external organisations. These include discussions of work in progress, with audience feedback and questions. Webinars hosted by programme staff take the form of interactive discussions around a particular topic, sometimes with outside experts. Programme staff also take the opportunity to explore non-traditional methods of teaching intelligence by hosting discussions around intelligence fiction and film, drawing out themes and topics that are taught on the course.

Teaching on this programme will be research-informed (it draws consciously on systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process itself) in the following way:

The School supports all staff involved in teaching to gain an accredited Higher Education teaching qualification, in which they demonstrate their use of teaching theory to support their own practice and reflect on their current teaching and continuing professional development.

The programme itself is predicated on distance learning as a distinct approach to education, and is based on Gilly Salmon's Five Stage Model for Online Learning. Professor Salmon was Professor of E-Learning at this institution.

The programme leader plays an active role in developing teaching and learning, having earned their HEA Senior Fellowship on the basis of developing and leading the programme. The underlying pedagogical approach was detailed in a co-authored article (Dexter, H., Phythian, M., & Strachan-Morris, D. (2017). The what, why, who, and how of teaching intelligence: the Leicester approach. *Intelligence and National Security*, *32*(7), 920–934).

The programme leader is a member of the International Association for Intelligence Education (IAFIE) and is Vice Chair of the Europe Chapter. In this capacity, they are actively engaged in developing intelligence education, both contributing to the development of education practice and taking best practice from the wider community.

11. Indications of programme quality

- Departmental expertise in delivering a range of DL MA programmes in the broad area of international security;
- The programme is underpinned by staff expertise and publications in the area;
- Consistent, positive feedback from current and former students;
- High levels of student retention on existing DL MA programmes;
- Consistently positive feedback from external examiners, for example, relating to the quality of student work.

12. Scheme of Assessment

The programme structure is in accordance with Senate Regulation 6 and comprises of 120 taught credits and a 60 credit dissertation.

13. Progression points

As defined in Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study

In cases where a student has failed to meet a requirement to progress they will be required to withdraw from the course and a recommendation will be made to the Board of Examiners for an intermediate/exit award where appropriate.

For January starts ONLY

The following additional progression requirements for this programme have been approved by the Curriculum and Quality Sub Committee in September 2022.

- A Board of Examiners will meet at the end of module 3, once 90 credits have been completed, to determine progression to module 4 and the dissertation.
- The 90-credit progression point applies to both January-entry MA and January-entry Postgraduate Diploma students. Postgraduate Diploma students must successfully pass the progression board

following completion of 90 credits before proceeding to Module 4 and subsequent award consideration

The Board of Examiners shall determine whether a student is permitted to progress to Module 4 and the dissertation:

- If a student has failed a maximum of 30 at the first attempt they are entitled to proceed to module 4 and the dissertation, taking any outstanding re-sits alongside. -
- A student will not proceed to Module 4 if up to 60 credits have been failed. Students will be entitled to re-sit the failed modules. Students must pass both modules at resit before they can be progressed to Module 4;
- A student will not proceed to Module 4 if more than 60 credits have been failed. Students will be entitled to re-sit the failed modules in order to meet the requirements for an intermediate award.

14. Rules relating to re-sits or re-submissions:

As defined in Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study

15. Additional information

Sustainability

Strengthening global peace, security and governance is at the heart of the UK's 2018 aid strategy and is the central focus of our distance learning MA programmes (see https://le.ac.uk/engagement/sdgs for details). Our courses directly contribute to Sustainability Development Goat (SDG) 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. A number of our MAs (particularly MA SCID) are designed for students who work or wish to work in the security, humanitarian or development sector thereby having a direct influence on practice. All our DL MAs support SDG 5 Gender Equality both through its engagement with academic debates about the role of gender in international politics, security, peace and development. I should also be noted that distance learning provides opportunities for women to access education, widening access to those who may be unable to travel for university education due to work or caring responsibilities. The programme also supports SDG 4 – Quality Education by providing access to academically rigorous and vocationally relevant education to anyone, anywhere in the world. Distance learning allows for capacity building without students having to leave their home countries.

16. External Examiners:

The details of the External Examiner(s) for this programme and the most recent External Examiners' reports can be found here.

Appendix 1: Programme structure (programme regulations)

Module code	Module title	Semester	Credits
PL7540	Intelligence: Key Concepts and Debates	1 and 2	30
PL7541	Intelligence Techniques and Tradecraft	1 and 2	30
PL7542	Intelligence Failure	1 and 2	30
PL7543	Intelligence Ethics	1 and 2	30
PL7503	Dissertation	1 and 2	60

Appendix 2: Module Specifications

See Module Specifications Database [Login required