UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Programme Specification (Postgraduate)

FOR ENTRY YEAR: 2026/27

Date created: n/a **Last amended:** 08/10/2026 **Version no.** 3

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

MA in International Relations and World Order
Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate in International Relations and World Order

HECOS CODE	%
100471	100

2. Awarding body or institution:

University of Leicester

3. a) Mode of study

Full-time and Part-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, History, International Relations 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.

6. Accreditation of Prior Learning:

Standing APEL arrangement between the University of Leicester and the NATO Defense College, Rome

Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL):

There shall be a standing Accredited Prior Experiential Learning agreement where the completion of the 'Senior Course' at the NATO Defense College shall be accepted by the School of History, Politics and International Relations as APEL in place of *PL7591 Strategy in the Modern World* (worth 30 credits). The operation of this APEL agreement will be in line with the framework set out in the University's Senate Regulations governing admission and registration, and the Policy on the Accreditation of Prior Learning. This standing APEL agreement is applicable to the following distance learning programmes:

- PGCert, PGDip and MA International Relations and World Order
- PGCert, PGDip and MA Human Rights and Global Ethics
- PGCert, PGDip and MA Politics of Conflict and Violence
- PGCert, PGDip and MA Security, Conflict and International Development.

Process for application of APEL

Applicants wishing to claim APEL will be required to submit evidence of completion of the Senior Course as well as a short portfolio of work. The format of the portfolio will be agreed between UoL and the NATO Defense College, Rome. This portfolio will be reviewed by UoL staff to confirm that it demonstrates that students have met the learning outcomes associated with PL7591. The University of Leicester requires students to have completed the Senior Course within the last five years in order to qualify for this APEL standing arrangement.

Subject to approval by UoL staff, applicants will be eligible to undertake a PGCert, PGDip or MA programme with UoL, consisting of:

- PG Certificate**:** NATO College Senior Course (accepted as Experiential Prior Learning on the completion of short portfolio submitted to UoL) + **one** core module offered by University of Leicester. *This structure for the PG Certificate is only available to NATO applicants. In the event that the PG Cert is continued to PG Diploma or MA the student must complete the second core module.*
- PG Diploma**:** NATO College Senior Course (accepted as Experiential Prior Learning on the completion of short portfolio submitted to UoL) + two core modules + one optional module offered by the University of Leicester.
- Masters: NATO College Senior Course (accepted as Experiential Prior Learning on the completion of short portfolio submitted to the UoL), two core modules, one optional module and dissertation offered by the University of Leicester.

Award and Classification

The credits awarded by UoL on the basis of the APEL will be ungraded. Degrees will be calculated on the basis of the credits achieved at the University of Leicester only. This will be undertaken on a pro-rata basis, in line with the Policy on the Accreditation of Prior Learning.

In the case of the PG Certificate the University of Leicester requires that students successfully pass their core module (offered by the UoL) in order to achieve the qualification.

Senior Course members must meet the language requirements set out in the School of History, Politics and International Relations admissions policy in order to be accepted onto their chosen degree. The requirements are set out in the Programme Specification for each programme.

Fee Reduction

Current or past Senior Course members will be offered a 10% discount on course fees, rising to 15% for 10 or more registered students per semester. Only applications **not** claiming APEL are eligible for this fee reduction.

Applications claiming APEL will have their fee reduced by the equivalent of 30 credits.

7. Programme aims:

The overall aim of the programme is to provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary international relations. By providing a thorough grounding in the subject, students are made aware of the importance of this topic to a sophisticated understanding of global political developments.

The programme also aims to:

- achieve a balance between a thorough exploration of the theoretical dimension and the consideration of empirical issues and practical debates in post-Cold War international relations.
- provide students with the competencies and skills to understand contemporary debates in international relations and to analyse international relations using a mixture of theoretical and empirical tools.

8. Reference points used to inform the programme specification:

The programme has been developed with reference to the following sources:

- QAA Benchmarking statement for Politics and International Relations
- University of Leicester Education Strategy
- University of Leicester Assessment Strategy [Login required]
- University Employability Strategy
- Periodic Developmental Review Reports (February 2014)

9. Programme Outcomes:

	Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
(a) Subject and Professional skills			
	Knowledge		
MA	Recognise, describe and discuss a wide range of important themes and issues in post-Cold War international relations	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays; dissertation
PGDip	Recognise, describe and discuss the major themes and issues in post-Cold War international relations	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays
PGCert	Identify and explain the major themes and issues in post-Cold War international relations	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; research proposal; essays
	Concepts		
MA	Discuss, analyse and appraise a wide range of international relations concepts and theories and relate and apply these to empirical practices and developments	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays; dissertation
PGDip	Discuss, analyse and appraise the major international relations concepts and theories and relate these to empirical practices and developments	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays
PGCert	Explain and assess key concepts and theories and relate these to empirical practices and developments	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; research proposal; essays
	Techniques		
MA	Masterful application of key theories and concepts, research methods, and learnt skills in referencing and appropriate written and verbal communication	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays; dissertation
PGDip	Confidently apply key theories and concepts and learnt skills in referencing and appropriate written and verbal communication	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays

PGCert	Apply key theories and concepts and learnt skills in referencing and appropriate written and verbal communication	Guided private study; directed reading; electronic seminar/forum; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; research proposal; essays
	Intended Learning Outcomes	**Teaching and Learning Methods**	**How Demonstrated?**
	Critical analysis		
MA	Analyse relevant concepts and practices with independence and rigour, including in an extended research-based dissertation	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays; dissertation
PGDip	Analyse relevant concepts and practices with independence and rigour	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays
PGCert	Independently analyse relevant concepts and practices	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Participation in online activities; research proposal; essays
	Presentation		
MA	Organise and present research material in a range of formats, including an extended research-based dissertation; develop arguments drawing on relevant material; write-up and deliver written work to a professional standard	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays; dissertation
PGDip	Organise and present research material in a range of formats; develop arguments drawing on relevant material; write-up and deliver written work to a professional standard	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays
PGCert	Organise and present relevant material; develop arguments drawing on material read; write-up and deliver written work to a professional standard	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; and independent research	Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays
	Appraisal of evidence		
MA	Confidently and persuasively assess the relevance and evaluate the quality of a range of primary sources and secondary literature.	Guided private study; independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays; dissertation
PGDip	Confidently and persuasively assess the relevance and evaluate the quality of a range of primary sources and secondary literature.	Guided private study; independent research	Participation in online activities; literature review; research proposal; essays

PGCert	Appraise the relevance and quality of a range of appropriate sources	Guided private study; independent research	Participation in online activities; research proposal; essays
(b) Transferable skills			
	Research skills		
MA	Design appropriate research questions; develop research proposal; discuss the ethical implications of research; recognise and create effective literature reviews. Conceive and produce an independent research-based dissertation.	Formative study/research skills modules (1-4); dissertation supervision; directed reading	Research skills module e- tivities; dissertation outline; literature review; dissertation
PGDip	Design appropriate research questions; develop research proposal; discuss the ethical implications of research; recognise and create effective literature reviews.	Formative study/research skills modules (1-3); directed reading	Research skills module e-tivities; research design outline; literature review
	Intended Learning Outcomes	**Teaching and Learning Methods**	**How Demonstrated?**
PGCert	Design appropriate research questions; develop research proposal; discuss the ethical implications of research	Formative study/research skills modules (1 & 2); directed reading	Research skills module e-tivities; research design outline
	Communication skills		
MA	Summarise, explain and analyse complex material, and formulate and present critical discussions and independent appraisals orally and in writing, including in an extended research-based dissertation	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; electronic seminar/forum; and independent research	Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays; dissertation; participation in on-line activities
PGDip	Summarise, explain and analyse complex material, and formulate and present critical discussions and independent appraisals orally and in writing	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; electronic seminar/forum; and independent research	Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays; participation in on-line activities
PGCert	Summarise and explain complex material, and formulate and present discussions and appraisals orally and in writing	Guided private study; essay commentary/feedback; electronic seminar/forum; and independent research	Essay plans; dissertation outline; essays; participation in on-line activities
	Data presentation		
MA	Synthesise research data into coherent and sustained arguments using appropriate IT resources	Online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum; independent research	Essays; dissertation
PGDip	Synthesise research data into coherent and sustained arguments using appropriate IT resources	Online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum; independent research	Essays

PGCert	Present research data using appropriate IT resources	Online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum; independent research	Essays
	Information technology		
MA	Confidently and effectively retrieve, utilise 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
PGDip	Retrieve, utilise and present information using appropriate information technology, for example, bibliographic software, data archives	Induction; online resource-based learning; activities	Use of Blackboard and participation in on-line activities; essays
PGCert	Retrieve and present information using appropriate information technology, for example, bibliographic software, data archives	Induction; online resource-based learning; activities	Use of Blackboard and participation in on-line activities; essays
	Problem solving		
MA	Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems	Guided private study; online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum	Essays; dissertation; participation in on-line activities
PGDip	Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems	Guided private study; online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum	Essays; participation in on-line activities
PGCert	Identify and analyse relevant problems and select between appropriate responses	Guided private study; online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum	Essays; participation in on-line activities
	Intended Learning Outcomes	**Teaching and Learning Methods**	**How Demonstrated?**
	Working relationships		
MA	Collaborate confidently and effectively as part of a team. Identify appropriate opportunities for drawing on the knowledge and expertise of others; contribute and comment on ideas in learning groups	Electronic seminar/forum; dissertation supervision	Participation in on-line activities: message boards and Wikis
PGDip	Collaborate effectively as part of a team. Identify appropriate opportunities for drawing on the knowledge and expertise of others; contribute and comment on ideas in learning groups	Electronic seminar/forum	Participation in on-line activities: message boards and Wikis

PGCert	Collaborate as part of a team. Identify appropriate opportunities for drawing on the knowledge and expertise of others; contribute and comment on ideas in learning groups	Electronic seminar/forum	Participation in on-line activities: message boards and Wikis
	Managing learning		
MA	Develop and implement personal plan of work to meet a deadline Work independently and in groups towards the completion of a range of tasks	Non-core module activities; guided independent study; personal tutor system; dissertation supervision	Participation in online activities; essays; dissertation; Personal Development Planning
PGDip	Develop and implement personal plan of work to meet a deadline Work independently and in groups towards the completion of a range of tasks	Non-core module activities; guided independent study; personal tutor system	Participation in online activities; essays; Personal Development Planning
PGCert	Develop and implement personal plan of work to meet a deadline Work independently and in groups towards the completion of a range of tasks	Non-core module activities; guided independent study; personal tutor system	Participation in online activities; essays; Personal Development Planning
	Career management		
MA	Take charge of one's own progress and development Reflect on one's strengths, interests, motivations and skills; recognise one's achievements	Non-core module activities; personal tutor system; PDP training (on-line)	Participation in online activities; Personal Development Planning
PGDip	Take charge of one's own progress and development Reflect on one's strengths, interests, motivations and skills; recognise one's achievements	Non-core module activities; personal tutor system; PDP training (on-line)	Participation in online activities; Personal Development Planning
PGCert	Take charge of one's own progress and development Reflect on one's strengths, interests, motivations and skills; recognise one's achievements	Non-core module activities; personal tutor system; PDP training (on-line)	Participation in online activities; Personal Development Planning

10. Special features:

The programme is based on a social constructivist learning model.

Students are expected to complete a dissertation that is in line with the award title.

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** Our students will be exposed to an inspiring and attractive curriculum in International Relations, Human Rights and Security Studies drawing on the expertise and internationally recognised research produced in the School of History, Politics and International Relations and beyond. All teaching staff are engaged in research and bring their subject expertise and enthusiasm for inclusive, rigorous research into their teaching practice. Our teaching introduces students to an advanced curriculum and key innovations in our field, situating contemporary developments within appropriate conceptional and theoretical frameworks.
Research-based Framed enquiry for exploring existing knowledge.	• **Research-based** Students are encouraged and supported to draw from a comprehensive range of published research and demonstrate a robust critical engagement with it. Typical assessments include essays, article analysis, policy and conceptual analysis. Our online, asynchronous learning encourages students to work independently and in learning communities to understand, contextualise, critique, and apply concepts in depth.
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** Our students are an important part of our research environment and are encouraged to take an active part in our learning community. 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:

All Distance Learning Students are considered full members of the School and invited to engage in the School's research culture through extra-curricular events. These include the popular roundtable seminar series, in which roundtable discussions featuring a varying mix of staff and student researchers come together to discuss contemporary issues. Roundtables in the last year have covered topics such as the rise of the far-right and misogyny, and the 2024 U.S. election, and offer research-led opening remarks from staff with relevant expertise, followed by audience

questions. In addition, a popular online book club series for Distance Learning students offers introductory remarks and a Q&A led by a staff member whose research connects to the book or article under discussion. These events allow students to engage with cutting edge research, and to experience and participate in lively academic discussion. MA students are invited to join HyPIR's research clusters (Feminism, Global Ethics and Politics Theory; Intelligence, Security and Strategic Studies; Parties, Parliament, and Public Opinion) and participate in their activities which are conducted in a hybrid manner where appropriate. Distance Learning Students are also directed to online events such as webinars and book launches in order to engage with research culture beyond the School.

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. All staff who are primarily engaged in Distance Learning Teaching have earned their FHEA qualification on the basis of their Distance Learning teaching and experience. Through routine peer observation of teaching and feedback, teachers in the School are encouraged to reflect on their own practice, and to share, support, and develop as a learning and teaching community. The Distance Learning Team have a monthly meeting in which they discuss teaching practice and consider any enhancements to our delivery of research inspired education. The Team also reviews its entire course content and delivery every summer. In addition, the School holds an annual Teaching Away Day as well as termly teaching meetings for the Politics and International Relations team to develop ideas around best practice. These events allow for in-depth discussion of teaching, including the interface with research and how we support students to become research-briefed, research-based, research-oriented and research-apprenticed.

11. Indications of programme quality:

- Considerable departmental experience in e-learning as a result of the development and success of our existing DL programmes;
- Presentations from current students and former students at national and international conferences;
- Regular progression of former students into academic posts and postdoctoral and research projects;
- Consistent, positive feedback from current and former students;
- Consistent positive feedback from external examiners.

12. Scheme of Assessment

Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study applies.

Students are only expected to complete the summative elements of the modules within this programme in order to pass.

13. Progression points

As defined in Senate Regulation 6

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 credits 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

15. Additional information [e.g. timetable for admissions]

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)

The University regularly reviews its programmes and modules to ensure that they reflect the current status of the discipline and offer the best learning experience to students. On occasion, it may be necessary to alter particular aspects of a course or module.

Updates to the programme

Academic year	Module	Change
2026/27	PL7522 Narrative, War and International Law	New optional module
2026/27	PL7592 Astropolitics	New optional module

For the award of MA, students must complete four 30 credit taught modules and a 12-15,000 word dissertation worth 60 credits. For the award of Postgraduate Diploma students must complete four 30 credit taught modules, and for the award of Postgraduate Certificate, two 30 credit taught modules.

Module Code	Module Name	Core or Optional	Credits
PL7508	Post-Cold War World Order	C	30
PL7515	Theories of International Relations	C	30
PL7503	MA Dissertation	C	60
PL7505	International Security	O	30
PL7521	The International Politics of Protection	O	30
PL7522	Narrative, War and International Law	O	30
PL7589	The Politics of Human Rights	O	30

PL7591	Strategy in the Modern World	O	30
PL7592	Astropolitics	O	30
PL7530	The Politics of Conflict and Violence	O	30
PL7540	Intelligence: Key Concepts and Debates	O	30
PL7597	Politics of International Development	O	30
PL7598	Critical War Studies	O	30
PL7599	Contemporary Conflict Analysis	O	30

Appendix 2: Module Specifications

See module specification database [Login required]