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):

MA in Politics of Conflict and Violence
Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate in Politics of Conflict and Violence

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, 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:

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 one 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:

This MA aims to equip students with the skills and resources necessary to ask critical questions about the politics of conflict and violence in the modern world.

Addressing conflict and violence in its many forms and drawing on cutting edge research conducted by members of the Department of Politics and IR at the University of Leicester students enrolled on this MA will have the opportunity to conduct advanced study on subjects such as the politics of war and peace; the politics of nuclear weapons and arms control; humanitarian intervention; the political legacies of conflict; the changing character of war; the politics of defining, conducting and combating terrorism; the nature and theoretical conceptualisation of violence; the role of gender politics in conflict and violence as well as classical strategy and the utility of force.

Combining theoretical and empirical approaches students will explore the politics, sites, logics, technologies and ethics of conflict and violence.

The programme will appeal to those interested in pursuing advanced postgraduate studies in the field of conflict and violence with an academic background in (but not limited to) International Relations, politics, political theory, war studies, terrorism studies, history, human rights, journalism, philosophy or law. The programme will also appeal to those seeking professional development and enhanced employability in relevant sectors such as those working for NGOs, the military, media, private security, the UN or other international organisations.

8. Reference points used to inform the programme specification:

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

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 possess: Knowledge and critical appreciation of academic literature relating to the politics of conflict and violence. Graduates will have gained empirical knowledge and theoretical understanding of the place of conflict and violence in the modern world and the political questions raised in relation to the problem of conflict and violence.	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 be able to explain, critique and apply concepts such as political violence, terrorism, intervention, war, peace and the state.	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 Understanding of both quantitative and qualitative research methods appropriate to the study of conflict and violence. *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*	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*

literature		
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, and be compatible with, the Department's existing DL MA degrees, which build on the university's Learning Innovation Strategy. The programme is based on a social constructivist learning model.

The programme differs from most campus-based and distance learning MA degrees in violence and conflict studies as it does not have a traditional focus of war at its core. Rather it approaches violence and conflict from a broad perspective drawing on expertise from all research groups within the Department of Politics and International Relations and encouraging critical enquiry into contested subjects.

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, Conflict, Human Rights, International Security and International Development 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.
Research-based Framed enquiry for exploring existing knowledge.	• **Research-based** Our teaching introduces students to an advanced curriculum and key innovations in our field, situating contemporary developments within appropriate conceptional and theoretical frameworks. 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 distance teaching and learning as a result of the development and success of our existing DL programmes;
- Consistent, positive feedback from current and former students;
- Consistent positive feedback from external examiners.

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.

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

The criteria for and classification of awards are as detailed in Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study

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 [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.

All students must complete two core, compulsory modules PL7530 *The Politics of Conflict and Violence and PL7505 International Security* before going on to choose from a list of optional modules as required by their award. Students are given advice at the time of choosing as to which optional modules are best suited to their degree programme. All module choices are checked and approved by the Director of Distance Learning to ensure they are appropriate to the student's programme of study and provide coherent intellectual development. MA students must also devise a dissertation question that is relevant to their MA programme. Dissertation questions are reviewed by the Director of Distance Learning and the student's dissertation advisor. Our approach to programme structure combines choice and individual intellectual development for the student with flexibility for the Department in order to cater to teaching and research commitments whilst ensuring that students are presented with and complete an intellectually coherent and relevant programme of study.

N.B. All modules are 30 credits with the exception of the 60-credit MA Dissertation

Module Code	Module Name	Core or Optional	Credits
PL7530	The Politics of Conflict & Violence	C	30
PL7598	Critical War Studies	O	30
PL7503	MA Dissertation	C	60
PL7505	International Security	C	30
PL7508	Post-Cold War World Order	O	30
PL7515	Theories of International Relations	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
PL7540	Intelligence: Key Concepts and Debates	O	30
PL7597	Politics of International Development	O	30

Distance Learning Teaching

Distance Learning Modules in the Department of Politics are taught entirely through our Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard. Each week for ten weeks students are given a reading list accompanied by questions or exercises designed by the Course Convenor to help them critically engage with that literature. Students are encouraged to discuss and debate their reading on the online forums. An Associate Tutor supports these forum discussions though e-moderation. Accompanying weekly reading and discussion are six Activities. Activities are designed to build a supportive online community of students as well as develop scholarly skills. Activities take them form of formative and summative assessments designed to complement and support subject specific learning objectives by promoting key academic skills using subject specific materials. Students are guided through these Activities and the module as a whole by their Associate Tutor who is available in the online forums or via email. Course Convenors provide all learning materials and offer detailed feedback on all essay plans and essays. Online feedback is provided after each E-tivity and continuous support is available from the DL Personal Tutor.

Having completed the six Activities that comprise Core modules students should be able to:

- Contribute to forums
- Search for electronic library materials
- Identify and evaluate appropriate academic articles
- Compile and present a bibliography
- Understand why and how we reference academic writing
- Understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it
- Learn about good essay writing techniques
- Plan an essay
- Critically engage with texts

In addition the Activities of the non-core modules encourage students to:

- Reflect on their module choice and their interest in the subject matter
- Reflect on their previous learning experiences and develop their learning practice.
- Identify the over-all argument and supporting arguments made by another author
- Consider good structure in academic writing
- Develop their critical analysis skills of the module mark.

- Develop their essay writing skills Politics and IR Distance Learning courses encourage active enquiry-based learning rather than simply transmitting information to students and facilitate independent knowledge production by supporting and encouraging dialogue between students, Associate Tutors and Course Convenors as well as - more importantly - amongst students themselves.

Appendix 2: Module Specifications

See module specification database [Login required]