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 Security, Conflict and International Development
Postgraduate Diploma, in Security, Conflict and International Development
Postgraduate Certificate in Security, Conflict and International Development

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:

For MA, PG Dip and PG Cert:

Either a first or a good second-class honours degree from a British university or its equivalent. 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 Department of 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) + core module offered by University of Leicester.
- PG Diploma**:** NATO College Senior Course (accepted as Experiential Prior Learning on the completion of short portfolio submitted to UoL) + core module + two optional modules 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) + core module, two optional modules 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 Department of 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 postgraduate degree programme focuses on how to meet the strategic security and justice challenges of countries emerging from conflict. Designed specifically for those working – or hoping to work – in the security sector or international development, the programme offers opportunities to draw on the personal experience or professional expertise of its students and combine it with academic enquiry in order to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of conflict prevention and recovery with a particular emphasis upon: responding to the challenges of countries emerging from conflict; security sector reform; how to develop the rule of law; the importance of human rights in delivering justice and security; and broader issues relating to international security and the risks posed by countries emerging from, and vulnerable to, conflict. Using state-of-the-art learning technologies, the MA in Security, Conflict and International Development provides students with the opportunity to develop their professional careers in an area of growing strategic importance.

The programme is designed to give students the opportunity to develop a broad range of knowledge and skills including:

- Detailed understanding of a broad range of issues relating to security, conflict and international development.
- Awareness of key concepts associated with security, conflict and international development and capability of applying knowledge and understanding in workplace situations and to new contexts and environments.
- Ability to analyse key theoretical approaches to understanding the causes of conflict and evaluating the appropriateness of preventative methods in this field.
- Familiarity of ways in which to respond to the challenges of conflict and immediate post-conflict environments and the role of international agencies.
- Comprehensive understanding of post-conflict recovery efforts in the security and justice sectors, combined with an awareness of concurrent political, economic, development and humanitarian efforts.
- Capability to present knowledge and arguments clearly, confidently, coherently and concisely using a variety of communication formats.
- Ability to assess the appropriateness of the evidence and the methods used in studies relating to security, conflict and international development, including their value and limitations.
- Ability to undertake analysis and reflect critically and contextually on material related to security, conflict and international development.

8. Reference points used to inform the programme specification:

- QAA Quality Code

- QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- University of Leicester Education Strategy
- University of Leicester Assessment Strategy [log in required]
- University of Leicester Employability Strategy

9. Programme Outcomes:

*Bold type – MA only

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
(a) Subject and Professional skills		
Knowledge and Concepts		
Graduates should demonstrate the ability to critically engage with key conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of security, conflict and post-conflict transformations, and International Development.	Guided private study; directed reading complimented by critical self-reflection, drawing on professional and personal experience; peer-to-peer social learning via online forum; debate and discussion moderated by a University Tutor; formative and summative assessment; engagement with assessment commentary/feedback; independent research; **research design;**	Successful completion of core modules, end of module essay (E6); critical analysis of text/source (E3); essay plan (E4); reflective writing drawing on personal/professional experience (E5); **successful completion of dissertation.**
Techniques		
Mastery of key theories and concepts, methodological tools and bibliographic, writing and critical skills **Understanding of research methods appropriate to the study of security, conflict and international development.**	Guided private study; directed reading complimented by critical self-reflection, drawing on professional and personal experience; peer-to-peer social learning via online forum; debate and discussion moderated by a University Tutor; formative and summative assessment; engagement with assessment commentary/feedback; independent research; **research design.**	Successful completion of core modules, end of module essay (E6); Critical analysis of text/source (E3); Essay plan (E4); reflective writing drawing on personal/professional experience (E5); **successful completion of dissertation.**
Critical analysis		
Ability to identify and apply relevant concepts and techniques with independence and rigour, to identify key arguments and the assumptions that underpin them, offer critique based on evidence, analysis and critical self-reflection.	Guided private study; directed reading complimented by critical self-reflection, drawing on professional and personal experience; peer-to-peer social learning via online forum; debate and discussion moderated by a University Tutor; formative and summative assessment; engagement with assessment commentary/feedback	End of module essay (E6); Critical analysis of text/source (E3); Essay plan (E4); reflective writing drawing on personal/professional experience (E5); confident engagement with peers on discussion forums, **successful completion of dissertation.**

	particularly E3; independent research; **research design;**	
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	Formative and summative assessment (E2, E3, E4, E5, E6); formative discussions with University Tutor and Module Convenor; engagement with assessment commentary/feedback; engagement with University studies guides; independent research; **research design;**	End of module essay (E6); Critical analysis of text/source (E3); Essay plan (E4); reflective writing drawing on personal/professional experience (E5); confident engagement with peers on discussion forums, **successful completion of dissertation.**
Appraisal of evidence		
Ability to locate, access and assess the relevance and quality of a substantial range of appropriate primary sources and secondary literature. Ability of engage with and integrate a range of appropriate literature into their own analysis. **Ability to mount and sustain an independent inquiry at an advanced level**	E2 part 1 and E2 part 2: Accessing e-resources and understanding good academic practice; formative discussions with University Tutor and Module Convenor; engagement with assessment commentary/feedback; engagement with University studies guides; independent research; **research design.**	Successful completion of E2 parts 1 and 2; end of module essay (E6); Critical analysis of text/source (E3); Essay plan (E4); reflective writing drawing on personal/professional experience (E5); confident engagement with peers on discussion forums, **successful completion of dissertation.**
(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	Non-credit bearing dissertation module PL7503**;** online E-tivities 1-6; assessment feedback; Personal Tutor support; online study guides; peer support and discussion via online forums; University Tutor support; **Dissertation proposal; dissertation supervision and independent research.**	Successful completion of formative and summative assessments particularly E4 - essay plan, E3 critical analysis and E6 essay; engagement with PL7530 Dissertation Support Module**; production of coherent research proposal; successful completion of dissertation.**
Communication skills		
Ability to: respond with focus and clarity to written questions; write clearly and concisely; produce properly structured, clear essays and dissertations; to contribute	Guided private study; directed reading complimented by critical self-reflection - drawing on professional and personal experience; peer-to-peer social learning via electronic	Successful completion of formative and summative assessments (E-tivities 1-6). Engagement with forums; successful administration of own learning; written and oral

to meaningfully to debate, acknowledge and engage with the experience and views of others.	seminar/forum; debate and discussion moderated by a University Tutor; managing studies via email, Skype/phone; completion of formative and summative assessments.	communication with University Tutor, Module Convenor and administrators.
Data presentation		
Ability to synthesise research data into coherent and sustained arguments using appropriate IT resources	Online resource-based learning; online forum; independent research; Dissertation module PL7503; **dissertation supervision**	Use of appropriate research data in support of assessment (e-tivity 6/**dissertation**)
Information technology		
Advanced ability to retrieve and present information using appropriate information technology, for example, bibliographic software, library services; data archives, data analysis software; confident use of Blackboard; Word; email and other programmes where appropriate.	Use of VLE; peer-to-peer social learning via online forum; debate and discussion moderated by a University Tutor; managing studies via email, Skype/phone; completion of formative and summative assessments (E-tivities 1-6); completion of PL7503; **dissertation supervision, dissertation.**	Demonstrated through all aspects of completing this MA.
Problem solving		
Ability to identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems	Guided private study; online resource-based learning; electronic seminar/forum	Essay; participation in on-line activities; **dissertation;**
Working relationships		
Ability to work and learn a collaboratively as part of a learning community. Knowing how and when to draw on the knowledge and expertise of others; Knowing how and when to draw on personal and professional experience and critically reflect on it; ability to contribute and comment on ideas in learning groups	Online forum participation; wiki (E1 part 2), communication with University Tutor and Module Convenor; **dissertation supervision.**	Meaningful participation in online activities: message boards and Wikis; Reflective writing (E5).
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;	Successful completion of modules; meeting deadlines; active participation on discussion forums; timely **communication with dissertation supervisor; successful completion of dissertation.**

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; voluntary engagement with Careers Service; reflective writing (E5).	Successful completion of E5 - reflective writing; contribution to skills development audit (E1 part 2); student feedback.

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, and are subject to on-going collaborative development with the Leicester Learning Institute. The programme is based on a social constructivist learning model.

1. HyPIR have Memorandum of Understandings with the NATO Defense College in Rome and with the Institute for Statecraft based in London. Students on our DL programme have a unique opportunity to study alongside NATO officers and to study curriculum which is reviewed annually by professionals in the field to ensure that it reflects practitioner needs.
2. The programme brings together a unique learning community of practitioners and scholars and provides space and opportunity to contextualise and reflect on the professional experience of the student or their peers. Through the use of weekly discussion forums guided by a University Tutor, reflective writing and directed reading, students are encouraged to use their professional experience and that of others to inform their studies.
3. The inclusion of refugees or asylum seekers (via the Sanctuary Scholarships) on this degree serves to create a unique and distinctive DL PGT provision which moves beyond traditional 'professional development' to offer an enriched, critical professional education where practitioners can learn with and from those directly affected by their practice.
4. The major marketing feature of the degree is the fact that it is offered by Distance Learning. This is particularly attractive for students employed by international organisations or in other professional careers, who may travel frequently or be required to change base, which makes even part-time campus-based study impossible. A number of distinct features about the content of the programme and our method of delivery make this MA distinct from our competitors:
5. The manner in which our DL provision is structured and taught means that we are able to offer a large number of optional modules each semester. This a unique selling point for our MAs. Our selection of modules allows students to choose their own path through their MA tailoring the content of their studies to their own intellectual or professional needs. 60 credits of compulsory modules, followed by close supervision of module choices and dissertation projects by the Director of Distance Learning and Dissertation Advisors ensures that all students complete intellectually coherent programmes of study appropriate to their MA subject but tailored to their own individual interests and needs.
6. Students are not required to attend campus. This means our DL provision is suitable for students based anywhere in the world, those in the armed forces or other jobs that take them into remote locations as well as those that do not have the financial means to travel to the UK.

At the same time DL students are very welcome to visit the campus, meet in person with academic staff, attend School Research Seminars or other optional workshops.

7. Students have access to daily contact from their Associate Tutors and course administrators who offer guidance and support with studies. Our programmes stress a social approach to study. Every effort is made to create a supportive learning community with students who are a treated as full members of HyPIR. Our approach to teaching and student support is designed to mitigate the physical distance of our students and integrate them into the School.
8. Distance learning is well established across the University of Leicester and central student support is available and tailored to the specific needs of distance learners.

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 Development Conflict, Human Rights, International Security and International Relations 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 run in an online or 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 School 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.
- Continuous review and advice from LLI
- Draws on good practice from across the UoL via the Flexible and DL Forum

- Recruitment via word of mouth
- External partnerships (NATO and Institute for Statecraft)

12. Scheme of Assessment

As defined 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]

None.

16. External Examiners:

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

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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 Master of Security, Conflict and International Development, students must complete four 30 credit taught modules (2 core 2 optional) and a 12-15,000-word dissertation worth 60 credits. For the award of Postgraduate Diploma students must complete four 30 credit taught modules (2 core and 2 optional), and for the award of Postgraduate Certificate, two core 30 credit taught modules.

Students complete two core modules: PL7599 *Contemporary Conflict Analysis* and PL7597 *The Politics of International Development*

Module Code	Module Name	Core or Optional Module
PL7599	Contemporary Conflict Analysis	C
PL7597	Politics of International Development	C
PL7503	MA Dissertation	C for the award of MA
PL7530	Politics of Conflict and Violence	O
PL7505	International Security	O

PL7508	Post-Cold War World Order	O
PL7515	Theories of International Relations	O
PL7521	The International Politics of Protection	O
PL7522	Narrative, War and International Law	O
PL7589	The Politics of Human Rights	O
PL7591	Strategy in the Modern World	O
PL7592	Astropolitics	O
PL7598	Critical War Studies	O

Appendix 2: Module specifications [log in required]