

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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MASTER OF STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	Centre of International Studies
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Master of Studies
5	Programme title	International Relations
6	JACS code(s)	L250
7	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
8	Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
9	Date specification was produced/ last revised	18 May 2011
10	Date specification was last reviewed	18 May 2011

Educational Aims of the Programme

This two-year course aims to provide students with relevant experience at first degree level (or through their working lives) with the opportunity to carry out advanced research in International Studies. Covering contemporary and historical perspectives on International Relations, the MSt offers education and research training at the Master's level.

During the first year, all students will be required to undertake a core course in International Relations and also choose six modules from a range of options:

- *Public Opinion and International Security*
- *International Organisations*
- *International Energy Security*
- *International Relations of the Middle East*
- *International Politics of Afghanistan and South Asia*
- *The Politics of the World Trade Organisation*
- *China in the International System*
- *Democratisation*
- *US Presidents and US Foreign Relations 1898 – 2008*
- *The Cold War*
- *Law and Transitional Justice*
- *European Security and Foreign Policy*

The MSt takes place over two years running from September of the first year to July of the second. The taught elements of the syllabus are offered during the first year and are assessed by a written examination of the core course and examination or assessed essays for each option module which are submitted after the residential session in which the module is taught. Sessions will be offered in essay writing and examination techniques and an opportunity given to write an essay under examination conditions.

Students completing the first year successfully will then spend their second year researching and writing a 25,000 word dissertation on a topic of their choice, subject to the approval of the Graduate Education Committee (GEC) of the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS). Dissertation work will be individually supervised and will be assessed by two examiners, neither of whom may be the supervisor.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of the course students should have

- Developed the ability to apply critically the main theories, models, and concepts used in the study of international politics;
- Developed an understanding and substantive knowledge of international politics, history, economics, and security;
- Extended and developed their analytical, evaluative and critical capacities;
- Developed transferable skills, including the ability to take responsibility for their own learning, learning how to learn, making oral and written presentations, planning and producing written assignments, working independently, and, where they have chosen to do so, using information technology;
- Developed the ability to undertake independent research and writing.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The aims of the programme are achieved by two hundred and forty hours of lectures, seminars, classes and individual tuition. These will include sessions on research methods, writing (essays and theses), library resources, computing applications relevant to the course, and discussion of key texts. Lecturers and students use the VLE between residence sessions to communicate and provide feedback and assessment.

Assessment

In year one the taught elements of the course are assessed through a combination of an invigilated three hour examination for the compulsory core course and assessed essays or examination for each other module. The core course examination will require students to answer 3 of 10 questions, with the marks for all three questions averaged into a single mark. This mark will be worth 40% of the overall mark for the year.

Students will also be examined or submit essays for each of their 6 option modules. These will each be worth 10% of the overall mark for the year. If the option leaders choose not to set a three hour examination, they can set either one 4,000 word or two 2,000 word essays for their module from a choice of either four (for single essays) or eight (for two essays) questions. All students within any module will submit the same number of essays for that module. All essays will be double marked, and examiners will be asked to reconcile their marks. Each assessed essay mark will be recorded as either a single mark for an essay of 4,000 words or the average of two marks on two essays of 2,000 words.

In the second year of the course assessment will be by a single dissertation of up to 25,000 words to be submitted by 1 July. There shall be two examiners. A viva voce examination may be required by the examiners and shall always be offered to the student in the event of a failing mark being awarded.

Skills and other attributes

By the end of the course, the students should have acquired:

- those skills necessary to locate, read, interpret and analyse primary source material in the field of international relations;
- the ability to formulate a research topic, create a research design;
- the ability to communicate their ideas and research conclusions in a substantial piece of postgraduate level research.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Skills are developed through regular seminars, online discussions, presentations and classes at which students present work in progress accounts of their research.
One to one supervisions with a designated expert supervisor.

Assessment:

- (i) An examination paper shall be written under examination conditions of three hours duration on a compulsory Core Course;
- and
- (ii) An assessed course of study on each of six topics, the form of examination for any field may be:
Two essays not exceeding 2,000 words in length and on set topics falling within a field designated by the Degree Committee;
or
One essay not exceeding 4,000 words in length and on set topics falling within a field designated by the Degree Committee;
or
an examination paper written under examination conditions of three hours duration on set topics falling within a field designated by the Degree Committee.
- and
- (iii) A thesis of not more than 25,000 words in length

Programme Structure

Year 2

August	Viva Voce examination (may be required) Awarded	Examiners Meeting	Degree
1 July	Submit Thesis Double marked		
January (1 week)	Residential session for thesis research presentations		
September (1 week).	Entry to Year 2: Supervised Research . Residential session for thesis research presentations		

Year 1

June/July	Subject teaching packages including four optional modules, each subject consisting of lectures and seminars
(2 weeks)	Thesis preparation session
March/April	Core course examination Subject teaching packages including four optional modules, each subject consisting of lectures and seminars.
(2 weeks)	Meetings with dissertation supervisor and course directors.
December	Subject teaching packages including core subject module and three option modules, each subject consisting of lectures and seminars.
(2 weeks)	Practice examination Meetings with dissertation supervisor and course directors
September	Orientation. Introductory lectures on methods and resources.
(2 weeks)	Introduction to Cambridge facilities, the course VLE and to the goals and requirements for the course Essay writing instruction. Core subject module and oneoption module. First meeting with dissertation supervisor.

Requirements for the award of the degree

Year 1

In order to proceed to year 2, students must complete the option module essays satisfactorily and also pass the core subject examination. The marking conventions are:

The pass mark for Part I is 60%.

A Part I mark of 58% or below constitutes an irredeemable fail.

A Part I mark of 59% is a redeemable fail compensated for by a mark of at least 67% on Part II (dissertation).

Year 2

The submission of a 25,000 word thesis which is read by two examiners, who report independently. They may hold an oral examination of the candidate, after which they make a joint report and recommendation. The examiners are required to assure themselves that the thesis is clearly written, that it takes account of previously published work on the subject, and that it represents a contribution to learning. The possible recommendations are:

High Performance	(Cambridge University undergraduate First Class Standard extrapolated for a further year's study).
Pass	(Upper Second Class extrapolated).

Redeemable Performance (a high Lower Second class (2.2) extrapolated.
Fail.

The examination may include, at the discretion of the Examiners, an oral examination on the thesis, or on the general field of knowledge within which this falls, or both

In some cases a Redeemable Performance in one part of the examination may be offset by a mark of 67% in the other component; an oral examination is mandatory in such cases.

Indicators of Quality

The degree is offered every two years with a target intake of 40 students. The current level of interest means that there are over 3 enquiries for every place and the standard required for admission is the same as required for the full time MPhil in International Relations. Some students have done sufficiently well to continue to the PhD, some of them part-time.

The Programme conforms to the Board of Graduate Studies' Code of Practice, available at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/policy/quality/cop/>.

Learning Support

All students are members of a College and have access to learning support from their College, the Institute of Continuing Education, the Centre of International Studies and the other University resources. During the first residential week, students have induction sessions in the University library, a session introducing the University computing facilities, including the course web site provided which is a VLE developed by the Institute of Continuing Education using Moodle software

The Course Directors and course administrator provide an introduction to the University and the resources and facilities available to graduate students and the students are introduced to the teaching staff of the course and their individual supervisor.

Progress is monitored by the Course Directors and support and guidance is given on each of the essays submitted during year one. Students are encouraged to maintain contact with their supervisor during year 1 and individual supervisions are compulsory during year 2. Any problems are notified to the student's College tutor.

The Course Handbook provides comprehensive details of the programme, contact details and academic and general advice. Students are invited to attend lectures and events organised by the Centre of International Studies and other relevant departments.

Evaluating and Improving the quality and standards of learning

The Institute of Continuing Education and the Centre of International Studies participate in the University's quality assurance and enhancement system. Academic management of the degree is in the hands of the Graduate Education Committee of POLIS, which includes Faculty and Institute members. The decisions of the GEC are reported to the Awards and Qualifications committee of the Institute of Continuing Education, the Board of Graduate Studies and the Vice Chancellor of the University.

1. **Examining Year 1:** The core course examination at the beginning of the third residential period and the examination/essays of modules are double marked as indicated above and all failed essays and potential high performance passes are sent to the External examiner for further assessment. .
2. **Examining Year 2:** Each thesis is double marked and oral examinations arranged at the discretion of the examiners (mandatory if a candidate is likely to fail). The External Examiner adjudicates on any significant discrepancies in marks and also reviews all fail and potential high performance passes. The External Examiner is also invited to participate in any viva voce examinations. The External Examiner submits a report to the Vice Chancellor which is copied to the International Studies Degree Committee and the Board of Management of the Institute of Continuing Education
3. **Student Evaluation.** Opportunities are provided during each period of residence to discuss progress and any problems. Their progress is also monitored by their supervisor, who is required to submit an annual report. At the end of each year the students are asked to complete an evaluation form, which is collated and distributed to staff involved in teaching the course. This forms the basis of the annual review which helps to determine any proposed changes to the course structure.

Employment and Careers

The majority of students undertaking the MSt in International Relations are already in full-time employment and have taken the course either for personal development or to enhance their skills and knowledge of the subject. Some proceed to read for PhDs.

In addition, the Faculty stresses the importance of transferable skills training, in line with its policy at <http://www.ppsis.cam.ac.uk/prospective/undergraduate/skills.html>. Students on the Programme are encouraged to access a wide range of transferable skills events both at the University and Faculty level.