

## Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

### Basic Course Information

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| 1. | Awarding Institution:                         | Nottingham Trent University  |
| 2. | School/Campus:                                | School of Social Sciences  |
| 3. | Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study: | MA International Relations;<br>PGDip International Relations;<br>PGCert International Relations<br>Distance Learning |
| 4. | Normal Duration:                              | 30 months (2.5 years)  |
| 5. | UCAS Code:                                    |  |

### 6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

The MA International Relations has four over-arching aims:

- (1) To provide you with advanced knowledge of the key concepts, theoretical frameworks and methodologies of International Relations as well as specialist knowledge of new trends developing in the discipline;
- (2) To enable you to understand the relationship between theoretical explanations of contemporary international relations and the real world policies and practices of state and non-state actors in the contemporary world;
- (3) To train you to use theory-informed analysis and rigorous social science methodologies to understand and explain international relations, and offer predictions and prescriptions to public and private sector entities;
- (4) To offer you a course of study that will prepare you for your professional aspirations in the public, private and non-profit sectors by enabling you to identify, conceptualise and solve relevant, contemporary problems via your independent learning, coursework and dissertation research project.

Over the past two decades Nottingham Trent University has operated successful MA taught courses in related areas, including International Relations, and Politics within the School of Arts and Humanities, and the School of Social Sciences. The successful experiences of these courses benefit the delivery of MA International Relations through the experience and subject-specific knowledge of the course team and the research

conducted by the Division of Politics and International Relations by which the MA is provided.

An MA in International Relations will be awarded for the successful completion of 180 credits of study; a Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations will be awarded for the successful completion of 120 credits of study; and a Postgraduate Certificate in International Relations will be awarded for the successful completion of 60 credits of study.

**7. Course outcomes**

Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide.

**Knowledge and understanding**

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Critically analyse the establishment, development and contemporary significance of International Relations as a discipline. (B)
2. Contribute original and innovative knowledge to current debates in International Relations and critically analyse the relationship between these debates and contemporary issues in international affairs. (B)
3. Critique and employ a range of key theoretical approaches which are at the forefront of International Relations scholarship. (B)
4. Critically evaluate and use advanced methodologies to understand and explain contemporary international relations. (B)
5. Exhibit specialist and critical knowledge of selected aspects of contemporary political, social, economic, and environmental issues affecting international policy in different regions around the world. (B)
6. Critically understand, explain and predict the behaviour of state, non-state and supra-national actors through the analysis of structures, processes and agency at different levels of analysis. (B)

**Skills, qualities and attributes**

By the end of the course you should be able to:

7. Identify, collect and evaluate qualitative and quantitative data using a range of advanced research techniques and methodologies drawing on positivist and interpretivist or non-positivist approaches in social science. (B)

8. Master advanced research methods, methodologies and research tools appropriate to conducting internationally-focused research on contemporary international relations. (B)
9. Design and conduct substantial pieces of rigorous research as an independent learner, in a self-directed and autonomous manner. (B)
10. Demonstrate initiative, personal responsibility and ethical discernment in decision-making and problem solving. (B)
11. Manage time, communicate efficiently with peers using a range of communication mediums, and effectively present complex ideas to a diverse audience using different mediums. (B)

#### **8. Learning and teaching methods**

The course team have designed a course-wide learning and teaching approach that underpins each module. This approach has been developed to ensure that the course is current, interesting, engaging, interactive, clear and transparent, and balanced between individual and collective learning. It is important that you appreciate the purposive nature of the learning and teaching strategy employed by the course. The course induction will familiarise you with this approach to learning. Your development and your learning experience are central to this strategy and to the delivery of the MA International Relations Course

A wide-range of learning and teaching methods are used on the course, with e-learning methods forming the foundation of the delivery of each module. Traditional class contact is replaced by the delivery of class content via Engage in various forms including audio-visual, written and mixed mediums. Class content is designed to offer you specific knowledge of International Relations as a discipline (for example, material on theories and methodologies) and in-depth knowledge on contemporary international relations (for example, current affairs). The course learning and teaching strategy centres on providing you with the opportunity to participate in and lead advanced discussions of current issues, processes, and events. By engaging in independent and collaborative research, you and your peers will develop your breadth of subject knowledge, as well as the transferable skills sought by a graduate of International Relations. Other aspects of the learning and teaching methods used on the course include project-based work (both individual and group), which entail the

design, conduct and dissemination of research. This approach to engagement with the course will help you to develop a sense of ownership of your own learning experience. Ultimately, you will be expected to engage in the production of knowledge about contemporary international relations as well as consume existing knowledge.

Staff- and student-led virtual contact offers a regular opportunity for you to test and develop your ideas and receive feedback from your tutors and peers. Oral and written feedback is constantly provided by tutors and peers using various tools within Engage, including: online discussion forums, video-conferences, and collaborative spaces (wikis).

The specific module learning rooms on Engage will provide you with all necessary content. Lectures, presentations, seminars, and workshops are recorded in audio-visual and audio-only form and accessed via Engage. Reading material is also accessed either directly via Engage, where copyright permits the uploading of content files, or alternatively by using Engage to access the NTU library, through which you are able to search for electronic materials. Discussion forums and collaborative creative spaces (for example, wikis and Microsoft OneNote documents) are essential aspects of the delivery of each module and of the your learning experience. You will access class and reading material, and engage with discussions and collaborative spaces on a daily basis (up to five days per week) through the eight weeks on each module.

## 9. **Assessment methods**

Each module has a specific assessment strategy, but each of these are consistent with and based upon the overall course assessment strategy. This ensures that the course as well as module specific learning outcomes are all met, and that you have the opportunity to develop your knowledge and skills through the full range of assessments available for this distance learning course. Consistent with its overall aims, the course is assessed through the University's Grade-Based Marking scheme by a variety of means, including traditional essays, presentations (delivered virtually – live and pre-recorded), debates and discussions, simulations, reports, portfolios, and research project work. The course is also assessed through the writing of policy-oriented works such as reports and negotiation briefs.

The underpinning course assessment strategy ensures a consistent approach to evaluating your knowledge and skills across modules by using a mix of assessment methods on each module. Both formative and summative assessments are included in each module. The formative assessments are used to inform your learning experience and to feed-forward into summative work.

This MA includes a dissertation research project which represents one third of the course (60 credits). This module includes a written project design/proposal, as well as a preliminary project presentation, and a 12,000 word dissertation.

Group and individual presentations enable you to practice engaging with the subject matter and enhance your understanding. This will be particularly useful if the discipline of International Relations is unfamiliar to you if you have transitioned to this field from other subject areas, or have previously learnt International Relations at a university where the full breadth of theories were not taught. These presentations will be delivered by the use of Microsoft PowerPoint (or similar) software and video-conferencing tools (both live and pre-recorded and uploaded material). Presentations require you to develop and demonstrate your presentation skills as well as conduct research on a given topic, analyse its key issues, and propose measures for dealing with them. These assessments are designed to assess a range of skills in addition to subject knowledge and understanding. These include: presenting, team-work, research, organisation, initiative, analysis and time-management

Essays that concentrate on subject knowledge, give you the opportunity to demonstrate that you have read and engaged with the literature, understood the key concepts and theories and are able to apply them to critically analyse contemporary international relations.

Portfolios are used to allow you to reflect on the content of the module, referring to your readings, and on what you have learnt, in addition to what may need further clarification, investigation or reading. This type of assignment has three main objectives: (1) to provide you with a means to reflect on and assess your own learning experience and needs as the module progresses, (2) to be a dialogue between you and your module

leaders, (3) to help you make sense of the different topics and identify, for yourself, the overall structure and rationale of a specific module.

During simulation exercises you are given a scenario, instructions, an assigned role, and an indicative list of relevant material. Your individual participation and performance in online discussions, video-conferences and collaborative work spaces, is jointly assessed with written reports/policy briefs, and research materials that you need to develop prior to a negotiation session. These 'sessions' will not be short, scheduled events, but will be longer periods of time (for example 24 hours) where students are required to engage (it is important to note that all 'contact' during the course will be conducted in this fashion as students on the course will be located in many different time zones around the world). This type of assessment enables you to apply subject specific knowledge (especially different theories and methodologies) gained from the academic literature to real-life situations and to explore, analyse and outline the perspectives of particular international actors.

#### 10. **Course structure and curriculum**

The course has been designed to provide a challenging contemporary curriculum in international relations which reflects the most important political, economic, social and environmental features of our world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular the course focuses on investigating the nature of new and emerging security challenges, the inter-connections between political and economic processes, and the nature and impact of globalisation on human communities. It also provides you with a powerful sense of the development of thought in International Relations and enables you to develop advanced capabilities in a range of methods and methodologies available to support research in the social sciences. The first two modules ('International Relations Theory' and 'Methodologies in International Relations Research') are pre-requisites for all other modules on the course and, therefore, need to be studied first.

The course consists of 13 distinct modules as follows, with the credits ascribed to each in parentheses:

<b>Module No.</b>	<b>Module Title</b>
1	International Relations Theory (10)
2	Methodologies in International Relations Research (10)

3	The New World War: Terrorism in the Era of Globalisation (10)
4	Security in the Post-Soviet Space (10)
5	Woman and Global Movements (10)
6	The Political Economy of (Under-)Development (10)
7	The New World Order: Global Governance and International Institutions (10)
8	The Rise and Fall of Hegemonic Powers: the USA, China and the Rest (10)
9	Order and Power in Europe (10)
10	Challenges to International Security in the Asia-Pacific (10)
11	Security, Radicalisation and Terrorism in Europe (10)
12	War and Peace in the Post-Arab Spring Middle East and North Africa (10)
13	Dissertation (60)

Modules run for eight weeks sequentially and you will only be studying on one module at any given time.

The course is designed to allow you to develop essential knowledge of the ways in which International Relations *is done* – through the application of theory and your use of various research methods to collect, analyse and present information. Emphasis is placed on training you to be able to identify and employ the most rigorous and appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches to a large range of contemporary issues, processes and events in international relations. With this in mind, the first module that you must take focuses on International Relations theory. You will then be able to complete the remaining modules which focus on specific regions and/or issues either in the order in which they run over 30 months or by taking pauses in your studies and picking modules up as you return to study. The final module to be completed will be the Dissertation. With the Dissertation module, you will be given the opportunity to display your creativity and imagination in the design and execution of a research project. It will be expected that you will employ specialist skills of project design and management, in addition to critical, analytic and synthesising skills that would be transferable to both further postgraduate studies and professional settings. Members of the Politics and International Relations team are available to supervise dissertation projects in their area of specialism.

The dissertation project is to be completed within a submission period of between six and twelve months, depending on your requirements. The

modules 'International Relations Theory' and 'Methodologies in International Relations Research' are both prerequisites for undertaking the Dissertation module. You should also have attempted 110 credits in total, before commencing the Dissertation module. The requirement for having attempted 110 credits before starting the Dissertation module is to prevent you from becoming overwhelmed by trying to complete too many credits at once. You may carry one referred module (which you have failed), and it may also be possible to carry a module that you have yet to attempt. If you would like to submit your dissertation in six months, you must have completed all modules in sequence.

**11. Admission to the course**

**Entry requirements.**

For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the 'Applying' tab on the NTU course information web page.

The Nottingham Language Centre, located at the University's City site, provides intensive courses in English for Academic Purposes, designed for international applicants if your knowledge of English does not reach the required level. You may attend these courses prior to commencing your studies, where appropriate and compatible.

**12. Support for learning**

Student support includes the opportunity to work to prepare for the course before it starts with guided reading. A number of supporting systems are put in place to enhance your student experience during the course. As part of the learning experience for NTU students, student support is a critical element. NTU and Wiley will collaborate to ensure that you have consistent levels of support. Details of student support are outlined in the Collaborative Framework Document for the NTU Wiley Partnership. At the start of the course, a two-week long induction course will introduce you to the virtual learning environment (Engage), and the learning and teaching and assessment methods used on the course. It will also help the course team to assess your needs. This induction is especially tailored to international students and students coming from a different educational environment than that of the UK, and aims to present and harmonize learning expectations.

All class material, required reading, learning material and resources, and supporting material will be available for you to access via Engage learning rooms for each module as you begin them. The virtual learning

environment is a space for course and module information, resources for study, news and email/other communication means, and is utilised by members of the course team to deliver modules and enhance your learning experience. All work for the course will be centred on Engage and you will be offered training at the start of the course in its use. You will be supported by NTU and our Wiley partners throughout the entire period of study – with Wiley offering a 24 hours a day support service.

During the Dissertation module, students will be assigned a specific lecturer to act as their supervisor to offer support throughout this final aspect of the degree. Here, students will be assigned a tutor whose academic expertise suits their chosen research topic.

Non English-native speakers benefit from in-session English support to help them with developing and sustaining their written and oral skills. All students have a course leader and an assigned instructional designer that act as personal tutors. Support will also come from the experienced course team. You will have the opportunity to work with individual members of staff and to develop your own learning and writing skills through the non-assessed coursework in each module. NTU's Academic English (AE) support team will provide academic English language/skills support in three ways:

1. Embedded material within the institutional induction module, each course induction and within the first two modules on Wiley's Engage platform. These materials (links, reference notes, small activities, etc.) will be written in conjunction with the MA Module Leaders and assigned Instructional Designer (ID) from Wiley.
2. A bank of interactive reference materials held in a separate learning repository and accessed via hyperlinks on Engage. These materials will be accessible for the duration of the course. They will be designed to sit alongside the materials made available by NTU Library.
3. For the duration of each course, AE will provide individual tutorial support.

### 13. **Graduate destinations/employability**

Graduate employability is fundamental to the strategic objectives of NTU. The university's strategic plan: *Creating the University of the Future*, contains a number of ambitions and several directly inform considerations of graduate employability on the MA International Relations. In particular, the university's ambitions to create opportunity, enrich society, and empower people have shaped the course learning outcomes, the approaches to learning and teaching, and assessment strategy that is applied on this course. NTU is consistently placed close to the top of the league table of all UK Universities for graduate employment, and this course seeks to maintain this tradition. By nature, the International Relations subject fosters students' Global Citizenship characteristics with the discipline's focus on globalisation, international and global level engagement, and its focus on issues that impact on and are impacted by sustainability. In addition, the knowledge and skills that International Relations graduates attain are generally those that employers in a variety of different sectors seek. In particular, the ability to think creatively and critically, to communicate complex notions effectively, and to observe and interpret salient features of the contemporary system will be some of the most sought-after graduate attributes that students will develop through this course. Overall, the successful completion of the course should mean that you will have a good opportunity to promote yourself to suitable employers in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

Students graduating from this course will have had the opportunity to gain subject knowledge and transferable skills through their research, completing learning tasks, preparing coursework (including writing complex yet concise analytical pieces, designing and implementing research projects, and presenting in-depth analyses with confidence using a range of modern communication mediums), and working as part of a diverse and globally-located student community. You will also have been helped and encouraged to articulate those skills in relation to particular occupations that they may be interested in pursuing. This includes policy-making and knowledge-generating roles in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The course learning outcomes, learning and teaching approach, and assessment strategy are all designed in part to help you to develop transferable skills and attributes skills as outlined in section 7 above. While the primary aims of a university course have traditionally

been intellectual in nature and specific to the subject(s) under study, NTU realises the importance of the role of higher education in training graduates to move into the labour market. As such, this course focuses on developing the following skills: communication, time-management, team-working, critical thinking, and IT/modern technologies abilities. Each module on this course is designed to help you to develop these skills, and this is reflected in the assessed assignments.

In addition to the expertise available within the School of Social Sciences, the University has a comprehensive careers service open to all students to assist in securing employment – you can access the Career’s Service pages of the NTU website here: <http://www.ntu.ac.uk/careers>. Support is especially provided by the Career Development Centre as well as more specific aid from our careers consultants experts for international students, and through various initiatives such as the ‘Succeed in Social Science’. This support can be accessed on-campus and electronically.

**14. Course standards and quality**

Course standards are monitored in a variety of ways. A course committee of staff and students monitors student feedback on module delivery, resources and the overall learning experience. An external examiner supports the course team and ensures quality in the delivery and assessment of the course. Students are given detailed feedback on each piece of assessed work and all feedback will be provided by the end of each module. Students also have a course leader with whom they can discuss their progress and gain additional feedback or advice on their learning experience. Finally, the course is delivered by the Division of Politics and International Relations within Nottingham Trent University’s School of Social Sciences, and is managed within the guidelines and standards set and assured by the School.

**15. Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University’s Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook). Any course specific assessment features are described below:

There are no course specific exceptions from the university regulations.

**16. Additional information**

Collaborative partner(s): Wiley

Course referenced to national (QAA) Politics and International Relations  
Benchmark Statements:

Course recognised by: None

Date this course specification approved: March 2018

Any additional information:

The MA International Relations is taught within the Division of Politics and International Relations and the course team also teach on the MA International Relations and MA Politics courses. The distance learning MA develops the postgraduate provision of the division.