

Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

Basic Course Information

1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2.	School/Campus:	Social Sciences/City
3.	Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	MSc Politics and Public Policy, F/T, P/T
4.	Normal Duration:	1 year (F/T); 2 years (P/T).
5.	UCAS Code:	

6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

The combined MSc Politics and Public Policy course offers you the opportunity to undertake an active and current study of Politics and Public Policy at an advanced level. Following recent global events, politics—as we know it—is in crisis. Alongside the gradual decline in ‘formal’ political engagement, there has arisen a deep suspicion of the twentieth-century promise of globalisation, and in this so-called ‘post-truth’ context many of the values and institutions of the liberal democratic order have been brought into question. This includes debates concerning the role of the citizen and reconsideration of various public policies. The combined course provides you with the skills and knowledge necessary for exploring the link between politics and policymaking today, particularly with respect to the role of various formal and informal actors, processes and institutions which shape democracy and policies affecting daily life.

The course is built around NTU’s learning and teaching philosophy, putting strong emphasis on: 1) personalised learning experience via both personal tutorial stream and dissertation supervision structure; 2) internationalised curriculum that nurtures global citizenship and engages with international research community; and, 3) experiential learning via our learning facilities and partnerships with both private and public sector.

The aims of the course are to:

- To provide an advanced and coherent understanding of the link between politics and the policymaking process, particularly with respect to the role of formal and informal actors;
- To enable understanding of the link between theoretical conceptualisations and politics and policymaking;
- To offer a program that will equip students with the necessary skills and attributes relevant for a successful graduate career and/or advanced doctoral study.

The MSc in Politics and Public Policy may serve as an appropriate pathway to doctoral studies for those who may wish to advance in academia. It will provide you with the opportunity to take part in exciting contemporary discussions of politics and public policy, not only focusing on core theoretical concepts, but also on key trends and developments. It is designed to promote deep knowledge, understanding and experience of both domestic and

international political institutions, processes, actors—including the public—and how they influence the policy process and its outcomes.

MSc Politics and Public Policy joins existing provisions and is a collaboration between the MA Politics and MSc Public Policy offered within the Department of Politics and International Relations, enabling students to access a wide range of specialised knowledge. The course is complemented by optional modules from across the School of Social Sciences. This allows for greater appreciation of policymaking in distinct and specialised areas as well as offers familiarity with negotiating in international contexts.

The School of Social Science's research clusters promote participation in a vibrant student community of both home and foreign students from around the world. The course is open to anyone who has already gained experience in the politics or public policy or holds a background in a related discipline and field in Social Sciences and/or Humanities. It aims to be a foundation for anyone who wants to continue advanced 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 evaluate the theories and concepts that underpin the discipline of Public Policy;
2. Critically evaluate ways in which theoretical insights might be applied to particular policy cases at various levels and within different contexts of governance;
3. Critically analyse the relationship between citizens, the democratic process and political institutions in contemporary politics;
4. Critically analyse the role of formal and informal actors in politics and policymaking;
5. Critically assess the utility of a variety of research methods in understanding issues in politics and public policy.

Skills, qualities and attributes

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

6. Synthesise and critically analyse a wide range of qualitative and/or quantitative information from varied sources;
7. Master research methods and tools appropriate for conducting research related to politics and public policy;
8. Plan and generate rigorous research as an independent and/or collaborative learner;
9. Demonstrate personal responsibility and ethical discernment in decision-making and problem solving;

10. Produce academic work within specified deadlines;
11. Develop efficient interpersonal communication skills with peers;
12. Communicate complex ideas effectively and demonstrate academic rigor in the production of written and oral work.

8. Learning and teaching methods

A wide-range of traditional and experiential teaching methods are employed on the course. These may include discussion-based seminars, online teaching and learning sessions, interactive workshops, traditional lectures, and presentations and collaborative project-based work. These sessions are designed to engage students through problem-solving, sharing ideas, giving and receiving feedback and teaching each other.

The course also benefits from activities and research seminars taking place within the Department of Politics and International Relations and across the School of Social Sciences. You will have the option to partake in various events focusing on politics and policy. Activities range from negotiation simulations, guest lectures by politicians and practitioners, to problem-solving activities.

9. Assessment methods

The MSc Politics and Public Policy is assessed via the University's Grade-Based Marking scheme through a variety of means, including essays, presentations and individual/group projects, and the written delivery and oral presentation of research outputs. The course is also underpinned by an overall course-based assessment strategy ensuring a consistent approach to evaluating student knowledge across modules. Moreover, the assessment methods enable students to develop and strengthen transferable skills, thus supporting their employability profile. The Politics and International Relations Employability Coordinator, together with NTU's Employability Team, will assist in developing a professional portfolio that can be used when applying for internships, professional employment or further study.

Core and option modules will comprise assessed essays, presentations and/or case studies of various length. These concentrate on the knowledge of the subject, giving you an opportunity to demonstrate that you have critically read and engaged with the required and recommended literature and are able to apply it to selected case studies.

The core modules will include in-class individual and collaborative work, requiring you to develop and demonstrate your communication and critical thinking skills, as well as to conduct research on a given topic, analysing key issues and proposing measures for dealing with them. Core modules and the optional module, Negotiating in International Contexts, will comprise problem-solving and role play exercises, where you will be expected to take on the role of a given political or policy actor. Your individual participation and performance are assessed either independently or in conjunction with

written research materials that you may be required to develop prior to a simulation session. This will enable you to apply academic literature and the current state of research to a real-life situation and to explore and articulate the perspective of a particular actor or institution. Finally, these activities and assessments will help you to develop the abovementioned skills in preparation for the dissertation or work-based dissertation.

The course culminates in a dissertation research project or work-based research project comprising one third of the course (60 credits). The dissertation module comprises several assessed elements, including a written outline of the methodology to be deployed, a project plan, as well as an individual preliminary project presentation. It also includes an ethics self-assessment.

The reflective synoptic assessment, a part of the Researching Political Issues module, invites you to reflect on the content of the module, referring to the readings, and on what has been learnt/what remains unclear and may need further clarification, investigation or reading. This assignment has three main objectives: (1) to provide a means to reflect on and self-assess the learning experience and personal developmental needs as the module progresses; (2) to encourage dialogue between you and the module leader; and (3) to help you make sense of the different topics and identify, for yourself, the overall structure and rationale of a specific module and the skillset gained.

10. Course structure and curriculum

The MSc Politics and Public Policy has been designed to provide a challenging contemporary curriculum which reflects the link between politics and policymaking. It also provides you with a powerful sense of the development of thought in the subjects and enables you to obtain an advanced understanding and practice of a range of methods and methodologies available to support research.

The course comprises the following modules (180 credits total):

- Four core modules (150 credits total):
 - Theory and Trends in Public Policy (30 credits)
 - Citizens, Values and Political Participation (30 credits)
 - Researching Political Issues (30 credits)
 - Dissertation Module or Dissertation Work-based Experience (60 credits)

- One of following optional modules (30 credits each):
 - Law and Policy for Social Work (Department of Social Work)
 - Education Policy and Practice (Institute of Education)
 - Service Learning (Department of Sociology)
 - International Politics of Health
 - Sustainability, Citizenship and Identity
 - Negotiating in International Contexts
 - Gender and Security
 - Global Governance and International Institutions

Interim awards include a PG Certificate in Politics and Public Policy (60 credits) and PG Diploma in Politics and Public Policy (120 credits). The MSc is achieved on the fulfilment of the criteria for the Diploma plus the completion of the Dissertation (180 credits in total).

The course is designed to place emphasis on advanced understanding, learning and research practices from the outset, with the four core taught modules (see above) reflecting debates and current trends in Politics and Public Policy. The first two modules (*Theory and Trends in Public Policy* and *Citizens, Values and Political Participation*) allow you to explore the major theoretical approaches to and trends in politics and policymaking. The bridge between these two modules is that they both deal extensively with the role of formal and informal actors. As such, *Theory and Trends in Public Policy* also treats the 'politics' of policymaking, while *Citizens, Values and Political Participation* examines democracy and citizen engagement in politics. These two core modules will also help to equip you with the critical thinking, research and interpersonal communication skills necessary for undertaking the *Dissertation* or *Work-based Experience*.

The other two core modules (*Researching Political Issues* and *Dissertation/Work-based Experience*) allow you to develop a grounding in and working knowledge of a variety of approaches to social science research, thus supporting your intellectual inquiries. The dissertation or work-based experience is the capstone of the MSc, drawing together skills and expertise, as well as providing you with the opportunity to display creativity, imagination and originality in the design and execution of a research project. You will be able to demonstrate specialist skills in research design and project management, as well as critical, analytical and synthesising skills that would be transferable to further postgraduate research (PhD) or to working in other professional settings. Members of the Politics and International Relations team are available to supervise dissertations in their area of specialism. Where necessary, it would be permissible for a dissertation to be supervised by another colleague from another academic unit within the university (together with a co-supervisor from the Politics and International Relations team to ensure that the requirements of the course are met).

The optional modules enable you to tailor the course to your individual preferences and professional objectives. As such, the optional modules are offered from a pool of modules from the Department of Politics and International Relations and from across the School of Social Sciences. Students may only take one optional module during the duration of the course. While some optional modules may start in term one, others start in term two. Moreover, some optional modules run across different terms.

In order to accommodate different professional journeys and needs, you will also have the option to study part-time. The part-time route comprises two years of study (rather than one under the full-time route). Should you elect to take the part-time route, you will be expected to take at least one module per term, with the exception of term three in year one. As some optional modules

run across different terms, the departmental team will work with you to design your individual study plan accordingly.

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.

12. **Support for learning**

A number of supporting systems are put in place to enhance your experience during academic studies at NTU.

At the start of the first term, an induction period will help to assess your needs and provide guidance for your preparations for successful completion of the course. This induction is tailored to all students, including domestic, international, full-time and part-time students. The induction aims to present and harmonize learning expectations. It will include introductions to all relevant modules, programs, assessment schedules, employability support and research activities of the Department of Politics and International Relations. This will include the opportunity to discuss your preferences and decide on an optional module in consultation with the relevant departmental team member(s). Staff will offer support throughout the year where you might wish to engage with research being conducted in the department or within the context of the Dissertation or Work-based Experience.

Non-English native speakers will benefit from in-session English support to help them develop and maintain their writing skills. All students have a personal tutor and support from an experienced course team. Students have the opportunity to work with individual members of staff and to develop learning and writing skills via the diagnostic elements of the non-assessed coursework in the first term. Through the personal tutorial system, students will be invited to hold a one-on-one meeting each month during term time (starting in the induction period) in order to identify specific educational and employability needs. In these meetings, the tutor will help you to develop a personalised strategy in order to maintain a high level of engagement with the course and to respond to challenges if they emerge.

The Politics and International Relations team also utilises online learning methods. As such, lecture slides and supportive documents are available for you to access on the Nottingham Trent University Online Workspace (NOW) Learning Rooms for each module. NOW is a space for programme and module information, resources for study and news and email. It is utilised by members of the course team to support and enhance module delivery and to assist with the dissemination of course information. This allows students to grasp the fundamentals of the course at their own pace. Students can replay lectures (recorded and placed on NOW by Lecture Capture) as many times as they need, while having access to all supporting materials such as required and recommended readings, videos, examples of best practice, etc. Moreover, select lectures and workshop sessions may be conducted online in order to better accommodate different learning styles and activities.

All written work is submitted online through NOW and discussion threads within modules will enhance standards. The departmental team and, more broadly colleagues from across the School, offer a series of research seminars throughout the year which postgraduate students are encouraged to participate in. These include student-run sessions for graduate students, which cut across the PhD/Master's divide, as well as a regular course of visiting speakers.

Specific support is available for you as you come to write your Dissertation or Work-based Experience, including an academic staff supervisor who will be available for advice and guidance until submission. You will be able to meet with course team members on a regular basis, including during the summer months.

If you elect to take the part-time route or are thinking about doing so, the departmental team (including personal tutors) will advise you accordingly.

13. Graduate destinations/employability

Graduate employability is fundamental to NTU's strategic aims. This is reflected in NTU's placement close to the top of the league table of all UK Universities for graduate employment.

As MSc Politics and Public Policy graduates, you will have the opportunity to reflect on the subject and transferable skills learnt while preparing coursework. These include expertise in writing complex, yet concise, analytical pieces, developing and implementing projects, interpersonal communication, diplomatic and negotiation skills, problem-solving, and the ability to present in-depth ideas with confidence. You will be offered encouragement and assistance in articulating those skills in relation to occupations that may be of interest to you.

Course learning outcomes and assessment strategies are designed, in part, to help students develop transferable skills and attributes as outlined in section 7 above. While the primary aims of a university course has 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. This course, therefore, focuses on developing skills crucial to the modern workplace, including analysis, communication, time-management, teamwork and problem solving. Each module on this course is designed to engage students in the development of these skills, which often form part of assessed assignments.

In addition to the expertise available within the School of Social Sciences, the University has a comprehensive employability infrastructure open to all students. You can access the Employability pages of the NTU website here: https://www4.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/your_future/employability/in

[dex.html](#). Support is especially provided by the Employability Team, including through more tailored assistance from our careers consultants, experts for international students and various other initiatives, such as the 'Succeed in Social Science', which includes an annual event on 'Early careers with Politics and International Relations degrees'. Moreover, the Department of Politics and International Relations has a dedicated employability coordinator to help embed transferrable skills training throughout our modules and connect our students to employment and placement opportunities. The NTU portal also provides various online tools available to students in order to help with career planning.

Students who complete postgraduate education in Politics/Public Policy typically end up being employed in the following fields (according to [unistats.ac.uk](#)): public service, administration, business, research and welfare and housing. The nature, breadth and depth of knowledge gained is also applicable to the non-governmental/non-profit sector.

14. **Course standards and quality**

Course standards are monitored in a variety of ways:

- 1) A course committee of staff and students monitors student feedback on module delivery and the learning experience.
- 2) An external examiner supports the course team and ensures quality in the delivery and assessment of the course.
- 3) Students are given detailed feedback on each piece of assessed work, and on non-assessed diagnostic work.
- 4) Students have a personal tutor with whom they can discuss their progress and gain additional feedback or advice on learning.
- 5) Student feedback is captured via module and course student evaluation surveys (EvaSys, PTES).
- 6) Finally, the course is lodged within the 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:

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in its [Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#)).

Student work will be assessed via the University's [Grade-Based assessment](#) scheme, and in-line with university policy all assessed work will be graded and

returned within 15 working days. Feedback is provided either electronically or in person, depending on the nature of the assessment. Some modules will also encourage students to engage in self and peer feedback.

16. Additional information

Collaborative partner(s):

Course referenced to national (QAA) Politics and International Relations

Benchmark Statements:

Course recognised by:

NTIC progression route(s):

Date this course specification
approved:

Any additional information: