

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:	MA International Relations; Full Time / Part Time
4.	Normal Duration:	FT: 1 year / PT: 2 years
5.	UCAS Code:	

6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

The MA International Relations has three main aims:

1. To provide an advanced knowledge of the key concepts, frameworks and ideas of International Relations as well as a specialist knowledge of new trends developing in the field of International Relations;
2. To enable students to understand the link between theoretical understandings of the field and policies and practices in a contemporary world;
3. To offer students a course of study that will prepare them for their professional aspirations by enabling them to conceptualise and solve problems of their choices via their coursework and dissertation research project or work-based research project.

The course offers an opportunity to take part in an exciting contemporary discussion of international relations that not only focuses on core theoretical understandings of International Relations but on contemporary and critical developments within the field, and especially on how those can be researched and analysed. The course is grounded in theoretical debates and has a strong policy focus on global governance, the link between political economy and security, and the transient nature of international political actors and phenomena. The course is complemented by optional social science modules that will allow you to further specialise in areas such as international health, media, and sustainability hence preparing them for the dissertation research project or work-based research project, in which they can work creatively on topics of their own particular interests, drawing either on a more academic or a more practical concern, or combining the two. You will have the opportunity to design and implement your dissertation research project or work-based research project working closely with supervisory staff.

Nottingham Trent University has operated a successful MA in International Relations since 1992. The course sits within the School of Social Science and benefits from being housed at the core of a healthy suite of MA courses offered within the School's remit, thus offering you optional modules, access to the School's

research hubs and interactions amongst a vibrant Social Science postgraduate students community of both home (British) and foreign students from around the world. The course curriculum (especially as this is a course in *International Relations*) is designed to further promote knowledge, understanding and experience of international issues, processes and relationships shaping our world. Throughout the course you will gain international perspectives to succeed in the global workplace.

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

4. **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 nature and significance of International Relations as a discipline.
2. Contribute original and innovative knowledge to contemporary debates in International Relations and critically analyse the relationship between these debates and contemporary problems in international affairs.
3. Synthesise and critique a range of key theoretical assumptions which are at the forefront of International Relations scholarship.
4. Critically evaluate advanced conceptual and methodological tools within an International Relations context.
5. Exhibit specialist and critical knowledge of self-selected aspects of broad socio-economic, historical and cultural contexts linked with international policy.
6. Critically understand, explain and predict the behaviour of state, non-state and supra-national actors through analysis of structures, processes and agency at different levels of analysis.
7. Critically reflect on social and environmental responsibilities that are relevant to international relations.

Skills, qualities and attributes

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

1. Survey, identify and evaluate qualitative and quantitative data using a range of advanced research techniques and methodologies drawing on social science and interpretive or non-positivist approaches.
2. Master advanced research methods, methodologies and tools appropriate to conducting internationally-focused research.

3. Plan and generate substantial pieces of rigorous research as an independent learner, in a self-directed and autonomous way.
4. Demonstrate initiative, personal responsibility and ethical discernment in decision-making and problem solving.
5. Manage time, develop efficient interpersonal communication skills and communicate complex ideas effectively.

5. Teaching and learning methods

A wide-range of teaching and learning methods are used on the program, from traditional lecturing to complex role-playing. Lecture and seminars will usually be combined in order to offer student knowledge depth as well as an opportunity to participate in and lead discussions. Other ranges of teaching and learning methods involve project-based work (individual and group) leading to presentations as well as simulations. Class debates on a given topic, requiring students to conduct research on the key functions of specific international relations actors such as the United. The preparation for and participation in the debate allows the assessment of a range of skills including research, analytical, team-working and debating skills.

Student-led workshops offer students the opportunity to test and develop their ideas and receive the tutor's feedback. Each student is asked to choose one topic at the beginning of each module, for which she/he will act as Chair, meaning that she/he will be required to prepare especially carefully for this session. There again, oral feedback is then provided by the tutor at the end of the class. Simulations which combine written and oral elements, and gives students an opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding of a given topic in a near-reality setting.

The course also benefits from the research activities developed within the School of Social Sciences, with workshops showcasing the School's research activities.

6. Assessment methods

Consistent with its overall aims, the course is assessed through the University's Grade-Based Marking scheme by a variety of means, including essays, portfolios, presentation and project work, and the writing of policy-oriented works such as reports and negotiation briefs. The course is also underpinned by an overall course-based assessment strategy which ensures a consistent approach to evaluating students' knowledge across modules. Moreover, the assessment methods enable students to develop and strengthen transferable skills, thus supporting your employability profile.

The MA includes a dissertation research project or work-based research project which represents one third of the course (60 credits). This module includes as

assessed elements a written outline of the methodology to be deployed, a project plan as well as a preliminary project presentation.

The course is also supported by a number of formative elements that scaffold learning, with the opportunity for you to submit work for review ahead of summative deadlines.

Group presentations enable you to practice engaging with the subject matter, which allows your knowledge and general understanding to be diagnosed, which is especially helpful for you if you do not have a prior International Relations degree.

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

Individual class presentation requires you to develop and demonstrate your presentation skills as well as conduct research on a given topic, analyse key issues, and propose measures for dealing with them. These presentations 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. Portfolios, where you are invited to reflect on the content of the module, referring to their readings, and on what you have learnt/what remains unclear and may need further clarification, investigation or reading. This 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 the module leader, (3) to help you make sense of the different topics and identify, for yourself, the overall structure and rationale of a specific module.

Students will also engage in simulation exercises where you are given a scenario and instructions, an assigned role, and an indicative list of relevant material earlier in the term. Your individual participation and performance is jointly assessed with written policy briefs and research materials that you need to develop prior to a negotiation session, thus enabling you to apply the academic literature to a real-life situation and to explore, analyse and outline the perspective of a particular international actor.

7. Course structure and curriculum

The course has been designed to provide a challenging contemporary curriculum in international relations which reflects the specific features of international relations as a field. The course is especially focused on the investigating the nature of security and the transient nature of political system and relationships. It also

provides you with a powerful sense of the development of thought in the subject and also enables you to get an advanced understanding and practice of a range of methods and methodologies available to support research.

The course content is as follows:

- One core Dissertation module (60 credits) OR Dissertation Work-Based Experience
- Three core modules (30 credits each):
- International Relations Theories
- Political Economy of International Security
- Researching Political Issues
- One of the following option modules (30 credits each)
- Global Governance and International Institutions
- Sustainability, Citizenship and Identity

Term one:

- International Relations Theories
 - Global Governance and International Institutions
- OR
- Sustainability, Citizenship and Identity

Term two:

- Political Economy of International Security
- Researching Political Issues

Term three and summer:

- Dissertation module (60 credits) OR Dissertation Work-Based Experience

The MA is achieved on the fulfilment of the criteria for the Diploma plus the completion of the dissertation research project or work-based research project (180 credits in total).

The course is designed to put an emphasis on core understanding and core learning and research practices from the outset with the three core taught modules (International Relations Theories, Political Economy of International Security and Researching Political Issues) reflecting debates in the study of international relations. The first two modules allow you to explore the key tenets of the major theories of international relations, and to question the linkage between issues and actors. The third module allows you to develop a sustained grounding in and working knowledge of a variety of approaches to social science research, thus supporting your intellectual inquiries in the concurrent modules.

The role of the option modules is to enable you to tailor the course to your individual preferences and according to your professional objectives. As such, the two elective modules (Global Governance and International Institutions, and Politics of Sustainability) are taken from a pool of Social Sciences options, and strengthen the core International Relations offering.

The dissertation research project or work-based research project is intended, as with many MA level courses, to be the pinnacle of the course, drawing together skills and expertise, but giving you the opportunity to display your creativity and imagination in the design and execution of a research project. As such, you will be able to display specialist skills of design and project management, critical, analytic and synthesising skills that would be transferable to further postgraduate studies or to working in other professional settings. Members of the International Relations team are available to supervise dissertation research project or work-based research project in their area of specialism, and where necessary we would allow a dissertation research project or work-based research project to be supervised by another colleague from the wider International Relations and politics team (but with a co-supervisor from the IR team to ensure that the requirements of the course were met).

Modules run on a term-long system. The timetable is structured to facilitate learning while acknowledging the personal, professional and other extra-curricular activities that you may have. For example, there are no classes on Wednesdays to allow you to take part in university sports and other society activities, and to attend the Department of Politics and International Relations' research events.

8. Admission to the course

Entry requirements.

For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the course webpage.

9. 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 experience during your academic studies at NTU.

At the start of term one, a week-long induction course will also help to assess your needs and direct you towards particular ways in which you can help to prepare for successful completion of the course. This induction is tailored to all students (whether home or international and students coming from a different educational environment than that of the UK) and aims to present and harmonize learning expectations. The induction week will also introduce you to the research activities

of the Department of Politics and International Relations. Staff-led research projects will be introduced to you during an induction session and you will be given the opportunity to liaise with staff from the Politics and International Relations Department about their projects. You will be invited to contribute to staff-led research projects by designing the dissertation that you will complete during term three and the following summer to fit with the broader research objectives of one staff-led project. Staff will offer support throughout the year where you may wish to engage with research being conducted in the department. During the induction week you will also have a session on assessment. This will cover the MA International Relations' assessment criteria, assessment and feedback schedule, and other practices. You will also be able to discuss NTU's assessment practices and course-specific requirements with your personal tutor in regular meetings.

Non English-native speakers benefit from in-session English support to help them with developing and sustaining their writing skills. All students have a personal tutor and support from an experienced course team. You will have the opportunity to work with individual members of staff and to develop your own learning and writing skills especially through the weaving into the course of diagnostic elements of non-assessed coursework in the first semester. Through the personal tutor system you will be invited to hold a one-on-one meeting per month during term time (starting in the induction week) dedicated to helping you to identify your specific educational and employability needs. In these meetings your tutor will help you to develop a personalised strategy of how you will maintain a high level of engagement with the course, and to respond to challenges if they emerge.

The International Relations team also utilises E-learning components as integral parts of the course. As such, lecture slides and supportive documents are available for you to access on the NOW Learning Rooms for each module. The Nottingham Trent University Online Workspace (NOW) is a space for programme and module information, resources for study, news and email and is utilised by members of the course team to support and enhance module delivery and to assist with the dissemination of course information. Work is submitted online through NOW and you will also use discussion threads within modules to enhance your work. The International Relations team, and more broadly colleagues across the School, offer a series of research seminars throughout the year which MA students are encouraged to participate in and to offer presentations to. These include student-run sessions for graduate students which cut across the PhD/MA divide, as well as a regular course of visiting speakers for the International Relations team.

Because of the nature of International Relations as a discipline, many lectures and seminars integrate international and global perspectives, thus allowing non-UK students to share their experience and knowledge about the world in an inclusive

way. Specific support is available for you as you come to write your dissertation research project or work-based research projects. You will have a supervisor, and all students will want to meet with course team members from time to time including during the summer months.

Depending on which pathway you choose to take via the *Dissertation* module, you will also be assigned a specific tutor to support you throughout this final aspect of your degree. Here you will either be assigned a tutor whose academic expertise suits your chosen research topic, or will have the guidance of a dedicated tutor who will provide regular assistance in completing both your period of work-based learning, and/or chosen work-based research project.

10. **Graduate destinations/employability**

Graduate employability is fundamental to the strategic aim of NTU, as reflected in the fact that NTU is consistently placed close to the top of the league table of all UK Universities for graduate employment. By nature, the International Relations subject fosters students' Global Citizenship characteristics with the discipline's focus on openness to the world, and its focus on sustainability issues. In addition, the knowledge and skills that International Relations graduates attain are generally those that employers in a variety of different sectors seek, which means that as an International Relations graduate you should have a good opportunity to promote yourself to suitable employers.

As an International Relations graduate from this course you will have had the opportunity to reflect on the subject and transferable skills that you have learned while preparing coursework, and those include expertise in writing complex yet concise analytical pieces, develop and implement projects, and the ability to present in-depth ideas with confidence. You will also have been helped and encouraged to articulate those skills in relation to particular occupations that you may be interested in pursuing. Course learning outcomes and assessment strategies are designed in part to help you to develop transferable skills and attributes 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, and IT/modern technologies. Each module on this course is designed to engage students in developing 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 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'.

A number of students seek internships and placements during the summer months, and are assisted by the International Relations team to find relevant experiences. This allows graduates from this course to seek a wide range of careers and professions. In the private sector businesses are increasingly looking for graduates with an understanding of international/global events and processes.

11. 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 and the learning experience. An external examiner supports the course team and ensures quality in the delivery and assessment of the course. You will be given detailed feedback on each piece of assessed work, and on non-assessed diagnostic work. You will also have a personal tutor with whom you can discuss Your progress and gain additional feedback or advice on learning. 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

12. 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 [Quality Handbook](#)).

Your 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.

13. Additional Information

Collaborative partner(s):	N/A
Course referenced to Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Benchmark Statements:	Politics and International Relations
Course recognised by:	None
Date this course specification approved:	02 July 2018

Any additional information: