International Relations and Security Studies MA
Programme Specification

Academic Year:	2026/2027	
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford	
Main Location:	City Campus	
Qualifications Framework:	HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ: QAA 2014)	
Target Degree Award:	Master of Arts, International Development Management	[FHEQ Level 7]
Intermediate/exit awards:	Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate	[FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	UK and international	
Programme Start Month:	September and January	
Course modes of study:	September start, 12 months full-time	
	January start, 15 months full-time	
	September start, 15 months full-time with internship/placement	

The September start with internship or placement is accessible through the Rotary Peace Fellowship programme. Visit the Rotary website to apply for 2028/2029 or refer a potential candidate.

Please note: The University has a set of terms and conditions for all students accepting an offer to study on a course here at Bradford. This is called the Student Contract. This document sets out the Terms and Conditions which apply when an offer of a place on a programme of study at the University of Bradford is accepted. View our Student Contract for further details. Information about this programme and its modules has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of publication, but changes may occur given the interval between publishing and commencement of teaching. Any change which impacts the terms and conditions of an applicant's offer will be communicated to them.

Minor Modification Schedule

1. May 2024: Annual review; updates to optional modules and electives for 2024-25 academic year.
2. May 2025: Annual Review, additional options added and changes to academic regulations.
3. May 2026: Annual changes for 2026 entry, simplified presentation and changed modes of study.

Programme Overview

In the past decade, many aspects of international relations and security have changed profoundly. This includes major power shifts at global and regional levels; changing patterns of conflict and co-operation; complex risks and processes of insecurity and violence at human, community, regional and international levels; and important changes in the characteristics of the international system, with increasingly complex impacts of emerging technologies, environmental challenges, and flows of people and goods (illicit and legal) working alongside or against the ambitions of neo-realist "great power" politics.

This MA programme in International Relations and Security Studies enables an advanced understanding of these issues and trends, and of the range of policy and practitioner responses to them. The programme is strongly informed by themes of peace and conflict studies, including issues of war, violence and security-building between and within communities, states and regions across the world; and understanding WMD, conventional arms proliferation, political violence and terrorism; but also the development and operation of international and regional institutions and past and present environmental and other transnational challenges relating to international and regional diplomacy in a complex world.

MA International Relations and Security Studies is offered by the internationally recognised Department of Peace Studies and International Development, drawing on over 50 years of experience as a leading centre of international peace and conflict research, education and training. Students further benefit from studying at a major international centre for research and engagement with policy and practitioner communities working in the areas of international relations and security studies, providing many opportunities for interested students to participate or observe regular workshops, international conferences, research seminars, and engagements in or near Bradford with relevant NGOs, community organisations, governmental and international agencies, and with the UK Ministry of Defence and other foreign and development agencies and police, military or justice services.

Peace Studies and International Development is a dynamic learning community within a diverse and active Faculty and wider University. We typically arrange numerous events and opportunities beyond the taught modules, fostering engagement with academic, policy and practitioner communities. These include invited speakers, seminars, workshops, activities and conferences.

Academic staff at the Department are actively engaged in international research on the issues addressed in this course, with academic backgrounds in branches of economics, politics, management, and other social sciences, and have specialist areas of expertise in international relations, regional politics, and security studies through a rigorous advanced and multidisciplinary understanding of theories and empirical evidence and trends in these academic disciplines and area studies; combined with a focus on contemporary international, regional and transnational challenges and processes; and international debates and responses.

The MA IRSS programme will equip students with advanced understanding and skills for work for example in national and local government; global governance institutions; research institutes; international, national and local development agencies; advocacy and policy work in environmental, security, and other regional and international issue areas; private sector strategy and governance for sustainability; and NGOs.

Programme Structure

MA International Relations and Security Studies runs full-time with entry in September or January. Students and Rotary Peace Fellows who start in September can stay on to complete an integrated internship or placement as part of the degree award. Students may transfer to the placement route any time up to the middle of Semester 2 (specific deadline dates are provided in the Programme Handbook each year). The 15-month option provides students with further opportunities for developing professional experience and practical skills during their Masters programme by

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undertaking a voluntary placement or internship in a relevant organisation for a period of up to three months. This internship or placement normally starts shortly after the end of Semester 2:

Table 1: International Relations and Security Studies Routes Compared

Route \ Period	Year 1 Period 1	Year 1 Period 2	Year 1 Period 3	Year 2 Period 1	Year 2 Period 2	Year 2 Period 3
September Entry, no placement	Semester 1 Modules	Semester 2 Modules	Research	Submit Dissertation & Graduate		
January Entry, no placement	-	Semester 2 Modules	-	Semester 1 Modules and Research	Submit Dissertation	Graduate
September entry, with Placement	Semester 1 Modules	Semester 2 Modules	Professional Experience & Research	Submit Dissertation	-	Graduate

After completing the taught modules, students then undertake a substantial Dissertation project on a subject of their choice (relating to the Programme's aims and learning objectives). This involves research and analysis, and preparation of a Dissertation of up to 15,000 words. This is a major opportunity not only to research and prepare a substantial scholarly analysis of a specialist area in which the student is particularly interested, but also to demonstrate an advanced understanding of relevant policy and practitioner agendas and debates to increase the value of the Masters degree to pursue relevant careers.

After an internship is completed, students return to the University to proceed with researching and preparing their Masters dissertation, with the same requirements and academic supervision as for students on the shorter programme, except that the dissertation submission date is extended by approximately three months (actual submission dates are specified annually in the Programme Handbook) as appropriate for a longer programme.

All of the Masters programme routes provide excellent opportunities for engaging with the spheres of policy and practice as well as with academic studies. However, the 3-month placement options provide further enhanced opportunities for integrating practitioner community engagement (such as internship experience) with their academic studies. This element of the programme is student-centred and student-led, and thus the initiative for identifying and applying for internships is driven by the students. The academic staff in the programme team can facilitate and support such searches for suitable placements with leads and suggestions, help with the writing of applications, and provide supporting letters of reference. They provide customised preparatory training before students who choose the placement route, and mentoring support as useful during the period of the placement or internship.

The academic modules for this programme include a range of innovative approaches to teaching, blended learning and assessment, to enable students to actively engage with the key concepts and syllabus and to develop not only their academic knowledge and understanding but also to their skills and experience for the worlds of policy, practice and employment. Every student will participate in at least two intensive laboratory workshops/webinars or 'immersion days' on key cross-cutting thematic issues including on: the roles and significance of gender; the skills of using conflict analysis methods and conflict sensitivity guidelines for assessing and ensuring conflict

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sensitivity in fragile and conflict affected areas. These are incorporated into the core modules for the programme. Students can also have the chance to participate in an extended 'crisis response game' to further sharpen their skills as a practitioner.

There are opportunities for students to create their own specialism, such as the themes discussed above, or also in a selected region (e.g. Africa, Middle East), with opportunities for selected study visits. This includes the Africa Study Visit which includes a study visit of approximately 12 days to an African country recovering from conflict as well as preparatory and post-visit study and analysis (which can be taken as an assessed element of the programme). It also includes further voluntary study visits to Northern Ireland, Hiroshima or to major locations of international organisations, such as The Hague or Brussels as well as London.

We take the safety of our students and practitioners very seriously. Participation in study visits is subject to travel risk assessments and there may be an extra charge to students participating in some of these activities, but there may also be scholarship funding available on a competitive basis by application to help with the costs.

Programme Aims

The MA programme is intended to enable students:

- to develop an advanced knowledge and understanding of international relations and security studies.
- to critically engage with debates concerning the various theoretical frameworks, themes and processes concerned with the state and the range of other international actors; the dynamics of their interactions in the international system of states, international and regional organisations, and non-states actors and networks; and the development and effectiveness of regional and international governance.
- to critically engage with debates concerning the theoretical frameworks, themes and processes concerned with complex contemporary security issues and challenges, and responses to them.
- to make informed analyses of complex events and ideas by synthesising knowledge and debates.
- to prepare for engagement and employment in the field of international relations and security studies.

Programme Learning Outcomes

Students eligible for the FHEQ Level 7 Degree award of Master will be able to:

1. Conduct systematic research into international relations and security-related contexts, using relevant techniques and technologies to gather, evaluate and manage evidence, data and information from valid, appropriate sources, and using data and theory in the analysis of relationships, dynamics and impacts within contemporary case-studies.

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2. Use knowledge, evidence, techniques and theory to analyse at an advanced level and understand real-world cases of international relations and security and to the international, regional and national responses to these cases.

3. Identify and critically assess at an advanced level the ideas, practices and conditions that influence debates concerning international relations and security studies.

4. Collaborate effectively with others in the completion of appropriate academic tasks.

5. Generate clear, concise and coherent advanced analysis and communication tailored to the audience.

6. Employ relevant theories and evidence to engage constructively at an advanced level with debates concerned with international relations and security studies.

7. Identify and apply critical learning to real-world cases and the international responses to these cases.

8. Demonstrate initiative and independence in systematic academic inquiry, using relevant techniques and technologies to gather, evaluate and manage evidence, data and information from valid, appropriate sources.

9. Plan and execute a range of assignments, including essays, reports and reflective pieces, tailored to the audience.

10. Design and carry out, with appropriate ethical approval, an original and self-directed capstone advanced research project, including a comprehensive and critical literature review.

11. Exercise initiative and personal responsibility in completion of an advanced, original and self-directed capstone project, using critical reflective communication to deepen understanding of the learning process, with appropriate documentation.

12. Recognise and be able to reflect critically on one's own positionality, values and epistemological orientation in one's own academic work.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment of learning outcomes is based on principles of rigour, constructive alignment, diversity and inclusion. It employs a well-developed range of formative and summative assessments tasks which are designed to help students to develop and demonstrate their understandings and skills as set out in the learning outcomes for each module and for the Programme overall. Our overall strategy attempts to strike a balance between developing students' abilities to succeed in a balanced and diverse range of assessment tasks and to stretch beyond existing comfort zones on the one hand and allowing them to play to their strengths on the other hand.

The formative assessment strategy includes monitoring learning throughout each semester using a range of online and face-to-face activities, tutorials and coursework, including reports, essays,

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reflective notes, literature reviews, oral or audio-visual presentations, and group and individual tasks; for which formative feedback is given. During the process of selection, refinement, research and drafting of the dissertation project, formative feedback and guidance will be provided by a personal supervisor, as well as by other members of academic staff on request. The dissertation module has been designed with a view to maximising students' engagement in a structured process of research, with formative feedback built in from the start.

Summative assessment is similarly through a variety of tasks, including essays, reports, policy briefs, case study analyses, oral and audio-visual presentations, and reflective notes. Each module is assessed by specified modes of assessment, as described in the relevant module descriptor. Some of the modules may be assessed through submission of a portfolio of work. A Portfolio is a specific set of assignments of varying types and lengths, including reports, essays, and written or oral project presentations.

While all of our assessment tasks will be designed with the aim of promoting an inclusive and accessible curriculum for all, we will, in co-ordination with the Disability Service, work with any individual students who might have additional access requirements to find solutions appropriate to their needs.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The learning and teaching strategy for this programme emphasises the acquisition of academic skills, familiarity with contemporary policy and professional competencies related to peace and development work. The strategy reflects the University's Blended Learning Strategy and provides a wide range of online and face-to-face teaching and learning methods and opportunities in and across modules, including lectures and directed study, but also discussion of in-class and pre-class student research findings; simulations, presentations and other methods of communicating arguments - within groups and to whole class audiences.

A range of innovative approaches to Blended teaching and learning are incorporated throughout the programme, enabling active study and analyses of important historical and contemporary issues relating to international relations and security studies, so that learning about theories develops closely with understandings about the application to real issues and problems.

Employability and professionalism capabilities and attributes are developed through group and pair work, in and out of class, and experience with oral, written and other audio-visual presentations. In some modules, these skills are given a sharp focus, and self-reflection on skills development is an explicit learning outcome for the modules.

Students start the programme with an intensive induction week to develop their learning and personal development planning skills and to provide an introduction to IT and library resources. Additional group and one to one support is provided as required. Students will be introduced to academic writing, research and analytical skills as part of the preparation for writing their dissertation.

The academic modules for this programme include a range of innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, to enable students to actively engage with the key concepts and syllabus and to develop not only their academic knowledge and understanding but also to their skills and

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experience for the worlds of policy, practice and employment. There are opportunities to take specialist pathways, including thematic specialisms such as those indicated above, and also specialising in selected regions (e.g. Africa, Middle East), with opportunities for selected study visits.

During the first and second semesters of the programme, students will undertake at least two intensive laboratory workshops or 'immersion days' on key cross-cutting thematic issues including on: the roles and significance of gender; and the skills of using conflict analysis methods and conflict sensitivity guidelines for assessing and ensuring conflict sensitivity in fragile and conflict affected areas. These are incorporated into the core modules for the programme.

Placement and Study Abroad

Further information about internships and placements and study abroad opportunities is published on the University's website.

Professional Experience Option

The Professional Experience is an elective integrated work experience element of the MA programmes in PSID. This normally takes the form of an internship in another organisation and can be either undertaken in the UK or abroad. Students normally use their placement period and experience to inform and shape their dissertation. Students on the September route without placement can transfer into the placement route during Semester 2 if they change their mind; exceptionally, in the unfortunate circumstance that an arranged placement falls through it is also possible to transfer back onto the without placement route.

It is up to students to plan and arrange their placement. For Rotary Peace Fellows, designing the applied field experience is an integral part of their scholarship. Planning for the placement/internship starts several months in advance. The Department will provide information sessions. The process may involve several steps including:

- Identifying and searching for voluntary placement/internship opportunities.
- Preparing applications, covering letters, supporting letters of reference.
- Contacting relevant organisations, arranging for and agreeing specifics such as location, domain of work, start and end dates, focal point, terms of reference of placement and what the student is expected to do and the days and hours.
- Sorting out financial planning issues, visas, travel risk assessments and permissions.
- Discussing with the relevant contact person in the host organisation about aims and reviewing arrangement.

Students are required to complete a form detailing their proposed activities and obtain permission from the Department before they can go on placement/internship. Many organisations also offer virtual placements or virtual internships and these may be a more feasible option.

Upon completing the period of placement/internship, students should come back on the programme and submit a completion report summarising key learning points before they can formally continue work on their dissertation.

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Study Abroad Semester Option

Students can choose to study abroad for Semester 1 or Semester 2 at specified approved partner Universities. This is a cost- and time-effective way of getting international experience alongside university education.

The list of Study Abroad Semester partners changes year-to-year depending on the curriculum offered. This option can be available ONLY if the modules offered by the host institution allow the student to meet the learning outcomes of the Bradford Programme Stage. The semester exchange requires students to study only modules suitable to the Bradford programme stage when abroad. Therefore, all modules selected for the exchange will have to be mapped to the Bradford programme learning outcomes and be approved by the Programme leader in Bradford in advance of the exchange.

During the exchange, if the student needs to change the modules, this can only be done after approval of the Bradford Programme Leader. If the student fails a module abroad, the student must explore the possibility of re-taking any exams at the host university and immediately inform the International Opportunities Team. Students will have support from the relevant University of Bradford services while overseas. All credit successfully obtained whilst on study abroad semester will count towards the students final degree.

Curriculum

The MA International Relations and Security Studies curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure coherence and progression through the different stages of study. This course also provides the opportunity for granular personalised learning and specialism within 120 total taught credits.

Semester 1

The first semester provides an advanced understanding in two core areas. First, there will be an examination of the historical development and contemporary trends and characteristics of the international system in theory and in context. Second, an advanced investigation of the contemporary security challenges, including the current state of the theoretical and policy literatures and practices focused on the understanding and responding to these security challenges. The provision of an options allows further specialisation in relation to a number of key areas. Students select one option in Semester 1:

Table 2: International Relations & Security Studies Semester 1 Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Mod. Code	Module Title	Credit	Selection
PES7037-B	Contemporary Security Challenges	20	Core
PES7054-B	The International System in Theory and Context	20	Core
DEV7037-B	Policy Analysis for Governance and Development	20	Option 1
PES7035-B	African Politics and Security Dynamics	20	Option 2
PES7036-B	Applied Conflict Research	20	Option 3
PES7048-B	Security and Development in Fragile & Conflict-Affected Areas	20	Option 4
PES7051-B	Studying Peace in a Changing World	20	Option 5

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Semester 2

Semester 2 offers opportunities to deepen knowledge of particular contexts, themes or policies relating to international relations and security studies. The core focus is on developing advanced understanding and lessons from experience concerning environment, trafficking, crime and other transnational challenges, and responses at international, regional, national and local levels. Students select two options in Semester 2:

Table 3: International Relations & Security Studies Semester 2 Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Selection
PES7062-B	Environment, Trafficking and Crime: Transnational Issues and International Governance	20	Core
PES7034-B	Africa Study Visit	20	Option 6
PES7043-B	Middle East Politics and Security Dynamics	20	Option 7
PES7045-B	Natural Resource Governance	20	Option 8
PES7046-B	Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding	20	Option 9
PES7053-B	Terrorism and Political Violence	20	Option 10
PES7069-B	Politics, Security and Development in South Asia	20	Option 11

Semester 3

Study in semester 3 involves work on the 60-credit dissertation for all MA students and the professional experience for students and Rotary Peace Fellows on the placement route. The preparation and submission period will vary depending on the route taken – see the Programme Structure section for more details. All students will be supported in their dissertation work by an academic supervisor.

Table 4: International Development Management Semester 3 Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Mod. Code	Module Title	Credit	Period	Selection
PES7040-E	Dissertation	60	FLYear	Sept. Start Core
PES7040-E	Dissertation	60	NSYear	Jan. Start Core
PES7023-Z	Professional Experience (Rotary Peace Fellows Applied Field Experience)	N/A	Sem 3	Rotary Peace Fellowship
PES7056-Z	Voluntary placement/ internship	N/A	Sem 3	Non-Rotary Placement Route

Assessment, Continuation and Award Regulations

This programme follows the Assessment, Continuation and Award regulations for postgraduate taught courses published on the University's Website (Regulation 9).

Award of the Masters degree requires 180 FHEQ Level 7 credits and achievement of the award learning outcomes. Students who exit the programme with 120 or 60 credits completed may be eligible for an intermediate award in line with the regulations.

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Admission Requirements

We are proud to be one of the most inclusive universities in the UK. All our students have potential, and we believe that as many people as possible should have the chance to benefit from higher education, no matter what their background or circumstances. We take the time to understand the background of our applicants, understand their journey to education, and make decisions based on an applicant's potential to thrive at university and beyond.

Language competency

As the programme is taught in English, all applicants are required to have proficiency at GCSE Grade 4 (national grade C) or above in English Language. Alternative RQF Level 2 qualifications such as Key Skills are also acceptable if equivalent. For international students, the level of English required is listed on the University of Bradford English language requirements website. Exceptionally, holders of a UK degree awarded within 2 years prior to entry to the Bradford programme may be exempt from these English test requirements. International applicants who do not meet the IELTS requirement can take a University of Bradford pre-sessional English course.

Academic entry

Applicants typically have at least an undergraduate degree passed at 50% or above, such as a UK Bachelor's degree with honours classed 2:2, or equivalent, in any subject. Examples of other equivalent international qualifications are provided on the University of Bradford page for a country or region.

Relevant professional or voluntary activities would be desirable as the course will draw on your experience and the experiences of your fellow students.

Access and Recognition of Prior Learning

Applications are welcome from students with non-traditional qualifications, or with significant personal and professional experience, and these applications are assessed by interview.

If applicants have prior certificated learning or professional experience which may be equivalent to parts of this programme, the University of Bradford has procedures to evaluate and recognise this learning to provide applicants with exemptions from specified modules or parts of the programme. Find more information about recognition of prior learning decisions on the University website.

People thinking of studying with the University of Bradford don't need to wait for the start of the year to contact our Disability Service. The University can arrange for anyone to talk to this team about what support is on offer at Bradford including an invitation to our Get Set Day. To contact the Disability Service please complete the request support form.

Information in this document is for the contemporary recruitment cycle and was accurate at time of publication. The current tariff and accepted qualifications for entry onto the programme is published at the online course page:
https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/international-relations-and-security-studies/

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