

Sustainable Development MSc 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 Science, Project Planning and 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 for 2024/25 academic year.
2. July 2025: Annual Changes for the 2025 academic year, including changes to academic regulation.
3. May 2026: Annual changes for 2026 entry, simplified presentation and changed modes of study.

Programme Overview

MSc Sustainable Development at Bradford will enable students to develop an advanced knowledge and understanding of social, political, economic and development issues relating to the [UN sustainable development goals](#), including inequality, poverty, conflict and social justice, as well as the environmental and ecological aspects of sustainability.

The traditional concept of sustainable development has the three pillars of economic, social and environmental dimensions. This programme aims to take a multi-disciplinary approach to sustainability and encourage enquiry into these and other dimensions including historical,

cultural, political, institutional and gender dimensions to understand the issues and challenges of vulnerability, powerlessness, agency, responsibility and resilience.

Sustainability has once again become an important national and international priority and policy issue. There are serious challenges which need to be overcome before any society, country or city can claim to be on a path to sustainability. This programme develops knowledge and understanding at advanced level by focusing on a range of issues at different levels - global, national, regional and local community and critically examining how sustainable development shapes policy and strategy in these different spatial scales. For example, modules will offer opportunities to investigate development issues such as water supply governance and the politics of public health which combine the strategic priorities in ways that encourage students to develop proposals for innovative solutions to real world problems.

This MSc programme in Sustainable Development is intended to enable students to develop an advanced knowledge and understanding of sustainable development issues, policies and processes, and to become to develop an international cadre of informed and skilful analysts, practitioners and potential leaders with a deep understanding of sustainable development ideas, institutions, policies and networks and the necessary critical thinking skills to inform policy and contribute to long term impacts. The 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; environmental advocacy and policy work; private sector strategy and governance for sustainability; and NGOs.

The MSc Sustainable Development is offered by the internationally recognised Department of Peace Studies and International Development (PSID), drawing on over 50 years of experience as a leading centre of peace and development research. Students further benefit from studying at a major international centre for research and engagement with policy and practitioner communities working in the areas of sustainable development, 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 UK and other foreign and development agencies and police, military or justice services.

Academic staff of the PSID Department have strong academic and applied research track records in aspects of:

- the growth of sustainable development as an international concept and objective.
- the negotiation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and development of mechanisms and indicators to promote their implementation.
- economic inequality, poverty alleviation, natural resource governance and sustainability.
- resilience, peacebuilding, gender and conflict sensitivity analysis.
- project and strategic planning and capacity building.

They are often involved in advocacy and policy analysis work for international, governmental and non-governmental organisations and agencies on these issues. We currently collaborate with:

- **national and local government agencies in the UK** and several other developed and developing countries

- **UN agencies, EU institutions and European governments**
- **the African Development Bank, and the Caribbean Development Bank**
- **bilateral lenders and donors such as AusAid, FCDO and the China Development Bank**
- **international NGOs such as the Aga Khan Foundation, Oxfam and Saferworld**
- **the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council**
- **a developing global network of inclusive, sustainable smart cities.**

Staff members have current research and knowledge transfer projects in many countries including:

- **East Asia:** Japan, China, Korean peninsula
- **Southeast Asia:** India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar
- **East Africa:** Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania
- **West Africa:** Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone
- **Latin America:** Brazil and Colombia.

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.

Programme Structure

MSc Sustainable Development 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 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: Sustainable Development 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 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 programme aims to develop comprehensive and systematic understanding of students to various dimensions of sustainable development and the complexities of shaping, influencing and informing policy analysis and achieving impact in the world.

The programme is intended to:

- Enable students to develop advanced knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories and frameworks of sustainable development and their application in policy and practice.
- Develop students' skills to analyse, synthesise and critique current and emerging research and practice and critically appraise evidence using insights at the forefront of the discipline and practice.
- Advance students' knowledge and understanding of skills and techniques to develop innovative ideas and originality in the application of knowledge in relation to sustainable development policy and practice for their own research and advanced scholarship.
- Develop students' skills to formulate and independently investigate a complex issue related to sustainable development by developing appropriate research questions and critically evaluating evidence to answer such questions and communicating their findings at an advanced level.
- Develop autonomous learning skills for lifelong learning to become even better at being an independent learner and critical and creative thinker.
- Further develop skills in communicating complex ideas and issues to different groups of stakeholders.
- Equip students with the knowledge and skills to become a reflective and critical practitioner and work as an effective team member in culturally diverse groups and teams.

Programme Learning Outcomes

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

1. Critically evaluate advanced theoretical concepts in sustainable development and its framing in order to create original critiques of the existing literature and policy discourse.
2. Develop an advanced understanding of policy analysis skills and a systematic understanding of institutions and quality of government.
3. Synthesise complex information from a range of sources and on a range of issues related to sustainable development in order to develop new theoretical approaches and practical solutions.
4. Use initiative in self-directed learning and construct better arguments that challenge existing knowledge paradigms.
5. Develop advanced knowledge and understanding of contemporary transnational and global problems of environment and development.

6. Show an advanced understanding of concepts and theories of sustainable cities; critically examine ideological, ethical and institutional perspectives on sustainable cities, the contradictions, possibilities and challenges of applying these concepts for urban policy and a number of issues related to sustainable smart cities; and critically examine the link between sustainability and well-being and existing and new indicators and their relevance to Sustainable Development Goals agenda.
7. Develop a critical, ethical and reflective approach to implementing practice or policy-based interventions and understanding and assessing their applications in diverse cultural, geographic and socio-economic contexts.
8. Apply originality and creative problem-solving in dealing with complex development problems in order to generate new approaches and insights with practical applications in the real world.
9. Demonstrate a detailed, rigorous and original critique of current research and scholarship at the forefront of the discipline in a specialist area of sustainable development – focusing on the complex real-world context of either a developed country or region or a developing country or region or fragile and conflict affected countries or regions.
10. Identify, design and apply appropriate research methods and strategies for specific purposes and applications demonstrating a comprehensive, critical and reflective understanding of relevant techniques in the field.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy 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. The formative assessment strategy includes monitoring learning throughout each semester using a range of class activities, tutorials and coursework, including reports, essays, 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

As an advanced postgraduate programme, learning and teaching is based on developing critical reflection and active learning. Research-led teaching means that the staff members delivering the teaching will be themselves engaged in research at the cutting edge of the field. This is the case in all our modules.

The blended 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 provides a wide range of teaching and learning methods including by online (and subject to health and safety by face to face) approaches and opportunities in and across modules for student presentations. A range of innovative approaches to blended teaching and learning are incorporated throughout the programme, enabling active study and analyses of important contemporary issues relating to sustainable development, so that learning about theories develops closely with understandings about the application to real problems.

In addition to student learning within modules, personal academic tutors will support individual students' academic development, helping them to analyse their learning needs, develop appropriate learning strategies and reflect on their progress. 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 skill development is an explicit learning outcome for the modules.

Extensive optionality is provided within some modules, where students are supported to select their own projects, case-studies and topics within the overall syllabus. The dissertation project is also chosen (within the overall scope of issues relating to Sustainable Development), designed and undertaken by each student, under academic supervision. Furthermore, during the first and second semesters of the programme, students will have the opportunity to participate in intensive blended laboratory workshops or 'immersion days' on key cross-cutting thematic issues including on: the roles and significance of gender; and various challenges for sustainable development. These are incorporated into the core modules for the programme.

Curriculum

The curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure coherence and progression through the programme of study. This programme also provides the opportunity for granular personalised learning and specialism where students can take one option in semester 1 and two options in semester two. The curriculum may change, subject to availability and the University's programme approval, monitoring and review processes.

Semester 1

The first semester provides an advanced understanding in two core areas: the development, implementation and debates concerning sustainable development concepts, norms, policies and programmes; and issues of governance and sustainable development.

Students in Semester 1 take Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Development, Policy Analysis for Governance and Development and select one module option.

Table 2: Sustainable Development Semester 1 Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Mod. Code	Module Title	Credit	Select
DEV7026-B	Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Development	20	Core
DEV7037-B	Policy Analysis for Governance and Development	20	Core
PES7035-B	African Politics and Security Dynamics	20	Option 1
DEV7007-B	Economic Growth and Development	20	Option 2
PES7048-B	Security and Development in Fragile & Conflict Affected Areas	20	Option 3
DEV7003-B	Issues in Development Theory	20	Option 4
PES7065-B	Social-Ecological Systems and Crises	20	Option 5
PES7036-B	Applied Conflict Research	20	Option 6

Semester 2

Semester 2 offers opportunities to deepen knowledge of particular contexts, themes or policies relating to peace, conflict and development and their inter-relationships. The core focus is on contemporary urban challenges and the development of sustainable cities.

Students will take Sustainable Cities and select two module options:

Table 3: Sustainable Development Semester 2 Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Code	Module Title	Credit	Select
PES7052-B	Sustainable Cities	20	Core
PES7065-B	Social-Ecological Systems and Crises	20	Option 7
DEV7001-B	Finance for Development	20	Option 8
DEV7039-B	Assessing Development Practices, Needs and Outcomes	20	Option 9
ENB7007-B	Risk Assessment and Management	20	Option 10
PES7034-B	Africa Study Visit	20	Option 11
PES7041-B	Gender, Conflict and Development	20	Option 12
PES7045-B	Natural Resource Governance	20	Option 13
PES7069-B	Politics, Security and Development in South Asia	20	Option 14
PES7062-B	Environment, trafficking and crime: Transnational issues and international governance	20	Option 15

Semester 3

Study in semester 3 involves work on the 60-credit dissertation for all MSc 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: Sustainable Development 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

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 MSc 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.

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.

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.

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/sustainable-development/>