

Course Specification

Course Summary Information		
1	Course Title	MA International Relations and Security
2	Course Code	PT1810 (FT) PT1816 (PT) PT1818 (FT with PP)
3	Awarding Institution	Birmingham City University
4	Teaching Institution(s) (if different from point 3)	N/A
5	Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation	N/A

6	Course Description
	<p>The International Relations and Security course explores issues of power, governance, security, decision-making, conflict, and cooperation across the globe. Students develop knowledge and high-level skills that equip them for success in their careers. The course provides knowledge and critical understanding of communities and states facing challenges such as migration, terrorism, state violence, climate change and social inequalities. The study of International Relations encompasses relations between human beings and their sociopolitical and ecological environments at local, national and global levels. This course explores security, power relations, globalisation and the ways states interact, whether through cooperation or through conflict.</p> <p>This course is designed with employability at its core, both through the teaching and through authentic assessments.</p> <p>Authentic assessments such as projects, crisis games, live debates or presentations, directly link learning to meaningful contexts. Students actively engage with the material, seeing its relevance to future careers. This fosters intrinsic motivation and deeper understanding. Through authentic tasks you develop key skills: authentic tasks require you to apply knowledge, analyse, synthesise, and collaborate with classmates. These skills are sought by employers and are vital for lifelong learning. Authentic assessments provide opportunities for ongoing feedback and self-reflection.</p> <p>Opportunities include placements, work experience or volunteering with external organisations, or through work-like learning and research experiences embedded into the course via simulations, role-play and practical problem-solving activities. You will gain work-related learning through employer insight visits, authentic assessments and volunteering; you will be able to apply knowledge in combination with transferrable skills, through guest lectures and employer-led skills sessions, as well as in-class tasks that help you develop skills in negotiation, time management, risk assessment, leadership and teamwork.</p> <p>You can succeed in a wide variety of career pathways: policy-oriented work - within domestic and international NGO, charity and other third sector organisations; enterprise work - within social sciences-driven start-ups or private sector organisations; and working within institutional settings</p>

	<p>such as the civil service or diplomatic service, educational institutions, media and political institutions at the national and local levels.</p> <p>The Professional Placement is designed to improve your employability skills which will, through the placement experience, allow you to evidence your professional skills, attitudes and behaviours at the point of entry to the postgraduate job market. Furthermore, you will be able to develop and enhance your understanding of the professional work environment, relevant to your chosen field of study, and reflect critically on your own professional skills development within the workplace.</p>
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7 Course Awards			
7a	Name of Final Award	Level	Credits Awarded
	Master's in international relations and security	7	180
	Master's in international relations and security with professional placement	7	240
7b	Exit Awards and Credits Awarded		
	Postgraduate Diploma International Relations and Security	7	120
	Postgraduate Certificate International Relations and Security	7	60

8 Variation from the University Regulations	
	None.

9 Delivery Patterns			
Mode(s) of Study	Location(s) of Study	Duration of Study	Code(s)
Full Time	City Centre	12 months	PT1810
Part Time	City Centre	24 months	PT1816
Full Time with Professional Placement	City Centre (and placement provider)	18 months	PT1818

10 Entry Requirements	
Home:	Minimum 2:2 class UK degree or international equivalent in any subject area.
EU/International	<p>An applicant must have a Secure English Language Test (SELT) to study on the pre-sessional English course (see: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/international/your-application/english-language-and-english-tests/pre-sessional-english-courses)</p> <p>For other accepted qualifications see: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/international/your-application/english-language-and-english-tests/accepted-qualifications.</p>

11	Course Aims
	<p>The course aims to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a detailed and critical overview of contemporary debates in International Relations and frame these within contemporary security. • Provide you with the opportunity to engage in optional modules, which will allow you to develop your understanding of a chosen, specialised area. • Interrogate the social processes that influence the relationship between individuals, groups and institutions. • Provide an understanding of qualitative and quantitative research methods in ways that are consistent with discipline expectations and that meet the expectations of the professional market. • Develop your intellectual, critical and analytical skills. • Enhance and develop your transferable skills including proficiency in oral and written communications, the capacity for independent learning, project management, the ability to reflect on the ethical components of your work and the capacity to work cooperatively with others. • Nurture critically aware and professionally adept future global citizens. • Provide a rich range of teaching methods and pedagogical approaches, opening up opportunities beyond the classroom through problem-based learning, critical thinking, collaboration, self-reflection, simulations and crisis games, field trips and placements. • Establish a learning environment that encourages interdisciplinarity and authentic approaches, to develop key skills and abilities, to challenge sites of injustice, and rethink established power structures. • Mentor you in research and publications. • Develop your personal employability by pervasively embedding it across the curriculum.

12	Course Learning Outcomes
1	Critically evaluate key topics and theories in International Relations and Security.
2	Assess a range of legal, ethical and practical arguments regarding national and international security.
3	Develop effective negotiation and problem-solving skills.
4	Effectively evaluate the role, aims and effectiveness of various agencies within the global context of international relations and security.
5	Engage critically with the concept of power, including the contested nature of knowledge and understanding.
6	Cultivate decision-making and collaboration skills as part of a team.
7	Identify, evaluate and utilise appropriate research methods.
8	Systematically search for and identify the most relevant literature for a research topic, to engage with contending debates, concepts and empirical findings in the field.
9	Plan, execute and produce an independent research project, utilising advanced, postgraduate level communication skills, in which qualities such as problem-solving and effective time management are evident.

10	Identify relevant work skills you have developed through engaging in a professional placement.*
	*This is only applicable for students enrolled on the MA International Relations and Security with Professional Placement.

13	Level Learning Outcomes
	<i>Upon completion of 60 credits at Level 7 / the PG Cert, students will be able to:</i>
1	Critically evaluate key topics and theories in International Relations and Security.
2	Assess a range of legal, ethical and practical arguments regarding national and international security.
3	Develop effective negotiation and problem-solving skills.
	<i>Upon completion of 120 credits at Level 7 / the PG Dip, students will be able to:</i>
4	Effectively evaluate the role, aims and effectiveness of various agencies within the global context of international relations and security.
5	Engage critically with the concept of power, including the contested nature of knowledge and understanding.
6	Cultivate decision-making and collaboration skills as part of a team.
	<i>Upon completion of 180 credits at Level 7 / the Master's Degree, students will be able to:</i>
7	Identify, evaluate and utilise appropriate research methods.
8	Systematically search for and identify the most relevant literature for a research topic, to engage with contending debates, concepts and empirical findings in the field.
9	Plan, execute and produce an independent research project, utilising advanced, postgraduate level communication skills, in which qualities such as problem-solving and effective time management are evident.

14	Course Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy
	<p>The goal of the Course Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is to provide opportunities, support and reliable measures of the course learning outcomes as realised across the modules. Its overall goal is to develop autonomous, critical and reflective learners, who are able to take responsibility for their studies and career plans and imagine their position in the wider global society. In order to achieve this, the objectives in the strategy set out below will incorporate key elements of the Quality Assurance Agency's Subject Benchmark Statement International Relations, including equality, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, sustainability and enterprise.</p> <p>International Relations developed in the contexts of imperialism, colonialism, patriarchy and racism. The discipline actively shaped these forces and was shaped by them. It requires engagement with the work of knowledge-producers in all parts of the world, including those whose ideas and experiences have historically been marginalised or excluded from the discipline. The discipline is committed to the creation of inclusive learning experiences that value diversity and promote equality. The course is designed to create a learning community that is accessible to all</p>

students (including those from less privileged and marginalised backgrounds) and in which they feel safe, welcome, able to participate and excel. The course team works to ensure that the curriculum takes account of the breadth of human experience and that teaching, learning and assessment support all students to learn and to demonstrate that learning.

A rich range of teaching methods and pedagogical approaches, opening up opportunities beyond the classroom through problem-based learning, critical thinking, collaboration, self-reflection, simulations and crisis games, and placements, is used for the delivery of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). There are also a range of extra-curricular activities available for students including field trips and writing retreats. Embedding active and meaningful learning and assessment opportunities within the curriculum encourages you to acquire the skills to be engaged members of the community. Establishing learning environments that encourage interdisciplinarity and focus on authentic approaches enables you to see your own experiences and challenges reflected throughout your studies. ESD highlights the contemporary relevance of studying Politics and International Relations in a world of challenges. These consider the implications of climate breakdown and interconnected questions of economic and social well-being, gender, race and other forms of inequality, thereby developing critical insight into established narratives and hierarchies of power. Technology, social media, cyber warfare and misinformation shape the conduct of both national and international politics today. Understanding how knowledge is managed, contested and evolving is a key part of ESD within this degree.

Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education (EED) develops competencies that support you to contribute to society as active and enterprising citizens and pursue successful graduate careers. The course, through exploring and evaluating political and international systems, practices and processes, encourages you to develop an inquisitive, analytical and reflective mindset. You will develop EED competencies such as digital literacy, data analysis skills, negotiating, understanding political and social agendas, as well as the confidence to tackle contemporary sociopolitical issues. EED attributes are developed through modules that explore the application of knowledge and skills in the workplace.

A diverse range of learning environments, methods, activities, content, skills and understandings supports you in developing your own approach to critical evaluation and enhances your ability to develop your own knowledge base. Small group learning environments, such as workshops and seminars, provide you with student-centred interaction, maximising effective student participation. Activities include problem solving exercises, roleplay, crisis-games and live-scenarios, debates, writing tasks and student-led teaching. Small group teaching gives you the opportunity to receive critical and constructive comments on your understanding and progress. You will engage with a wide range of sources and be supported to develop the skills to critically evaluate them.

Teaching and assessment strategies in the core modules prioritise support for cultivating belonging and inclusiveness through personal study and career planning. As you learn the fundamentals of academic writing and research at postgraduate level, the teaching team will involve the Centre for Academic Success.

Accessibility is reflected in the variety of assessments, which will be flexible and adjusted to any students with disabilities. The teaching team will develop students' digital skills and norms to locate reliable sources and use artificial intelligence appropriately and sensibly. To ensure progression and retention, all modules provide ongoing formative feedback, as well as revision workshops. The manner in which contact time is distributed during the week, as well as the use of VLE, means

that the course offers a flexibility that will be of benefit to those who are working alongside their studies.

The above strategy, which underpins the achievement of the course learning outcomes, is complemented by a range of experiential learning opportunities and involvement in the College's research community:

- Field trips
- School Research Seminars and External Events: students are invited to attend and sometimes deliver research seminars.
- Student Research Collaborations: students are invited to collaborate with staff on active research projects.

The course provides you with a set of attributes that prepare you for your future career. Our graduates are creative problem solvers, enterprising and with a global outlook. Moreover, we value our diverse student body and utilise the diversity of our academic community (students and staff) as a key learning resource, while respecting individual differences in knowledge, education and culture.

Engagement with partners is a key priority. Our School has close working links with a variety of NGOs, charities, the West Midlands Police and the Refugee and Migrant Centre. These partnerships support the curriculum in delivering a combination of practical and subject specific knowledge.

As employability is embedded in the curriculum, it is at the heart of the teaching and learning strategy, which aims to produce graduates with competence and skills in problem solving, time management, effective communication, conflict management, harm mitigation, flexibility and diplomacy. As a result, our strategy involves:

1. Embracing Real-World Contexts: Modules incorporate case studies, simulations, or projects that replicate professional scenarios or address community challenges, allowing you to apply learning in practical ways and develop problem-solving strategies.

2. Using Reflective Practice: We encourage students to reflect on their learning process and outcomes, fostering deeper learning. This might be achieved by using digital portfolios and storytelling.

3. Going Beyond Individual Performance: Some modules (eg The International Relations of the Middle East, Postcolonial International Relations, and Regulating Conflict and Facilitating Peace) encourage collaborative projects where students work in teams, mimicking real-world work environments. This fosters communication, negotiation, and leadership skills.

4. Providing Clear Feedback: Module leaders clearly articulate expectations via discussions, constructive feedback, personal tuition and mentoring.

5. Collaborating with Industry: We partner with professionals to design both content and assessments that are current and relevant.

Learning and teaching methods:

Lectures. Lectures provide you with key knowledge, arguments and debates surrounding a given topic. They can also help you develop a range of skills, including knowledge synthesis, note taking and the ability to retain information.

Seminars. Seminars provide the forum for in-depth critical discussions that build upon the lectures and the pre-sessional readings, as well as class activities.

Collaborative study. Group work is embedded throughout the course in the form of student-led activities, such as presentations and debates. Collaborative study develops teamworking skills, leadership capacity, management skills and creative problem-solving skills.

Guest speakers. Guest speakers with a range of expertise, both within and outside academia, will be embedded into modules, to provide cutting-edge research led perspectives, as well as articulate the skills required for success in a particular professional field. Engagement with tutors and speakers will help you navigate your career options.

Virtual learning environment (VLE). A virtual learning environment provides a blended learning strategy for engagement outside the timetabled hours. It can house further reading, multimedia content and other resources, as well as provide collaborative and interactive spaces to engage with your peers and tutors.

Independent study and self-reflective practice. This increases confidence, keeps you informed and critical, and helps you understand what is important to you. It allows you to discover your strengths and weaknesses, and to process and review feedback you have received.

Assessment:

Assessments enable you to demonstrate your understanding of the subject and the ability to develop critical analyses. Authentic assessments which model transferable skills that reflect possible careers related to International Relations develop your sense of self-efficacy. They enable you to explore areas of personal interest, build your capacity for independent research and critically reflect on your knowledge and personal development.

Through formative learning you will be able to demonstrate your development and receive qualitative feedback: written or oral, peer reviews, or through the VLE (e.g. Moodle quizzes).

Summative assessments include:

Essays. Successfully writing an essay requires clear communication in written English, often with recourse to a specialised vocabulary; demonstrating critical thinking and the ability to construct critical arguments; demonstrating an ability to distinguish between alternative perspectives and express independent thought; developing high-level research skills.

Policy brief. This authentic assessment task, aligned with the employability framework, will enable you to demonstrate your ability to apply subject-specific knowledge and transferable skills to achieve future success. You will need to critically analyse existing policies, identify gaps or areas for improvement, and propose evidence-based recommendations.

Presentations. They help you develop skills that are highly valued by employers: effective oral communication, time management, leadership, analytical skills, the ability to present and interpret data, and the confident and effective dissemination of findings.

Crisis Response. This authentic assessment enables you to demonstrate critical awareness of security, but also to show that you can deal with complex issues creatively, make sound judgements based on data, make recommendations, tackle and solve problems, and communicate conclusions with clarity and precision. It also helps you create a professional, expert and specialist identity. You are encouraged to adopt the roles of experts and play out hypothetical, but plausible, national or international crises. This assessment is a device for simulating the decision-making process, while developing risk-assessment, leadership and harm mitigation skills. You will become aware of the many voices, concerns and threats to security involved in every crisis, all of which are valid and merit attention, consideration and response. A Crisis Response can have many learning objectives: understanding a crisis, deciding on responses to the crisis, collaborations between important actors in the crisis, diplomacy, negotiation and decision-making, the reporting of a crisis and its impact, as well as reflecting on different understandings of security. It can be used to teach conflict and political violence and consider a variety of stages: pre-conflict, active conflict and post-conflict.

Debate. Debating will help you develop time-management skills, speak with conviction, use rhetorical devices, address opposing views and challenges, practise active listening and adjust your body language.

Diplomatic negotiation brief. A diplomatic-type assignment reflects a peaceful process that encourages the development of negotiation skills and the discovery of common ground, based on mutual interests and desirable outcomes.

Dissertation. The final assignment represents a truly independent piece of research, where you can show your research skills, your creativity, your ability to plan, structure and organise an argument, and -above all- your emerging area of expertise. In addition to 4 seminars on ethics, research methods, literature review and interviews/questionnaire design that are incorporated into the dissertation module, there will be additional sessions in semesters 1 and 2 on ethics, methodology, literature review, identification of research interests and the allocation of a supervisor.

For those in paid employment, or doing voluntary work, training, or activities involving the observation of the environment and work processes of agencies and professionals, it is possible to submit a work-informed dissertation.

The *placement report* additionally invites you to discuss and reflect on your work experience, evaluate it within the context of wider society and politics, and understand the wider implications of your findings.

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15a	<p>Level 7:</p> <p><i>In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 160 credits):</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Module Code</th> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Module Name</th> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Credit Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>CRI7030</td> <td>Security and International Relations Theory.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRI7063</td> <td>Regulating Conflict and Facilitating Peace. The Role of International Law in Global Politics.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SOC7000</td> <td>Contemporary Security.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRI7061</td> <td>International Relations of the Middle East. Implications for Regional and Global Security.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRI7062</td> <td>Postcolonial International Relations</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRI7060</td> <td>Dissertation</td> <td>60</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete at least 20 credits from the following indicative list of OPTIONAL modules:</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Module Code</th> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Module Name</th> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Credit Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>CRI7064</td> <td>Terrorism and Political Violence. Traditional and Critical Perspectives.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRI7051</td> <td>Green Criminology in an Age of Climate Breakdown.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CRI7059</td> <td>International Refugee Law.</td> <td>20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>In order to qualify for the award of MA International Relations and Security with Professional Placement, you must successfully complete all the Level 7 modules listed above as well as the following Level 7 module:</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Module Code</th> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Module Name</th> <th style="background-color: #ffff00;">Credit Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffff00;">PLA6001</td> <td style="background-color: #ffff00;">Professional Placement</td> <td style="background-color: #ffff00;">60</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value	CRI7030	Security and International Relations Theory.	20	CRI7063	Regulating Conflict and Facilitating Peace. The Role of International Law in Global Politics.	20	SOC7000	Contemporary Security.	20	CRI7061	International Relations of the Middle East. Implications for Regional and Global Security.	20	CRI7062	Postcolonial International Relations	20	CRI7060	Dissertation	60	Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value	CRI7064	Terrorism and Political Violence. Traditional and Critical Perspectives.	20	CRI7051	Green Criminology in an Age of Climate Breakdown.	20	CRI7059	International Refugee Law.	20	Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value	PLA6001	Professional Placement	60
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15b Structure Diagram
Full-time

Semester 1 (Sept - Jan)	Core Security and International Relations Theory (20 credits) Regulating Conflict and Facilitating Peace. The role of international law in global politics (20 credits) Postcolonial International Relations (20 credits)		Includes timetabled workshop on ethics, identification of research interests and supervisor allocation.
Semester 2 (Jan - May)	Core Contemporary Security (20 credits) International Relations of the Middle East. Implications for regional and global security (20 credits)	1 option from: Terrorism and Political Violence. Traditional and critical perspectives (20 credits) Green Criminology in an Age of Climate Breakdown (20 credits) International Refugee Law (20 credits)	
Semester 3 (Jun - Aug)	Core Dissertation (60 credits)		Includes 4 timetabled seminars on research methods: ethics, methodology, literature review and interviews/questionnaire design.

Part Time

If you are a student studying on a part-time basis, you will have up to 24 months to complete the course.

Year One

Semester 1 and semester 2	Complete 4 core modules (80 credits)
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Year Two

Semester 1 and semester 2	Complete 1 core and 1 optional module (40 credits)
Semester 3	Complete the Dissertation (60 credits)

16 Overall Student Workload and Balance of Assessment
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Overall student *workload* consists of class contact hours, independent learning and assessment activity, with each credit taken equating to a total study time of around 10 hours. While actual contact hours may depend on the optional modules selected, the following information gives an indication of how much time students will need to allocate to different activities at each level of the course.

- *Scheduled Learning* includes lectures, practical classes and workshops, contact time specified in timetable
- *Directed Learning* includes placements, work-based learning, external visits, on-line activity, Graduate+, peer learning
- *Private Study* includes preparation for exams

The *balance of assessment* by mode of assessment (e.g. coursework, exam and in-person) depends to some extent on the optional modules chosen by students. The approximate percentage of the course assessed by coursework, exam and in-person is shown below.

Level 7

Workload

17% time spent in timetabled teaching and learning activity

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	166
Directed Learning	312
Private Study	1322
Total Hours	1800

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	50%
Exam	0%
In-Person	50%