

Programme Specification

MA Conflict and International Security (full-time)

PFTZCONXISHM

MA Conflict and International Security (part-time)

PPTZCONXISHM

For students entering in 2027/28

This document sets out key information about your Programme and forms part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

Awarding Institution	University of Reading
Teaching Institution	University of Reading
Length of Programme	MA Conflict and International Security (full-time) - 12 months MA Conflict and International Security (part-time) - 24 months
Accreditation	N/A
Programme Start Dates	September
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A

Programme information and content

This programme will provide you with the tools to analyse contemporary issues of war, conflict, and security, within the context of politics within and between societies. You will receive a grounding in the study of organized violence from the perspectives of a variety of disciplines, but you will also learn to think critically about a wide range of political ideas, institutions and events as they relate to empirical and conceptual issues of security and conflict. You will also conduct an independent research project, in the form of a dissertation, and you will receive methods training which will enable you to do so.

Interactive small group teaching is central to the programme, which is designed to build on a wide range of student backgrounds and previous experience. Through discussion, you will strengthen your understanding, and gain an appreciation of the complex and contested nature of political problems, in particular the challenges faced by politicians and military personnel. As you move through the programme, you will become an increasingly independent learner, acquiring more powerful tools with which to analyse the relationship between politics and the theories and practices of conflict and security.

The programme will prepare you for a wide range of careers in governments and civil services across the world, as well as the commercial sector, particularly those related to national and international security and defence policies.

The core teaching of the programme is done through two compulsory modules, 'International Security' and 'War in Theory and Practice'. 'International Security' will give you a grounding in the discipline of International Security. It will give you analytical tools to understand the impact on government, the security forces, and international politics of new security issues and the emergence of new security actors such as transnational crime, global terrorism, and private military companies. 'War in Theory and Practice' will complement 'International Security' with an analysis of war as an evolving phenomenon. It will cover both well-established theories of how wars can and should be fought and won, as

well as emerging debates about how war is being transformed by technology and the prevalence of war within states.

You will also have the opportunity to choose from a range of optional modules offered in the department, in order to contextualize your studies within a wider appreciation of the political and international context in which war, conflict, and security are located.

You will receive training in either qualitative or quantitative research methods. This will then equip you to conduct an independent piece of research—the dissertation—with individual guidance from a member of staff as supervisor, during the summer.

Programme Learning Outcomes

-MA Conflict and International Security (full-time)

During the course of the Programme, you will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills, knowledge and attributes (known as learning outcomes) For this programme, these are:

	Learning outcomes
1	Think critically and independently about events, ideas and institutions related to war, conflict, and security, and the role of politics in each.
2	Use relevant concepts and theories to analyse the conduct of war, conflict, and security practices, including recent forms of warfare, and to situate them within the wider context of politics within and among societies.
3	Demonstrate a critical awareness and understanding of current problems faced by security and defence professionals and the armed forces and/or new insights into how to address them.
4	Apply study and research techniques applicable to their own studies - Understand and critically analyse various different kinds of texts, data and information from a variety of secondary and primary sources - Synthesise relevant information based on the knowledge of course materials and independent research, bringing together ideas and evidence purposefully and coherently - Rigorously deploy qualitative or quantitative research methods.
5	Exercise critical judgement, independently evaluating arguments and ideas in their proper context.
6	Construct reasoned argument based on knowledge and understanding of key concepts, giving ample justification capable of persuading others.
7	Communicate clearly and effectively in speech and writing.
8	Complete research that is original, appropriately to graduate-level coursework.

You will be expected to engage in learning activities to achieve these Programme learning outcomes. Assessment of your modules will reflect these learning outcomes and test how far you have met the requirements for your degree.

To pass the Programme, you will be required to meet the progression or accreditation and award criteria set out below.

Module information

The programme comprises 180 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.

Compulsory modules

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PIM102	International Security	20	M
PIM103	War in Theory and Practice	20	M
PIM63	International Relations Theory	20	M

Students must take one of the following modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PIM85	Introduction to Qualitative research methods in Politics and International Relation	20	M
or			
PIM86	Introduction to Quantitative research methods in Politics and International Relations	20	M

Students must also take one of the following modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PIM12	Dissertation	60	M
or			
PIM104	Dissertation (for placement students)	40	M

Students who choose PIM104 must also take the Work Placement module (PIM105).

Remaining credits will be made up of optional modules available in the Department of Politics and International Relations or modules from an approved list.

All students will take a preparatory module in advanced academic skills required for transition to postgraduate study.

Part-time or flexible modular arrangements

The programme may be studied part-time over two consecutive years. Dissertations are submitted at the end of the second year of study.

Placement opportunities

N/A

Study abroad opportunities

N/A

Optional modules

The optional modules available can vary from year to year. An indicative list of the range of optional modules for your programme can be found online in the Course Catalogue. Details of optional modules for each part, including any additional costs associated with the optional modules, will be made available to you prior to the beginning of the Part in which they are to be taken and you will be given an opportunity to express interest in the optional modules that you would like to take. Entry to optional modules will be at the discretion of the University and subject to availability and may be subject to pre-requisites, such as completion of another module. Although the University tries to ensure you are able to take the optional modules in which you have expressed interest this cannot be guaranteed.

Teaching and learning delivery

Teaching on the MA Conflict and International Security focuses on equipping students to complete the programme at a high level of achievement, enabling them to analyse contemporary issues of conflict and security within the context of politics within and between societies. By the end of the programme, students will have the knowledge, capacities and confidence to independently and critically engage with current research, as well as use the skills they have gained in a range of roles in the wider world.

The central method of teaching in the MA Conflict and International Security is the small-group seminar. While some modules may include lectures, either as a way of grounding the first few weeks in the course material in order to prepare students for class discussion, or occasionally in a more systematic way, seminar discussions make up a large portion of the contact hours for each module. Seminars will typically consist primarily of discussion of a set of readings to be prepared by students in advance, and/or other module content presented to students by the instructor. Seminar discussions allow students not only to sharpen their knowledge of core readings and module content but also enable them to subject the module content to critical analysis and evaluation and expose them to a variety of perspectives. This, in turn, enables students to grow as independent learners and reasoners. We ensure that all students from all backgrounds are given the opportunity to develop their own critical perspective through these discussions and exercises in a respectful and mutually supportive environment. Seminar activities will also include opportunities to develop employable skills, for example through presentations, practical sessions, or simulations.

Students will also benefit from an academic skills module, which will consist of a small number of sessions designed to prepare students from a variety of backgrounds for academic study at graduate level in the UK. It will cover the range of different aspects of the programme, including guidance on the various different types of assessment students should expect to complete.

Students will complete their own independent research project in the form of a dissertation. While students will be guided by a supervisor who will help focus their project, identify appropriate methods and material, and comment on work, they themselves will select and investigate their question.

Elements of your programme will be delivered via digital technology.

The scheduled teaching and learning activity hours and amount of technology enhanced learning activity for your programme will depend upon your module combination. In addition, you will undertake some self-scheduled teaching and learning activities, designed by and/or involving staff, which give some flexibility for you to choose when to complete them. You will also be expected to undertake guided independent study. Information about module study hours including contact hours and the amount of independent study which a student is normally expected to undertake for a module is indicated in the relevant module description.

Accreditation details

N/A

Assessment

Students will be assessed in a variety of ways, depending on the modules selected. Assessment may include any combination of the following: formal written examination; essay, dissertation, class test, oral presentation, project output, set exercise and practical. Further information is contained in the individual module descriptions.

Progression

There are no specific progression requirements that part-time students need to meet before they can progress into the second year.

Classification

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation

70 - 100% Distinction

60 - 69% Merit

50 - 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 - 49% Work below threshold standard

0 - 39% Unsatisfactory Work

For Master's Degree

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Master's degree:

Award of a Master's degree

- (i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 180 credits
- (ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 120 credits

- (iii) no credits with a mark below 40%
- (iv) a mark of 50% or more for the Dissertation

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Master's degree, the following **further** conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 180 credits and marks of 70% in at least 90 credits

AND

Where the dissertation is included in the conditions for the award of a Master's degree, a mark of at least 60% in the dissertation

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 180 credits and marks of 60% in at least 90 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Diploma

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma:

Award of a Postgraduate Diploma

(i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 120 credits

(ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 80 credits

(iii) no credits with a mark below 40%

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, the following further conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 120 credits and marks of 70% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 120 credits and marks of 60% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Certificate

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate:

Award of a Postgraduate Certificate

(i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 60 credits

(ii) No credits with a mark below 40%.

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the [Assessment Handbook](#) under:

- Section 19: Awards: Postgraduate Master's, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate

Please note that there may be a specific version for your year of entry.

Additional costs of the programme

Please refer to individual module descriptions for information.

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2026.

Students may consider purchasing a laptop to help support their learning. Information on recommended device specifications can be found on the [DTS Student Hub](#).

For further information about your Programme please refer to the Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions, which are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/module/>. The Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions do not form part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

MA Conflict and International Security (full-time) for students entering in session 2027/28
30 July 2026

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