

## Programme Specification

MA International Relations and Diplomacy (full-time)

PFTZIRXDIPHM

MA International Relations and Diplomacy (part-time)

PPTZIRXDIPHM

**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 International Relations and Diplomacy (full-time) - 12 months<br>MA International Relations and Diplomacy (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 in international relations and diplomacy. You will receive a grounding in key theories of international relations and diplomacy, and you will learn how to think critically about a variety of political institutions, actors, ideas, and events, enabling you to apply theories to a range of empirical cases from around the world. 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, interactive group work, presentations, and simulations, you will strengthen your understanding, and gain an appreciation of the complex and contested nature of international politics and diplomatic transactions and interactions. As you move through the programme, you will become an increasingly independent learner, acquiring more powerful tools with which to analyse the relationship between the theories and practices of international relations and diplomacy. The programme will prepare you for a wide range of careers in governments and civil services across the world, as well as the commercial and non-profit sectors, particularly those related to international relations, security, diplomacy, and humanitarian aid.

The core teaching of the programme is done through two compulsory modules, 'International Relations Theory' and 'Contemporary Diplomacy.' 'International Relations Theory' will give you a comprehensive introduction to the key theoretical approaches in International Relations. In addition to standard International Relations theories, the module will discuss critical approaches including feminist, green, and postcolonial perspectives. The module applies these theories to contemporary event and developments in international

politics ranging from climate change to the rise of non-Western powers. ‘Contemporary Diplomacy’ will complement ‘International Relations Theory’ by equipping you with an understanding of the key concepts, types, and practices of contemporary diplomacy since the Second World War, as well as the actors, content, and methods employed across a range of international transactions. In particular, it will give you the analytical tools to understand how theories and concepts of diplomacy relate to actual diplomatic practice and to the complex process of policymaking, both domestic and international. You will benefit from regular input of current and former diplomats and undertake a range of practical policy-oriented exercises and assessments that let you ‘be the diplomat’ and provide you with key employability skills.

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 the wider field of politics and international relations and to create a programme of learning that suits your interests and career aspirations.

You will receive training in either qualitative or quantitative research methods. This will 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 International Relations and Diplomacy (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:

|   | <b>Learning outcomes</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Think critically and independently about key events, ideas, and institutions in international relations and diplomacy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2 | Use a wide range of theories and concepts in international relations and diplomacy to analyse contemporary challenges, actors, and processes in world politics in an analytically and methodologically rigorous way.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3 | Demonstrate a critical awareness and understanding of current problems faced by policymakers in government departments, international organisations, and NGOs, for example, and/or new insights into how to address them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4 | <p>Apply study and research techniques applicable to their own studies</p> <p>a. Understand and critically analyse various different kinds of texts, data, and information from a variety of primary and secondary sources</p> <p>b. Synthesise relevant information based on the knowledge of course materials and independent research, bringing together theories and empirical evidence purposefully and coherently</p> <p>c. Rigorously deploy qualitative and/or quantitative research methods</p> |
| 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.

|                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                       |                |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Module information</b>                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                       |                |              |
| The programme comprises 180 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.             |                                                                                       |                |              |
| <b>Compulsory modules</b>                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                       |                |              |
| <b>Module</b>                                                                                                                                               | <b>Name</b>                                                                           | <b>Credits</b> | <b>Level</b> |
| PIM63                                                                                                                                                       | International Relations Theory                                                        | 20             | M            |
| PIM66                                                                                                                                                       | Contemporary Diplomacy                                                                | 20             | M            |
| Students must take one of the following modules:                                                                                                            |                                                                                       |                |              |
| <b>Module</b>                                                                                                                                               | <b>Name</b>                                                                           | <b>Credits</b> | <b>Level</b> |
| 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:                                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                |              |
| <b>Module</b>                                                                                                                                               | <b>Name</b>                                                                           | <b>Credits</b> | <b>Level</b> |
| 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.                                      |                                                                                       |                |              |
| <b>Part-time or flexible modular arrangements</b>                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |                |              |

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 International Relations and Diplomacy focuses on equipping students to complete the programme at a high level of achievement, enabling them to analyse contemporary issues of both the theory and practice of international politics and diplomacy 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 International Relations and Diplomacy 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 difference 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 Masters 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.**

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30 July 2026

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