

Programme Specification

MSc Public Policy (full-time)	PFTZMPPXXXHM
MSc Public Policy (January - closed cohort) (full-time)	PFTZMPPKDIHM
MSc Public Policy (part-time modular)	PPTZMPPXXXFM
MSc Public Policy (part-time)	PPTZMPPXXXHM

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	MSc Public Policy (full-time) - 12 months MSc Public Policy (January - closed cohort) (full-time) - 12 months MSc Public Policy (part-time modular) - 72 months MSc Public Policy (part-time) - 24 months
Accreditation	N/A
Programme Start Dates	September January start date will be available for those students studying on a specific partnership pathway and with approval from the School
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A

Programme information and content

The MSc in Public Policy is a multidisciplinary programme that seeks to help graduates develop a deep understanding of the making and impact of public policy across a whole range of institutions at different levels. It gives students both breadth and depth of understanding of public policy in a systematic way and combines theoretical, methodological and practical issues relevant to the study of public policy. Students will also have a general familiarisation with the full range of quantitative and qualitative research skills. All students will engage both in a sustained piece of independent and critical research within the context of close and supportive academic supervision and also in a placement or capstone project, which will enhance their employability skills. While designed to appeal in particular to students who have a first degree in Politics and/or Economics, applications are also welcomed from other related first degree disciplines who share a desire to work in the wide-ranging public sector and non-profit sector in such employment areas as: government officials, administrators, policy analysts, budget analysts, programme managers or as employees of private sector companies that work to provide social and public services, in education, health, housing to mention only few. The programme is based around core taught modules, specialist pathways that reflect major public policy challenges and a choice between applied research project with placement or Capstone module. The core modules provide a range of threshold concepts and key tools for a critical analysis of the Economics of Public Policy and the Politics of Public Policy. Increasingly evidence-based policy and

research demand familiarity with key quantitative and qualitative techniques. As a consequence of this, the third core module relates to Research Training. Students will have the option of opting for a qualitative or quantitative focus. The pathways are designed to give students the ability to tailor their studies to reflect personal or national interests as well as provide an issue-based focus for further in-depth analysis. In conjunction with this, students also undertake a dissertation. Students then have the option of choosing between an individual Applied Research project with Placement or a Capstone project, where they work in teams to deliver a project for an outside organisation, after which they will submit a related individual report. Students complete the required 180 credits by choosing modules from different pathways or choose to specialise in a particular pathway; students should be aware that their final award title will not reflect a specialist pathway.

Programme Learning Outcomes

-MSc Public Policy (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, policies and institutions.
2	Gather, organise and deploy evidence, data and information from a variety of secondary and primary sources.
3	Construct reasoned argument, synthesise relevant information and exercise critical judgement.
4	Communicate effectively in speech and writing.
5	Critically analyse and disseminate information.
6	Apply employability skills.
7	Understand, interpret, evaluate and critically engage with issues in public policy, including political, economic, strategic and social issues.
8	Develop a thorough understanding of the role of the public sector and the approaches needed to reform and strengthen public policies.

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

Compulsory Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
ECM184	Economics of Public Policy	20	M
PIM49	Politics of Public Policy	20	M
PIM91*	Dissertation in Public Policy	40	M

Students will be required to take one of the following modules:

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

AND

Students will be required to take one of the following modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
PIM92	Applied Research Project and Placement	20	M
or			
ECM200	Capstone Project	20	M

The remaining credits will be taken from a list of optional modules from the School of Politics, Economics and International Relations, or up to 40 credits from an approved list of modules from across the University.

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

* For students undertaking the January-start partnership pathway, the Dissertation in Public policy module is optional and can be replaced by other optional modules worth 40 credits, from a list of optional modules from the School or from across the University.

** Students undertaking the January-start partnership pathway are exempt from this module, on the basis of learning gained at the Partner.

Part-time or flexible modular arrangements

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

Placement opportunities

The programme requires students to choose between a Placement module (PIM92) or a Capstone module (ECM200). The first is an individual placement, assessed through an individual submission linked to the work and research undertaken during the

placement. The Capstone is a team-based project for an organisation, assessed through an individual submission linked to the project undertaken. The Capstone does not require students to be placed within an organisation. In the unlikely event that a Capstone Project falls through or a placement is cancelled, students will take an extended 60-credit version of the Dissertation module

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 methods will vary from module to module but teaching will primarily be by means of lectures and seminars. Certain modules may be partially taught by means of lectures and tutorials. Total study hours for your programme will be 1800 hours. The contact hours for your programme will depend upon your module combination; contact hours for modules on this programme range between a 22 and of 50.

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, project, class test, oral presentation.

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%

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

Students are encouraged to discuss the purchase of textbooks or other resources with the module convenor before purchasing. Some books may be available second-hand, which will reduce costs. A range of resources to support your curriculum, including textbooks, electronic resources and computer facilities are available through the library and through both the Department of Economics and the Department of Politics and International Relations.

Students will need to bear in mind the potential for associated travel costs if undertaking a placement module.

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.

MSc Public Policy (full-time) for students entering in session 2027/28

30 July 2026

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