



BA (Hons) International Relations, Politics and Security Studies Programme Specification

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/ug/international-relations-politics-security-ba/>

Academic year:	2024/25
Degree awarding body:	The University of Bradford
Target degree award:	Bachelor of Arts with Honours in International Relations, Politics and Security Studies [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level 6]
Interim awards:	Ordinary Degree of Bachelor of Arts [FHEQ Level 6]; Diploma of Higher Education [FHEQ Level 5]; Certificate of Higher Education [FHEQ Level 4]
Programme entry:	September
Programme duration:	3 years full-time or 4 years full-time with placement / study abroad
UCAS code:	L245

Please note: This programme specification has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. The curriculum may change, subject to the University's programme monitoring and review processes. 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. Upon commencement of the programme, students will receive further detail about their course and any minor changes will be discussed and/or communicated at this point.

Minor Modification Schedule

1. September 2020: COVID Adjustments
2. January 2021: Specification made accessible
3. April 2021: Reformatted with further accessibility improvements
4. May 2021: Annual changes for 2021 academic year
5. October 2022: Annual changes for 2022 academic year
6. July 2024: Annual changes for 2024/5 academic year; updates to optional modules.

Introduction

International relations, politics and security are undergoing a number of fundamental and global transformations in the 21st century. In the past three decades, many aspects of international relations have changed profoundly, including major power shifts, changing patterns of conflict and co-operation, and significant changes in the characteristics of the international system, with increasingly important transnational processes and complex impacts of recent technologies, environmental challenges, globalisation, societal change and flows of people and goods (illicit and legal). These are changing both international and domestic politics and security. In this context, an understanding of international and

regional politics and security is often vital for understanding challenges at national and local levels; and vice versa.

Why International Relations (IR)?

International Relations is the study of the principles, norms, interests, power relations, knowledge, institutions and processes that determine and inform why and how states and other international actors engage with one another, and with other relevant non-state actors such as international, regional, transnational and civil society groups and organisations. Understanding international and regional dynamics and challenges requires a good understanding of politics – both within and between different states and societies. It also requires contributions from other social sciences, and from peace, conflict and security studies.

This BA (Hons) International Relations, Politics and Security Studies provides a rigorous, exciting and relevant understanding of these disciplines and areas. It provides a strong education in the core concepts, theoretical frameworks and debates in the fields of international relations, politics and security studies, but gives particular emphasis on using them to understand key international problems and policy and practitioner experiences in responding to them. It primarily focusses on international and regional studies, but with careful attention also to politics and security at national and local levels and their interrelationships with international and transnational challenges.

While placing international developments within historical context, the programme focusses particularly on recent and contemporary processes, trends and problems, examining efforts to respond to international, regional and transnational challenges in the spheres of policy and practice. This programme is located within the Division of Peace Studies and International Development, an internationally recognised centre for excellence in teaching, research, and policy analysis on International Relations, Politics, Peace, Conflict and Security issues. It engages with policy and practitioner communities on these issues internationally and in developing, fragile and conflict affected areas in most regions of the world, including Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America; thus providing an excellent context for this programme.

A unique student journey

There are strong opportunities for students to shape their particular areas of study, according to their specialist topic interests. Students will be engaged in research and analysis of the causes, characteristics, trends and responses to challenging political and security problems from early in Stage 1 and in all subsequent stages of the programme. Most modules provide students with scope to focus on the issues in that module that particularly interest them. Moreover, module optionality is built into the programme at both stage 2 and 3, including the possibility of opting for an elective in stage 3 - which can include one of the Masters modules offered by the Division - in order to enable students to further develop specialist areas of their choice. The topic of the final Year dissertation is chosen by the student, within the broad scope of the programme.

Stage 1 of the Programme aims to provide students with a thorough introduction and grounding in issues of international relations, politics and security. In Semester 1 of Stage

1, students study: politics and the state; understanding the international system; and challenges and approaches to development. Together, these modules provide a strong introductory grounding to the academic areas of international relations, politics, and development; and also explore issues and concepts of violence and security. Semester 2 of Stage 1 is innovatively designed to enable students to examine several major contemporary global issues and challenges, such as climate change, refugee crises, or threats to international peace. This alerts students to the complexity and dynamics of such problems, some of the key actors and institutions at the international/global level and the ways that they operate, as well as enabling them to relate these to the concepts and tools for critical thinking in international relations, politics, development, and security introduced in the previous semester. Alongside this, students learn about approaches and concepts for studying peace and violence, at local as well as international levels.

At Stage 2, in Semester 1 students learn about the main theoretical approaches in the international relations discipline; the development and implementation of foreign policies, and the changing characteristics, roles and significance of international diplomacy, with opportunities to be involved in simulated peace negotiations. They also study approaches and methods for analysing the range of types of contemporary conflict and the extent to which they help to understand key international processes of globalisation, conflict and governance. In Semester 2, students learn the key concepts, theories and frameworks for understanding and analysing security issues and how to apply them to various security issues in different contexts. Students will further be able to choose from a range of options to study global and regional power shifts and their implications; globalisation and global governance; or peace-building, conflict and security.

At Stage 3, students further develop their understanding and skills, including in their preferred areas of specialisation. The Dissertation provides a major opportunity to develop and implement a substantial academic project involving research and analysis, on a question that students will choose (within the overall programme aims and objectives). In Semester 1, students also develop their knowledge and experience of international policy processes and how they operate and are influenced, and thereby enhance their understanding and opportunities for employment in these areas. This is reinforced by introduction and training towards professional practices, including opportunities to engage with local and international organisations engaged with issues of peace and conflict, including preparation of briefing or research papers or work-placement opportunities. They are further able to choose from a set of options, for example, enabling them to develop a more focussed understanding of politics and security issues in Africa; authoritarianism, national and populism; or revolutions and regime change. In Semester 2, students continue to work on their dissertation and also study the politics, mechanisms and practices of international crisis response, including participating in crisis simulations and role plays. These provide opportunities for students to engage with the practices and dilemmas of practitioner and policy communities, helping them to prepare for future employment in these areas.

Students can also choose from a range of optional modules including technology, violence and war; politics and security in the Middle East; creative conflict transformation and, health crisis permitting, the Africa Study Visit. Alternatively, students can choose an elective module (subject to timetabling and prerequisites) from the wide range of modules

for which they will be eligible across the university. This latter opportunity is provided to enable students to develop their specialist interests to an advanced level.

Peace Studies and International Development is a very dynamic division, within a diverse and active Faculty and wider University. It arranges numerous events and opportunities each semester beyond the taught modules to engage with not only academic but also policy and practitioner events and issues. These include invited speakers, seminars, workshops, activities and conferences, both off and on-campus.

Students register initially for the 3-year BA programme; but may transfer to the 4-year programme anytime up to the end of Stage 2 of the BA Programme (specific deadline dates are provided each year). The four-year programme option provides students with further opportunities for developing professional experience and practical skills during their BA programme by undertaking a voluntary placement or internship in a relevant organisation, either in the UK or abroad, for a period of up to twelve months.

Please note that such off-campus learning activities may involve an extra cost to the student.

Overall the programme has a strong focus on developing analytical, policy and negotiating skills. Students will graduate with a portfolio of evidence of their progress in this area, achieved through participation in interdisciplinary problem-based learning sessions; skills training days; when possible, field visits; simulations and roleplays; and professional practice projects.

Students can choose options enabling them also to graduate with a detailed knowledge of the international relations, politics and security of two regions of the world. All this will equip students with employability skills and professional competencies for work in, for example, global governance institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU); national, local, and city government; counterterrorism and intelligence; policy-analysis, policy-making and peacekeeping, and it will equip them with the skills and competencies for work in research institutes, international, national and local development agencies, as well as private sector strategy, governance sectors, and for working in and with civil society and Non-Governmental (NGO) sectors.

Programme Aims

The programme aims to:

- A1. support students in the transition into higher education, cultivating the skills and qualities needed for social scientific inquiry and effective learning.
- A2. introduce students to the study of international relations, politics, security and their inter-relationships.
- A3. provide relevant conceptual and theoretical tools for studying international relations, including frameworks, themes and processes concerned with the state and other important actors, including local, national, regional and international organisations and networks, and the dynamics of their interactions in the international system, and in different countries and regions.

- A4. foster a critical understanding of discourses, policies and practices associated with international relations, particularly in relation to politics and security studies, and the assumptions underlying them.
- A5. create opportunities to engage in active and independent learning activities - carrying out research, managing projects, problem-solving – employing knowledge, methods and techniques in analysing relevant cases and issues.
- A6. enable students to develop and demonstrate achievement towards a range of competencies relevant to professionals working in areas relating to international relations, and to politics and security issues in different countries and regions.

Programme Learning Outcomes

To be eligible for the award of Certificate of Higher Education at FHEQ level 4, students will be able to:

1. Explain, employ and compare key concepts, theories and approaches in the discipline fields of international relations, politics and security studies, and demonstrate the ability to apply these to contemporary global challenges and the relationships between global, regional and national politics and processes.
2. Distinguish a range of research designs and methods used in international relations, politics and security studies, and more broadly across the sciences, social sciences and humanities.
3. Formulate and evaluate clear arguments, using knowledge of the different components of argumentation and rigour, and using relevant concepts and theories to investigate issues in international relations, politics and security studies and their inter-relationships, reflecting on their advantages and limitations.
4. Communicate knowledge, understanding and argument in accurate, well- structured and coherent oral, written and multimedia presentations.
5. Collaborate with others in a groupwork task, reflecting critically on group dynamics and outcomes, and demonstrating problem solving, policy assessment and analytical skills.
6. Design and manage a learning project showing ability to clarify objectives, prioritise tasks, meet deadlines and reflect critically on outcomes.

Additionally, to be eligible for the award of Diploma of Higher Education at FHEQ level 5, students will be able to:

7. Critically assess the nature of the international system using relevant concepts, theories and methods to analyse political ideas, practices and issues of relevance to complex contemporary global, regional and transnational challenges, including security challenges.

8. Explain and critically assess key theoretical approaches to the study of international relations, politics and security studies, and analyse the development, implementation and effectiveness of international and regional governance, agreements, policies, norms and institutions relating to contemporary global, regional and transnational issues.
9. Demonstrate progress in the ability to use a range of common techniques used by international relations and security policymakers and practitioners including conflict analysis and security assessments.
10. Systematically investigate topics or issues using relevant techniques and technologies to gather, evaluate and manage evidence, data and information from valid, appropriate sources.
11. Plan and execute a range of assignments, including essays, reports and reflective pieces, showing awareness of the requirements to address different audiences and purposes.
12. Explain and actively promote the characteristics and qualities of effective collaboration.
13. Identify, analyse and assess implications of the characteristics and complexity of inter-relationships between conflict, security, development, and environment, and their relationships with governance, politics and security in a variety of international and regional contexts.

Additionally, to be eligible for the award of Ordinary Degree of Bachelor at FHEQ level 6, students will be able to:

14. Develop and apply appropriate multi-disciplinary approaches to researching and analysing in detail selected developments, trends, policy responses and practices relating to regional or international systems, governance, security, institutions, norms and complex international, regional or transnational challenges.
15. Reflect critically on personal development as a scholar and policy analyst in international relations, politics and security studies, using evidence, feedback and insights from research and practice to make judgements about areas of personal development and progression.
16. Plan and execute a range of assignments, including essays, reports and reflective pieces, in which style, scope and depth are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.
17. Analyse and critically evaluate contemporary debates relating to policy responses or practices on selected security issues, and regional or international issues or challenges.

Additionally, to be eligible for the award of Honours Degree of Bachelor at FHEQ level 6, students will be able to:

18. Design and carry out, with ethical approval as appropriate, a capstone research project including a comprehensive literature review and desk research and analysis.
19. Demonstrate initiative and independence in systematic academic inquiry, using relevant techniques and technologies to gather, evaluate and manage evidence, data and information from valid and appropriate sources relating to international relations, politics and security issues.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The strategy provides a wide range of learning opportunities in each module, including lectures and directed study, but also discussion of in-class and pre-class student research findings; oral presentations; and other methods of communicating arguments - within groups and to whole class audiences.

Graduate employability and professionalism capabilities and attributes are developed through group and pair work, in and out of class. In some modules, these skills are given a sharp focus, and self-reflection on skill development is an explicit learning outcome for the module. These include opportunities for placements or experience with practitioner methods in International Policy Processes in Practice at level 6. As such, some of these skills will be recognised explicitly through the University's HEAR Achievement recognition. This will also be the case for any study trips and crisis simulation exercises students are able to participate in over the course of the programme.

The dissertation project at Stage 3 is chosen (within the overall scope of International Relations, Politics and Security Studies), designed and undertaken entirely by students, under supervision. In the second semester at Stage 3, the core module, Politics of International Crisis Response, specifically includes crisis simulations and other exercises and when possible off-campus visits as well as lectures, seminars and directed reading.

Outside the modules, in each Stage, students will undertake a reflective learning journal, with the support of their Personal Academic Tutor, through which they will identify, and take, opportunities to develop all the skills outlined in the learning outcomes.

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 assessment tasks which are designed to help students to develop and demonstrate their understandings and skills as set out in the staged 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 presentations, and group and individual tasks for which formative feedback is given.

Summative assessment is similarly through a variety of tasks, including essays, reports, policy briefs, analyses, oral presentations, diagrammatic/pictorial representation of theories/concepts etc., data analysis/representation exercises and reflective notes. Each module is assessed by specified modes of assessment, as described in the relevant module descriptor. Some of the modules are 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 with a total word length as appropriate for the Stage and module. At each Stage of this Programme, assessment includes at least one assignment involving oral presentation, in line with subject benchmarks, in order to ensure both oral and written skills are developed.

Curriculum

The BA International Relations, Politics and Security Studies degree is organised in modular units. These are offered across the Academic Year of September to May and usually completed during Semester 1 or Semester 2 discretely. Completing taught modules and assessments for a year allows students to progress to the next Stage for the following academic year.

Modules provide credits proportionate to their study time, with students taking 120 credits within each Stage of the programme. Optionality is provided within some modules in all Stages, where students are supported to select their own projects, case-studies and topics within the overall syllabus. Further optionality between module choices is specifically provided in the design at stages 2 and 3. At Stage 2 and the first semester of Stage 3, this includes several specialisms. In the second semester at Stage 3, this includes further options from specialist modules (e.g. the Africa Study Visit, Technology Violence and War) or, alternatively, an elective module where students can choose from any module (subject to timetabling and prerequisites) for which they are eligible offered across the University including one of the Masters level modules offered in the PSID Department.

Stage 1 Modules (FHEQ Level 4/CertHE)

Study Period	Code	Title	Credit	Level
Semester 1	PES4018-B	Understanding the International System	20	FHEQ 4
Semester 1	PES4019-B	Politics and the State	20	FHEQ 4
Semester 1	PES4020-B	Challenges and Approaches to Development	20	FHEQ 4
Semester 2	PES4021-D	Issues in World Politics	40	FHEQ 4
Semester 2	PES4022-B	Peace and Violence: theories, cases and challenges	20	FHEQ 4

Students in Stage 1 study 120 core credits as above. At the end of stage 1, students will be eligible to progress or exit with the award of Certificate of Higher Education if they have successfully completed at least 120 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Stage 2 Modules (FHEQ Level 5/DipHE)

Study Period	Code	Title	Credit	Level
1 Core	PES5018-B	Analysing Contemporary Conflict	20	FHEQ 5
1 Core	PES5020-B	Contemporary International Relations	20	FHEQ 5
1 Core	PES5035-B	The Politics and Processes of Foreign Policy	20	FHEQ 5
2 Core	PES5036-B	Security: Concepts, Constructions and Analyses	20	FHEQ 5
2 Option	PES5024-B	Peacebuilding, Conflict and Security	20	FHEQ 5
2 Option	PES5029-B	Power Shifts: Regional and Global Challenges	20	FHEQ 5
2 Option	PES5022-B	Globalisation and Global Governance	20	FHEQ 5
2 Option	PES5037-B	Introduction to Conflict Transformation Skill	20	FHEQ 5

Students in Stage 2 will study 80 core credits and select 2 from 3 optional modules during Semester 2 for the other 40 credits. At the end of stage 2, students will be eligible to progress or exit with the award of Diploma of Higher Education if they have successfully completed at least 240 credits overall and achieved the award learning outcomes.

This programme provides the option for students to undertake a work placement or period of study abroad of up to a year between Stages 2 and 3: see the **Placement and/or Study Abroad** section for more details.

Stage 3 Modules (FHEQ Level 6/BA)

Study Period	Code	Title	Credit	Level
Academic Year	PES6016-D	Dissertation	40	FHEQ 6
1 Core	PES6024-B	International Policy Processes in Practice	20	FHEQ 6
1 Option	PES6026-B	Authoritarianism, Nationalism and Populism	20	FHEQ 6
1 Option	PES6020-B	Politics and Security in Africa	20	FHEQ 6
1 Option	PES6023-B	Revolutions and Regime Change	20	FHEQ 6
2 Core	PES6019-B	Politics of International Crisis Response	20	FHEQ 6
2 Option	PES6025-B	Africa Study Visit	20	FHEQ 6
2 Option	PES6015-B	Creative Conflict Transformation	20	FHEQ 6
2 Option	PES6021-B	Politics and Security in the Middle East	20	FHEQ 6
2 Option	PES6027-B	Technology, Violence and War	20	FHEQ 6
Elective	Any	University Semester 1/Semester 2 Elective	20	5/6/7

Students in Stage 3 will study 80 core credits, including the Dissertation across the academic year. For the other 40 credits, students will select 1 optional module in each of Semesters 1 and 2.

Students are permitted to take a 20-credit elective module in either of Semester 1 or Semester 2 (but not in both). The elective can be taken from any part of the University that accepts elective students and can be at Level 5, 6 or 7.

Students will be eligible to exit with the award of **Ordinary Degree of Bachelor** if they have successfully completed at least 120 credits at both Level 4 and 5 and 60 credits at level 6 and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Students will be eligible for the award of **Honours Degree of Bachelor** if they have successfully completed at least 360 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Please note: The curriculum may change, subject to availability, public health concerns/*force majeure* events and the University's programme approval, monitoring and review processes.

Placement and/or Study Abroad

Both the three- and four-year BA programme options provide excellent opportunities for engaging with the spheres of policy and practice as well as with academic studies. However, the four-year programme provides further enhanced opportunities for work experience and for integrating practitioner community engagement with their academic studies. This normally takes the form of an internship in another organisation and can be either undertaken in the UK or abroad. This internship or placement normally starts in September immediately following the end of stage 2.

Students often use their placement period and experience to inform and shape their studies in their final year of the BA programme, including the final year dissertation. This element of the four-year BA programme is student-centred and student-led, and thus the initiative for identifying and applying for internships or placements is driven by the students.

Planning for the placement/internship year starts several months in advance, usually in the first semester of Stage 2 and at the latest by the end of Semester 2. Academic staff on 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 some customised preparatory training before students who choose the four-year option, proceed with their placement, and mentoring support is useful during the period of the placement or internship. 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 and 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 arrangements.

After the placement or internship is completed, students taking this four-year BA Programme return to the programme at the University of Bradford at the beginning of the next academic year to proceed with their final Stage of the programme, with the same requirements and academic supervision as for students on the three-year programme.

Placement/Study Abroad Stage 2a Modules

Study Period	Code	Title	Credit	Level
Full Year Option	PES5001-Z	Placement	Exempt	FHEQ 5
Full Year Option	PES5002-Z	Study Abroad Experience	Exempt	FHEQ 5

Upon successful completion of the PES5001-Z Placement module, students on the 4-year route will be eligible for the additional FHEQ Level 5 award of University Diploma in Professional Studies.

Upon successful completion of the PES5002-Z Study Abroad Experience module, students on the 4-year route will be eligible for the additional FHEQ Level 5 award of University Diploma in Professional Studies (International).

Other Study Abroad

Students are welcome to explore available opportunities for a Study Abroad Semester that may be viable for them via our International Opportunities team.

A Study Abroad Semester can be available **ONLY** if the modules offered by the host institution allow the student to meet the learning outcomes of the Bradford Programme during Semester 1 **OR** Semester 2.

Any student wishing to study abroad for a semester should first contact the International Opportunities Team to explore the opportunities and funding in place and, secondly, the Faculty Exchange Coordinator to check if the available options and relevant modules are in line with the University requirements. Following these checks, the International Opportunities Team and the Faculty Exchange Coordinator will liaise with the relevant Programme Leader to validate the modules and the semester exchange.

The semester exchange requires students to study only modules suitable to the Bradford programme 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 and the Director of Studies 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 Programme Leader and Director of Programmes.

If the student fails a module abroad, the student must:

- a) inform immediately the International Opportunities Team and the Faculty Exchange Coordinator
- b) explore the possibility of re-taking any exams at the host institution.

During the exchange, students will have support from the relevant University services. All credit successfully obtained whilst on study abroad semester will count towards the student's final degree. Our International Opportunities team can advise students about the available funding to support their study or work experience abroad.

The list of exchange partners and network of Universities available for Study Abroad Semester, as well as further information about international opportunities can be found online at www.bradford.ac.uk/exchanges/current-students.

Please note: Some institutions are only available to undergraduate or postgraduate students. Any potential exchange is dependent on student eligibility, student finance, and the appropriate modules required to fulfil the requirements of the programme being available at either institution.

Assessment Regulations

This Programme conforms to the standard University Undergraduate Assessment Regulations which are available at the following link: www.bradford.ac.uk/regulations.

Admission Requirements

We take into consideration a number of factors when assessing your application. It's not just about your grades; we take the time to understand your personal circumstances and make decisions based on your potential to thrive at university and beyond.

A typical offer to someone seeking entry through the UCAS scheme would be 112 points, including a full A Level or BTEC, with Grade 4 (national Grade C) or above in GCSE English or the equivalent in another RQF Level 2 qualification such as Key Skills.

Please note: These requirements are correct for the contemporary recruitment cycle and may be different when you are reading this document. The UCAS tariff applicable may vary and is published here <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/ug/international-relations-politics-security-ba/>

Access and Recognition of Prior Learning

Applications are welcome from students with non-traditional qualifications, and/or significant personal/professional experience.

The University of Bradford has always welcomed applications from disabled students. To discuss adjustments or to find out more about support and access, you may wish to contact the Disability Service before you apply at www.bradford.ac.uk/disability/before .

Applications are particularly welcomed from adult learners (those aged 21+ at the start of the programme), armed forces families, carers and care leavers, estranged or orphaned learners, refugees and asylum seekers, and Romani or Traveller families. To find out more about the University of Bradford Progression Scheme, visit the webpage: <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/applicants/progression-scheme/>

If applicants have prior certificated learning or professional experience which may be equivalent to parts of this programme, the University has procedures to evaluate and recognise this learning in order to provide applicants with exemptions from specified modules or parts of the programme.
