Postgraduate Programme Specification

Session	2025/26	**Last Modified**	
Named Award Title	MSc Applied Social Science		
Award Title for Each Award	MSc Applied Social Science PG Dip Applied Social Science PG Cert Applied Social Science		
Date of Approval	June 2020		
Details of Cohort Applies to	Level 11 – All intakes from September 2025		
Awarding Institution	University of the West of Scotland	**Teaching Institution(s)**	University of the West of Scotland
Language of Instruction & Examination		English	
Award Accredited by			
Maximum Period of Registration			
Duration of Study			
Full-time	1 year	**Part-time**	2 years
Placement (compulsory)	No		
Mode of Study	☒ Full-time ☒ Part-time		
Campus	☐ Ayr ☐ Dumfries	☐ Lanarkshire ☐ London ☒ Paisley	☐ Online / Distance Learning ☐ Other (specify)
School	**Education and Social Sciences**		
Divisional Programme Board	**Social Sciences**		
Programme Leader	Dr Diarmuid McDonnell		

Admissions Criteria
Candidates must be able to satisfy the general admission requirements of the University of the West of Scotland as specified in Chapter 2 of the University Regulatory Framework together with the following programme requirements:

Appropriate Undergraduate Qualifications:
Applicants will typically possess a degree or equivalent. In the absence of a degree, where entry requirements do not conform to the general entry requirements, other evidence can be considered on an individual basis in line with Regulations 2.13 – 2.36 (Recognition of Prior Learning – RPL / Recognition of Credit).

Honours degree (minimum 2:2 classification) within the broad area of the Social Sciences or a bachelor's degree with significant and relevant work experience.

Other Required Qualifications/Experience
English language proficiency is also a requirement, with candidates expected to achieve IELTs average standard of 6.0.Admission based on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will comply with the University's Regulatory Framework (Section 6), as well as University regulations on postgraduate study and guidance on RPL.

Credit transferred into the programme through Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) must have been subject to reliable and valid methods of assessment at a recognised HEI. Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) entry is also permitted. The amount of credit transferred though RPL (APL and APEL) will comply with the maxima set out in the Regulatory Framework. Candidates should note that transferred credit does not carry a grade, therefore, award with distinction cannot be granted for awards where credit is transferred in at level 11.

Further desirable skills pre-application

General Overview
This programme introduces students to the social and political contexts within which social science research is currently being undertaken and the uses to which social research might be put across the areas of international politics, criminal justice, social policy, public governance and administration. Through this programme students will be able to develop an understanding and applied experience of researching a number of contemporary and international issues. This will be relevant to students who are seeking to develop both advanced and broad knowledge, skills and understanding in social sciences.

Key features of the programme:

- Focus on understanding a range of contemporary social and political issues within a global and comparative context.
- Opportunity to develop expertise in the area of social science that interests you.
- Employability and career-relevant content through innovative learning and assessment.
- Study within a diverse international community of learners.

The programme equips students for employment in a number of sectors, particularly (but not exclusively) within the public sector, the civil service and civil society organisations. Students may also seek to undertake doctoral studies after completing the Masters programme.

The academics who teach on the programme draw on their research networks for the benefit of the student experience through a combination of field trips to external organisations and the use of guest speakers from external bodies. The programme team support students to develop their own networks and to co-produce Masters projects with external organisations (e.g. through the UWS-Oxfam Partnership as well as our other partners).

The programme is flexible allowing for part-time and full-time study, while also blending on campus, and on- line delivery techniques. Moreover, a range of transferable skills are enhanced and these include the ability to:

- Gather, organise and deploy evidence, data and information from a variety of secondary and some primary sources.
- Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems.
- Construct reasoned argument, synthesise relevant information and exercise critical judgement.
- Reflect on their own learning and seek and make use of constructive feedback.
- Manage their own learning self-critically.
- Recognise the importance of explicit referencing and the ethical requirements of study which requires critical and reflective use of information and communications technology in the learning process.
- Communicate effectively and fluently in speech and writing.
- Use communication and information technology, including audio-visual technology, for the retrieval and presentation of information, including, where appropriate.
- Work independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organisation and time management, progressing through the degree programme to become an independent learner.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals through, for example, group work, group projects, group presentations.

Students are required to design and undertake an extended piece of written research focused around a specific research question via the MSc Dissertation.

In terms of student choice there are three elective modules within the programme, offering significant specialisation in an area of applied social science that interests you. In addition student choice will be located within as well between modules. This will be realised through inquiry-based learning approaches and negotiated assessment approaches and strategies.

Masters programmes have a crucial role in taking forward School-level and university wide priorities in terms of enhancing the number of postgraduate students that come to study at UWS from home and overseas markets and to also maximise the student experience. Key drivers relevant to the Masters framework are contained in the School's Operational Plan, the university's Research and Education Enabling Plan, and the wider university's Internationalisation and Research and Enterprise strategies. The programme outcomes have been informed by a variety of internal and external sources.

Typical Delivery Method
In-person lectures and seminars, with some online provision depending on the module.

Any additional costs
No

Graduate Attributes, Employability & Personal Development Planning
The programme is fully aligned with institutional priorities around the development of graduate attributes and with the institutional policy on personal development planning. The UWS Graduate Attributes were created to reflect the range of skills, qualities and abilities students can develop at UWS which will help to prepare them for success outwith the university.

The programme will help develop student attributes across three dimensions:

- Academic - knowledge, skills and abilities related to high-level academic study.
- Personal - qualities and characteristics of well-rounded, developed, responsible individuals.
- Professional - skills, aptitudes and attitudes required for professional working life in the 21st century.

The aim is to develop graduates who are:

- Universal - globally relevant with comprehensively applicable abilities, skills and behaviours
- Work ready - dynamic and prepared for employment in complex, ever-changing environments which require lifelong learning and resilience.

Successful - as a UWS graduate with a solid foundation on which to continue succeeding and realising my potential, across various contexts.

Work Based Learning/Placement Details

Work-related learning underpins the programme with the use of authentic employment-focused assessments. The programme also offers students the opportunity to enhance their CV by undertaking a practice-based project as part of their final dissertation in collaboration with a public or third sector organisation.

Attendance and Engagement

In line with the Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure, Students are academically engaged if they are regularly attending and participating in timetabled on-campus and online teaching sessions, asynchronous online learning activities, course-related learning resources, and complete assessments and submit these on time.

For the purposes of this programme, academic engagement equates to the following:

Equality and Diversity

The University's Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Procedure can be accessed at the following link: UWS Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Code.

Programme structures and requirements, SCQF level, term, module name and code, credits and awards (Chapter 1, Regulatory Framework)

Learning Outcomes

SCQF LEVEL 11 - Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge and Understanding	
A1	Demonstrate critical knowledge and understanding of selected areas of the contemporary social science landscape (such as politics, social justice, criminology, social policy, civil society, policy analysis and global governance, public administration, and/ or research methodologies).
A2	
A3	
A4	
A5	
Practice - Applied Knowledge and Understanding	
B1	Apply a range of conceptual and theoretical tools, vehicle way include research methodologies, in selected areas of the contemporary social science landscape.
B2	
B3	
B4	
B5	
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	
C1	Communicate sophisticated academic conclusions convincingly using appropriate methods.
C2	
C3	
C4	
C5	
Generic Cognitive Skills - Problem Solving, Analysis, Evaluation	
D1	Deploy skills of critical analysis and evaluation to selected issues within contemporary social science.
D2	
D3	
D4	
D5	
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others	
E1	Demonstrate responsibility for own academic practice.
E2	
E3	

E4	
E5	

Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) Modules

CORE

SCQF Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Term			Footnotes
				1	2	3	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
Footnotes for Core Modules							

Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) Modules

OPTION

SCQF Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Term			Footnotes
				1	2	3	
11	SSPG11002	The State, Globalisation and Social Justice	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11003	Policy Analysis & Practice	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11005	Civil Society & Social Justice	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11007	Applied Research Methods in Social Sciences	20	☒	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11009	Applied Criminology and Criminal Justice	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11011	Comparative Governance & Public Administration	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11012	Comparative Penology	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11013	Global Crisis Management	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11015	Comparative Policing	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11019	Contemporary Populism & Nationalism	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11020	Contemporary Social Issues	20	☐	☒	☐	
Footnotes for Option Modules Further optional modules may be available at Level 10 by agreement with the Programme Leader.							

Level 11- Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) **Criteria for Award** *Please refer to UWS Regulatory Framework for related regulations*
Students achieving 60 credits from any of the core and optional modules above are entitled to exit with a Postgraduate Certificate in Applied Social Sciences. A minimum of 40 credits should be at SCQF 11 level and none less than SCQF level 10. No Distinction is awarded at PgCert level (Regulation 3.25).

SCQF LEVEL 11 - Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge and Understanding	
A1	Demonstrate critical knowledge and understanding of the key issues, debates and concepts in (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
A2	Demonstrate reflective and critical knowledge and understanding of social research methodologies.
A3	
A4	
A5	
Practice - Applied Knowledge and Understanding	
B1	Apply advanced conceptual tools to resolve policy scenarios within (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences) contexts.
B2	Apply a range of routine and specialist research methodologies in exercises of inquiry.
B3	Apply advanced theoretical concepts to inform key debates in (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).) contexts.
B4	
B5	
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	
C1	Communicate sophisticated academic conclusions convincingly, using appropriate methods, to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge and expertise.
C2	Deploy a range of routine techniques to analyse and present the outcomes of inquiry.
C3	Deploy some specialist techniques to analyse and present research findings.
C4	
C5	
Generic Cognitive Skills - Problem Solving, Analysis, Evaluation	
D1	Deploy critical, analytical and evaluative skills in the context of (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
D2	Make informed judgements about key issues in (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
D3	Demonstrate originality and/ or creativity in response to contemporary challenges and issues in (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
D4	
D5	
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others	
E1	Contribute effectively in a team setting, demonstrating awareness of own and others' responsibilities in collaborative contexts.

E2	Demonstrate insight into ethical issues and debates within contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
E3	Take significant responsibility for forging relationships with peers in external organisations.
E4	
E5	

Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) Modules

CORE

SCQF Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Term			Footnotes
				1	2	3	
11	SSPG11007	Applied Research Methods in Social Sciences	20	☒	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11003	Policy Analysis and Practice	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11020	Contemporary Social Issues	20	☐	☒	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
Footnotes for Core Modules							

Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) Modules

OPTION

SCQF Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Term			Footnotes
				1	2	3	
11	SSPG11002	The State, Globalisation and Social Justice	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11005	Civil Society & Social Justice	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11009	Applied Criminology and Criminal Justice	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11011	Comparative Governance & Public Administration	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11012	Comparative Penology	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11013	Global Crisis Management	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11015	Comparative Policing	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11019	Contemporary Populism & Nationalism	20	☒	☐	☐	
Footnotes for Option Modules Further optional modules may be available at Level 10 by agreement with the Programme Leader.							

Level 11- Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip)
Criteria for Award
Please refer to UWS Regulatory Framework for related regulations

There is no progression within stages at SCQF Level 11.

In line with the Regulatory Framework, for the award of Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) Applied Social Science, at least 120 credit points must be achieved (including all core modules) of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF Level 11 and none less than SCQF Level 10.

Distinction will be awarded in line with University Regulations and no imported credit can be used. (Regulations 3.35 & 3.26)

SCQF LEVEL 11 – Masters Learning Outcomes (Maximum of 5 per heading)	
Knowledge and Understanding	
A1	Demonstrate integrated, critical and reflective knowledge and understanding of the policy, theory and practice of contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
A2	Demonstrate extensive and focused insight into areas at the forefront of contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
A3	
A4	
A5	
Practice - Applied Knowledge and Understanding	
B1	Apply a range of advanced theoretical and conceptual tools to inform debates across the theory policy and practice of contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
B2	Apply some specialist theoretical and conceptual tools to generate original insight into at least one issue at the forefront of contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
B3	
B4	
B5	
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	
C1	Convey convincingly the outcomes of self-authored research to experts and peers.
C2	Deploy a range of routine and specialist techniques to analyse and present research data.
C3	
C4	
C5	
Generic Cognitive Skills - Problem Solving, Analysis, Evaluation	
D1	Make informed and professional judgements about controversial issues at the forefront of (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
D2	Insightfully synthesise and integrate issues at the forefront of contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
D3	
D4	
D5	
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others	
E1	Exercise substantial autonomy and responsibility in devising, implementing, managing and executing a substantial research project in an area of contemporary (politics/

	social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
E2	Demonstrate intellectual leadership and initiative by contributing to new thinking in an area of contemporary (politics/ social justice/ criminology/ policy analysis & global governance/ public administration/ social sciences).
E3	Demonstrate commitment to ethical and reflective academic practice.
E4	
E5	

Masters Modules

CORE

SCQF Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Term			Footnotes
				1	2	3	
11	SSPG11007	Applied Research Methods in Social Sciences	20	☒	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11003	Policy Analysis and Practice	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11020	Contemporary Social Issues	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11004	Social Sciences Dissertation	60	☐	☐	☒	
				☐	☐	☐	
				☐	☐	☐	
Footnotes for Core Modules							

Masters Modules

OPTION

SCQF Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Term			Footnotes
				1	2	3	
11	SSPG11002	The State, Globalisation and Social Justice	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11005	Civil Society & Social Justice	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11009	Applied Criminology and Criminal Justice	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11011	Comparative Governance & Public Administration	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11012	Comparative Penology	20	☒	☐	☐	
11	SSPG11013	Global Crisis Management	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11015	Comparative Policing	20	☐	☒	☐	
11	SSPG11019	Contemporary Populism & Nationalism	20	☒	☐	☐	
Footnotes for Option Modules							

Level 11- Masters **Criteria for Award** ***Please refer to UWS Regulatory Framework for related regulations***
In line with the Regulatory Framework, for the award of MSc Applied Social Science, at least 180 credit points must be achieved (including core modules) of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF Level 11 and none less than SCQF Level 10. Distinction will be awarded in line with University Regulations and no imported credit can be used. (Regulations 3.35 & 3.26)

Regulations of Assessment
Candidates will be bound by the general assessment regulations of the University as specified in the University Regulatory Framework. An overview of the assessment details is provided in the Student Handbook and the assessment criteria for each module is provided in the module descriptor which forms part of the module pack issued to students. For further details on assessment please refer to Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. To qualify for an award of the University, students must complete all the programme requirements and must meet the credit minima detailed in Chapter 1 of the Regulatory Framework.

Combined Studies
There may be instances where a student has been unsuccessful in meeting the award criteria for the named award and for other more generic named awards existing within the School. Provided that they have met the credit requirements in line with the SCQF credit minima (please see Regulation 1.21), they will be eligible for a Combined Studies award (please see Regulation 1.61). For students studying at Level 11, they will normally be eligible for an exit award of PgCert / PgDip / Masters in Combined Studies.

Version no: 1

Change/Version Control

What	**When**	**Who**
Replication for purposes of PSMD.	11/02/2024	C Atkinson
Replication for purposes of PSMD.	17/04/2025	D McDonnell