Module Descriptor

Title	Professional Project		
Session	2026/27	**Status**	
Code	MPAL 11000	**SCQF Level**	**SCQF 11**
Credit Points	60	**ECTS (European Credit Transfer Scheme)**	30
School	School of Education & Social Sciences		
Module Co-ordinator	A. Gouglas		

Summary of Module

This module will train you in social science and applied research methods, as well as educate you in key elements of professional practice. You will learn to design, manage, and execute a public administration and policy project independently and in timely fashion. The module will foster a critical, as well as decolonized, understanding of quantitative and qualitative research strategies, with a particular focus on comparative methods, and will assist in developing your professional profile, as well as critically develop your learning and writing skills. You will be able to choose one of two pathways: a) research dissertation in the form of a journal article; b) applied public administration & policy project - e.g. analysis of a practical policy issue for a client. The professional project runs throughout the duration of your postgraduate studies.

At the start of the programme (first trimester of study) you will be trained to be a good professional in the governance sector. This training will also help you transition in the postgraduate learning environment as professional student in UWS. You will then be introduced to the methods necessary to implement your project (eg social science research methods, applied policy analysis methods etc).

Mid-way through the programme (second trimester of study) you will follow compulsory academic skills and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes. Towards the end of the middle term you will be assigned a supervisor for your project.

During the last trimester you will implement your project under the guidance of your supervisor.

Module Delivery Method	On-Campus[1] ☒	Hybrid[2] ☐	Online[3] ☐	Work -Based Learning[4] ☐
Campuses for Module Delivery	☐ Ayr ☐ Dumfries	☐ Lanarkshire ☒ London ☐ Paisley	☐ Online / Distance Learning ☐ Other (specify)	

Terms for Module Delivery	Term 1	☒	Term 2	☒	Term 3	☒
Long-thin Delivery over more than one Term	Term 1 – Term 2	☒	Term 2 – Term 3	☒	Term 3 – Term 1	☒

Learning Outcomes	
L1	Demonstrate extensive, detailed and critical knowledge that covers all main areas and methods in doing applied or social science research and of professional practice rules and norms and critical knowledge.
L2	Use a significant range of the principal professional skills, techniques, practices and materials associated with doing applied policy or social science research and professional practice in the public administration & policy.
L3	Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent information.
L4	Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance your research project work and professional practice at this level.
L5	Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in research activities and professional practice.

Employability Skills and Personal Development Planning (PDP) Skills	
SCQF Headings	**During completion of this module, there will be an opportunity to achieve core skills in:**
Knowledge and Understanding (K and U)	**SCQF Level 11** An extensive, detailed and critical knowledge and understanding of a range of specialised applied policy and social science research methods A critical knowledge and understanding of professional practice rules, norms, ethics and ethos.

[1] Where contact hours are synchronous/ live and take place fully on campus. Campus-based learning is focused on providing an interactive learning experience supported by a range of digitally-enabled asynchronous learning opportunities including learning materials, resources, and opportunities provided via the virtual learning environment. On-campus contact hours will be clearly articulated to students.

[2] The module includes a combination of synchronous/ live on-campus and online learning events. These will be supported by a range of digitally-enabled asynchronous learning opportunities including learning materials, resources, and opportunities provided via the virtual learning environment. On-campus and online contact hours will be clearly articulated to students.

[3] Where all learning is solely delivered by web-based or internet-based technologies and the participants can engage in all learning activities through these means. All required contact hours will be clearly articulated to students.

[4] Learning activities where the main location for the learning experience is in the workplace. All required contact hours, whether online or on campus, will be clearly articulated to students

Practice: Applied Knowledge and Understanding	**SCQF Level 11** Identify, conceptualise, and define abstract problems and issues. Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to professional practice, applied and/or social science research issues and projects; Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues; Plan and execute a significant applied policy or research project.
Generic Cognitive skills	**SCQF Level 11** Develop a range of academic and professional skills including those relevant to critical reflection on assessing evidence. Identify, conceptualize and define new and abstract problems and issues. Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent information.
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	**SCQF Level 11** Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance your professional practice and research project work at this level, as well as adjust features to suit purpose. Use a wide array of routine professional skills and a range of routine and advanced applied and research skills as appropriate to professional public administration and policy practice, and social science research practice. Communicate using appropriate methods to a range of audiences.
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others	**SCQF Level 11** Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in research activities and professional practice. Take responsibility for own research and applied work. Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements where such issues are not addressed by current codes and standards. Learn to reflect on your role as practitioner, researcher and critical thinker via extensive independent work.

Prerequisites	**Module Code**	**Module Title**
	Other	
Co-requisites	**Module Code**	**Module Title**

Learning and Teaching	
In line with current learning and teaching principles, a 60-credit module includes 600 learning hours, normally including a minimum of 54 contact hours and maximum of 72 contact hours.	
Learning Activities During completion of this module, the learning activities undertaken to achieve the module learning outcomes are stated below:	**Student Learning Hours** (Note: Learning hours include both contact hours and hours spent on other learning activities)
Lecture/Core Content Delivery	54
Tutorial/Synchronous Support Activity	8
Practice Based Learning	15
Independent Study	523

Please select	
Please select	
TOTAL	600

Indicative Resources

The following materials form essential underpinning for the module content and ultimately for the learning outcomes:

1. General research methods

Clark, T., Foster, L., Sloan, L., Bryman, A. (2021). Bryman's Social Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cresswell, J. and Cresswell, D. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches. London: SAGE.

Van Thiel, S. (2014). Research methods for public management and administration. London: Routledge.

2. Comparative methods

Engeli, I., Rothmayr Allison, C. (2014). Comparative Policy Studies. Conceptual and Methodological Challenges. ECPR: Springer.

Landman, T., Carvalho, E. (2016). Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics. London: Routledge.

Önder, M., Nyaburi N.I. and Islam, Md.N. (2022). The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative Public Administration Concepts and Cases. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.

3. Literature review methods

Meert, A., Pickering, H., Brans, M. and Gouglas, A. (2023). 'Systematic literature reviews: opportunities and limits for advisers' research', In Richard Shaw and Chris Eichbaum (eds) (forthcoming) Handbook of political advisers, Edward Elgar.

Petticrew, M. and Roberts, H (2006). Systematic reviews in the social sciences: a practical guide. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

4. Qualitative research methods

Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y.S., Giardina, M.D., Canella, G.S. (2017). The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research 6th Edition. London: SAGE.

Silverman, D. (2021). Doing Qualitative Research. London: SAGE.

5. Quantitative research methods

Kaplan, D. (2004). The SAGE Handbook of Quantitative Methodology for the Social Sciences. London: SAGE.

6. Decolonized research methods

Cunneen C., Rowe S., Tauri J. (2017). Fracturing the colonial paradigm: Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. Méthod(e)s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology, 2(1–2), 62–78.

Datta R. (2018). Decolonizing both researcher and research and its effectiveness in Indigenous research. Research Ethics, 14(2), 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1747016117733296

de Sousa Santos B. (2015). Epistemologies of the south: Justice against epistemicide. Routledge.

Held M. B. E. (2019). Decolonizing research paradigms in the context of settler colonialism: An unsettling, mutual, and collaborative effort. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918821574

Thambinathan, V., Kinsella, E.A. (2021). Decolonizing Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Creating Spaces for Transformative Praxis. International Journal of Qualitative Methods. 20. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211014766 .

6. How to plan & write your dissertation and applied research project

McMillan, K. & Weyers, J. (2011) How to write dissertations & project reports. 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Robson, C. (2024) Real world research, 5th Edition. Chichester: Wiley.

7. Professional practice

Goatly, A. & Hiradhar, P. (2016). Critical Reading and Writing in the Digital Age: An Introductory Coursebook. Routledge.

McLaughlin, M., & Allen, E. (2016). Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Schön, D. A. (1992). The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action. London: Routledge.

(N.B. Although reading lists should include current publications, students are advised (particularly for material marked with an asterisk*) to wait until the start of session for confirmation of the most up-to-date material)

Attendance and Engagement Requirements

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 module, academic engagement equates to the following:

This module requires attendance and active student engagement. In-class activities are formative assignments geared towards accomplishing the learning outcomes. As per UKVI regulations students have to attend all classes (see academic-engagement-and-attendance-procedure.pdf (uws.ac.uk)). If a student will not be able to attend a class, the student must contact the module lecturer and coordinator beforehand.

Additionally, this module requires an individual supervision attendance and progress report written by the student and signed-off by the supervisor. The report is tabled to ESS VISA monthly.

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.

The module is also in line with the MPA programme EDI policy meaning that it has included inclusivity in four areas: a) Designing course material b) Inclusive Teaching in class c) Assessment and d) Providing extra support to the students. Added to the above, the module is foundational for postgraduate studies as it helps students from different linguistic, cultural and learning backgrounds transition to postgraduate education in the UK at UWS. The module includes compulsory academic skills and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes, which are both taught at the start of the MPA programme. Last, the module takes a decolonized approach to research methods. While doing research students are taught to exercise critical reflexivity, reciprocity and respect for self-determination, embrace

"Other(ed)" ways of knowing and embody a transformative praxis. Specific literature is provided on decolonized research practice.
(N.B. Every effort will be made by the University to accommodate any equality and diversity issues brought to the attention of the School)

Supplemental Information

Divisional Programme Board	**Social Sciences**
Overall Assessment Results	☐ **Pass / Fail** ☒ **Graded**
Module Eligible for Compensation	☐ **Yes** ☒ **No** **If this module is eligible for compensation, there may be cases where compensation is not permitted due to programme accreditation requirements. Please check the associated programme specification for details.**
School Assessment Board	PG Social Sciences
Moderator	K. Camaj
External Examiner	Karin Bottom
Accreditation Details	
Module Appears in CPD catalogue	☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Changes / Version Number	1

Assessment (also refer to Assessment Outcomes Grids below)
Assessment 1
Professional portfolio (equating to approx. 4000 words) (30%)
Assessment 2
Written assignment (10000 words) (70%)
Assessment 3
(N.B. (i) Assessment Outcomes Grids for the module (one for each component) can be found below which clearly demonstrate how the learning outcomes of the module will be assessed. (ii) An indicative schedule listing approximate times within the academic calendar when assessment is likely to feature will be provided within the Student Module Handbook.)

Component 1							
Assessment Type	**LO1**	**LO2**	**LO3**	**LO4**	**LO5**	**Weighting of Assessment Element (%)**	**Timetabled Contact Hours**
	☐	☒	☐	☒	☐	50	17

Component 2							
Assessment Type	**LO1**	**LO2**	**LO3**	**LO4**	**LO5**	**Weighting of Assessment Element (%)**	**Timetabled Contact Hours**

	☒	☐	☒	☐	☒	50	37

Component 3							
Assessment Type	**LO1**	**LO2**	**LO3**	**LO4**	**LO5**	**Weighting of Assessment Element (%)**	**Timetabled Contact Hours**
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Combined total for all components						100%	hours

Change Control

What	**When**	**Who**
Transferred to new module template	28 Mar	K. Camaj and A. Gouglas
Amended assessment weights and word counts	9 June 2026	A. Gouglas and K. Camaj