MSc, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate in Health Sciences

Programme Specification

1.	**Awarding institution**	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
2.	**Teaching institution**	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
3.	**Final award**	MSc
4.	**Programme title**	Health Sciences
5.	**Programme accredited by**	N/A
6.	**UCAS code**	N/A
7.	**QAA subject benchmarking group**	N/A
8.	**Date of production**	April 2004

9. Programme aims:

(a) To produce graduates with an academic foundation in the disciplines underlying health sciences with these specific knowledge and skills:

i) An understanding of the factors that influence the health of populations and the skills to research these factors.

ii) An understanding of the settings in which health and health care are influenced.

iii) The ability to apply research findings to improve health or effective delivery of health care services.

iv) The capacity to integrate material across a range of disciplines.

v) The ability to carry out a research project within the disciplines covered Health Sciences.

(b) To provide a programme that meets the criteria for a Masters degree in the National Qualifications Framework.

NB The programme aims for the Diploma in Health Sciences are the same as for the MSc except that aim (a) v) is omitted.

10. Intended learning outcomes:

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate.

A: Knowledge & Understanding
The programme provides opportunities for the students to develop and demonstrate the ability to:
A1 describe and appraise the way in which health care is planned, delivered and influenced in the UK
A2 describe the health status of individuals and populations and the factors that influence them

Teaching Strategies
Knowledge and understanding (A1-2) are primarily imparted through lectures and seminars. In both cases group exercises and student presentations of key facts and theories are used to check the students learning. In A2, web-based exercises are used to encourage students to further their understanding in a practical setting. Computer-based practicals are also used in A2 to ensure students have a practical understanding of the subject. They are given extensive support in terms of reading lists, access to documents on the internet, and resource packs with relevant documents at the beginning of modules. Both A1 and A2 achieved by project work undertaken as part of several of the modules leading to this learning outcome.

Learning Strategy
Throughout the programme, students are encouraged and expected to undertake independent reading to supplement the taught component of the programme. This reading is supported by the provision of reading lists, with identified prioritised references. Understanding of the key topics is informally tested by participation in group work exercises and presentation of key issues to the class. Mock exams are set at the end of the first term for students to assess their progress and level of comprehension of the key subject areas. Exercises are provided throughout the programme for self assessment/monitoring of progress.

Assessment Strategy
Knowledge and understanding of the subjects is primarily assessed by unseen examinations (A1-2) and written assignments (A1-2). This is supplemented by the use of assessed oral presentations (A1-2).

B: Cognitive Skills
The programme provides opportunities for the student to develop and demonstrate the ability to:
B1 Critically appraise and summarise published literature
B2 Analyse and interpret health-related data
B3 Use evidence to recommend changes to health care practice

Teaching Strategy
Cognitive skills are developed through seminars (B1-3) and individual and group exercises (B1+2). Students are encouraged to explore and develop these skills through directed reading and student presentations, through case studies (B2) and project work to assess and solve problems (B3).

Learning Strategy
Students are encouraged to develop cognitive skills through a range of practical exercises in Critical Appraisal, Medical Statistics, Demography & Information, Evidence-based practice, Health Economics, Health Promotion, Epidemiology, Quality in Health Care, Qualitative Methods and Health Needs Assessment modules. These practical exercises can involve small group work in seminars or be individual pieces of work either for informal presentation to the group or by self-directed learning/directed reading.

Assessment Strategy
Cognitive skills are assessed by unseen examinations – which include data interpretation, analysis and appraisal of literature (B1-3), and written assignments(B1-3).

C: Subject specific skills
The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate the ability to:
C1 Design a study to investigate a health-related question
C2 Implement a study of a health-related question

Teaching Strategy
Skills in study design (C1) and study implementation (C2) are developed by lectures, seminars and individual and group exercises. Students are also taught basic statistical computing packages (C1-2) and undertake practical exercises on a regular basis. Students are supported in the development of these skills and their application in the dissertation by one-to-one supervision.

Learning strategy
Students are encouraged to develop subject-specific skills C1-2 through active participation in class exercises (statistics project, demography and information student presentations). These skills are further developed and reinforced as the students apply their new skills to the development of a research project which is written up as their dissertation.

Assessment strategy
These skills are assessed by design and implementation of a research project for the dissertation (C1-2), by unseen examination (C1), written assignment (C1-2), statistics project (C1-2) and oral presentation (C2).

D: Key transferable skills

D1 Identify appropriate information from a variety of sources
D2 Integrate material across a range of disciplines to investigate a topic
D3 Demonstrate effective communication skills using a variety of media

Teaching Strategy

The skill of identifying sources of information (D1) is developed through lectures, seminars and practical group exercises. The use of web-based resources is also encouraged. A key part of the programme is integrating the material from the various modules (D2), and this is developed through seminars, lectures, group exercises and student presentations, and also by tutors cross-referencing material from relevant modules. Communication and presentation skills (D3) are developed through seminars, group exercises and student presentations.

Learning Strategy

Students are encouraged to develop key skills D1-3 through active participation in group exercises, through presentations to the group – both informal and assessed, and through the completion of written work. Specific sessions are provided on literature searching in the critical appraisal module. Resource packs suggesting sources of information and details of useful websites are provided in Demography and Information module. Integration of material from across the programme content is encouraged by the stream essay at the beginning of stage II, and is further developed in the planning and implementation of the research project for the dissertation which makes up the final part of the programme. Students are supported by an academic supervisor, who provides support and advice throughout the dissertation.

Assessment strategy

Skills D1-3 are assessed by a combination of written assignment, dissertation and stream essay. In addition, skill D1 and D2 are assessed by oral presentation, and skill D1 is assessed by unseen examination.

NB The learning outcomes for the Diploma in Health Sciences are the same as for the MSc except that C2 is omitted.

Appendix A maps each of the learning outcomes onto the strategies and methods for both teaching and learning and assessment, and modules that contribute to each of them.

11. Programme features, curriculum and structure:

This modular programme has a number of study options. The degree can be studied full-time over one year or part-time over 2-3 years. The MSc programme consists of three parts: Part I is taught modules covering the key disciplines of Health Sciences, Part II is further taught modules building upon those in Part I and Part III is a project for which a dissertation is submitted. The modules that are offered for each part of the programme are given in Appendix B.

Modules for Part I are taught on Tuesdays and are compulsory. They provide a multidisciplinary foundation covering Fundamentals of research, Medical statistics, Sociology of health and medicine, Health economics and Methods of health and health services research.

Modules for Part II are mostly taught on Wednesdays and include compulsory and elective modules in Health and health care policy, Health promotion, Health surveillance and health needs assessment, Applied epidemiology, Principles of management, Evidence-based practice, Qualitative research methods, Ethics, Public health protection, Partnerships Working for Health and Health Development: a global perspective. The latter two modules are offered through Northumbria University. Part III is a dissertation on the topic of a relevant problem within the fields of health and health care. Projects will usually involve the assembly, analysis and interpretation of data, but other forms are possible. The project and dissertation draws upon disciplines from earlier parts of the programme, and students develop their skills further in problem analysis, literature review, data handling and analysis, data interpretation, project management and written presentation. An additional (optional) module covering the principles of project management will be offered to students. This is assessed as an appendix as part of the dissertation.

The credit value for the whole MSc programme is 180. Modules have credit values of 5, 10, 15 or 20. Parts I and II have a combined credit value of 120, and Part III of 60. The split in credits between Parts I and II is approximately 60:60, but there is some limited flexibility in total credits in each of Part I and II. A Postgraduate Diploma in Health Sciences can be awarded for satisfactory completion of Part I and II only of the programme. A Postgraduate Certificate in Health Sciences can be awarded for satisfactory completion of Part I only of the programme.

Progression through Parts I and II is dependent upon obtaining an average mark over all modules and integrative assessments of not less than 50%, and no single mark for any below 45%. The pass mark for Part III is 50%: candidates with marks between 45% and 49% attend an oral examination on the subject of the dissertation.

12. Criteria for admission:

Essential criteria
A degree or equivalent professional qualification. Non-medical applicants should hold at least a 2nd class honours degree in a professional subject, or in the numerate or social sciences, or show academic attainment to a similar level. Medical students in their 4th year are eligible to apply to do the MSc as an intercalated degree.

Desirable Criteria
It is desirable that applicants have at least two years' post-qualification experience in their field. It is strongly recommended that all applicants have substantial experience of working in the NHS or understand how the NHS functions.

Applicants with non-standard qualifications
Candidates who do not meet the criteria are encouraged to discuss their application with the programme or stream director and/or to provide written justification for their application for this particular programme. All applicants will be considered individually on merit.

Additional requirements
Basic numerical skills – mathematics to GCSE level/O level or evidence of equivalence. Applicants for whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of a satisfactory command of English, preferably by means of a TOEFL score of 575 or greater, or by an IELTS score of 6.5 or greater.

Admissions policy
Applications may be made at any time during the year, but a closing date for finalisation of places will be set annually, usually the end of August. Offers of places are made to suitably qualified applicants, conditional upon receiving a satisfactory reference, evidence of qualifications and IELTS or TOEFL score if applicable. Interviews will be undertaken if appropriate. Specialist Registrars in Public Health Medicine in the Northern Region will be deemed accepted upon appointment.

13. Support for students and their learning:

A tailored programme outlining the coming year is provided for both new and returning students. This programme includes:

- Meeting with the MSc Management group to welcome them and introduce the programme.
- Issue of student handbook. The handbook contains general and domestic information, information on the programme, and student support available.
- Meeting with the Head of School.
- Tours of the Robinson and Walton libraries.
- Introduction to the University computer clusters with exercises.
- An introduction to study skills.
- A social event to allow students to meet fellow-students and staff in a social atmosphere.

- Introduction to project requirements, databases and data protection issues for returning students
- Outline of year ahead and any programme changes to returning students

Study skills support
- A tour of the University libraries is provided as part of the induction programme.
- IT training and a session on study skills are provided as part of the induction programme.
- Training on MINITAB or EPI-INFO is provided as part of the Statistics module.

Academic and pastoral support
- Each student is provided with an academic tutor for pastoral and academic advice and guidance. The results of module assessments are fed back to the tutors, allowing them to monitor the progress of the students.
- An academic member of staff is provided to supervise their dissertation project and to advise them on the production of their dissertation.
- All students have access to the Degree Programme Director and Administrator for advice and discussion of any academic or pastoral issues arising.
- The student handbook provides contact information for the Student Counselling Service and the Chaplaincy.

Support for Special Needs
- Access to Disability Support Unit.

Learning resources
- Access to the Robinson and Walton libraries.
- Access to the University Computing Service e.g. e-mail, access to the web
- IT facilities throughout the campus
- Module websites with links and exercises
- The MSc office has a selection of textbooks to which the students have access.

14. Methods for evaluation and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning:

The quality and standards of the programme are continuously monitored by the formal mechanisms listed below. However, informal comments from current and past students, and employers are also incorporated into the review process.

Mechanisms for review and evaluation

Both individual modules and the programme as a whole are periodically reviewed by the following mechanisms:

- Student questionnaires and information from feedback sessions
- External examiners report

- Annual review of progression and assessment statistics
- Annual review of feedback on modules
- Feedback from graduates and employers

Committees with responsibility for monitoring quality and standards

- Curriculum Committee
- Staff/Student Committee
- Board of Examiners
- Department Teaching Committee
- Faculty Teaching Committee
- University Teaching & Learning Committee

15. Regulation of assessment

The course consists of three parts: Part I and II (taught programme) and Part III (project). All parts must be completed satisfactorily in order to obtain the MSc degree.

The taught components of the programme are assessed by in-course assignments and unseen examination papers. A candidate will pass if the average mark over all modules and integrative assessments, weighted by module size or examination weight, is not less than 50%, and no single mark for any module or integrative assessment is below 45%. All assessments are anonymously and double-marked.

Part III is assessed by the submission of a dissertation during the final year of the programme and the pass mark is 50%. Candidates who obtain between 45% and 49% will be required to attend for an oral examination and this examination will usually involve the lead examiner, the external examiner and, as observer only, the Degree Programme Director.

The Postgraduate Diploma may be awarded under the following circumstances:

- If a candidate has registered for the Diploma and passes Part I and Part II, they will be awarded the Diploma.
- If a candidate has passed Part I and Part II, but fails to achieve a pass in Part III, they will be awarded a Diploma.

The Postgraduate Certificate may be awarded under the following circumstances:

- If a candidate has registered for the Certification and passes Part I, they will be awarded the Diploma.
- If a candidate pas passed Part I but fails to achieve a pass in Part II, they will be awarded a Certificate.

The level required for the award of distinction will be decided at the Board of Examiners, but shall normally be an overall mark of 70% or more for the programme of study as a whole.

An external examiner of the programme (currently Professor Fiona Williams of the University of Dundee) is appointed by the Faculty Teaching Committee. The external examiner is an expert in the programme disciplines, with wide-ranging experience of teaching and learning.

The external examiner's role is that of moderator and includes:

- liaising with and advising on issues of course assessment
- commenting on drafts of unseen exams
- receiving and reviewing scripts from unseen papers alongside marks awarded
- receiving and reviewing coursework alongside marks awarded
- receiving and reviewing dissertations alongside marks awarded and acting as oral examiner in that capacity (when required)
- attending the final Board of Examiners' meeting at which the MSc is awarded
- commenting upon and advising on policy development (particularly where it is of relevance to student assessment)
- providing specific advice and views on borderline cases or other problems associated with student assessment.
- reporting to the University regarding standards

16. Indicators of quality and standards

Previous QAA reports.

The teaching within the Faculty of Medicine was reviewed in October 1998. The outcome was a maximum 24/24 score.

17. Other sources of information

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. It should be noted that there may be variation in the range of learning opportunities reflecting the availability of staff to teach them. While every effort will be made to ensure that the module or modules described in the programme specification are available, this cannot be guaranteed.

The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

In addition, information relating to the course is provided in:

The University Prospectus
The Departmental Prospectus
The University and Degree Programme Regulations
The Degree Programme Handbook
QAA Subject Review Report
The MSc in Health Sciences' website *http://www.ncl.ac.uk/pahs/postgrad/taught/*

Appendix A – See Item 10

A: Knowledge and Understanding

Learning outcomes	Teaching / learning methods and strategies	Assessment methods and strategies	Modules contributing to learning outcome
A1: Describe and appraise the way in which health care is planned, delivered and influenced in the UK	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed reading • Web-based exercises • Group exercises • Student presentations • Project work	• Written assignment • Unseen examination • Oral presentation	• Health and Health Care Policy • Health Economics • Health Needs Assessment • Principles of Management • Sociology of health and medicine
A2: Describe the health status of individuals and populations and the factors that influence them.	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed reading • Computer-based practicals • Student presentations • Individual & group exercises • Project work	• Written assignment • Unseen examination • Oral presentation	• Fundamentals of Research • Health Surveillance and Health Needs Assessment • Sociology of health and medicine • Applied Epidemiology • Health Promotion • Medical Statistics • Health Development: a global perspective

B: Cognitive skills

Learning Outcome	Teaching and learning methods and strategies	Assessment methods and strategies	Modules contributing to learning outcomes
B1: Critically appraise and summarise published literature	• Student presentations • Seminars • Individual & group exercises • Computer based practicals • Lectures • Directed reading • Web-based exercises	• Unseen examination • Written assignment	• Fundamentals of Research • Health Economics • Medical Statistics • Evidence Based Practice
B2: Analyse and interpret health – related data	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed reading • Student presentations • Individual & group exercises • Web-based exercises	• Unseen examination • Written assignment	• Fundamentals of Research • Medical Statistics • Health Economics • Qualitative Methods
B3: Use evidence to recommend changes to health care practice	• Student presentations • Seminars • Group exercises • Lectures • Directed reading • Project work	• Unseen examination • Written assignment	• Health Surveillance and Health Needs Assessment • Health Promotion • Evidence based Practice • Partnership Working for Health

C: Subject specific / Practical skills

Learning Outcome	Teaching and learning methods and strategies	Assessment methods and strategies	Modules contributing to learning outcomes
C1: Design a study to investigate a health-related question	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed reading • Individual & Group exercises • Student presentations • Supported learning • Web-based exercises • Computer-based practicals	• Dissertation • Written assignment • Unseen examination	• Qualitative Methods • Methods of health and health service research • Medical Statistics • Fundamentals of Research • Health Needs Assessment • Project Management**** • Health Economics • Health Promotion • Ethics • Applied Epidemiology • Critical Appraisal
C2: Implement a study of a health-related question	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed reading • Individual & Group exercises • Student presentations • Supported learning • Web-based exercises • Computer-based practicals	• Dissertation • Written assignment • Oral presentation	• Qualitative Methods • Methods of health and health service research • Medical Statistics • Fundamentals of Research • Project Management**** • Health Economics • Health Promotion • Evidence-based Practice • Applied Epidemiology Health Protection • Ethics • Health Development: a global perspective

D: Key skills

Learning Outcome	Teaching and learning methods and strategies	Assessment methods and strategies	Modules contributing to learning outcomes
D1: Identify appropriate information from a variety of sources	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed reading • Group exercises • Computer-based-practicals • Student presentations	• Unseen examination • Written assignment • Dissertation • Oral presentation • Stream Essay	• Health Surveillance and Health Needs Assessment • Critical Appraisal • Applied Epidemiology
D2: Integrate material across a range of disciplines to investigate a topic	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed -reading • Group exercises • Computer-based-practicals • Student presentations	• Written assignment • Dissertation • Stream Essay	• Applied Epidemiology • Project Management *** • Critical Appraisal
D3: Demonstrate effective communication skills in a variety of media	• Lectures • Seminars • Directed -reading • Individual & Group exercises • Computer-based-practicals • Student presentations • Directed reading	• Written assignment • Dissertation • Oral presentation • Stream Essay	• Sociology of health and medicine • Ethics • Principles of Management • Medical Statistics

Appendix B – See Item 11

Curriculum Structure

These tables show the codes, names, credit values and their role

Module title	Credit value	Day taught	Semester taught
Part 1 modules			
Fundamentals of research*	15	Tues	1
Medical statistics*	20	Tues	1 & 2
Sociology of health and medicine*	5	Tues	1
Health economics*	10	Tues	2
Methods of health and HSR*	10	Tues	2
Part 2 modules			
Health & health care policy*	10	Weds	1
Health surveillance & HNA	10	Weds	1
Applied epidemiology	10	Weds	1
Qualitative research methods	10	Weds	1
Principles of management	5	Weds	2
Evidence-based practice	5	Weds	2
Health promotion	10	Weds	2
Health care quality	5	Weds	2
Ethics	5	Weds	2
Partnerships working for health	20	Thurs	2
Health Development: a global perspective	20	Weds	2
Part 3			
Dissertation*	60		