

BA (Honours) POLITICS AND HISTORY  
Programme Specification

<b>1. Awarding institution</b>	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>2. Teaching institution</b>	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>3. Final Award</b>	BA Honours
<b>4. Programme title</b>	Politics and History
<b>5. Accrediting bodies</b>	None
<b>6. UCAS Code</b>	VL12
<b>7. Relevant QAA Benchmarking Groups</b>	Politics, History
<b>8. Date of production</b>	4 March 2004

**9. Programme Aims:**

- To provide opportunities for students to study Politics and History, to acquire the skills of historians and political scientists, to undertake specialised research projects, and to acquire skills relevant to employment.
- To broaden and deepen students' understanding of the nature and significance of Politics and History, including an appreciation of the complexity and diversity of situations, events, and mentalities in the past and the present.
- To offer a research-informed environment in which students can learn about Politics and History from knowledgeable staff, their own study and from discussion with fellow students.
- Graduates of the programme should gain methodological and critical skills.
- Graduates of the programme should gain key skills, such as adaptability, planning, and organisation.
- Graduates of the programme should be capable of going on to further study, or undertaking a wide variety of jobs in industry, commerce, or the public sector.
- Graduates of the programme will have attained standards that at least meet Level 3 of the HE Qualifications Framework and the QAA subject benchmarks for Politics and History.

A typical graduate will have attained the following:

**10 (a) Programme Intended Learning Outcomes:**

**A. Knowledge and understanding**

1. A knowledge and understanding of relevant key concepts within the disciplines of Politics and History.
2. An ability to reflect critically on the nature of the disciplines and professions of Politics and History
3. A knowledge and understanding of self-selected specialisms within the two disciplines.
4. An understanding of the relationship between the disciplines of Politics and History.

**B. Cognitive skills (i.e. intellectual skills)**

1. Analytical reasoning and critical skills in reading, writing and debating
2. Using appropriate evidence to support a sustained argument or line of reasoning
3. Ability to compare contrasting and conflicting ideas and material
4. Ability to adapt effectively to new or unexpected questions or problems
5. Intellectual independence

### **C. Subject-specific skills**

1. Listening and note-taking
2. Independent study
3. Locating, critically reading, evaluating and digesting material
4. The ability to produce clear, succinct, accurate, well-planned and coherent presentation of results in both written and oral forms
5. Research skills required to process and evaluate primary sources and produce thereby an extended piece of work

### **D. Transferable (key) skills**

1. Computer literacy
2. Written Communication
3. Problem Solving
4. Interpersonal Communication
5. Initiative
6. Oral Presentation
7. Adaptability
8. Teamwork
9. Basic numeracy
10. Planning and Organising

### **10 (b) Intended learning outcomes**

#### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

#### **A. Knowledge and understanding**

The primary method of imparting knowledge and understanding (A1-A6) is lectures, supplemented by seminars and in the case of A1 and A5 by IT workshops. Seminars and workshops help to reinforce and amplify student learning gained in lectures. A1, A2, and A3 are developed through the compulsory module (POL100). Throughout the programme, students are encouraged to supplement taught material by independent study, for which they are given extensive support and guidance on relevant reading materials, and web-based material, and how to use them. Students have the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding partly via intensive seminar work and also by the undertaking of an independent research project under staff supervision. A6 is taught particularly through a compulsory module at Stage 1 (POL100) and in one optional stage 3 module. A7 is taught partly via intensive seminar work and also by the undertaking of an independent research project under staff supervision.

#### **B. Cognitive skills**

Cognitive skills (B1-B5) are developed through exercises and guidance in lectures, in seminars, where group discussion and debate take place, supplemented in the case of B1-B3 by written feedback and by discussion with staff. Students are encouraged to acquire such skills through the completion of a range of written assignments, notably essays and documentary commentaries and problem-solving exercises. (B1-B5) are also encouraged by group and one-to-one discussion and debate in lectures, seminars

- and tutorials.
- C. Subject-specific skills  
Listening and note-taking (C1) are taught via a skills module (POL100) and developed principally in lectures, but also in seminars. Note-taking is also a feature of independent study. Other subject-specific skills (C2-C6) are taught in lectures and in seminars, supplemented by assigned work (C2-C3, C5) and workshops. C6 is further taught by dissertation supervisions. Such skills (C2-C6) are developed and practiced in written assignments, notably essays and documentary commentaries, and problem-solving exercises undertaken in class or in private study time. Preparation of oral presentations also helps develop C2 and C4-C5.
- D. Key skills  
Transferable skills are principally learnt and practiced in private study, preparation of assignments, and seminars (D2-D8, D10), and taught also in the skills module (D2-D3, D5, D10) via workshops supplemented in the case of D3, D5, D8, D9 and D10 by workshops. Assigned work also helps to inculcate D2, D3, and D10. Communication skills (D2, D4) are further refined in one-to-one essay tutorials. Transferable skills are developed and practiced in written assignments such as essays and documentary commentaries (D2-D3, D5, D10) supplemented in the case of D3, D4, D6, D7, D8, and D10 by individual or group presentations. Oral debate in seminars or tutorials supplies the opportunity to develop D4 and D6. Specific problem-solving exercises help to develop some basic numeracy (D9) and computer literacy (D1) is practiced by the word-processing of written assignments and problem-solving exercises such as bibliographic tasks. D8 is fostered by group presentations and assignments

**10 (c) Intended learning outcomes**  
Methods of assessment

- A. Knowledge and understanding  
Knowledge and understanding of the subject is primarily assessed by unseen written examination together with written assignments notably essays and documentary commentaries. (A1-A7) In the case of A7, students have the opportunity to have their knowledge of understanding of the subject assessed via an extended piece of work, usually an undergraduate dissertation.
- B. Cognitive skills  
Cognitive skills B1-B3 and B5 are assessed by written assignments, including unseen examination, written assignments, timed class essays and are also to be assessed in dissertations. B4 is primarily assessed by unseen written examination only.
- C. Subject-specific practical skills  
The ability of students to deploy subject-specific skills (C1-C5) effectively is assessed primarily by means of unseen written examination, written assignments, timed class essays and also in dissertations. C6 is assessed via an undergraduate dissertation.
- D. Key skills  
D6 and D8 are assessed by means of the grading of seminar group presentations. D9 is assessed by means of specific workshop tasks. D2, D3, D7, D10 are assessed by a combination of unseen examination (D2, D3, D7), written assignments (D2, D3, D10), timed class essays and can also be assessed in

dissertations. In the case of D2, this is supplemented by assessed workshop tasks. Computer literacy (D1) is assessed as part of the process of grading written assignments and also forms part of specific workshop tasks. D4 is not assessed.

## Section 11

### Programme Features, Curriculum and Structure:

#### (i) Programme features

The programme is studied over three years full-time.

The programme is divided into three stages. Each year, or stage, requires the study of modules with a total credit value of 120. The three years of the degree therefore amount to 360 credits. Each credit represents 10 hours of student effort, covering lectures, seminars, private study, completion of coursework and revision.

In politics and history, modules vary in size from 10 to 30 credits.

At Stage 1, there is compulsory module (POL100) for 20 credits that introduces students to methods and study skills in Politics and History. Students must take at least one introductory Politics module in the areas of political thought, political systems or international politics. Students must take a minimum of 40 credits in Politics overall and 40 in History overall.

At Stage 2, students normally take 60 credits in Politics and 60 credits in History. However, at both Stages 1 and 2, students have the right to earn up to 20 credits in modules taken outside the department.

At Stage 3, all students have the choice to complete a dissertation in either Politics or History. Overall, they must take 60 credits in Politics and 60 credits in History.

For degree classification purposes, all honours modules count. Stage 3 modules have twice the weighting of stage 2 modules in the final degree classification.

Progression to the next stage of the programme is conditional on meeting the conditions laid down by the University for progression. Students should pass every module with a mark of at least 40%. Narrow failure of a small number of credits will be condoned.

#### (ii) Curriculum and structure

The core of Stage 1 is POL100, where students are introduced to the substantive subject matter of the two disciplines of Politics and History and the differences/similarities between the two (A1-A2, A4). Other Stage one modules begin the development of all related cognitive skills (B1-B5) and subject-specific skills (C1-C5). Key skills (D1-D8, D10) are introduced and practiced in most stage one modules.

At Stage 2, there are more opportunities for specialisation. All modules at this stage are optional, and provide the opportunity to

develop further knowledge of both disciplines (A1-A4). Modules at Stage 2 continue the development of cognitive (B1-B5) and subject-specific skills (C1-C5). A number of Stage 2 modules offer the opportunity to develop research skills and produce extended pieces of work (C6). Transferable skills (D1-D8, D10) are also developed at Stage 2.

At Stage 3, there are further opportunities for specialisation. Students have the opportunity to take Special Subjects in history, where students develop their knowledge and understanding of a relatively narrow historical topic and its related primary sources (A1, A7). At Stage 3, students have the opportunity to do a dissertation in either Politics or History (A3). Dissertations develop cognitive (B1-B5) and subject-specific skills (C1-C5), but also provide students with the opportunity to develop research skills (C6) and produce an extended study. Transferable skills (D1-D8, D10) are further developed at Stage 3.

## **Section 12**

### **Criteria for Admission**

The admissions officer normally asks applicants to the degree programme from England, Wales, and Northern Ireland for at least ABB from 18 units including A level History and one other A level. AVCE (Double Award) accepted if offered with an A level. AS level History considered. Prospective entrants may also offer two AS levels of a similar standard in place of a third A level.

Scottish Qualifications are welcomed, and although we consider all candidates with Scottish Highers/CSYS on an individual basis, a typical offer would be AAABB at Higher Grade including History. Combination of Highers and Advanced Highers accepted.

Other Qualifications: For candidates offering Access courses, modules in Historical Studies, Social Studies and Law desirable (at Credit level for courses that are graded).

Places are normally offered primarily on predicted grades at A and AS level and the student's personal statement.

Students to whom offers are made are invited to an Open afternoon to meet staff and students. Attendance of this afternoon is non-compulsory. Applicants with non-standard qualifications may be interviewed.

Appropriate overseas qualifications will be considered from overseas students, as well as A levels. A minimum of 30 points

in the IB Diploma preferably with Grade 6 or above in History at Higher Level. Evidence of English language skills that are adequate to complete the programme successfully is required.

For the Irish Leaving Certificate, ABBBB at Higher Level including History is required. For candidates offering Access Qualifications to HE courses, modules in Historical Studies or Social Sciences are desirable (at Credit level for HEFC). BTEC National Diploma Applicants offering BTEC qualifications will be considered on an individual basis.

The programme is keen to encourage applications from mature students with A levels or other qualifications and each of these applicants is given individual consideration. Whatever one's background or qualifications, the programme welcomes applications from bright and enthusiastic people with a genuine interest in politics and history

Information about criteria for admissions may be found at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/course/v112/requirements>

## **Section 13**

### **Support for Students and their Learning**

- Induction programme for both orientation and the introduction of study skills for both new and returning students
- A compulsory first year skills module (POL100) to inculcate some basic study skills
- Personal tutors available to advise on module selection, to take an overview of students' performance and to assist with personal problems
- Politics and History Staff-Student Committee to foster and improve communications between staff and students and to identify issues of concern to students.
- Access to University Student Counselling service (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/student.counselling>)
- Help from the University Student Office regarding financial problems, transfers between degree programmes and matters concerning University or faculty regulations
- Access to the Student Progress Office regarding welfare or any problems that might affect a students progression
- Access to the University Accommodation Office
- Access to the Student Union Society resources, notably the Welfare Officer and Child care co-ordinator
- Students have email and personal access to the Degree Programme Director and tutorial staff
- Access to the University Careers Service:

- (<http://www.careers.ncl.ac.uk>)
- Excellent University Library Facilities, including CDROM databases and online services (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library>)
  - Excellent computing clusters throughout the Campus
  - Degree Programme Handbook
  - Module reading lists and course handbooks
  - Resources and information listed on the school web-sites (<http://historical-studies.ncl.ac.uk/history.asp>) (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/geps/about/politics.htm>) and on individual staff websites.
  - Support for special needs, including dyslexia and hearing impediments, via the University Disability Unit

## Section 14

### **Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning**

- Staff-student committee fosters improved student feedback on the quality of their teaching and learning experience
- Student feedback regarding individual modules and programmes via module and stage 1, 2 and programme (issued at the end of state 3) questionnaires
- Peer observation of teaching via the mentoring system for new members of staff and via the degree programme's requirements of peer review.
- Module reviews. Modules are reviewed each year by module leaders in the light of student feedback and attainment and staff comment
- Scrutiny Committee of Degree Programme Directors for Politics, History, and Politics History, collating information from Politics and History Boards of Studies, (committees of all module leaders together with student representatives and some external staff members reviews the programme regularly, in order to enhance and develop it and considers progression rates, achieved examination and coursework grades, degree classes achieved and graduate employment statistics) for presentation by Degree Programme Director to Faculty Committee for Joint Degree.
- Liaison Committee of Degree Programme Director, Heads of School, and administrators to implement good practice in operation of the degree programme through student evaluation.
- External examiners, senior academics appointed by the University to oversee the programme, comment on its quality and standards, take part in the progress of assessment of stage 2, and stage 3 students and in the process of final degree classification.
- Boards of Examiners review assessment and performance at

- each stage of the degree
- Annual Faculty review of the programme
- University review of the programme as part of internal subject review that occurs every few years.

## Section 15

### Regulation of Assessment

#### Assessment rules and Honours Classification

- Minimum pass mark for each module is 40%
- Students are assessed by a combination of unseen written examination, by submitted work and by a variety of class exercises.
- At stage 2, no history module is assessed by a combination of unseen written examination and submitted work. All stage two history modules involve either an examination or submitted work.
- Programme requirements: students must pass all modules at Stage 1 and Stage 2 to proceed to next Stage. (Narrow failure of a small number of credits will be condoned.) There are two resit opportunities
- Final degree classification is based on the results of Stage 2 and Stage 3 modules only. Modules taken at Stage 3 count double towards the final degree.

Honours marks are based on the University's Common Marking Scheme:

70 or more	First Class
60-69	Second Class, Upper division
50-59	Second Class, Lower division
40-49	Third Class
Less than 40%	Fail

### Role of External examiners

The External examiners are distinguished members of the academic community appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee and their role is to

- Advise on examination papers on modules which count for Honours
- Review samples of examination scripts and coursework to check standards and assessment procedures
- Attend the Examination Board meetings and participate in the process of deciding students' degree classification
- Report back to the University on comparability of standards of the degree student attainment in relation to national standards



## **Section 16**

### **Indicators of Quality and Standards**

- QAA report on the quality and standard of provision
- Faculty reports on the quality and standard of provision
- Graduate employment statistics
- ANRB and ESRC funding for graduates
- Prizes awarded to graduate students by the Royal Historical Society and the Political Studies Association

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

Key information about the programme can also be found in the following sources:

The University Prospectus

The History at Newcastle Brochure

The Politics at Newcastle Brochure

The University and Degree Programme Regulations

The Degree Programme Handbook

The Module Handbooks

The QAA Subject Review Report 1994 [History] and 1998 (with follow-up 1999) [Politics]

The School Web-sites (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/history> and [www.ncl.ac.uk/politics](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/politics))

## **Section 18**

In recognition of problems in providing a consistent experience for students on Joint Honours and Combined Studies programmes, UTLC has approved a revised system for managing them, including the requirement for a Faculty-level Board (equivalent to a Board of Studies), a Faculty-level Progress and Awards Board (equivalent to a Board of Examiners) and a Faculty-level Staff-Student Committee for these programmes. There is also a requirement for a Subject Co-ordinator to ensure that there are clear points of contact for both students and liaison on curriculum and assessment matters.