

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MSc
4	Programme Title	MSc Social Science and Health Research
5	UCAS/Programme Code	4801F/P
6	Programme Accreditation	Not applicable
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Not applicable
8	FHEQ Level	Level 7
9	Date written/revised	May 2009

10 Programme Aims

- 1 Enable graduates to gain advanced knowledge and understanding of the social science disciplines related to health, illness and health care:
 - An understanding of the social factors that influence the health of individuals and populations, and the skills to research these factors.
 - An understanding of the context of health, illness and health care.
- 2 Produce graduates who are capable of successfully undertaking and completing advanced research projects by allowing students to undertake a general training in research methods and management within Social Sciences. Within this aim, the students will be provided with individual experience of a range of cutting edge research in population and health sciences in order to develop:
 - The ability to apply social science research methods to health, illness and health care issues.
 - The capacity to integrate material across a range of disciplines.
 - The ability to carry out a research project within the disciplines covered in Social Sciences related to health, illness and health care.
- 3 Contribute to ESRC, NHS and University of Newcastle objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates and enhancing their key skills and employability.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for social policy.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- A1 Describe and understand the theoretical traditions and concepts that shape social science disciplines and range of social science research methods related to health, illness and health care.
- A2 Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the variety of philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin approaches to social inquiry.
- A3 Understanding of the way in which social divisions (including gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and disability) are generated as structures of power and patterns of inequality; how these are reproduced and transformed over time; and how they shape and impact health and health policy
- A4 Describe appropriate research governance procedures.

A5	Describe ethical issues in research.
Teaching and Learning Methods	
<p><i>Teaching Strategies</i></p> <p>Knowledge and understanding (A1-5) are primarily imparted through lectures and seminars. Group exercises and student presentations of key facts and theories are used to check the students learning. Students 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. A1 – 2 are also achieved by project work undertaken as part of several of the modules leading to these learning outcomes.</p> <p><i>Learning Strategy</i></p> <p>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. Exercises are provided throughout the programme for self assessment/monitoring of progress.</p>	
Assessment Strategy	
<p>Knowledge and understanding of the subjects is assessed by unseen examinations (A1-5) and written assignments (A1-5). This is supplemented by the use of assessed oral presentations (A1-5).</p>	
Intellectual Skills	
On completing the programme students should be able to:	
B1	Discriminate between, and apply, appropriate methodological approaches to research questions.
B2	Design a study to investigate a health-related question.
B3	Implement a study of a health-related question.
Teaching and Learning Methods	
<p><i>Teaching Strategy</i></p> <p>Skills in study conception and design (B1-2) and study implementation (B3) are developed by lectures, seminars and individual and group exercises. Students are also taught basic statistical computing packages (B2-3) 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.</p> <p><i>Learning strategy</i></p> <p>Students are encouraged to develop skills B1-3 through active participation in class exercises (statistics project, demography and information student presentations). These skills are further developed and reinforced as the students apply them to the development of a research project which is written up as their dissertation.</p>	
Assessment Strategy	
<p>These skills are assessed by design and implementation of a research project for the dissertation (B1-3), by unseen examination (B2), written assignment (B1-2), statistics project (B1-3) and oral presentation (B1-2).</p>	
Practical Skills	
On completing the programme students should be able to:	
C1	Critically appraise and summarise published literature.

C2	Analyse and interpret social science and health-related data.
Teaching and Learning Methods	
<p><i>Teaching Strategy</i> Practical skills are developed through seminars (C1-2) and individual and group exercises (C1-2). Students are encouraged to explore and develop these skills through directed reading and student presentations, through case studies (C1) and project work to assess and solve problems (C2).</p> <p><i>Learning Strategy</i> Students are encouraged to develop practical skills through a range of exercises. 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.</p>	
Assessment Strategy	
Practical skills are assessed by unseen examination and written assignments which test data interpretation, analysis and appraisal of literature (C1-2).	
Transferable/Key Skills	
On completing the programme students should be able to:	
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 and Learning Methods	
<p><i>Teaching Strategy</i> 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.</p> <p><i>Learning Strategy</i> 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. Resource packs suggesting sources of information and details of useful websites will be provided. Integration of material from across the programme content is encouraged, and is further developed in the planning and implementation of the research project for the dissertation. Students are supported by an academic supervisor, who provides support and advice throughout the dissertation.</p>	
Assessment Strategy	
Skills D1-3 are assessed by a combination of written assignments, oral presentation, and the dissertation. In addition, skill D1 is assessed by unseen examination.	

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

The MSc will provide broad-based research training in contemporary social science methodology and methods. It has been designed to meet the new ESRC 1+3 training guidelines. These guidelines emphasize the need for students to acquire key generic and subject-specific research skills in the Masters year prior to embarking on a doctoral programme. The programme will also cater for non ESRC-sponsored students, who could progress on to a doctoral programme or pursue a career in academic or non-academic

research.

This is a one year full time or two year part time programme. It consists of three parts: training in research methods and skill development; modules in applied policy research and policy studies; and a dissertation project.

The core training in social science research is provided in a family of modules taught on the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Training Programme. The modules are: The Nature of Explanation and Enquiry in the Social Science (HSS8007); Thinking about Research (HSS8001); Information Skills (HSS8002); Dissertation Preparation (HSS8003); Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences (HSS8005); and Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences (HSS8004). More specialist understanding of issues relating specifically to health are given in the modules taught in the Institute of Health and Society (IHS) including: Health and Health Care Policy (HSC8040); Health and Society (HSC8047); Applied Epidemiology (HSC8046); Health Care Quality (HSC8048); Health Economics (HSC8027) and Health Promotion (HSC8042). Specialist modules in applied policy research are taught in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, specifically Comparative Perspectives in Social and Environmental Change (SOC8045), and Social Divisions and Inequalities (SOC8034).

The philosophy of social science methodology (A1-2) is introduced in HSS8007. The development of this philosophy into theory and practice (A1 and A3-5) is then taken up in HSS8001 and on into HSS8004 and 8005. These latter two modules involve students in the practical analysis and interpretation of social science and health-related data (B2).

Guided and independent reading throughout the programme, brought into group exercises and discussion in the classroom provides the beginnings of an ability to critically appraise and summarise published literature (B1) at the appropriate level. Preparation and implementation of the project and dissertation then sees this through.

The social science perspective on, and the application of social science investigative practice to, health specifically (A1) are addressed in the HSC modules. These modules also both involve hands-on analysis and interpretation of data (B2). The Health and Health Care Policy module (HSC8040) provides essential background understanding of the practical context of the issues for investigation (A3).

C1-3 are covered in the preparation for the project and dissertation, especially in the Dissertation Preparation module, and then in implementation of the project itself and writing it up into the dissertation.

Transferable skills D1 and D3 are developed throughout all the modules of the programme. D2, the ability to integrate material across a range of disciplines to investigate a topic, is realized in its fullest in the dissertation.

The credit value for the whole MSc programme is 180. Modules have credit values of 10 or 20. The taught component part of the programme has a credit value of 120, and the dissertation of 60. The programme can be studied either one year full-time or 2 years part-time.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

- Equip students from different academic and professional backgrounds with an awareness and understanding of the variety of philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin approaches to social inquiry
- Provide you with an understanding of the social factors that influence the health of individuals and populations, and the skills to research these factors
- Allow you to develop an understanding of the context of health, illness and health care
- Provide students with the ability to apply social science research methods to health, illness and health care issues
- Equip you with the capacity to integrate material across a range of disciplines

- Develop the student's ability to carry out a research project within the disciplines covered in social sciences related to health, illness and health care.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

13 Criteria for admission

Entry qualifications

The MSc in Social Science and Health Research is to be offered to social science graduates or health sciences graduates with an appropriate social science background. Applicants should hold at least a 2:1 class honours degree.

Admissions policy/selection tools

Applications may be made at any time during the year, but a closing date for finalisation of places will be set annually. Offers of places are made to suitably qualified applicants, conditional upon receiving a satisfactory references. Interviews will be undertaken if appropriate.

Non-standard Entry Requirements

Applicants 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 Grade A-C or evidence of equivalence.

Level of English Language capability

Applicants for whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of a satisfactory command of English, preferable by means of a TOEFL score of 575 or greater, or by an IELTS score of 6.5 or greater.

14 Support for Student Learning

The Student Services portal provides links to key services and other information and is available at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/>

Induction

During the first week of the first semester students attend an induction programme. New students will be given a general introduction to University life and the University's principle support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. New and continuing students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/practicals/labs/ tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students.

Study skills support

Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid and help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre (further information is available from the Robinson Library).

Academic support

The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of

School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies.

Pastoral support

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. In addition the University offers a range of support services, including one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions / workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues e.g. Stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Union Society operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

Support for students with disabilities

The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to Newcastle. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies.

Learning resources

The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities.

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-session language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange.

15 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Module reviews

All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the School Teaching and Learning Committee and at the Board of Studies. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

Programme reviews

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. The FTLC takes an overview of all programmes within the Faculty and reports any Faculty or institutional issues to the University Teaching and Learning Committee.

External Examiner reports

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

Student evaluations

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee, and the Board of Studies. The results from student surveys are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review of the programme and any arising actions are captured at programme and School / institutional level and reported to the appropriate body.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback

Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms

The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process. Every five years degree programmes in each subject area are subject to periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a two-day review visit by a review team which includes an external subject specialist in addition to University and Faculty representatives. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Teaching and Learning Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further five year period.

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

The pass mark is 50 (Postgraduate programmes)

Course requirements

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40% is possible and there are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes

<50	Fail
50-59	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit
70 or above	Pass with Distinction

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes

<50	Fail
50 or above	Pass

Role of the External Examiner

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, after recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- See and approve examination papers
- Moderate examination and coursework marking
- Attend the Board of Examiners
- Report to the University on the standards of the programme

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

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>

The School Brochure

Degree Programme and University Regulations:
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/2009-2010/documents/480109_10final140409.pdf

The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. 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.

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

MSc Social Science and Health Research

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
HSS8001	C	1 2 4 5	1 2	2	1 2 3
HSS8002	C				1 2
HSS8003	C	1 2 4 5	1 2 3	2	1 2 3
HSS8004	C	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2
HSS8005	C	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2
HSS8007	C	1 2 4 5	1		1 3
HSC8027	O	1 2 3		1 2	1 2 3
HSC8040	C	1 2 3		1 2	1 2 3
HSC8042	O	1 2 3		1 2	1 2 3
HSC8046	O	1 2		1 2	1 2 3
HSC8047	C	1 2 3		1 2	1 2 3
HSC8048	O	1 2		1 2	1 2 3
SOC8034	O	1 2 3		1 2	1 2 3
SOC8045	O	1 2 3		1 2	1 2 3
HSC8099	C or	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	1 2	1 2 3
SOC8098	C	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3	1 2	1 2 3