

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MRes Digital Civics
4	Programme Title	MRes Digital Civics
5	Programme Code	4843F
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	N/A
8	FHEQ Level	Level 7
9	Last updated	26 July 2014

10 Programme Aims

1. To equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to undertake doctoral level research in Digital Civics: the application of personal and community-based digital technologies in the support of local communities, local government service provision, and local democracy.
2. To provide students with an understanding of contemporary issues in the technology, theory, policy and practice of Digital Civics.
3. To provide students with an understanding of theory and application of the principal research methods for Digital Civics.
4. To develop skills in the critical assessment of research in Digital Civics.
5. To develop the project planning, team-working and communication skills necessary for the conduct of cross- and multi-disciplinary disciplinary research in Digital Civics.
6. To provide a programme which meets the FHEQ at Masters level.

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.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have:

- A1 Knowledge and understanding of contemporary practices and challenges in the use of digital technologies in local government service provision.
- A2 Knowledge and understanding of the principal qualitative and quantitative research methods for Digital Civics, including an understanding of their conceptual underpinnings and limitations and experience of their practical application.
- A3 Knowledge and understanding of interaction design methods, including their practical application in design-led research.
- A4 Knowledge and understanding of the principles of human-computer interaction and their application to challenges of Digital Civics
- A5 Knowledge and understanding of social and ubiquitous computing and their application to challenges of Digital Civics.
- A6 Specialist knowledge and understanding that underpins one application strand of Digital Civics (i.e. in digital technologies, planning, public health & social care or pedagogy and learning).

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary teaching and learning methods for learning and understanding (A1-A6) are seminars and practical classes. Students will be required to deepen understanding by independent reading of the relevant literature both in preparation for seminars and subsequently. This is supported through guidance provided as part of students' research methods training, and supplemented by topic-specific guidance during seminars. Group and individual project work will also play an important role, allowing students to strengthen and apply the knowledge and understanding they have gained.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment of knowledge and understanding (A1-A6) is primarily assessed through coursework, but also through unseen written examinations (for specific technical knowledge), project reports (using a range of formats) and presentations.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1 Critically appraise and summarise both peer reviewed and other literature.
- B2 Analyse, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data.
- B3 Be creative and innovative in the application of design methods in problem solving.
- B4 Evaluate and use appropriate computer based tools and techniques.
- B5 Plan, conduct and report a programme of novel investigative work.
- B6 Take account of different disciplinary perspectives on knowledge and methods in planning, designing, conducting and communicating multi- and cross-disciplinary research.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Intellectual skills (B1-B6) are introduced and practised throughout the taught modules, in particular through the use of appropriate case studies used in seminar and practical classes. Specific research skills are introduced in seminar on research methods (B1, B2, B4), design-led research (B3), and research proposal planning (B5, B6). Both team and individual projects provide important opportunities for students to apply and develop all these skills (B1-6). Small group and one-to-one project supervision is employed in the team and individual project work to ensure students receive appropriate support and have the opportunity for deep engagement in the learning of skills.

Assessment Strategy

Intellectual skills are assessed through coursework assignments, both practical (artefacts and analysis) and written reports and presentation, and for technical modules through unseen written examinations. Specific skills will be the focus of the assessment of particular modules (B3: Interaction Design Methods for Digital Civics; B4: Technologies for Digital Civics; B2: Research Methods for Digital Civics; B5/B6: Digital Civics Research Project), whereas presentations and final reports for the dissertation module will be assess all these intellectual skills.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1 Apply advanced practical skills in the specific areas of Digital Civics chosen as part of their study (through the option strands).
- C2 Apply design methods in problem solving.
- C3 Use the academic and practitioner literature to search for information to address research problems.

- C4 Prepare research reports, and deliver research presentations to domain experts.
- C5 Design and prepare engaging presentations to non-experts in multiple media formats.
- C6 Manage a research project.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Practical skills (C1-C6) are developed through hands on practical exercises, coursework assignments and project work. Support for this is provided in the seminars and practical classes of the core modules. The seminar format of the core modules will place a particular emphasis on presentation and literature review skills. The research project will afford the opportunity for one-to-one support for the development of practical skills involving both the supervisory team and relevant post-doctoral and doctoral researchers.

Assessment Strategy

Practical skills (C1-C6) are assessed through a range of coursework assignments associated with taught modules and through the range of formats of project deliverables (e.g. presentations, demonstrations and dissertation) associated with the team and individual assignments and projects

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- D1 Communicate effectively (verbally, in writing, and using digital media).
- D2 Work effectively as part of a team.
- D3 Develop novel ideas and solutions to problems.
- D4 Manage resources, plan organise and prioritise work effectively to meet deadlines.
- D5 Learn independently and engage in open-minded critical enquiry.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Transferable skills (D1-D5) are developed through participation in seminars and through coursework and project work. Effective communication (D1) will be developed through participation in seminars and practical classes, and further through feedback on written coursework submission and presentations. Support for this is provided through the core modules in particular, facilitated by the small group character of the seminar format. Team working skills (D2) are developed through various team-based practical exercises and assignments. Deadlines for submission of coursework (formative and summative) will foster time and work management skills (D4). The research project will support the development of all these skills (D1-D5).

Assessment Strategy

Transferable skills (D1-D5) are assessed throughout the taught modules through coursework (including reports and presentations). Team coursework will directly assess students' ability to work as part of a team (D2). As the dissertation module includes the conduct of a substantial project in a real-world context, including engaging with external stakeholders, service users, etc., it will assess all transferable skills (D1-5).

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

The programme is studied on over one year full-time. There is a single stage to the programme, requiring the study of 180 credits. A 10-credit module consists of 100 hours of study time, made up of seminars, lectures, practical classes, presentations, private study, completion of coursework and revision. Taught modules vary between 10- and 20-credit taught modules and an 80-credit research project module. The programme has 150 credits of core modules (taken by all students) and 30 credits of optional modules organised as 30-credit optional strands in one of the 4 Digital Civics specialisms (Technologies, Public Health & Social Care, Local Democracy and Community Learning). Students must select one option strand and take all 30 credits of modules from that strand.

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

A key feature of the program is that it combines training in fundamental knowledge and skills in areas that cut across all areas of Digital Civics and Digital Civics research (human-computer interaction, interaction design, research methods and ubiquitous and social computing) with the option of deeper specialist training in a specific strand of Digital Civics: either the underlying technologies of Digital Civics (Technology option strand), or discipline specific training relevant to one of three Digital Civics application domains (i.e. the Local Democracy, Public Health & Social Care, or Community Learning option strands). The Research Project in Digital Civics requires students to undertake a significant design-led Digital Civics research project that involves supervisors from at least two different strands, and at least one external organisation who will both provide and advise on the real-world context that the research project is responding to.

Involvement of partner organisations (industry, local government and third sector) where appropriate in:

- Delivery of case studies for core modules;
- Seminars and practical classes;
- Co-supervision of CSC8609 (Digital Civics Research Project);
- Supporting access to stakeholders and service users (CSC8609)

Fully-costed commitments from external organisations, to facilitate the engagement of their staff in the delivery of the MRes in Digital Civics have been made by:

- Northumberland County Council, Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council.
- BT Research, eBay Research Labs, Microsoft Research (Cambridge), BBC R&D (UK), Orange Labs (France), IBM Research (Smarter Cities Technology Centre, Ireland), Promethean (UK), SMART Technologies (Canada), Line (UK); Philips Research (Eindhoven), and Tunstall Healthcare (UK).
- AgeUK, Investing in Children, Angelou Centre, Gentoo, Food Nation, Balance North East, Schools North East, Reflective Thinking, Churchill Community College, Newcastle City Learning Centre, Demos, FutureGov, Northern Architecture and The Royal Town Planning Institute.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/>

13 Criteria for admission

Entry qualifications: a good honours degree (upper second class or equivalent) in any discipline if applicant has additional relevant non-academic experience; or a good honours degree (upper second class or equivalent) in Computer Science, Engineering, Education, Politics, Social Science, Architecture, Planning, Psychology, Health Studies (or related discipline) or Design.

Admissions policy/selection tools: shortlisting based on qualifications, previous experience and personal statement regarding interest in Digital Civics; all short-listed candidates to be interviewed; offers made on the basis of qualifications, experience and interview performance.

Non-standard Entry Requirements: applicants for fully funded scholarships will be required to submit by a fixed deadline (which will be externally advertised).

Additional Requirements: None.

Level of English Language capability: IELTS 7.0 (or equivalent)

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 Development Centre (further information is available from the Robinson Library).

Academic and Pastoral support

Each undergraduate and taught postgraduate student will be assigned a personal tutor.* A personal tutor is one part of a wider network of advice and guidance available to students to support their personal and general academic development. The module leader acts as the first point of contact for subject-specific academic advice. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Student-Staff Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies. Within the academic unit, students may also receive additional academic and pastoral advice from a range of other student-facing staff including degree programme directors, dissertation/project supervisors, and administrative support staff.

*Arrangements may vary for students taking special types of provision.

The University also offers a wide range of institutional services and support upon which students can call, such as the Writing Development Centre, Careers Service and Student Wellbeing Service. This includes 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 Student Union 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 team 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 Board of Studies and/or the School Teaching and Learning Committee. Student opinion is sought at the Student-Staff Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

Programme reviews

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

External Examiner reports

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

Student evaluations

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Student-Staff 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 Student-Staff Committee and the Board of Studies.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms

Every six years degree programmes in each subject area undergo periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a review visit by a review team (normally one day in duration) which includes an external subject specialist and a student representative. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further six year period.

Accreditation reports

Additional mechanisms

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

The pass mark is 50%

Course requirements

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. There are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions. Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40% is possible for candidates who commenced their programme in 2013/14 or earlier. For students starting their programme in 2014/15 or later, no compensation is possible.

The University employs a common marking scheme for Masters level programmes, which is specified in the Regulations for Research Masters Degree Programmes (excluding MPhil programmes):

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

Role of the External Examiner

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the Digital Civics research community, is appointed by the University following recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- i. See and approve assessment papers
- ii. Moderate examination and coursework marking
- iii. Attend the Board of Examiners
- iv. Report to the University on the standards of the programme

Each student will also be assigned an additional External Examiner, a distinguished member of the research community, who is appointed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies (upon nomination of the Degree Programme Director). This examiner will evaluate the student's dissertation (research project report) and provide a detailed (brief) written report to the University. An external examiner may be asked to consider multiple dissertations.

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

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

The School Brochure: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/marketing/services/print/publications/ordering/>

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

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

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
Core Modules					
CSC8601	Compulsory	1	1	3, 4	1, 2, 4, 5
CSC8602	Compulsory	2	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
CSC8605	Compulsory	3	1, 2, 3	2, 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
CSC8603	Compulsory	4	1, 2, 3	3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
CSC8604	Compulsory	5	1, 2, 4	3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
CSC8609	Compulsory	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 3, 4, 5
Technology Option Strand					
CSC8101	Optional	6	1, 2, 3, 4	1	1, 3, 4, 5
CSC8111	Optional	6	1, 2, 3, 4	1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
CSC8202	Optional	6	1, 2, 3, 4	1	1, 3, 4, 5
Local Democracy Option Strand					
TCP8939	Optional	6	1, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
TCP8001	Optional	6	1, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
SOC8034	Optional	6	1, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
Community Learning Option Strand					
EDU8031	Optional	6	1, 2, 5, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
SOC8034	Optional	6	1, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
Public Health & Social Care Option Strand					
HSC8047	Optional	6	1, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
HSC8056	Optional	6	1, 6	1, 3	1, 3, 4, 5
HSC8042	Optional	6	1	1, 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5