Newcastle University Programme Specification

1	**Awarding Institution**	University of Newcastle upon Tyne

2	**Teaching Institution**	As above

3	**Final Award**	MA

4	**Programme Title**	Applied Policy Research

5	**Programme Accredited**	Not appropriate

6	**UCAS**	Not appropriate

7	**QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s)**	Social Policy

8	**Date of production/revision**	May 1, 2002/ updated Oct 8. 2004

9. Programme Aims

(i)   to meet the aims of the ESRC's postgraduate training guidelines by providing high quality research training at Master's level.

(ii)   to provide learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and sociology in particular

(iii)   to contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates (Institutional Plan, 6.7 (ii) and (iii)) and enhancing their key skills and employability (5.7 (iv))

(iv)   to produce graduates who are capable of successfully undertaking and completing advanced research projects

(v)   to produce graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector, or the private sector

(vi)   to provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at level 4 in the national qualifications framework

10. Intended learning outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for the students to develop and demonstrate:

A. General Research skills

A1   Bibliographic and computing skills:

(i)   the skills to identify and obtain relevant materials relating to research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings, and resources available electronically and on the WWW
(ii)   the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and use EndNote
(iii)   IT skills, including word processing and other basic computing skills including spreadsheets and database management, SPSS and Nu.Dist

A2   Language skills

(i)   where appropriate, the acquisition of the language skills necessary to enable research in, or pertaining to, a non-English speaking country, to be undertaken

A3   Ethical issues

(i)   a knowledge and understanding of matters relating to privacy and confidentiality in research
(ii)   an awareness of the political context of research
(iii)   an awareness of professional codes of practice
(iv)   a knowledge and understanding of the power relations inherent in research fieldwork
(v)   an awareness of the ethical responsibilities that a researcher has towards the researched

Teaching strategy
Bibliographic and computer skills are taught through workshops and practical classes. Ethical issues are taught by lectures and workshops.

Learning strategy
Students learn bibliographical skills (A1 (i - ii) by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation. Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues through team work, presentations, case studies and independent reading.

Assessment strategy
General research skills will be assessed by means of unseen written exams and coursework. Both employ a range of approaches in order to accurately assess student abilities. The assessment for the information skills module will be constructing a bibliography,

incorporating bibliographic search strategies and professional design and layout. IT skills will be assessed by the bibliographic exercise and data practical assessment. Ethical issues will be assessed by a combination of team work assessment and 3,000 word written reports.

B Training in Research Methods
The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

B1   Principles

(ii)   to be able to define and formulate research problems and questions and hypotheses
(iii)   will understand the rationale for research methods, appreciate the value for sociological research of the range of methods and sources available, be able to evaluate and select appropriate methods, and be properly critical and reflexive about these choices
(iv)   a knowledge and understanding of the social and political context of research activity and its uses
(v)   will advance understanding of qualitative research in the social sciences, including an examination of the range of available methods such as participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing and an exploration of the ethical principles, implications and dilemmas of qualitative research
(vi)   will understand sampling, sampling error, and biases in results
(vii)   will understand and be able to apply concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability

B2   Data collection and analysis

(i)   a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection
(ii)   a knowledge and understanding of the wide range of data sources available for research in social policy, including archival and historical data, survey and qualitative data, longitudinal studies, and material drawn from the mass media.
(iii)   an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources
(iv)   an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data, including techniques for analysing qualitative data (as an example discourse analysis or event analysis) and multivariate analysis (such as multiple regression and log linear models)
(v)   proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

Teaching strategy
B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the modules "Thinking About Research" and "Dissertation Preparation". B1 (iii-v) will be delivered through the Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods modules.

The teaching strategy for B1 (i) and (ii) is a combination of lectures, workshops and both discipline specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. Students learn through preparation of a

dissertation and team-based problem solving exercises. Teaching for B1 (iii) and (iv) will be through lectures and group discussions.   Teaching for B2 (i - v) will be delivered through the Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods modules. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops and data analysis practicals.

Learning strategy
For B1 (i - v) students will learn through completing assignments and practical exercises. For B2 (i - v) students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises and in the writing of their dissertations.

Assessment strategy
For B1 (i - v) will be teamwork assessment, practical assessments and a 3,000 word written report. Assessment strategy for B2 (i - iv) will be a combination of data analysis practicals and 3,000 word reports and evaluation of the dissertation.

C   Knowledge and Understanding in Social Policy

C1   appreciation of the theoretical traditions and concepts that influence and shape social policy as a discipline and the implications (both practical and methodological) of such theories for research

C2   awareness and understanding of the variety of philosophical principles and epistemological frameworks that underpin approaches to social inquiry

C3   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 social policy

C4   understanding and appreciation of the profound transformations in contemporary political, social, cultural and economic institutions and practices, and the implications of this restructuring for institutional change, collective and individual agency, and lived experience

C5   knowledge of the value and efficacy of comparative research within and between societies

Teaching and Learning Methods and Strategy
Theoretical traditions and concepts within social policy (C1) will be explored through lectures, group exercises, and student presentations in various modules (*Theory and Explanation in Social Policy; Social Divisions and Inequality; Political Economy of Social Policy)* and through independent reading and one-to one tutoring. An enhanced understanding of the epistemological and philosophical bases of social inquiry (C2) will be developed through the lectures, group workshops and student presentations in the module *Theory and Explanation in Social Policy.* An improved awareness of the importance of social divisions and social change, and the benefits of comparative research within the social sciences (C3-

C5), will be developed through the lectures, group exercises, and student presentations in modules (*Social Divisions and Inequality; Political Economy of Social Policy)*, and through independent reading and one-to-one tutoring. All of the sociological skills (C1-C5) will be enhanced by the student's dissertation project. The department also offers a yearly seminar programme, featuring talks from staff and guest speakers (including many renowned scholars), and students are encouraged to attend to improve their knowledge of the discipline.

Assessment Strategy and Methods
All of the skills (C1-C5) will be assessed through written essays and the dissertation.

D   Key Skills

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

D1   the skills to communicate and present research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences

D2   the skills of effective written communication and presentation

D3   the skills to manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time

D4   the ability to work independently, with initiative, and to work effectively as a member of both subject-specific and multi-disciplinary teams

Teaching strategy
D1, D3 and D4 are taught through teamwork and individual presentations which provide opportunities to cooperate, develop ideas, improve problem-solving capacity and work to deadlines. D2 is taught through a range of iterative written assessments.

Learning strategy
Students acquire the key skills through active participation in large and small multidisciplinary and discipline-specific groups. The dissertation project provides specific opportunities of skill development through the construction of a research plan, through synthesizing knowledge and by participating in dissertation workshops and individual meetings with supervisors.

Assessment strategy
Key skills are not independently assessed. However, effective written communication (D2) is indirectly assessed by coursework in the form of written essays, D4 is indirectly evaluated through fulfilment of module requirements in a timely manner, and D5 will be evaluated through student team presentations in various modules. All key skills (D1-D6) are assessed by the process of the dissertation.

11   Programme features

This programme has been re-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 the discipline of social policy; and a dissertation project. 70 credits are taught at Inter-Faculty level and 50 credits within the Department.

The 70 credits taught at inter-faculty level focus on generic research skills and competencies across the social sciences. The general research skills component of the programme, such as Bibliographical skills and IT skills (A1), are taught in the *Information Skills* module (10 credits). Training in research methods (both quantitative and qualitative analysis) (B1, B2) is dealt with in two double modules, *Introduction to Quantitative methods* (20 credits) and *Qualitative methodology in the Social Sciences* (20 credits). Instruction in the framing of research questions and hypotheses, the context of research, and the need for a critical and reflexive strategy towards research in sociology (B1 (I)-(iv)) will be treated in two modules: *Dissertation preparation* (10 credits) and *Thinking About Research* (10 credits).

The 50 credits taught within the Department are discipline-specific. Training in Social Policy will be developed through four modules. *Political Economy of Social Policy* (20 credits) is the foundation module in the programme, introducing students to some of the key conceptual issues in social policy, as well as the contemporary debates and transformations regarding the market, state and household. *Theory and Explanation in Social Policy* (10 credits) will give students an overview of the theoretical traditions within social policy and a broad understanding of the epistemological and philosophical frameworks that form the basis for social inquiry (C1, C2). *Social Divisions and Inequality* (10 credits) provides a critical overview of social divisions and *Comparative Policy Analysis* (10 credits) offers a understanding of the importance of comparative research and analysis to social policy (C3-C5).

Students will complete a dissertation project (60 credits) which will enhance and demonstrate their research skills and training in social policy. There are no formal restrictions on the type of project that can be chosen although projects are likely to employ some empirical research.

12   Criteria for Admission

Some applicants to this programme will have an ESRC Research Studentship and will

therefore satisfy the prevailing ESRC conditions for studentships.

Other applicants will normally have, at least, a second class honours degree from a UK University or its overseas equivalent. Preferred subjects include Sociology, Social Policy, Public Policy, Geography and other degrees in the social sciences.

Alternative entry qualifications: other qualifications and related experience may be considered.

Admissions policy and additional requirements : In addition to the First degree, the main criteria for the selection of a postgraduate research student are: Supportive reference letter(s) and, TOEFL for those who have not studied their first degree in English, a good knowledge of the English language (with a score of 6.5 IELTS or 575)

The process of selection within the Department can take only a few days, if all the relevant documents are supplied by the candidate. If any of these documents are missing, the applicant is contacted directly. If the applicants are in the UK, they may be invited for an interview. The interviewers complete the Form A2 and make a recommendation. If more than one supervisor is needed for the research project, the Director of Postgraduate Research facilitates the process of identification of, and communication between, supervisors.

The Department and Faculty are committed to equality of opportunity and treats all applicants as equals, disregarding their gender, nationality, religion, ethnicity, age, and any disability as can be seen in the current mix of our research students from around the world.

13. Support for students and their learning

Induction week
The first week offers a series of meetings, introductory module sessions, and social events to assist student orientation and to provide a common vocabulary and knowledge base for students with varying backgrounds. The induction programme will include:

- initial meeting: students meet as a group with Degree Programme director for welcome and introduction to course

- issue of student handbook: handbook contains general programme information, description of modules and suggested reading, staff biographies, assessment procedures, and other university wide information

- meeting with tutor: each MA student will be assigned a specific member of staff whose role encompasses both academic and non-academic issues.

- workshop in Robinson library to introduce resources; initial computer training session

to register students with University Computing centre and introduce them to various technical programmes.

- a social event where students have an opportunity to meet staff and other post-graduates in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Coherence and coordination will be assured at the faculty level by the Director of the inter-faculty postgraduate training programme. This will be provided by the faculty.

- There will be an induction meeting at inter-faculty level for the students from all the MA/MSc programmes where the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and all the module leaders of the generic modules to be delivered at inter-faculty level would be present. This would complement Departmental induction procedures, and serve to introduce the students to the inter-faculty part of their programmes and also to each other and to the idea of a multi-disciplinary learning environment.

Study skills support
Students with weaker background in English language will be directed to the Language Centre for additional instruction. Both general and discipline specific study skill support is provided as an intrinsic element of 'Thinking About Research' and 'Developing a Research Proposal'.

Academic support
Meetings with personal tutors are held termly to discuss progress and problems that arise from coursework. Students are encouraged to contact module leaders (or staff contributors to individual modules) to discuss matters that arise in lectures and workshops or to prepare for student presentations. One member of staff will be assigned to supervise their dissertation project although students are encouraged to discuss intellectual or practical issues arising out of their project with other members of staff whose expertise may be directly relevant. The DPD has overall responsibility for management of the course. All students have access to the course co-ordinator for advice and discussion of any academic or pastoral issues arising.

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme will have overall responsibility for ensuring coherence and continuity in the inter-faculty delivered modules and also for their administration and management. All students will have access to the Director and all the module leaders for advice and discussion of academic issues arising.

Pastoral support
The department provides a tutor system, with each student being assigned a specific member of staff for pastoral and academic advice and guidance. Meetings are held termly but students have personal and email access to their tutor in case any problem should arise and they may also contact the Degree Programme Director for additional help. The handbook contains information on the full range of pastoral and personal support offered to postgraduate students, including the University Student's Counselling Service, the Student Advice Centre, and the Student Progress Office.

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and the module leaders will be available to discuss pastoral issues arising from the inter-faculty delivered modules. The overall responsibility for pastoral issues, however, will lie within the Department.

The Postgraduate Sub-Dean and Faculty Postgraduate tutors will also be available for consultation on pastoral issues

The LESS Postgraduate Training Room provides an ideal environment for the teaching of the inter-faculty delivered modules. The room has comfortable chairs and kitchen facilities for refreshments and can be used by the students for social, as well as self-organised academic, events.

Special needs
The Handbook contains information about the University's Disability Unit which offers advice, guidance and support for students with disabilities and specific learning disabilities.

The LESS Postgraduate Training Room is accessible for wheel-chair bound students, and there is a purpose-built toilet adjoining the room.

Learning Resources
The department has an internal computer cluster for student use during office hours and the University Computing Centre provides computing facilities for students at many open access sites across the University. The Robinson library provides an extensive range of books and journals and students can utilise the Inter-library loan arrangements to locate books that are not in holdings. The LESS postgraduate training room is located in the department.

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

Mechanisms for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment, the curriculum and output standards

- Student opinion is gathered by means of student questionnaires which are issued on completion of the programme .
- Module questionnaires will be issued to all students on completion of each module. Summaries of the module and programme questionnaires will be considered at both the Departmental Board of Studies and the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies, although the later will be particularly concerned with evaluations arising from the generic component of the linked Masters programmes.
- Feedback from past graduates
- External examiner reports (A report following consideration of the comments external

examiner appointed to oversee the faculty generic modules will be forwarded <u>annually</u> to each Departmental Board of Studies)

- Taught Programme Review
- Internal Subject Review
- Periodic feedback from ESRC monitoring visits
- Consideration of annual programme monitoring statistics

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience

- Staff Student Committee
- Student representation on Boards of Studies
- Student evaluation questionnaires

Committees Responsible for Monitoring and Evaluating Quality and Standards

There will be separate but linked forums at Inter-faculty and Department level for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

Inter –Faculty Level

- A separate Board of Studies will monitor and evaluate quality and standards of the generic modules on the MA programme which are delivered in common across the faculty. This Board will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub- Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, DPD's of all the linked Masters programmes, module leaders of the five generic modules, and all teachers on these modules delivered at an inter-faculty level. The Board will also include appropriate student representation.
  <u>Overall responsibility for assuring quality and standards of the MA programme will lie with the Departmental Board of Studies</u>.
- A Board of Examiners will also exist to consider issues related to examinations and marks for the five modules delivered at an inter-faculty level to all linked Masters programmes. An external examiner will also be appointed for the 5 modules delivered at an inter-faculty level, who will also report on the standard of, and coherence between, the generically- taught modules.
- This Board of Examiners will meet before the meetings of the Departmental Board of Examiners who will consider the marks from the inter-faculty Board alongside the marks from the subject- specific modules. <u>Overall responsibility for the award of the degree will lie with each Departmental Board of Examiners.</u>

<u>Departmental Committees.</u>

- An MA Board of Studies including representative(s) from the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies. Membership will consist of the main course teachers and a student member

nominated by the student body.

- Examination Board which will include one representative from the generic Board of examiners.
- Staff Student Committee: the Department has a separate Staff Student Committee for each taught MA. It consists of two students from each MA, the DPD from each MA, and members of the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee
- Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee
- Departmental representation on Faculty Postgraduate Committee

15. Regulation of Assessment

(i) Assessment rules and degree classification are set out in the degree regulations attached .

(ii) Role of the external examiners

An external examiner is being appointed to oversee the generic modules that are being delivered to all of the linked Masters programmes. The role of this external examiner is to moderate these modules. He/she will attend the faculty-wide Board of Examiners and will be concerned with maintenance and comparability of standards of this aspect of the MA programme. The MA in Applied Policy Research also has an external examiner appointed to oversee the programme. This person has responsibility for reviewing student work across the departmental modules and attends the Board of Examiners' meeting.

(iii) Board of Examiners

An inter-Faculty Board will be held in June. It will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, the module leaders of the 5 generic modules, and the DPD's of all the linked Master's programmes. This board will report back to the subject-specific Board of Examiners. The MA in Applied Policy Research will convene a Board of Examiners, to be chaired by the DPD of the programme, and its members include the external examiner and all teaching staff on the MA.

MA IN APPLIED POLICY RESEARCH

Self Review Checklist and Evidence

PS   Programme Specification
DPH   Degree Programme Handbook

		A	PA	NA	NR	Evidence
1	The programme has clear aims	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
2	Aims include:					
	(a) broad educational purposes	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
	(b) the qualities and attributes of graduates	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
	(c) meeting the needs of stakeholders	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
	(d) meeting external referents	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
3	The programmes has clear intended learning outcomes	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
4	Learning outcomes are defined at the level of the typical graduate	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
5	Learning outcomes include:					
	(a) knowledge and understanding		4	☐	☐	☐ PS
	(b) subject-specific and practical skills	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
	(c) cognitive skills	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
	(d) key skills	4	☐	☐	☐	PS
6	The curriculum covers all of the intended learning outcomes	4	☐	☐	☐	PS

| 7 | Teaching methods are matched to the intended learning outcomes | 4 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | PS |

		A	PA	NA	NR Evidence	
8	Appropriate opportunities for independent student learning are incorporated in accordance with the intended learning outcomes	4	□	□	□	PS
9	The admissions policy for the programme relates to the potential of candidates to attain the intended learning outcomes	4	□	□	□	PS
10	New students are offered an appropriate induction to the programme	4	□	□	□	PS
11	The information given to students conforms to the University's Guidelines for Degree Programme Handbooks	□	□	4	□	DPH
12	Where relevant, returning students are offered an induction to the next stage of the programme	4	□	□	□	PS
13	Students are offered appropriate opportunities for career development and support	4	□	□	□	PS
14	Adequate resources are available to support student achievement of the intended learning outcomes	4	□	□	□	PS
15	There is a clear rationale for assessing or not assessing intended learning outcomes	□		□	□	
16	Assessment methods are matched to the intended learning outcomes	4	□	□	□	PS
17	There is an explicit statement of the output standards of the award	4	□	□	□	DPH
18	The output standards of the award at least meet the relevant benchmarks	4	□	□	□	PS

No.		Description					
19		Where relevant, the output standards of the award at least meet the requirements of professional and statutory bodies	□	□	□	4	
20		There are effective mechanisms for consulting student opinion	4	□	□	□	PS
21		There are effective mechanisms for feedback to students	4	□	□	□	PS
22		There are effective mechanisms for consulting staff opinion	4	□	□	□	PS
23		There are effective mechanisms for consulting external examiners	4	□	□	□	PS
24		The BoS reviews					
	(a)	aims	4	□	□	□	
	(b)	intended learning outcomes	4	□	□	□	
	(c)	curriculum	4	□	□	□	
	(d)	methods of teaching	4	□	□	□	
	(e)	independent learning	4	□	□	□	
	(f)	student support and guidance	4	□	□	□	
	(g)	learning resources	4	□	□	□	
	(h)	assessment	4	□	□	□	
	(i)	standards	4	□	□	□	
	(j)	quality management	4	□	□	□	
	(k)	standards management	4	□	□	□	

NB: *Some areas of review are delegated to Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee, which reports to the BoS, Strategy Group and Departmental Committee, and to the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies that reviews faculty taught modules. See programme Specification: Section 14*

Annex 2   Degree Programme Report on the Standards and Quality of Provision

Degree Programme   **MA IN APPLIED POLICY RESEARCH**

Degree Programme Director   **John Vail**

At the meeting of the Board of Studies on **30th April 2002** it was agreed that:

Criteria being adhered to were:

All those not listed in the boxes below

Criteria being partially adhered to which could be improved with assistance were:

Criteria not adhered to where action was required to improve provision were:

11. The current MA handbook does not incorporate a degree programme specification as recommended by the university. At its meeting on 14 February, 2002, the Departmental Teaching and learning Committee reviewed the potential for its inclusion. It was decided that the MA degree handbook should, above all other criteria, aim to be a student-friendly and readable document, expressly designed for the benefit of students. It was unanimously felt that the degree programme specification did not meet this criterion, and should therefore not be included in the handbook.

Criteria which were not relevant to this provision were:

19