PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (Taught Postgraduate)	

1	**Awarding Institution**	Newcastle University
2	**Teaching Institution**	Newcastle University
3	**Final Award**	PG Certificate
4	**Programme Title**	Research Training in the Social Sciences/Arts and Humanities
5	**Programme Code**	3044F 3426P
6	**Programme Accreditation**	Not appropriate
7	**QAA Subject Benchmark(s)**	ESRC and AHRC Postgraduate Research Training Guidelines
8	**FHEQ Level**	Level 7
9	**Last updated**	May 2024

10 Programme Aims

1. To provide students with the knowledge, understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake doctoral research in the social sciences, arts and humanities.

2. To train students in a range of theories and epistemologies, quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and give them the skills to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches in relation to their own research.

3. To provide an interdisciplinary grounding in issues such as research design, data management and information skills that are critical to contemporary doctoral research.

4. To develop postgraduates' skills at thinking critically, evaluating evidence, and reflecting on the production of research and on their own research practice.

5. To produce graduates who are capable of successfully undertaking and completing advanced research in the public or private sector.

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 refer to the postgraduate research training guidelines for the ESRC and AHRC.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have a/n:

- Understanding of the nature of evidence, including the ability to think and evaluate it critically (A1);
- Understanding of the relationships between theory, practice and criticism (A2);

- Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of core research methods, including how to link them appropriately with research questions (A3);
- Familiarity with the principles of diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to social science, arts, and humanities (A5);
- Knowledge of the principles of reflexivity, including the ability to critically reflect on one's own research practice (A4).

Teaching and Learning Methods

Understanding of the nature of evidence and the ability to evaluate it (A1), and understanding of the relationships between theory, practice and criticism (A2) are explored through a combination of online activities and live lectures, seminars and study groups across all three compulsory modules. Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of core research methods (A3) and familiarity with the principles of diverse theoretical and methodological approaches (A4) will be evaluated primarily in HSS8020 and HSS8021. Knowledge of the principles of reflexivity and critical reflective practice (A5) will be explored primarily through guided study groups on HSS8022.

Assessment Strategy

These principles will be assessed through the assignments associated with each module, which will assess students' capacity to apply their understandings of evidence, theory and practice, and of key methodological principles including reflexivity to 1) ask questions appropriate to their respective disciplines; and 2) understand the wider context of knowledge in the social sciences, arts and humanities.

Intellectual Skills

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

- Knowledge of different approaches to research design (B1);
- An ability to evaluate the quality of research according to internal and external criteria (B2);
- Awareness of the principles of research ethics and how to apply them (B3)
- Basic awareness of the scientific method and statistical literacy (B4);
- Understanding of qualitative methods sufficient to understand, interpret and analyse a range of phenomenological or textual data (B5);
- An understanding of the rationale for research methods and approaches, appreciation of the value of a range of methods, approaches and sources available, and ability to select appropriate methods and approaches (B6).

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should have:

Core research training;

- Practical experience in applying a broad range of methodological tools, including appropriate software such as NVivo, R, or GIS software where relevant (C1.i);
- Skills at managing data effectively; including cleaning, coding, storing, preparing for deposit in a repository, and safely disposing of data (C1.ii).

Information skills:

- The skills to identify and obtain relevant materials relating to research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings and resources available electronically and online generally on the World Wide Web (C2.i);
- The skills to maintain a personal research bibliography (C2.ii);
- IT skills, including word processing and other basic computing skills including spreadsheets and database management (C2.iii).

Teaching and Learning Methods

The teaching and learning strategy for B1-B3 will be delivered through a combination of combination of lectures, directed online reading & activities, small group work, workshops and interactive plenaries in the HSS8020 module. Outcomes B4-B6 and C1.i and 1.ii will be delivered through the qualitative and quantitative methods streams of HSS8021. In the quantitative methods streams, practical activities in data analysis labs will develop relevant software skills.

For C2, students will be asked to initially complete an online skills check which will show any areas where they need to develop. They will then be able to access workshops, lectures and self-paced materials on Canvas to work through in their own time, which develop their information skills.

Assessment Strategy

The Assessment strategy for B1-B3 will be a report assessing students' capacity to understand and evaluate the value of different approaches to research design and methodology in the context of their own research plan. B4-B6 and C1.i and 1.ii will be evaluated through a practical report applying and evaluating one or more of the methodologies studied in the HSS8021 streams to students' own research practice.

The assessment of C2.i, 2.ii and 2.iii will be undertaken as part of the assignments submitted for HSS8022. Students will discuss the results of the online skills check and outline the steps they have taken to address any identified weaknesses.

Transferable/Key Skills

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

- Ability to communicate and present research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences (D1);
- The ability to work independently, and to work effectively as a member of a team (D2).

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching and learning strategy:

The ability to communicate and present research findings effectively is taught through both a blended approach, which provides students with directed online reading and activities, and in-person structured interactions. Students will also benefit from lectures and workshops, which are attended in person. Within some of these workshops, students will be split into smaller groups, with each group consisting of people from various disciplines, in order to engage with the teaching content whilst simultaneously learning to work with others from different backgrounds.

Assessment Strategy

Key skills (D1 and D2) within the programme are assessed through a variety of different methods consisting of both presentations, which are also peer-reviewed, and critical essays whereby students are able to look at their research methodologies and examine their own applications.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

This programme has been designed to offer PhD researchers a Certificate for the research training modules they take during the first stage of their degree, and it is also offered to outside

applicants who want to acquire research skills for their own project or for employment in the academic or non-academic research sector.

All students will take three compulsory modules, beginning with a ten-credit module covering cross-disciplinary issues in designing research. They will then select relevant sessions in theory and epistemology, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods to form the basis of their research training on a large, 30 credit module. Throughout, they will reflect on the development of their research practice through ongoing study groups and portfolio exercises as part of a 20-credit module.

This is a one-year full time or two-year part time programme. It consists of core training in research design, theories and epistemologies of research, quantitative and qualitative methods, and skill development. All 60 credits are taught interdisciplinarily. These 60 credits focus on research skills and competencies across the social sciences and arts and humanities.

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

This programme sets students up with outstanding research skills, through modules that are distinct to doctoral researchers. It provides breadth of experience and training with an interdisciplinary focus, enabling researchers to reflect on the commonalities in doctoral practice. The portfolio of reflective practice enables students to develop their skills at critical reflection on their own and others' research. The certificate is excellent preparation for employment in the academic and non-academic research sectors.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

Programme Regulations 25-26

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available here.

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

Generic information regarding University provision is available here.

Accreditation reports
N/A

Additional mechanisms
N/A

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available here.

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

The University Prospectus: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/
Degree Programme and University Regulations: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/

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.