

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (Taught Postgraduate)	 Newcastle University
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1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MA
4	Programme Title	Media, Society and Cultural Studies (Research)
5	Programme Code	4156 F/P
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	N/A
8	FHEQ Level	7
9	Last updated	May 2026

Programme Aims

- 1 To provide a pathway to PhD study
- 2 To develop reflective critical knowledge of key areas of media and social studies
- 3 To develop and demonstrate independent research skills concordant with continuing postgraduate study
- 4 To draw on a number of research models and practices to develop the potential for original research in the social sciences and also with a focus on media, communication, cultural and social studies
- 5 To develop substantive knowledge and detailed understanding in a particular designated area of the field
- 6 To enable graduates to synthesise and extrapolate from the social sciences and media and social theory to wider social, political and civic concerns and cultivate the capacity for active engagement in matters of policy formation, civil society and social renewal
- 7 To experiment with and challenge existing approaches to understanding and creating knowledge about media and society
- 8 To provide a programme which meets the expectations of the FHEQ for a level 7 award
- 9 To provide a programme which complies with University policies and procedures and QAA Quality Code.

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 Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have:

- A1. An understanding of the role of media and communication systems in shaping meaning, shared perceptions and understanding of culture and society
- A2. A reflexive awareness of a broad range of critical, cultural and social theory that inform the field of media and social studies
- A3. A developed and focused understanding of one or more specialised areas in the field of media and society

A4. A critical understanding of the range of research practices, methods and paradigms that inform the generation of knowledge in the social sciences and media, communication, cultural and social studies.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The methods of teaching and learning will be a mixture of formal lecture, required and recommended readings of relevant materials plus active student learning and student-led research. The strategy is aimed at matching learning styles with the students' abilities to provide the maximum opportunity for knowledge acquisition and for independent learning. An emphasis on conceptual understanding of key methods, texts and approaches will be made, alongside encouragement of self-generated critical engagement with research practices and of theoretical frameworks.

Assessment Strategy

A full range of assessment methods - including group and individual oral presentations, case-study projects, written essay assignments, tests, professional plans and profiles, methodological critiques of selected research studies, practice-based reports, and critical evaluation - will be employed. These will reflect the aims and objectives of the programme and the postgraduate level of the degree.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1. Critically explore major thinkers and theoretical approaches in the field
- B2. Undertake independent research including data gathering and literature review, critique and synthesis of ideas in preparation for further academic research or professional research activities
- B3. Evaluate dominant paradigms in the field, and in societal values, beliefs and understanding more broadly
- B4. Demonstrate self-reflection and development of the student's own skill set and developmental needs, as well their role in professional and social conventions of knowledge making and research

Teaching and Learning Methods

The methods of teaching and learning will be a mixture of formal lecture, required and recommended readings of relevant materials plus active student learning and student-led research. The strategy is aimed at matching learning styles with the students' abilities to provide the maximum opportunity for knowledge acquisition and for independent learning. Intellectual skills-based learning in the context of independent research will be emphasised given the research track into PhD of this MA.

Assessment Strategy

These skills are assessed through a combination of formative verbal feedback both in seminars and to written short formative assignments plus summative essays, research reports and literature reviews plus a long-form dissertation.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1. Demonstrate an ability to construct well-formed and coherent arguments and satisfy the conventions of academic writing and presentation
- C2. Conceive, develop and organise supervised, self-directed projects

C3. Communicate ideas effectively in verbal forms, work effectively and respectfully with others and manage their time with self-discipline in delivering projects C4. Show insights into the complexity of contemporary media and communications and display effective use of a number of communications technologies in achieving goals
Teaching and Learning Methods
The teaching strategy is to provide subject-specific and professional research skills through a range of specialist research and subject-specific modules. Students will be provided with teaching and learning strategies. They will learn through participation in seminars and lectures, and through the preparation of oral presentations, dissertation and project work.
Assessment Strategy
These skills are assessed through a combination of formative verbal feedback both in seminars and to written short formative assignments plus summative essays, qualitative and quantitative research reports and literature reviews plus a long-form dissertation.
Transferable/Key Skills
On completing the programme students should be able to: D1. Display an ability to communicate effectively in teams and meet project deadlines D2. Communicate clearly and act reflexively in comprehending and responding to complex situations and ideas D3. Form independent and informed critical judgements and respectfully assert those judgements D4. Undertake information gathering, knowledge generation, self-reflection and practical application of knowledge in concrete situations
Teaching and Learning Methods
The teaching strategy consists of a range of practical work and seminars/workshops in which students are required to make team and individual presentations. They provide opportunities for the students to co-operate, develop ideas, improve problem-solving capacity and work to deadlines. The dissertation provides specific opportunities for skills development through the construction of a research plan, through synthesising knowledge and by participating in dissertation workshops on the methodologies modules and individual meetings with supervisors.
Assessment Strategy
Assessments will test, as appropriate, theoretical, empirical and professional knowledge and understanding, together with their application to the challenges of study at PhD level, including approaches to giving papers at conferences, preparing manuscripts and publishing research findings. The assessments will reflect the postgraduate nature and aims of the course and the track towards independent research at PhD level.
12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme
Students will complete a combination of specialist media-based modules plus a range of research orientated modules run by the North East Doctorial Training Centre. This accounts for the skills required to move into the PhD phase plus the specialist focus on Media, Society and Cultural Studies. Compulsory modules will comprise:

Semester 1:

News and Media Analysis

Thinking about Research

Dissertation Preparation

+ a choice of specialist optional modules (see programme regulations)

Semester 2:

Qualitative Methodology in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Quantitative Analysis

+ a choice of specialist optional modules (see programme regulations)

Semester 3:

Dissertation in Media, Society and Cultural Studies (Research)

Part-time students will negotiate their route through the programme with the DPD.

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

The programme offers a sound grounding in the area of research in social-science-based disciplines with a specific address to Media, Society and Cultural Studies, covering the key elements of media analysis skills, knowledge and understanding of the background and range of theoretical approaches in Media, Communication, Cultural and Social studies. Because the MA is envisioned in the first instance as an entry point to further research at PhD level the course has an emphasis and focus on independent and critical thinking and developing students' capacity to become self-directed.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2026-27](#)

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/>

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.