

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(for an Undergraduate programme with
Careers Service Placement Year)



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	BA Honours
4	Programme Title	Politics and History Politics and History (with Placement Year) Politics and History (with International Study Year)
5	UCAS/Programme Code	VL12 1439U (4 years) 1616U (4 years)
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	History, Politics and International Relations
8	FHEQ Level	Level 6
9	Last updated	April 2026

10 Programme Aims

1. To provide opportunities for students to study Politics and History, to acquire the skills of historians and political scientists, to specialise within each discipline according to their own interests and to undertake specialised research projects.
2. To broaden and deepen students' understanding of the nature and significance of Politics and History, including an appreciation of the complexity and diversity of situations, events, and mentalities in the past and present.
3. To offer a research-informed environment in which students can learn about Politics and History from knowledgeable staff, their own study and from discussion with fellow students.
4. To enhance students' cognitive skills, including analysing and presenting information and developing a reasoned argument; and core skills such as adaptability, planning and organisation.
5. Graduates of the programme should be capable of going on to further study or undertaking a wide variety of jobs in the private, public or voluntary sector.
6. Graduates of the programme will have attained standards that at least meet Level 6 of the FHEQ and the QAA subject benchmarks for Politics and History.
7. The programme will meet standards and comply with prevailing University policies and QAA codes of practice. Where courses of study take place outside the university, during ERASMUS exchanges, the standards will comply with the appropriate university policies on placements.

For Students Undertaking the Placement Year:

1. To provide students with the experience of seeking and securing a position with an employer.
2. To facilitate independent self-management and proactive interaction in a non-university setting.
3. To provide a period of practical work experience that will benefit current academic study and longer term career plans.
4. To enable students to ethically apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace, reflect upon their development and effectively evidence and articulate their learning in relevant future settings.

For Students Undertaking the International Study Year

1. Offer students the opportunity to develop graduate attributes which increase employability, particularly communication and (where applicable) language skills, intercultural competencies, adaptability, resilience and global awareness.
2. Gain insight into international Higher Education and experience differences in academic approach and learning environment.
3. Provide the opportunity to experience new areas of study outside of their usual programme of study at Newcastle University.

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 Politics and History.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

A1 Have gained knowledge and understanding of relevant key themes and concepts within the disciplines of Politics and History.

A2 Have gained knowledge of a wide range of primary source material and an understanding of how such material should be interpreted and evaluated.

A3 Have developed an ability to reflect critically on the nature of the disciplines and professions of Politics and History.

A4 Have gained knowledge and understanding of self-selected specialisms within the two disciplines.

A5 Have an understanding of the complexity, variety and diversity of the two disciplines and of the relationship between them.

A6 Be able to apply personal and professional development strategies to prioritise, plan, and manage their own skills development and learning.

For students Undertaking the Placement Year programme:

A7 Have researched, select and apply relevant knowledge aimed at enhancing their own skills and effectiveness in specific duties at their placement.

A8 Have demonstrated an understanding of a work environment, how it functions and their contribution to it.

A9 Be able to relate their work-based learning to other areas of personal development, including academic performance.

For Students Undertaking the International Study Year:

A10 Demonstrate the ability to adapt to different learning environments.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary method of imparting knowledge and understanding (A1-A5) is learning through lectures and seminars. Seminars and workshops reinforce and amplify student learning gained in lectures and provide an opportunity to develop appreciation of issues through discussion and argument. As students progress through the programme, seminars and guided independent study become increasingly important as a means to support the broader and deeper development of knowledge and understanding represented by A4, A5, and A6; this is reflected in the increased complexity of seminar tasks, in the greater scope and volume of reading lists, and

in skills training and short independent research projects, undertaken in both compulsory and optional modules. Throughout the programme, students are encouraged to supplement taught material with independent study, for which they are given support and guidance through materials such as module handbooks, reading lists, and virtual learning sites, as well as seminars.

Students have the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding partly via intensive seminar work and also by the undertaking of independent research under staff supervision. A1, A3 and A5 are developed through the compulsory Stage 1 Politics module; the compulsory Stage 1 History module develops A1, A2 and A5. A3 and A5 are further developed in an optional Stage 3 History module. A2 and A4 is taught via intensive seminar work and also through the option of undertaking independent research under staff supervision.

Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and understanding of the subject are primarily assessed by written assignments – including but not limited to essays, documentary commentaries, position papers, and literature reviews – and unseen and take-home written examination. Formative assessment, including submission of written work and participation in seminar discussion, also tests students on A1-A7. In the case of A4-6, shorter essays and exams are supplemented by submission of extended pieces of work at Stages 2 and 3, including the option of an undergraduate dissertation or other research modules.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

B1 Make use of analytical reasoning and critical skills in reading, writing and debating.

B2 Use appropriate evidence to support a sustained argument or line of reasoning.

B3 Be able to compare contrasting and conflicting ideas and material.

B4 Be able to argue coherently and persuasively.

B5 Be able to adapt effectively to new and/or unexpected questions or problems.

B6 Have developed intellectual independence

Teaching and Learning Methods

Intellectual skills (B1-B6) are developed through guidance in lectures, and exercises in seminars, where group discussion and debate take place. This is supplemented, in the case of B1-B4, by written feedback and discussion with staff. Students are encouraged to acquire such skills through the completion of a range of written assignments, notably essays, documentary commentaries and problem-solving exercises. B1-B6 are also encouraged through group and one-to-one discussion and debate in lectures, seminars and tutorials.

In all cases, students are expected to prepare for these exercises and discussions by working through guided reading lists in their own time, both before and after the classes; they are also expected to carry out wider independent reading, with guidance from staff but also (increasingly) through their own explorations.

Assessment Strategy

Intellectual skills B1-B4 and B6 are assessed by unseen and take-home examinations, written assignments, timed class essays and – optionally – the dissertations. B5 is primarily assessed by unseen written examinations, which require students to select relevant material from broader knowledge and adapt knowledge and understanding to new framings or perspectives.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

C1 Listen and take notes effectively.

C2 Pursue independent study.

C3 Locate, critically read, evaluate and digest material.

C4 Produce clear, succinct, accurate, well-planned and coherent presentation of results in both written and oral forms.

C5 Process and evaluate primary sources in order to produce an extended piece of work.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Listening and note-taking (C1) are taught via the compulsory Politics skills module and developed principally in lectures, but also in seminars. Note-taking is also a feature of independent study. Other practical skills (C2-C5) are taught in lectures and in seminars, supplemented by assigned work (C2-C4) and workshops. C5 is further taught via dissertation supervisions, for those students who choose to do a dissertation. Such skills (C2-C5) are developed and practiced in written assignments, notably essays and documentary commentaries, and problem-solving exercises undertaken in class or in private study time. Preparation of oral presentations also helps to develop C2 and C4.

Assessment Strategy

The ability of students to deploy practical skills (C1-C5) effectively is assessed primarily by means of unseen written examinations, written assignments, timed class essays and also in dissertations.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

D1 Use a computer and relevant software effectively.

D2 Be able to gather, manage and evaluate information from a variety of sources.

D3 Express themselves effectively in both written and oral form.

D4 Solve problems.

D5 Communicate clearly, relevantly, effectively and appropriately with others.

D6 Use their initiative.

D7 Adapt their knowledge and apply it to different circumstances.

D8 Work effectively as part of a team.

D9 Have basic numeric skills.

D10 Plan and organise their time and work effectively.

For students Undertaking the Placement Year programme:

D11 Reflect on and manage own learning and development within the workplace.

D12 Use existing and new knowledge to enhance personal performance in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate this process.

D13 Use graduate skills in a professional manner in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate the personal development that has taken place.

For Students Undertaking the International Study Year
D14 Adapt and operate in a different cultural environment.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Transferable skills are principally learnt and practiced in private study, preparation of assignments, and seminars (D1-10), and taught also in the skills module and via workshops. Assigned work also helps to inculcate D2, D3, D4, D6 and D10. Communication skills (D3 and D5) are further refined in seminars. Transferable skills are developed and practiced in written assignments such as essays and documentary commentaries supplemented by individual or group presentations. Oral debate in seminars and tutorials provides the opportunity to develop D3 and D5. Computer literacy (D1) is developed by the word-processing of written assignments and problem-solving exercises such as bibliographic tasks. D8 is fostered by group presentations, projects and assignments.

Assessment Strategy

Transferable skills are principally learned and practiced through guided independent study and preparation of assignments.

D3, D5 and D8 are assessed by means of the grading of seminar group presentations; some modules, particularly in Politics, also grade seminar participation. D2, D3, D4, D6, D7 and D9 are assessed by a combination of unseen examination, written assignments, timed class essays and can also be assessed in dissertations. Computer literacy (D1) is assessed as part of the process of grading written assignments and also forms part of specific workshop tasks. D10 is not explicitly assessed.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

VL12

Duration: 3 years

Stages: 3

Number of credits per stage: 120

1439U Students will partake of a placement year between Stage 2 and 3 of their programme.

Duration: 4 years

Stages: 4

Number of credits per stage: 120

1616U Students will partake in an International Study Year between Stage 2 and 3 of their programme.

Duration: 4 years

Stages: 4

Number of credits per stage: 120

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

This is a joint programme which allows students to study two separate disciplines to Honours level. The Politics and History degree at Newcastle University is distinctive in relation to similar degrees at other institutions in the emphasis on choice. There are only two compulsory modules; beyond that, students are encouraged to pursue their own interests and to develop their own distinctive pathways through the programme. In both disciplines an exceptionally wide range of topics are covered (geographically, chronologically and thematically).

At Stage 1, the compulsory modules (Evidence & Argument and Order & Disorder), are designed to help students with the transition between school and University study, teaching core skills (notably C1-C5 and D1-D2) in conjunction with key concepts of the two disciplines.

Stage 2 provides the opportunities for specialisation, while also sustaining the skills training from Stage 1. Students wishing to undertake independent research – particularly if they plan to do a dissertation at Stage 3 – have the option to take modules designed to help students get to grips with the necessary methodology and skills (Crafting History; Research Methods in Politics).

At Stage 3 the study of both History and Politics is done at a still more intensive level. On the History side, this is ensured principally through the Special Subjects, in which students develop their knowledge and understanding of a relatively narrow historical topic and its related primary sources (A2, A4). Special Subjects, taught by subject specialists, represent the point at which teaching is enriched by staff research interests most fully; they may be understood in some ways as semester-long collaborative research projects, in which staff and students learn from each other through close collective reading of primary source texts.

Politics and History students may choose to do a dissertation in Politics or History; alternatively, students may take other research options in Politics, including single-semester research modules, and Community-Based Research in Politics, which offers the chance to undertake a practical project beyond academia.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2026-7](#)

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](#).

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/undergraduate/degrees/#subject>
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.