



Postgraduate studies in

International Politics

Contents

Welcome	p.1
Our courses	p.2
Research degrees	p.7
Our research	p.8
Employability	p.10
Extra curricular activities	p.12
Student profiles	p.13

Important information

The programme information published in this brochure was correct at time of going to print (September 2022) and may be subject to change. Prospective students are advised to check the definitive programme information, including entry requirements, that is available on our website before making an application, to ensure that the programme meets their needs.

Welcome

Welcome to the world's first Department of International Politics.

The study of International Politics is indispensable for understanding a rapidly changing world. In a time of political and ideological uncertainty, social and economic transformation and increasingly diverse forms of conflict and violence, everyone has a stake in how these crucial global challenges are confronted. It is all the more essential, therefore, that the Department's teaching and research remain true to its founding ideals: to seek greater security, peace and justice in a disordered world.

A vibrant student community, working together with a dedicated staff of leading researchers and teachers, provides a dynamic environment in which to study international politics across all levels from the local to the global. As a student in our Department you will be well placed to gain a deep, diverse understanding of these challenges and how we can manage them in the coming decades.

We have a thriving Graduate School that reflects decades of experience producing generations of outstanding postgraduate students. We attract some of the brightest and best students from around the world to study in a highly stimulating intellectual environment. Our academic staff are all

active researchers, and the breadth of expertise we offer allows you to engage with the most pressing and stimulating issues and topics in international politics, ranging from the study of war, conflict, strategy and security to the study of global order, international theory, postcolonialism, Welsh politics, and ethics.

We are renowned for providing excellence in teaching and research, demonstrated by 87% of our research being deemed world leading or internationally excellent (REF 2021) and our position in the top five in the UK for satisfaction with teaching, the course and feedback for the subject of Politics (The Guardian League Table 2022). Aberystwyth University was also named University of the Year for teaching quality by The Sunday Times Good University Guide in both 2018 and 2019.

Our learning environment welcomes staff and students from all over the world, creating a lively interactive community that makes a vital contribution to our innovative research. Whether you are interested in understanding the conceptual underpinnings of international politics or practical policy

implications, you will be part of a department at the forefront of understanding and tackling the challenges of 'how we might live' in the 21st century.

Everybody here in the Department of International Politics looks forward to welcoming you into our academic community of students and staff.

Patrick Finney
Head of Department



Our courses

Taught degrees

International Relations	p.3
International Politics	p.4
War, Strategy and Intelligence	p.6

Research degrees

MPhil. PhD, DProf	p.9
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International Relations

MA

Students of international relations in the 21st century are confronted by a world in flux. Established structures of power and authority are being profoundly reshaped, or even torn down altogether, as new patterns of global relations and new forms of political identity come to prominence. Through this process, the landscape of contemporary global politics is changing rapidly, in pronounced and often unpredictable ways.

At the same time, dramatic advances in science and technology, as well as far-reaching developments in economic and social organisation, require new conceptions of what politics is and where it is happening. As the climate emergency most strikingly demonstrates, the challenges that face international relations now are unprecedented. However, profound change also invites a bold reimagining of the nature of our politics, of our relations with one another and of our existence in the world.

The MA International Relations course enables you to grasp the complexity of this turbulent moment in world politics and to think through its meanings, both theoretical and practical. Whether your background is in International Relations or a different discipline, the range of modules and academic expertise that our MA programme provides will encourage you to stretch your horizons and explore the many different possibilities for envisioning international politics today.

Pathways

The MA International Relations is available as a Specialist or Research Training pathway degree. Students studying the Specialist pathway pursue advanced subject-specific study through a core module and a number of optional modules along with a dissertation. Those on the Research Training pathway take a suite of research training modules in place of some optional modules.

For further information see our website, or contact us.

Modules

On this course you will study a core module in International Politics, along with the Dissertation.

International Politics: Theories and Concepts

Examines 'classical' concepts within International Relations, such as anarchy, sovereignty, power and security, as well as the roles of colonialism, environment and gender. Attention is paid to contestation and differences of meaning ascribed to core concepts, the political, ethical, practical and methodological consequences involved in the choice of concepts used, and the role of conceptual innovation in the study of a dynamic and diverse subject matter.


You will also choose from a range of optional modules, which currently include:


- Knowledge and Expertise in International Politics
- Gender and Transformative Approaches to Peace
- Post-Western International Relations
- Middle Powers and the Liberal Order
- Global Challenges and the Future of International Relations Theory
- Indigenous Politics: Challenging the Global Order?

For more details and the latest information on our modules, see our website.

Key Facts

 Degree type: MA.

 Course Code: L287S (specialist pathway), L287R (research training pathway).

 Duration: 1 year (full-time).

International Politics

(Dual Degree with American University)

MA

This exciting two-year MA degree in International Politics enables you to study with leading scholars in two departments with enviable reputations for the quality of their teaching and research: the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University and the School of International Service at American University in Washington, D.C. In addition, you will experience living and studying in two very different but complementary cultural and academic worlds.

During the first year, you will be based in Aberystwyth where you will take advantage of the Department's distinctively normative and critical perspectives on the discipline. You will not only explore concepts that typically constitute the bedrock of the study of International Relations (such as sovereignty, anarchy and security) but subject those concepts to rich and multi-layered interrogation from perspectives that unsettle conventional understandings of international relationships and how they function.

During the second year in Washington, D.C., the optional modules that you take will have a more policy-orientated character and be combined with core modules in social science methodology and economics. You will have the opportunity to connect your studies with practical experience and interaction with the policy community, which American University's School of International Service is uniquely positioned to provide. You will also have the opportunity to apply for internships with government or non-governmental organisations in Washington, D.C. under the Optional Practical Training Scheme after you complete your degree.

Pathways

The MA International Politics (Dual Degree with American University) is available as a Specialist pathway degree. Students studying this degree will have the advantages of combining advanced subject-specific study in Aberystwyth with core modules in social science research methodology and economics, alongside optional modules from their chosen field of specialisation, taken at American University.

For further information see our website, or contact us.

Key Facts



Degree type: MA.



Course Code: L286A.



Duration: 2 year (full-time)

Modules

Core modules you may study at Aberystwyth include International Politics along with the Research Paper, which gives you the opportunity to produce an in-depth piece of research through a guided, structured process.

You will also choose from a range of optional modules, which currently include:

- Knowledge and Expertise in International Politics
- Gender and Transformative Approaches to Peace
- Post-Western International Relations
- Middle Powers and the Liberal Order
- Global Challenges and the Future of International Relations Theory
- Indigenous Politics: Challenging the Global Order?

Core modules you may study at Washington, D.C. include Social Science Research Methodology and Economics. You will undertake a major research project (either the Practicum in International Affairs or the Substantial Research Paper).

Optional modules will be chosen from one field of specialisation and include:

- Energy and Environment
- International Development
- Social Enterprise
- US Foreign Policy.

For more details and the latest information on our modules, see our website.



War, Strategy and Intelligence

MA

This degree will provide you with the necessary conceptual and empirical tools and knowledge to understand, debate and critique the interconnected phenomena of War, Strategy and Intelligence.

The question of war has been at the heart of the human experience since the beginning of political communities and remains an enduring feature of the international system. Understanding the causes and consequences of war is a complex task that requires an interdisciplinary approach. Throughout the course, you will engage with a diversity of fields from the social sciences and humanities to understand the phenomenon of war and the perennial quest for security that characterises international relations. As you explore fields such as military history, security, intelligence, strategic studies, and international relations, you will develop the knowledge and analytical instruments needed to understand the concepts of war and warfare, the various strategies used to wage it and the intelligence apparatuses that inform those strategies.

From Sun Tzu to 'Shock 'n' Awe' this degree develops your conceptual and empirical understanding of the use of force in international relations. In the 21st century, with the initial post-Cold War hopes for a 'New World Order' having faded, fears of major regional and even global wars are growing. This degree examines the most pressing strategic issues facing the world today and analyses the evolving nature of war and conflict from traditional great power competition to modern forms of hybrid warfare. Renewed friction between Russia and the West, escalating tensions in the Middle East and South Asia, growing Chinese military assertiveness, and ongoing intra-state violent conflicts around the world demonstrate the continuing need for an in-depth and critical understanding of the dynamics of war, strategy and intelligence.

Pathways

The MA War, Strategy and Intelligence is available as a Specialist or Research Training pathway degree. Students studying the Specialist pathway pursue advanced, subject-specific study, through a core module and a number of optional modules along with a dissertation. Those on the Research Training pathway take a suite of research training modules in place of some optional modules.

For further information see our website, or contact us.

Key Facts



Degree type: MA.



Course Code: L252S (specialist pathway), L252R (research training pathway).



Duration: 1 year (full-time).

Modules

Core modules you will study on this course include Warfare in the Twenty-First Century and the Dissertation.

Warfare in the Twenty-First Century

Examines the evolution of modern warfare into the 21st century. It analyses various aspects of war and warfare in their contemporary expressions across the domains of land, sea, air, space and cyberspace. You will develop a good understanding of the latest strategic trends in areas such as inter- and intra-state conflict, asymmetric and hybrid warfare, nuclear proliferation, the evolution of the 'War on Terror', and great power competition.

You will also choose from a range of optional modules, which currently include:

- Warfare in the 21st Century
- Intelligence, Security and International Relations in the 20th Century
- Security Policy in the European Union
- War and Peace in the Middle East
- Critical Security Studies: Emerging Issues
- Thoughts of War: Strategic Theory and Thinkers.

For more details and the latest information on our modules, see our website.

Research degrees

MPhil, PhD, DProf

Here in the Department of International Politics, we have an excellent record of training PhD students.

Students undertaking PhD research are integral to the Department's renowned research culture. The considerable achievements of Aberystwyth PhD graduates are indicated in a significant number of prize-winning theses, high quality published work and conspicuous success in the job market, including in academia, government departments, NGOs and international organisations.

PhD students design and carry out a major piece of research that makes an original contribution to knowledge in their chosen discipline. You will be supervised by subject specialists within the Department, who will advise you carefully throughout the planning, research and writing process. Students who have not already completed a programme in research methods as part of their Masters degree will undertake an ESRC recognised package of social science research training modules during the first year of their PhD.

Our areas of supervision expertise include:

- International relations theory and political theory
- War, strategy, security and intelligence
- Democracy, devolution and territorial politics
- Migration and global development
- Conflict and post-conflict reconciliation
- International political economy
- Global health and the environment
- International and military history
- The politics of the UK and its regions
- Regional politics: Europe, Russia, Middle East, Latin America and the USA.

The Department also offers an MPhil degree, which is a research-based Masters, comprising a 60,000 word thesis. The MPhil is completed in one year full-time, or two years part-time.

Supervision and progression

Both our PhD and MPhil students enjoy the very best supervision in the field. Each student is assigned two supervisors and supervision meetings take place every three weeks during term time. The exceptionally close working relationship encouraged by this system translates into an excellent completion rate.

DProf

The Professional Doctorate or DProf is more appropriate for those pursuing professional rather than academic careers and is designed to allow qualified professionals to study towards a doctorate while maintaining their employment. A DProf will be awarded in recognition of the successful completion of an approved taught programme of study, together with the successful completion of an advanced piece of research. The collaborative aspect provided by a work-based research project provides an ideal opportunity to embed new knowledge in the workplace and ensure that your research is relevant to industry.

For further information see our website, or contact us.



Research

At Aberystwyth you will be at the centre of the latest thinking, exploring and testing of new ideas in international politics. Our Department is a leading centre of innovative research in politics and international relations.

We are renowned for our research activities, with our staff and postgraduate students conducting research on some of the most difficult and important issues facing human communities today. We are a leading research department in the UK and globally, and are well known as a place where exciting new insights into national, international and global politics are developed.

From the analysis of humanitarian intervention to the future of EU security, from the critique of forms of global harm to imagining new planetary politics, from the study of military history to the latest challenges in nuclear proliferation and intelligence gathering, from analyses of the role of Britain in a changing world to understanding the role of Wales in the world - our world-leading research expertise has been at the forefront of developing new thinking and new policy practices.

Reflecting its cutting-edge nature, our research has been consistently rated as internationally excellent and world-leading in the Research Excellence Framework assessments. In the last assessment in 2014, 44% of our research was assessed as world-leading and a further 32% as internationally excellent. We were ranked 5th in the UK for world-leading research and 7th overall.

In sum, our Department is a vibrant environment in which to study and explore new ideas. Each year we host a range of talks by world-leading experts and opinion formers that students, staff and local people regularly attend. We also host a number of exciting research groups and centres, such as the Centre for the International Politics of Knowledge, the David Davies Memorial Institute, the Centre for Intelligence and International Security Studies and the Planetary Challenges and Politics Centre. These are forums for analysis and discussion of the latest research in the context of a welcoming and rigorous research community.

Our Research Groups

We have a thriving community of research groups. Each research group organises its own programme of seminars, which provides an opportunity for staff and research students to present ongoing research and to receive critical feedback. Research groups also host visiting speakers and organise periodic conferences and workshops.

Critical and Cultural Politics and Racialisation Research Group (CCPR)

This is a student-run interdisciplinary research group that brings together those who are engaged in work inspired by a variety of critical perspectives in international politics. The CCPR aims to give undergraduate and postgraduate students of various departments the opportunity to present and receive feedback on their work. It also organises several other events throughout the year, in which participants will have the chance to critically engage with contemporary debates on a variety of issues, including a specific focus on (neo)colonialism, race, identity, and cultural relations.

Security Research Group (SRG)

This is another student-run research group, seeking to provide a platform where divergent academic interests and disciplines related to the study of security can be fruitfully brought together. Areas of interest include health security, environmental security, human security, national security, intelligence studies, accountability, strategic studies, critical security studies, geo-politics and geo-strategy, terrorism and critical terrorism studies.

International History Research Group (IHRG)

This group was established in October 2004 and has made an active contribution to the research culture of the Department. The IHRG is concerned with all aspects of international, transnational and global history. It has regularly organised seminars, roundtables and symposia, and brings together International Politics staff and postgraduate students, as well as colleagues from across the University, especially from the Department of History and Welsh History.

Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Research Group (IGSRG)

This is an interdepartmental research group, based between the Department of International Politics, the Department of Psychology, the Department of Law and Criminology and the School of Art, which focuses specifically on questions relating to feminism, queer theory, and gender. The goal of the group is to bring together students and members of staff from different departments within Aberystwyth University who have common interests.

Post Human Research Group

The Post Human Research Group (PHRG) is a multidisciplinary student led research group that provides an open and welcoming environment to explore new ideas and contemporary problems from a post-human perspective. The group was founded in the summer of 2020. Since then, it has organised a diverse range of events including a walking event which explored the effect of space and movement on ways of knowing, and an online event in Gathertown which explored virtual embodiments and avatar cultures. PHRG was recently successful in securing postgraduate community funding to organise a multidisciplinary workshop that focused on fluid thinking and climate change. The group has several events planned for the coming academic year.



Employability

Career prospects

Do you want to make an impact in the world? Going on to further study in the field of international relations and politics can open doors to many different career opportunities. Popular careers in the field of politics and international relations include: diplomacy work, lobbying, political analysis, international law and intelligence.

Transferable skills

Our Postgraduate programmes emphasise the development of strong research, writing and analytical skills as well as the capacity to work independently - qualities that are highly valued by employers.

Our postgraduate programmes will also develop the following skills:

- structuring and communicating complex ideas effectively
- writing for and speaking to a range of audiences
- evaluating and organising information
- working effectively with others
- working within time frames and to specific deadlines.

Our graduates work in:

- local and national politics
- the Foreign Office
- the Ministry of Defence
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- international organisations
- journalism
- business
- education
- the armed forces.

Many also choose the legal profession. And some love academia so much that they stay on and become eminent scholars!

Meet one of our alumni:

Ian Crook, Intelligence Specialist at Google

In my current role I am responsible for open source intelligence collection and analysis, monitoring of regional and international developments, and providing operational support during incidents and crisis management to protect assets, personnel, and reputation.

Why I chose Aberystwyth University

I chose Aberystwyth due to the International Politics department being the first of its kind. As such the department has had a deal of prestige since its inception in 1919. When I visited the department I was impressed by both the departmental building and welcoming atmosphere. Also, spending a few days in the picturesque setting of Aberystwyth town made me sure that I wanted to attend the University. It is a great working and social environment!

How I found the academic experience

The academic experience at Aberystwyth is one that I will never forget. World renowned professors, great quality of teaching, and a rich research culture encouraged me to engage with the course and successfully explore various subtopics within IR in depth. Module convenors were easy to access for support when tackling research and writing assignments.

The range of modules offered throughout the undergraduate degree also empowered me and my fellow students to have a large amount of autonomy over our specialisms. This undoubtedly created a unique experience for everyone on the course and enabled us to pursue our interests, thus focusing our studies. This was really beneficial for me as I wanted to pursue a specific career.

I also progressed to study for a Masters degree at Aberystwyth. My postgraduate course enabled me to acquire a more in-depth understanding of a niche area of the subject and helped me to secure employment opportunities that are related to my studies.

What I loved most about my time at Aberystwyth University

I look back on my experience at Aberystwyth as some of the best years of my life. I made great friends, enjoyed the social aspects of university life, met a range of diverse and interesting people, and had a great academic experience. I would recommend Aberystwyth to anybody thinking of pursuing a degree!



Extra curricular activities

Our internationally renowned research community hosts numerous extra-curricular activities that are intended to enhance the range and depth of the postgraduate experience that we offer.

Specifically for MA students, there is the fortnightly International Politics Masters Seminar Series (IPMSS). This comprises a varied programme of talks each semester by academic members of staff, roundtables on current topics in international politics and documentary and film viewings. It also provides an opportunity for students to discuss their dissertation projects and to receive support and feedback.

There are also several research groups run by PhD students that are active in the Department, organising regular events such as talks and reading groups. These currently include the Post Human Research Group, the Critical and Cultural Politics and Racialisation Research Group and the Religion, Politics and Philosophy Research Group. All postgraduate students are very welcome to join these research groups, or to set up their own groups on the research areas that interest them.

In addition, we are home to a number of research centres that are run by academic staff and that put on events during the course of the year. These include the Centre for the International Politics of Knowledge, the Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, the Planetary Challenges and Politics Centre, the Centre for Intelligence and International Security Studies and the David Davies Memorial Institute.

Finally, each week during term we hold our International Politics Research Seminar (IPRS), at which a visiting academic, member of staff or PhD student presents their current research. This seminar series is at the centre of our research culture and all PhD students and members of staff attend. We strongly encourage our MA students to take part as well, as the IPRS presents an outstanding opportunity to engage with cutting-edge research in international politics.



Student profiles



Fiona Young

MA student (2020-21); PhD (2021-)

I chose Aberystwyth University for the high quality of its International Politics programme and engaging research community. I came to Aberystwyth for the first time as an international exchange student during my undergraduate degree and quickly became attached to the program as well as the town itself. I am studying International Relations with a concentration on Critical Security. Next year I will be pursuing my PhD in International Relations here at Aberystwyth, an opportunity that would not have been possible without the support and encouragement that I received from my mentors, peers, and the overall community which makes Aberystwyth unique. I plan to pursue a career dedicated to research, and my time here in Aberystwyth will put me in a position to drive policy with research-backed analysis in order to bring about effective change.



Harry Warne

MA student (2020-21); PhD (2021-)

When I decided to pursue postgraduate study I knew I had to return to Aberystwyth and the Interpol department. I had loved every minute of life in Aberystwyth and there really is no better politics department in Wales which can offer the critical perspectives this department offers. I first moved to Wales when I studied in Aber as an undergraduate and the combination of a beautiful and friendly town and my desire to produce work which helps contribute to academic and political discourse within the country which adopted me made the Interpol department the obvious choice. Even though I was away for a few years in between I was re-welcomed like I never left. Aberystwyth is a really special place full of special people. I know my time here will equip me to make an impact in my field, using the critical tools Aberystwyth has granted me. Also beach bonfires are a little slice of heaven.



Joseph Thurgate

MA student (2019-20); PhD (2020-)

Hi, I'm Joe. Last year I completed my MA in International Politics - Research Training, and now I'm settling into the 1st year of my PhD focusing on the experiences of young people seeking asylum in the UK. I developed my research question while working for the British Red Cross and chose Aberystwyth to explore my subject because of its excellent reputation. It has been the perfect place to develop my project; the department has supported my ideas while also really pushing me to think critically about the subject. I also chose Aberystwyth for its amazing location on the Welsh coast, and I'm glad that I did. Walking along the coastal path, and swimming and surfing in the sea with friends, have been ideal ways to unwind and relax after busy days in the office.

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