



## Programme Specification

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Programme title	MRes Social Policy
Awarding Institution//Body	University of Bath
Teaching Institution	University of Bath
Programme accredited by (including date of accreditation)	recognised by the ESRC in 2007 .
Subject Benchmark Statement*Subject Benchmark Statement:	n/a at M level
Date of Specification preparation/revision	
Applicable to cohorts	
Programme Approved by	

### Synopsis and academic coherence of programme

The overall objective of the programme is to develop a systematic understanding and critical appreciation of alternative approaches, methodologies and paradigms of research in social and educational enquiry, with some awareness of the application of these approaches in the specific areas of social, educational and political enquiry in which students are specialising, and some ability to identify and investigate their own original research questions.

The overall goal of the programme is to develop fully trained and competent social science researchers, able to understand and use research techniques appropriate to their subject area and conversant with approaches used by other social scientists. Each programme has a substantial theoretical and quantitative core, which provides an essential basis for any working researcher, whether they are doing a PhD or otherwise engaged in research. The training aims to enable students to think through how they can use their existing knowledge and skills in different contexts and apply them to a variety of problems; and, progressively, to identify their own needs for training. For doctoral students the programme is designed to provide high quality training, both to enable them to carry out their doctoral research and to equip them to pursue other professional research activities subsequently.

The MRes will do more than provide a student with the necessary foundations for doing a specific PhD. Its larger purpose is to create a craftsman/woman who is capable of contributing to research projects in any of the main methodologies of the social sciences. A student who goes on from the MRes to do the PhD would utilise and apply some of the craftsman's skills; but the student would be equally equipped to go on then to other types of research project, using methodologies quite different from those used for the PhD.

The student who does not do the research training Masters but goes straight for the PhD will not have this larger education. At the end of the PhD s/he will be equipped only to work with the narrow range of methodologies that the PhD required him or her to develop. Nevertheless, as far as the PhD itself is concerned, the two students will have needed the same degree of specialised training and there will be no difference in the standards of rigour by which the final product, the PhD thesis, is then judged. This is two track, therefore, not two tier. The MRes is far from being just the ante-room to the PhD and it attests to a different type of competence. The PhD attests to rigour and deepening; the Masters to broadening and adaptability. Any other student who is pursuing the MPhil/PhD will follow those units of the MRes as required by their Supervisor(s) and Director of Studies. Where appropriate, such students shall be encouraged to pursue and obtain the PG Certificate during the course of their MPhil/PhD studies, subject to a timetable to be prescribed by their Director of Studies.

Study is on a one year full-time basis or a two-year part-time basis (allowing three months for the final dissertation). However, at the discretion of the Director of Studies (DoS), p/t students may be able to have an extension of three months (giving a total of six months for the dissertation and an overall total registration period of 27 months).

### Educational aims of the programme

<p>The Programme has four broad aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to review systematically, and to evaluate critically, alternative approaches, methodologies and paradigms of research in social and educational enquiry;</li> <li>2. to review systematically, and to evaluate critically, the application of these approaches in the specific areas of social and educational enquiry in which students are specialising;</li> <li>3. to support students, within an active research community, in identifying and investigating their own original research questions;</li> <li>4. to equip students with the skills to contribute to research projects using any of the main methodologies of the social sciences.</li> </ol> <p>The PG Certificate focuses principally on aim (1), but offers students scope for some specialist application of what they are studying aim (2) and, through the Short Research Apprenticeship Project (SRAP), the opportunity to undertake a research enquiry on a modest scale aim (3). The PG Diploma gives additional scope for appreciation and application of different methodologies of research in the student's specialist field aim (2); the Large Research Apprenticeship Project (LRAP) gives a more substantial opportunity to undertake a research enquiry of the student's choosing aim (3). The MRes involves a dissertation which meets aim (3) on a still more substantial scale. The PG Certificate involves some attention to aim (4), but this increases with the PG Diploma and the MRes, as a progressively wider range of research methodologies and their applications is critically reviewed.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge &amp; Understanding:</li> </ul>	<p>Students will</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. understand the basic principles of research design and appreciate alternative approaches to research;</li> <li>2. understand the significance of alternative epistemological positions that provide the context for theory construction, research design and the selection of appropriate analytical techniques.</li> </ol> <p>There are additional Learning Outcomes specific to particular specialisms</p> <p><b>Social Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the key concepts and theories of welfare, the state and policy-making/implementation;</li> <li>• have knowledge of contemporary social problems and how they emerge;</li> <li>• understand the origins, development, current activity and organisation of the UK's social welfare institutions;</li> <li>• have a comparative understanding of social policy - both in historical and cross-national terms.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual Skills:</li> </ul>	<p>All Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. be able to define researchable problems and formulate questions and hypotheses;</li> <li>2. understand the relationships between, and the rationale for, particular qualitative and quantitative research methods and be able to select appropriate strategies for research and/or evaluation;</li> <li>3. understand the role of sampling and the relationship between sampling and theory generation;</li> <li>4. understand and apply concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability from a variety of standpoints;</li> <li>5. be competent in questionnaire design, interviewing and survey design, the interpretation of measurement error, data gathering through the Internet;</li> <li>6. be competent in methods of recording, analysing and interpreting qualitative data, including observation and the interpretation of text;</li> <li>7. appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of data from primary and secondary sources, and be able to select relevant information and data sources;</li> <li>8. acquire skills in specific data analysis methods and tools, including appropriate computer packages;</li> <li>9. be proficient in using data from large scale surveys and qualitative data sets;</li> <li>10. be able to construct new data sets;</li> <li>11. be competent in descriptive and inferential statistics and be able to use, model and interpret multivariate statistical data;</li> <li>12. be competent in the collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data using a variety of techniques.</li> </ol> <p>There are additional Learning Outcomes specific to particular specialisms:</p> <p><b>Social Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ be able to apply problem-solving skills in seeking solutions to social problems and individual welfare needs;</li> <li>▪ be able to assess the outcomes of interventions by governments and other organisations to meet human needs;</li> <li>▪ be sensitive to the values and interests of others;</li> <li>▪ be able to apply some of the established theories and concepts of social policy to analyse social needs and particular policy problems and issues;</li> <li>▪ be able to undertake investigations of social questions, issues and problems;</li> <li>▪ be able to distinguish between the technical, normative, moral and political differences that affect policies and their consequences.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Practical Skills:</li> </ul>	

	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. acquire bibliographic skills, enabling them to identify and use library and other bibliographic resources and maintain a personal research bibliography;</li> <li>2. acquire basic computing skills including word processing, spreadsheets and database management;</li> <li>3. be able to evaluate research, including undertaking refereeing and book reviews;</li> <li>4. understand issues posed by social research in relation to ethics, confidentiality and legality (including IPR), and acquire the skills needed in order to respect, consider and attend to the rights of other researchers and research participants;</li> <li>5. understand the role of data from large scale surveys in public and commercial life;</li> <li>6. acquire language skills where appropriate.</li> </ol> <p>There are additional Learning Outcomes specific to particular specialisms:</p> <p><b>Social Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o understand the role of research in the policy-making process;</li> <li>o be familiar with the political dimensions of social policy research;</li> <li>o be familiar with the format and mechanisms for the dissemination of social policy research through professional bodies, including conference papers, posters and journal articles, and the process of peer review.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transferable/Key Skills:</li> </ul>	<p>Students will</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. develop writing, presentation and dissemination skills, including Internet-based tools;</li> <li>2. develop competency in the presentation of research findings to practitioners and lay audiences;</li> <li>3. establish a critical facility;</li> <li>4. develop an understanding of how the media communicates specialist material to lay audiences, and the skills required to engage with the media, such as writing press releases and being interviewed;</li> <li>5. develop research management skills, including the development of research proposals for external funding, time and resource planning and monitoring, archiving of data and completion of end-of-award reports to sponsors;</li> <li>6. develop skills in effective team working through collaboration in projects;</li> <li>7. develop career management skills, including skills in using new technologies for obtaining information about new career opportunities, skills in networking and negotiation, evaluation of personal and career development needs, self-promotion and marketing.</li> </ol> <p>There are additional Learning Outcomes specific to particular specialisms:</p> <p><b>Social Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop skills in applying and using research to inform professional knowledge and practice in social policy;</li> <li>• develop skill in informing policy debates and policy formation in social policy</li> </ul>

**Summary of assessment and progression regulations**

NFA - fully compliant

**Progression Regulations and Awards**

The programmes assessment and progression regulations are covered by the university's "New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations: Phases 2 & 3 for postgraduate taught programmes (NFAAR-PGT)" which can be found at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/index.htm>.

Specific regulations for the masters are summarised in Appendix 11 at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/nfaar-pgt-appendix-11.pdf>.

Details of 'Stage Required Units' and 'Designated Essential Units' can be found in the Programme Description in Appendix 1.

#### **Schedule for Board of Examiners and Timings of Re-assessment**

Once assessed work has been marked/moderated and viewed by the external examiner, all marks are considered by a Board of Examiners for Units (BEU) – these typically meet at the end of each semester i.e. February and June, and once the dissertation has been completed in November. Once the marks have been officially agreed by a BEU, they are then collated and subsequently considered by a Board of Examiners for Programmes (BEP).

In the case of **Full-Time students**, BEPs meet at the *end* of the taught stage (in June) to make formal progression decisions and in November to make formal award decisions (including progression with resubmitted dissertations, exit with a lesser award, and failing). Interim sub-BEPs *may* meet at specific point(s) during the taught stage of the programme (typically in February) to monitor student performance. Supplementary BEPs *may* meet in early September to consider supplementary assessment results taken over the summer.

Condoning and/or supplementary assessment requirements/timings/deadlines will usually be recommended at the full BEP in June and in November. All decisions will be based on the Persistent Generic PGT Rules for the programme (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/nfaar-pgt-appendix-11.pdf>). Whilst final award decisions are normally made at the November BEPs, occasionally where students may have had extensions to their original dissertation deadlines or may have had to submit revised dissertations, final award decisions may have to be made in the June boards (and very occasionally in the February board).

In the case of **Part-Time students**, decisions on condoning and/or supplementary assessment requirements will be made at each June BEP *during* the taught stage (as well as at the *end* of the stage) to avoid the student having to wait until they have completed all their taught units. Any decisions regarding condoning and/or supplementary assessment requirements will be based on the Persistent Generic PGT Rules *for the whole taught stage* (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/nfaar-pgt-appendix-11.pdf>). It should be noted however that, very occasionally, those decisions made *during* the stage may have to be reconsidered at a subsequent BEP, depending on the students' performance during the remainder of the stage, taking into account the timeframe in which supplementary assessment has to be completed. Given the extended durations for dissertations, final award decisions may be delayed beyond the normal November BEP to the following June BEP.

#### **Details of Work Placements Requirements / Work Based Learning / Industrial Training Requirements**

#### **Details of Study Abroad Requirements**

#### **Details of Professional Accreditation**

#### **Admissions Criteria including APL/APEL arrangements**

1. Students should normally have a 2:1 in a relevant subject. See the individual web page for each programme for other criteria which may be considered.
2. For those with English as a second language a minimum overall IELTS score of 6.5 is normally required, with not less than 6.0 in each of the four sub-categories. Pre-sessional English language training may be offered to help some applicants to obtain this.
3. Two references are required, of which one must be an academic reference.
4. Accredited Prior Learning or Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APL or APEL) – exemptions may be offered for up to 12 credits of the Certificate, 24 credits of the Diploma or the MRes programme, taking into account a student's previous academic and/or experiential learning
5. A student who has already been awarded the University of Bath PG Certificate in Research or PG Diploma in Research within the particular discipline (within five years of initial registration) may be admitted directly onto the next Stage of the programme, subject to agreement by the Admissions Tutor, rescinding the previous award and payment of an additional Tuition Fee.

All decisions are subject to agreement by the Director of Studies/Admissions Tutor.

#### **Details of Support Available to Students**

**The Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) recognition of masters courses and outlets is part of its quality assurance procedures and is designed to ensure that students funded by the ESRC receive high quality training, supervision and support in an active research environment. The University of Bath's MRes programmes were all ESRC recognised by the ESRC's 2007 Recognition exercise.**

**Following changes to the ESRC recognition process, in 2010 the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at the University of Bath joined with the Universities of Bristol and Exeter to develop the South West Doctoral Training Centre (SWDTC) – which received official recognition from the ESRC in January 2011 (for the next 5 years). A number of the MRes programmes now form part of ESRC-recognised SWDTC Pathways, including: MRes Education, MRes International Development, MRes Psychology (since 2014), MRes Management, MRes Social Policy and MRes Social Work.**

#### Department and Programme Specific Support Information

For residential students

1. Initial induction programme to clarify expectations, identify computing training needs, brief students on available learning resources, strengthen group identity and reflect upon diverse learning styles.
2. Detailed programme handbook and outlines for each Unit.
3. Each student has a home department and a personal tutor. The personal tutor will meet frequently with the student, to review progress during the Master's year, and to facilitate the transition from MRes to MPhil/PhD. Access to a wide range of additional staff within the Faculty able to assist in more specialised areas. Staff in these roles will be able to respond to many of the questions and concerns raised by their students. However, there is also a range of specialist student support services that will offer both information and advice to support these staff working with their students, as well as take referrals to work more directly with the students. Students can also self-refer to these services.
4. Support services offer information, advice and support in relation to accommodation, emotional difficulties, assessment of needs and provision of support relating to disability, student funding, general welfare, academic problems, student discipline and complaints, careers, international students, spiritual matters, part time work, security and personal safety. The Students' Union can also provide advocacy for students. More information about these services can be accessed via: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/students/support/>. There are also Medical and Dental Centres, and a Chaplaincy on campus that are very experienced in meeting the needs of a student population, as well as a University nursery and vacation sports schemes are sometimes available for older children during the school holidays.
5. Membership of a wider academic community (through seminars and social activities) for those engaged in applied social science research and study.
6. Student internet communications and VLEs.
7. Mutual support among those enrolled together on the programme is also very important, and students are encouraged to develop this, particularly during the induction phase and quarterly organised student lunches.
8. Extensive library, including 24-hour access to computers, the web and many on-line journals and databases.

High class sports and arts facilities enable students to develop themselves in an all-round manner. There is a Health Centre which includes dental services and a Chaplaincy centre.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences <http://www.bath.ac.uk/hss/graduate-school/taught-masters.html>,

Departmental websites

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/econ-dev/pg/res-economics.htm>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/mres/>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/study/pg/programmes/mres-poli-and-inte-stud>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/postgraduate/mres-esp/index.html>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/econ-dev/pg/res-development.htm> <http://www.bath.ac.uk/prospectus/postgrad/psychology/progs/research.shtml>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/postgraduate/mres-socpol/index.html>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/postgraduate/mres-sw/index.html>

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/postgraduate/mres-sociology/index.html>

Postgraduate brochure:

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/prospectus/postgrad/>

ESRC website and guidelines <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/postgraduate/eligibleoutlets/>.

**Business Support Systems** - part of Computing Services