

Postgraduate Programme Specification

MSc Human Rights

This specification provides a summary of the main features of the programme and learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate where full advantage is taken of all learning opportunities offered. Further details on the learning, teaching and assessment approach for the programme and modules can be accessed on the University website and Virtual Learning Environment, GCU Learn. All programmes of the University are subject to the University's [Quality Assurance](#) processes.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION			
Programme Title	Master of Science in Human Rights		
Final Award	Master of Science in Human Rights		
Awarding Body	Glasgow Caledonian University		
School	Glasgow School for Business and Society		
Department	Social Sciences		
Mode of Study	Full-time/Part-time/Distance Learning (<i>subject to availability</i>)		
Location of Delivery	Glasgow Campus		
UCAS Code			
Accreditations (PSRB)			
Period of Approval	From:	September 2026	To: August 2031

2. EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF PROGRAMME
<p>The MSc in Human Rights brings interdisciplinary Social Science approaches to the study of human rights. Recent global events - from migration, climate and conflict to fast-paced technological change - have transformed the human rights landscape both locally and internationally. The aim of the programme is to equip students with the knowledge and skills to successfully negotiate <i>challenges to</i> and <i>opportunities for</i> realising human rights in this context. Drawing on research-led expertise in Criminology, History, Political Science, Sociology and Law, the MSc in Human Rights is designed for those who wish to create a just global future and is tailored to needs of students who wish to pursue a career in policy analysis, advocacy, civil administration and research.</p> <p>Human rights principles apply to everyday situations in care homes, prisons, healthcare, housing, education and all aspects of local, national and international governance. That reality is not always well understood or is deliberately obstructed to the detriment of equality and social justice. This programme builds theoretical social science knowledge alongside advanced practical skills in analysis, problem-solving and communication. The goal is to empower students to work towards the realisation of rights in practice.</p> <p>The primary aim of this programme is to provide a broad, analytical and integrated study of human rights in theory and practice in local and international settings. The specific educational aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build knowledge on the legal and policy frameworks on human rights to advance the realisation of rights in practice • Develop critical thinking and analysis of the policy process and institutional practice in relation to the realisation of rights in practice • Develop practical application of theoretically grounded policy analysis to support a human rights-based approach to policy making and service design and delivery • Develop the next generation of government officials, civil society advocates, public sector officers, communications and media strategists with a critical appraisal of policy and practice and the skills for advocacy for the realisation of rights. • Support the development of core skills in responsible and reflective leadership.

- Develop skills in research and analysis for policy, advocacy, and future research roles.
- Develop critical understanding of research techniques and methodologies and apply these to an independent research project relating to an appropriate topic.
- Develop written, oral and visual communication skills in a range of media to support academic and professional activities.
- Develop personal and transferable skills related to independent research, problem solving, critical thinking, group working, ICT, employability skills and inter-personal communication.
- Develop understanding and skills in the ethical use of technology, including AI.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the following areas (learning outcomes specific to each module can be found in **Appendix MSc Human Rights Curriculum Map**):

A: Knowledge and understanding;

- A1 Develop the students' understanding of the international human rights instruments and institutions.
- A2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of current issues, tools and techniques applicable to policy evaluation and appraisal.
- A3 Critical appreciation of the nature of the skills required for the global workplace.
- A4 Critically evaluate institutional policy and practice from a gender perspective.
- A5 Demonstrate an appreciation of current human rights issues, their causes and consequences.
- A6 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the range of research methods available.

B: Practice: Applied knowledge, skills and understanding;

- B1 Ability to evaluate, assimilate and interpret multiple forms of social science, policy, economic data.
- B2 Ability to compare and contrast different approaches to common problems.
- B3 Capable of analysing and evaluating the theoretical and empirical aspects of research, whilst exhibiting a level of both professional and personal communication skills.
- B4 Utilise relevant information sources in an appropriate manner to generate alternative decisions and formulate creative, innovative and responsible decisions.
- B5 Reflect on personal learning and development.
- B6 Utilise appropriate methodologies in the formulation of an individual research case study or a Masters Project and control, organise, communicate and analyse research findings in an efficient and effective manner.

C: Generic cognitive skills;

- C1 Effective use of communication and information technologies to present ideas, analyse problems and develop clear and concise conclusions and recommendations.
- C2 Cognitive and intellectual skills including critical thinking, self-reflection, creativity and ethical problem-solving.
- C3 Research skills: information retrieval and collection; data analysis and synthesis.
- C4 Apply a human rights-based approach to a range of policy interventions and problems.
- C5 Ethical decision-making, negotiation and conflict resolution skills.
- C6 Deal with complex issues and make responsible and informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.

D: Communication, numeracy and ICT skills

- D1 Quantitative and qualitative skills in interpreting social science data.
- D2 Report and project writing skills.
- D3 Professionalism in the use of a range of oral communication techniques when articulating ideas and concepts.
- D4 Presentation skills in written communication in a variety of formats.

- D5 Visual presentation skills in a variety of formats.
- D6 Appropriate and ethical use of AI.

E: Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

- E1 Effective leadership and team working skills, including cross-cultural sensitivity, team-building and project management in group work situations.
- E2 Planning and time-management: organising and planning work, self-management and independent working.
- E3 Inter-cultural awareness: understanding different perspectives, multi-cultural sensitivity and appreciation and development of a global mindset.
- E4 Inter-personal skills including questioning and listening, influencing and persuading, advising others and giving feedback.
- E5 Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.
- E6 Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Underpinned by GCU's Mission, Vision, and Values for the Common Good and our Strategy 2030, the Department of Social Sciences' Learning and Teaching Strategy is designed to support the achievement of the Programme's LOs by cultivating a comprehensive understanding of social sciences concepts (LO A) and the development of practical, applied skills (LO B). This is achieved through value-based, research-led, and reflexive approaches that incorporate diverse pedagogies to encourage student autonomy and engagement (LO C, E). The strategy addresses contemporary challenges (incl. declining attainment, the impact of COVID-19, economic pressures, and the emergence of generative AI) to ensure that students receive the necessary support and relevant skills for a rapidly changing environment. More information on the Department's L&T Strategy can be found in Section 3.4 of the 7D Programme Review document.

Assessment Strategy

The Department's Assessment Strategy closely aligns with the Programme's Los, particularly emphasising the development of a range of cognitive (LO C), communication, numeracy, and ICT (LO D) skills. The Department uses a systematic approach to assessment loading and is committed to fostering creativity and critical thinking (LO A, B) through open-ended assessment prompts. In line with the Strategy 2030, the Assessment Strategy gives significant consideration to digital skills and the responsible use of generative AI. The diversity in assessment methods ensures that students can demonstrate their understanding and skills in various formats. Further details on specific assessment approaches are available in in Section 3.4 of the 7D Programme Review document.

Feedback Strategy

The Department's Feedback Strategy is integral to supporting students in achieving LOs related to autonomy, accountability, and working with others (LO E) as well as fostering continuous personal learning and development (LO B). Aligning with the Strategy 2030, robust marking and feedback standards are implemented to support students' growth as learners. Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning journey through active engagement with assessments and feedback, cultivating self-awareness and accountability. In line with GCU Values and Behaviours, the Department approach to assessment and feedback contributes to students developing inter-personal skills. More information on the Feedback Strategy can be found in Section 3.4 of the 7D Programme Review document.

4. LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

The Department's Learning and Teaching Methods are underpinned by the Strategy 2030, emphasising pedagogical principles such as equality of participation and attainment, excellence in learning, teaching, assessment, and student experience, and a holistic approach to student support. The Department adopts this vision through inclusive and flexible curriculum design, an emphasis on digital literacy, critical thinking, and responsible leadership, embedded research-led teaching, and opportunities for civic engagement and partnerships. Further details can be found in Section 3.4 of the 7D Programme Review document.

The programme provides a variety of learning and teaching methods. Programme and Module specific details are available for each module in the Module descriptors. Across the programme the learning and teaching methods and approaches may include the following:

- Lectures
- Seminars
- Practical classes
- Placements
- Simulation experiences
- Groupwork
- Flipped classroom approaches
- Online learning

This is in alignment with the Department's and GCU strategies as follows:

Department of Social Sciences

The Department of Social Science has a teaching, learning and assessment strategy which is strongly value-based, research-led, and highly reflexive to respond to the experiences and needs of diverse student cohorts in a rapidly changing social and economic environment. Teaching is delivered by an experienced team of researchers and educators, each with research expertise in their field. This is currently underpinned by the work of the [Gender Research and Equalities Network \(GReeN\)](#), [the Social, Criminal and Legal Justice Research Group \(SCaLe\)](#) and the [Scottish Poverty Information Research Unit \(SPIRU\)](#), each of which is strongly linked to wider civil society networks and local and national governance. In 2026 the Department will introduce the Policy Lab which will further augment our research and impact strengths.

Social Sciences recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and remains agile in response to societal shifts. The current context includes a diverse student body with varied academic backgrounds, ongoing legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic, the present cost-of-living and housing crises, and the rapid evolution of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. In response to this, the department has adopted the following measures in order to boost attainment and prepare our students for the world beyond GCU. These include:

- The embedding of core academic skills development in reading, writing, literature searching and referencing in teaching and through specialised support from the GSBS Learning Development Centre (LDC) and Library services.
- The introduction of the core module 'The Social Science Toolkit'
- A dynamic approach to new pedagogies as appropriate to foster student autonomy and active, collaborative engagement and ensure best practice, including a dedicated Learning and Teaching Forum.
- A compassionate Departmental approach to timetabling to consolidate contact time
- Personalised academic support from students through Personal Tutors, including signposting to Wellbeing Services and Discretionary and Childcare Funding.
- A compassionate approach to the challenges faced by students with caring responsibilities, including appropriate use of discretion around awarding of assessment extensions.
- Support for understanding AI and its mis/uses.

Alignment with GCU Learning and Teaching strategy

Teaching in the Department is underpinned by the GCU Mission, Vision, and Values for the Common University for the Common Good

The MSc Human programme supports and exemplifies the Common Good attributes of active global citizenship, systems thinking, responsible leadership, integrity, creativity, resilience, compassion, empathy and confidence. These are embedded in everyday learning and assessment as follows:

- Compassionate pedagogies
- Student-led seminars and events
- Civic engagement: walking tours, field trips, guest speakers and masterclasses
- Skills focus in digital literacy, problem-solving, project-management, debating, argumentation and application to real-world contexts
- Emphasis on independent thinking, self-reflexivity and ethics.
- Theoretical and practical understanding of human rights, equity, and systemic oppression. The teaching builds confidence
- Robust marking and feedback standards that support students to develop and grow as learners.

The MSc Human Rights Programme has adopted this vision through:

- Inclusive and flexible curriculum design
- Emphasis on digital literacy, critical thinking, and responsible leadership
- Embedded research-informed teaching
- Opportunities for real-world engagement and partnerships
- Embedding SDGs learning outcomes and student projects. The Department has a track record of promoting several SDGs including Quality Education (4), Gender Equality (5), Reduced Inequalities (10), Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (16), and Partnerships for the Goals (17).

5. ASSESSMENT METHODS

The Department's Assessment Methods are strategically aligned with the pedagogical principles outlined in the Strategy 2030, prompting equality of participation and attainment, and excellence in assessment. The approach emphasises inclusive and flexible curriculum design, using assessments tailored to diverse learning needs. The assessment strategies foster digital literacy, critical thinking, and responsible leadership with practical exercises designed to develop students' ability to analyse complex socio and cultural issues. For a detailed breakdown of assessment methods, please refer to Section 3.4 of the 7D Programme Review document.

The programme provides a variety of formative and summative assessment methods. Programme and Module specific guidance will provide detail of the assessment methods specific to each module.

Across the programme the assessment methods may include the following:

- Written coursework (essays, reports, case studies, dissertation, literature review)
- Oral coursework (presentations, structured conversations)
- Practical Assessment (Placement)
- Group work
- Blogs and Wikis
- Portfolio Presentations

The above assessments may be delivered either in person and online as appropriate and determined at module level by the Module Leader.

Across the Programme a range of assessment methods are deployed which are designed to enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding required by the aims of the Programme as well as the array of intellectual, professional and transferable skills demanded by employers. As such, a balance of individual essays, case studies, facilitation and participation in seminars, individual and group reports (including individual reflective reports), presentations, blogs and dissertation assessments has

been created to ensure academic rigour in relation to knowledge and intellectual ability as well as the development of professional and transferrable skills. The nature of assessment is specific and relevant to the module content and therefore includes an amalgamation of investigative research, critical analysis, methodological approach, problem-solving and critical self-reflection. The use of individual and group-based projects, leading to individual and group reports, presentations, and self-reflection are designed to meet all learning outcomes as depicted in the Appendix MSc Human Rights Assessment Map.

6. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

UK honours degree 2:2 or equivalent in any subject area

English language requirement: Academic IELTS core of 6.0 (or equivalent) with no element below 5.5.

All students entering the programme are required to adhere to the [GCU Code of Student Conduct](#).

7. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND AVAILABLE AND FINAL EXIT AWARDS¹

The following modules are delivered as part of this programme:

Module Code	Module Title	Core or Optional	SCQF Level	Credit Size	Coursework 1 %	Coursework 2 %	
MML326667	Realising Rights in Practice	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
MML326670	Transformative Social Science	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
Revised title	Human Rights, Citizenship and Poverty	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
Revised title	Power and Global (In)Justice	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
Revised title	Social Movements and Activism for Justice	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
New module	Governing the World: Idea and Institutions	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
New module	The Social Science Toolkit: Theoretical Frameworks and Critical Skills	Core	11	15	100	n/a	
MMN230782	Postgraduate Research Methods	Core	11	15	40	60	
MMN230182	Masters Research Project	Core	11	45	100	n/a	
MMN639209	Developing Leadership for the Common Good	Core	11	15	100	n/a	

Students undertaking the programme on a full-time basis commencing in September of each year will undertake the modules in the order presented above. This may be subject to variation for students commencing the programme at other times of year (e.g. January) and/or undertaking the programme on a part-time or distance learning mode of delivery.

The following final and early Exit Awards are available from this programme²:

Postgraduate Certificate in Human Rights- *achieved upon successful completion of 60 credits*

Postgraduate Diploma in Human Rights- *achieved upon successful completion of 120 credits*

Master of Science in Human Rights- *achieved upon successful completion of 180 credits*

8. ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

Students should expect to complete their programme of study under the GCU Assessment Regulations that were in place at the commencement of their studies on that programme, unless proposed changes to University Regulations are advantageous to students. These can be found at:

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/aboutgcu/supportservices/qualityassuranceandenhancement/regulations-and-policies>

¹ Periodically, programmes and modules may be subject to change or cancellation. Further information on this can be found on the GCU website here:

www.gcu.ac.uk/currentstudents/essentials/policiesandprocedures/changesandcancellationtoprogrammes

² Please refer to the [GCU Qualifications Framework](#) for the minimum credits required for each level of award and the Programme Handbook for requirements on any specified or prohibited module combinations for each award.

VERSION CONTROL (to be completed in line with AQPP processes)			
Any changes to the PSP must be recorded below by the programme team to ensure accuracy of the programme of study being offered.			
<i>Version Number</i>	<i>Changes/Updates</i>	<i>Date Changes/Updates made</i>	<i>Date Effective From</i>
1.0	New PSP for 2026/27	04/10/2025	September 2026