



Durham
University

School of Government
and International Affairs

Inspiring the extraordinary

Undergraduate programmes

Pre-application information 2026/27



Welcome message from our Head of School

Welcome to the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA).

I hope you have an interesting and exciting day here in Durham – hopefully the first of many. My name is Christopher Finlay. I'm Professor of Political Theory here at SGIA and I'm also the current Head of School.

It's a very exciting time at SGIA as we continue the period of sustained growth in our research and teaching capacity that we have been engaging in over the past few years. This reflects a substantial investment by the University in our programmes, one that equips us to open them to a large cohort of talented students. Our academic staff are leaders in research and teaching in Politics and International Relations and we offer a suite of undergraduate programmes that reflect this excellence and that make it available to students excited about what our discipline has to offer.

Our single honours programmes were recently reviewed to ensure that they continue to deliver a demanding, stimulating, and life-changing educational experience that takes you to the forefront of research in Politics and International Relations in one of the world's top departments. At SGIA you will study with leading specialists in Comparative Politics and Political Science, Political Philosophy and Political Thought, International Relations, and International Political Economy. And we have colleagues whose regional knowledge spans the globe.

As a student in SGIA, we will provide you with opportunities to develop the skills and experience to succeed in your future study or work. Durham University and SGIA have an enviable track-record of producing graduates who win places in the best postgraduate programmes and with the most demanding employers. Our unique blend of academic training coupled with the wider student experience provided by the partnerships between academic units like SGIA and the colleges is central to that success.

Join us, and together we will challenge and support you to develop the knowledge and skills to help you succeed in your life goals.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Christopher Finlay



5th in the UK

Guardian
University Guide
2026

World Top 100

QS World
University Rankings
2027

49th in the world

for employer
reputation, QS
World University
Rankings 2027

88%

of Durham's
graduates were in
work or further
study 15 months
post graduation -
Graduate
Outcomes Data
2026 (for students
who graduated in
2023-24).

Our programmes – at a glance

BA (Hons) Politics L200

3 years full time

Typical A level offer - AAA

Typical BTEC offer - DDD

Typical IB offer - 36

BA (Hons) International Relations L250

3 years full time

Typical A level offer - AAA

Typical BTEC offer - DDD

Typical IB offer - 36

BA (Hons) Politics and International Relations L253

3 years full time

Typical A level offer - AAA

Typical BTEC offer - DDD

Typical IB offer - 36

Additional Politics programmes available at Durham University

The following programmes are also available which enables students to take a number of our modules:

BA (Hons) Philosophy and Politics LV25

3 years full time

Typical A level offer - AAA

Typical BTEC offer - DDD

Typical IB offer - 36

BA (Hons) Economics and Politics LL12

3 years full time

Typical A level offer - A*AA

Typical BTEC offer - D*DD

Typical IB offer - 37

BA (Hons) Philosophy, Politics and Economics VL52

3 years full time

Typical A level offer - A*AA

Typical BTEC offer - D*DD

Typical IB offer - 37

Course structure

Five or Six modules per year (120 credits total)

Teaching is primarily delivered in lectures and small group seminars. This is supported by further one-on-one guidance.

For every hour of teaching, students are expected to do around four hours of independent study

Seminar groups are usually between 15-20 students.

As you move into the final year, the focus on self-directed learning and independent research increases, particularly around your dissertation.

Essential Equipment

Students will require access to a WiFi-enabled personal computer or laptop (Mac or Windows) which is capable of running word processing



BA (Hons) International Relations

Our BA in International Relations will give you a grounding in global politics and so much more. Taking a research-led approach, you will develop an understanding of many of the relationships that shape our complex and interconnected world. Issues that range from regional studies and global security to the balance of power and social norms.

The critical analytical and research skills that underpin the course, coupled with an understanding of global affairs and the connections between countries, international organisations, NGOs and the business sector, will put you in a strong position to pursue a career in areas including policy, international finance, business, journalism and the charity sector.



First year study:

Core (compulsory) modules:

- International Security
- Perspectives of Political Economy
- Researching Politics and International Relations
- Introduction to International Relations

Plus a choice of either:

- Democratic Political Systems **or**
- Introduction to Political Theory

One further module, for example*

- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, **or**
- One open module offered from another department.

Second year study:

Core module

- Research Project

Plus a choice of either:

- International Theory **or**
- Capitalism: History and Theory

Plus a choice of either:

- International Organisations **or**
- Sovereignty, State and Empire

Plus three further optional modules, for example*

- Politics and International Relations of East Asia
- Foundations of Western Political Thought
- Analytical Politics
- Debates in Political Theory
- Class, Nation and Party in British Politics
- Middle East and the International System
- Gender and Politics
- Democracy, Conflict and American Society
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, **or**
- One open module offered from another department.

Final year study:

Core module

Dissertation

Plus four further modules from, for example*:

- The Politics of Inequality
- Democratic Practice in the US Campaigns, Elections and Voter Behaviour
- Decolonising International Society
- Theories of Liberty
- Marx and Marxism
- China in Global Political Economy
- Climate, Nature and the Global Economy
- Social Justice and Marginalised Groups
- Elections and British Politics
- Advanced Topic in International Political Theory: The International Politics of the Everyday
- Environmental Politics
- The Dark Side of the Liberal International Order
- Democratic Theory
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, **or**
- One module offered from another department

All modules are indicative modules and are subject to change. Under-recruited optional modules may not run.

***Please note, not all modules run every year and are subject to change**

BA (Hons) Politics

Taught by experts in the field, the BA in Politics will give you an insight into political systems and governance on a local and global scale. You'll be exposed to ideas and opinions that will challenge your perceptions and encourage you to think critically and analytically.

The critical analytical and research skills that underpin this course, coupled with a deep understanding of global current affairs and the complex connections between nations and ruling parties, will put you in a strong position to pursue a career in social policy research, journalism, academia, the Civil Service, the Foreign Office and more.



First year study:

Core (compulsory) modules:

- Democratic Political Systems
- Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Researching Politics and International Relations

Plus a choice of either:

- International Security **or**
- Perspectives of Political Economy

One further module, for example*

- Introduction to International Relations
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, **or**
- One open module offered from another department.

Second year study:

Core module

- Research Project

Plus a choice of either:

- Foundations of Western Political Thought **or**
- Analytical Politics

Plus a choice of either:

- Debates in Political Theory **or**
- Class, Nation and Party in British Politics

Plus three further optional modules, for example*

- International Theory
- Politics and International Relations of East Asia
- International Organisations
- Sovereignty, State and Empire
- Capitalism: History and Theory
- Middle East and the International System
- Democracy, Conflict and American Society
- Gender and Politics
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, **or**
- One open module offered from another department.

Final year study:

Core module

- Dissertation

Plus four further modules from, for example*:

- The Politics of Inequality
- Democratic Practice in the US Campaigns, Elections and Voter Behaviour
- Decolonising International Society
- Theories of Liberty
- Marx and Marxism
- China in Global Political Economy
- Climate, Nature and the Global Economy
- Social Justice and Marginalised Groups
- Elections and British Politics
- Advanced Topic in International Political Theory: The International Politics of the Everyday
- Environmental Politics
- The Dark Side of the Liberal International Order
- Democratic Theory
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, **or**
- One module offered from another department

All modules are indicative modules and are subject to change. Under-recruited optional modules may not run.

***Please note, not all modules run every year and are subject to change**

BA (Hons) Politics and International Relations

The BA in Politics and International Relations will help you develop an understanding of many relationships that shape our complex and interconnected world. The degree will equip you with a systematic and rigorous understanding of the two disciplines while developing many transferable skills valued by employers.

Your studies will be structured around four main themes: political thought, political economy, political institutions and international relations. Following a general introduction, you'll begin to tailor the course to your interests and aspirations with optional modules in areas such as interdependence, crises and conflict, comparative politics, regional politics, democratic practice and the impact of global politics on the environment.



First year study:

Core (compulsory) modules:

- Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to International Relations
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Researching Politics and International Relations
- Perspectives of Political Economy

Optional Modules

- Democratic Political Systems
- International Security
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, or
- One open module offered from another department.

Second year study:

Core Modules:

- Research Project

Plus a choice of either:

- Foundations of Western Political Thought or Analytical Politics

Plus a choice of either:

- International Theory or International Organisation

Plus three further optional modules, for example*:

- Politics and International Relations of East Asia
- Sovereignty, State and Empire
- Capitalism: History and Theory
- Middle East in the International System
- Gender and Politics
- Debates in Political Theory
- Democracy, Conflict and American Society
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, or
- One module offered from another department.

Final year study:

Core Module:

- Dissertation

Plus four further modules from*:

- The Politics of Inequality
- Democratic Practice in the US Campaigns, Elections and Voter Behaviour
- Decolonising International Society
- Theories of Liberty
- Marx and Marxism
- China in Global Political Economy
- Climate, Nature and the Global Economy
- Social Justice and Marginalised Groups
- Elections and British Politics
- Advanced Topic in International Political Theory: The International Politics of the Everyday
- Environmental Politics
- The Dark Side of the Liberal International Order
- Democratic Theory
- One module from the Centre for Foreign Language Study, or
- One module offered from another department

All modules are indicative modules and are subject to change. Under-recruited optional modules may not run.

***Please note, not all modules run every year and are subject to change**

Additional politics programmes available at Durham University

Offered by Philosophy:

BA (Hons) Philosophy and Politics
First year study:

Core modules

The Philosophical Traditions (Philosophy)
Introduction to Political Theory (SGIA)

Two of the following SGIA modules:

- Researching Politics and International Relations
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Introduction to International Relations
- Perspectives of Political Economy

Two of the following Philosophy modules

- Ethics and Values
- Knowledge, Minds and Reality
- Reading Philosophy
- Being Human: An Introduction to Post-Kantian Philosophy
- Science, Medicine and Society



Offered by Economics:

BA (Hons) Philosophy, Politics and Economics First year study:

Two of the following SGIA modules:

- Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Introduction to International Relations
- Researching Politics and International Relations
- Perspectives on Political Economy

The following Economics modules:

- Principles of Economics
- Economic Methods

The following Philosophy modules

- Ethics and Values
- Knowledge, Minds and Reality



Offered by Economics:

BA (Hons) Economics and Politics First year study:

Three of the following SGIA modules:

- Researching Politics and International Relations
- Introduction to Political Theory
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Introduction to International Relations
- Perspectives of Political Economy

The following three modules from Economics

- Principles of Economics
- Economic Methods
- Global Economic History

If you want to attend a first-class university in a beautiful, historic setting with unparalleled student support services, choose Durham.

All modules are indicative modules and are subject to change. Under-recruited optional modules may not run. (*Not all modules run every year)

Year abroad opportunities

You can further tailor any of these courses by applying to do a placement year or a study abroad year, increasing the course from three to four years. Please see the following sections for more details.

European partners

France

Universite de Lille
Sciences Po Institut d Etudes Politiques de Paris
Sciences Po Institut d Etudes Politiques de Toulouse
Sciences Po Aix en Provence

Germany

Ruprecht Karls Universität Heidelberg
Universität Konstanz

Italy

LUISS - Luiss Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi

Netherlands

Universiteit van Amsterdam

Spain

University of Granada
University of Salamanca
Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid

Sweden

Uppsala Universitet

Switzerland

University of Zurich

Turkey

Kadir Has University

For comprehensive list please visit:

Erasmus, Exchange & Study Abroad : Government and International Affairs - Durham University.



International/exchange partners include

Australia

University of Western Australia
University of Melbourne

Canada

University of British Columbia
University of Calgary

Hong Kong

University of Hong Kong
Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

Japan

University of Tokyo

New Zealand

University of Otago

USA

Boston College
University of Notre Dame

Singapore

National University of Singapore

For comprehensive list please visit:

Erasmus, Exchange & Study Abroad : Partner Universities - Durham University.



Career options, employability and graduate studies

The Careers, Employability and Enterprise Centre works closely with the School of Government and International Affairs. The link Careers Adviser delivers presentations to each year group on topics relevant to that stage of their academic career. These cover career decision making, successful applications and interviews, and advice for those considering further study. The department also hosts a range of guest speakers from external organisations to expand our students' knowledge of their different career options.

Durham University School of Government and International Affairs graduates have an enviable record of employment and enter a wide range of career areas including business and finance, local and national government, armed forces, marketing and PR, media - newspaper and TV journalism, publishing, law, manufacturing industry, recruitment and teaching.

Our graduates are recruited by leading employers such as the House of Commons, Accenture, British Airways, Ernst and Young, British Telecom, Goldman Sachs, PwC, Royal Navy, House of Fraser, Aldi, Channel 4, HSBC, Teach First, Durham University, Black Rock and the Audit Commission. Specific roles our graduates have progressed into include business manager, press and publicity assistant, accountant, political assistant, retail manager, international financial analyst, Naval Officer, marketing executive, stock-broker, tax adviser and political researcher.

durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/school-government-international-affairs/undergraduate-study/employability

Of those students that left in 2023:

- 84% are in paid employment or study fifteen months after graduation

Of those in employment:

- 70% are in high skilled employment - Average salary £31,000

durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/school-government-international-affairs/about-us/job-opportunities

Source: Graduate Outcomes Survey for students graduating 2022-23. Data from 60 students (55% of those who were asked)

Previous graduate career paths

- China Federation of Industrial Economics - International Liaison Officer
- Exeter University - Research Fellow
- International Organization for Migration - Associate to the Ombudsman
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Internship at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Tunbridge Wells Council - Democratic Services Officer
- Breast Cancer Now - Public Affairs Intern

durham.ac.uk/study/careers-employability-enterprise/



Placement year

A globally outstanding centre of teaching and research excellence, a collegiate community of extraordinary people, a unique and historic setting – Durham is a university like no other. With employers increasingly looking beyond qualifications and an emphasis on practical experience and transferable skills within the recruitment process, a Placement Year from Durham University could really help you stand out from the crowd.

Why do a placement year?

We strongly encourage undergraduate students to do a placement year as part of your degree if you feel it is the right option for you. Not only will it help you decide what you want to do when you graduate and potentially lead to graduate job offers, but research suggests that those who have completed a placement have a higher degree classification overall. You may choose to work in the UK or internationally and work in an organisation related to your degree or a completely different sector.

You will develop a number of transferable skills whilst completing the placement as well as sector specific experience and knowledge which will support you in future job applications upon graduation whether or not you choose to stay in your chosen industry or role.

- **Future-proof your career.** Many employers use the placement schemes to secure talent for their graduate schemes and many of our students enter final year with a graduate role secured.
- **Networking.** The connections made during your Placement Year, as well as the recruitment process, will help expand your network and enable you to secure roles in the future beyond graduation.
- **Bring your subject to life.** You will have the opportunity to apply the knowledge from your degree in a practical setting and for some decide whether you want to enter the job market or pursue a career in research.
- **Finances.** Placements will most likely be paid. On average a placement student earns between £15-£25k.

Students from this department are highly sought after by placement providers and we have students working in; regularly affairs, solicitor firms, public affairs consultancies, government social research and Think Tanks.

Student Placement Guide can be found [here](#).



Requirements of a placement year

Once you have decided to undertake a placement year, you should book an appointment with your Faculty Placement Manager who will be supporting you through the pre-placement process. They can also advise you on searching strategies and how to secure an appropriate placement. Please note, it is up to the student not the department or University to secure a placement.

In general, the requirements are that:

- You must pass all Level 2 modules of your programme
- You must have secured an approved placement of no less than 40 weeks (made up from one long placement, or up to a maximum of three shorter opportunities)
- You must have attended a pre-placement briefing

Contact Details:

For further information on placement years, please contact your Faculty Placement Manager at: socialsciences.placements@durham.ac.uk

Masters Programmes at Durham University

A significant number of students progress onto higher level study following their degree. Some remain within their academic field of interest and pursue a taught or research Masters at Durham, London School of Economics, University College London, York, Sheffield and Oxford. Some progress on to PhD study with recent successes at Durham and Cambridge.

Others take a different route and pursue professional postgraduate programmes in law, IT, advertising and marketing, finance and teaching.

Here in SGIA we currently offer the following Masters degree programmes:

- MA Politics and International Relations (Political Theory)
- MA International Relations
- MA Politics and International Relations of the Middle East
- MScPeace, Conflict and SecurityMSc Defence, Development and Diplomacy
- MSc Public Policy

Taught Courses - Durham University



A Students' Guide

A prospectus or brochure often contains a great deal of detailed information, but experience suggests that prospective students want clear answers to direct questions. Detailed information about courses and degrees is available from the department but the questions that follow are the sort most commonly asked. If your concerns are not addressed here, please write to us and we will try to answer them.

Q. Where is Durham and what is it like?

Durham is an historic, cathedral city designated as a World Heritage Site and located in the north-east of England. It is easily reached by rail, road and air. Its Cathedral is one of the finest buildings in Europe and the city provides an attractive and safe environment for students. The city possesses a range of entertainment.

Q. How will I be assessed?

Assessment methods vary according to the precise degree programme and to specific modules chosen, but in most cases there are a mixture of examinations, group projects, assessed essays, and a dissertation in your final year. You will normally be assessed during or at the end of the year in which you take a module.

Q. Where do Durham students come from?

Our students come from all parts of the UK and around the world. We particularly welcome overseas students with good spoken and written English; we determine qualifications on an individual basis; our International Office can provide further guidance:

durham.ac.uk/study/ug/apply/international

We also welcome applications from mature students, who are 21 and over, and consider qualifications on an individual basis; we look for strong evidence of promise and genuine interest in relevant areas of study.

Q. What happens to my UCAS form?

When your form arrives in Durham, it is sent electronically to the central Admissions team for grading. If an offer is to be made, the form is then considered by the College Office who will allocate your College/Society, if you have stated an open preference, a college will be allocated to you automatically by Central Admissions. You will know the result of your application within the time limit set by UCAS.

Q. Do you consider deferred entry applications?

SGIA is happy for students to apply for deferred entry, but if you decide to have a 'gap year', you should make good use of that time, working, travelling or widening your experience in some other worthwhile way and you need to explain your plans, briefly, in your UCAS application.

Q. How will I be supported?

The University operates an Academic Adviser system. An Academic Adviser is a member of staff from your degree programme, who will be responsible for providing you with academic support and guidance throughout your undergraduate programme of study. This support may include the provision of feedback and advice on your overall academic performance and progress, and guidance on study choices.

The Academic Adviser may be a first point of communication should you wish to talk about a variety of other issues, for example illness, family problems and career possibilities. Where students raise issues that are pastoral in nature, the Academic Adviser will signpost their advisee to their College Senior Tutor or Student Support Officer, and if appropriate, any relevant specialist student support service.

Q. Are there opportunities for a Placement Year as part of my degree?

All Undergraduate programmes in the department allow you to take a Placement Year as part of your degree. You cannot combine a study abroad year and placement year but you are able to undertake a work based placement year in the UK or internationally and will do so between your 2nd and 3rd year, extending your degree to 4 years in length. It is up to you to secure a suitable placement year which will be approved by the department and the University however there is lots of support to help you find a role.





Contact

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Admission related queries

Recruitment and Admissions
Durham University
Mountjoy Centre
Stockton Road
Durham
DH1 3LE

T: +44 (0)191 334 1000
W: durham.ac.uk/study/ug/apply

durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/school-government-international-affairs

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