



Public Policy
Postgraduate

Why study at postgraduate level?

The Masters (MSc) in Public Policy programme is aimed at recent graduates and mid-career professionals from around the world interested in public policy or policy research. This course caters for a mixture of home and international students, and both full and part-time students.

Students taking the MSc in Public Policy come from a wide variety of backgrounds (public administration; politics; international relations; economics; media studies; philosophy; history; geography). Some have no prior knowledge of the field, while others come to consolidate their undergraduate studies. Increasingly, students already working in a policy environment are sponsored by their employer or their government to complete the course, improving their skills and career prospects.

The diversity of our cohort allows students the opportunity to gain diverse perspectives on international policy processes and governance structures.

Students explore the changing nature of international public policy and consider key questions such as:

- What is public policy?
- Who are the key actors and what institutions are involved?
- How is public policy shaped, and how does it impact upon an economic, social and cultural environment which is increasingly 'globalised'?
- How is key evidence constructed and framed and why is the flow of information and change not reciprocal?
- How might the framing of evidence influence policy-making?



Why choose Bristol?

The Masters in Public Policy programme (MPP) in Bristol is a unique, academically rigorous, multi-disciplinary programme within a vibrant UK and international student community.

The programme is located within the School for Policy Studies, a research-intensive department with an outstanding international reputation.

The course is taught by a team of internationally recognised policy experts including economists, sociologists, social policy analysts and human geographers all with specialist expertise across a wide range of policy areas.

The MPP programme is designed for students who want to pursue professional careers in policy analysis, programme management, policy consultancy, and policy advocacy within the public, private, or non-profit sectors.

Most of our students go on to become civil servants, policy analysts, policy consultants, or policy entrepreneurs. Former students (coming from over 30 countries across the world) are flourishing in their careers and contributing to better, more considerate and more rigorous policy making at local, regional, national and supranational levels.



Bristol as a vibrant city

The programme is set in Bristol, an academically, culturally and socially dynamic city that offers unique opportunities for students to explore innovative local projects in their dissertation. Our students always say how much they love the city of Bristol - from its friendly people and fantastic music scene to its vibrant harbourside, green spaces and buzzing centre.

What will I study?

A rich variety of teaching methods are used across the different units. Lectures are combined with seminars, and in many units students are given the opportunity to develop presentational skills through group projects. The programme consists of mandatory units, optional units and a dissertation.

Mandatory units

Governance, institutions and the global political economy

This unit considers the economic and political contexts for the making and delivering of public policy, the changing role of the state and whether the concept of governance provides an appropriate theoretical framework for interpreting the emerging relationship between the state, institutions at different levels and the policy process.

It goes on to consider the diverse structures, people and processes that go into the making and implementing of policy. It will focus on identifying new or emerging types of relationships between institutions and the implications for public policy.

Power, politics and the policy process

This unit explores the whole process of public policy making, from the big picture of the global economy through to the more specific and complex issues of policies and political agendas and the role of individuals in shaping policy design. The concept of political power influences every stage of the policy process and forms a central strand running through the entire course.

Students are introduced to the main theories that seek to explain the nature of policy making and debate these in light of contemporary issues about the nature, scope and effectiveness of policy in modern societies. The unit begins by exploring how policy decisions are influenced by different structures of power, including class, wealth, bureaucracy and technical expertise. It goes on to critically review the key 'stages' of the policy process, including agenda setting, policy formation, implementation, monitoring and policy evaluation. The growing significance of multi-level and multi-actor governance and the role of policy networks will also be examined.

The course will conclude by critiquing the theory and models introduced throughout the course and evaluating these in light of national and regional policy examples.

What will I study?

Informing and evaluating policy: Research methods and analysis

This unit introduces students to the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques and data analysis relevant for public policy contexts. It introduces students to the application and analysis of quantitative and qualitative techniques to primary and secondary sources through a consideration of the following: questionnaire design; sampling techniques, statistical inference and experimental design; interviewing, focus groups, case studies, ethnography, content analysis and document analysis. The strengths and weakness of each method will be reviewed in the context of matching appropriate method(s) to specific research questions. The course will be taught using examples drawn from public policy studies.

Optional units

Students have the opportunity to choose additional units from a range of options, such as:

- The Economics of Public Policy.
- International Analysis of Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion.
- Cities, Housing and Public Policy.
- Corruption and Public Policy.
- Gender and Violence: International and Global Perspectives.
- Migration, Asylum and Human Rights: EU and Global Policy Perspectives.
- Disabled Childhoods.
- Health and Health Care in a Global Context.
- Policy Analysis.
- Public Management and Organisations.
- Digital Transformation of Public Services.
- Public policy for a complex and uncertain world.

You can find more details for each unit online at [bris.ac.uk/sps/study/postgraduate/public-policy](https://www.bris.ac.uk/sps/study/postgraduate/public-policy)

While this information is correct at time of writing (Nov 2022) we recommend you check for the most up-to-date unit descriptions at:

<https://www.bris.ac.uk/unit-programme-catalogue/>

What will I study?

The dissertation

The dissertation provides an opportunity for students to apply their learning through independent study and research, supported by a supervisor.

Students choose to consider a range of themes as part of their dissertation. Here is a taster of some recent topics with an international focus:

- Building Resilience: The impact of a directly elected mayor in Bristol.
- What is the impact of HIV/AIDS on the socioeconomic wellbeing of women in Zimbabwe?
- Understanding food policy making from and beyond an economics perspective: The case of minimum grain purchase price in China.
- Imposed Islamic dress code regulation as a specific form of violence against women in the Republic of Chechnya.
- The effects of urban transport in Toronto: A case for public bikes and pedestrianisation.
- How can labour market flexibility influence investment attractiveness of Kazakhstan?

Programme timetable

For full time students the programme is delivered on a weekly basis across the first two terms. During the first term, students complete three mandatory units. In the second term, students complete three optional units. They then spend their third and final term completing their dissertation. There are no taught components during this period.

Part time students have some choice in how they wish to complete the 120 credits of taught units and their dissertation across the two academic years. Part time students complete a minimum of one mandatory unit in autumn terms and one optional unit in spring terms. It is expected that the student will attend at least one day per week. Students spend the summer term of their second year completing their dissertation.

Career prospects

Graduates from our MSc in Public Policy often go on to work in roles that focus on strategy, policy development and implementation and/or policy research.

In recent years, students have gone on to work in a number of government agencies and departments; national or international non-governmental organisations; and international institutions, such as the European Union and the United Nations.

Our programme also has a strong track record of supporting our students in securing funded PhD research grants. Recent successfully funded research projects have included:

- Problematising the contemporary migrant health insurance issue: a post-structuralist analysis of the 2013 Migrant Health Insurance Card Scheme policy in Thailand (Thai Government PhD scholarship).
- An institutional account of public service reform: a case study of civic engagement in water and sanitation in Tanzania.
- Understandings and practices of citizenship in marginalised settings: a participatory and comparative study in England and Nicaragua.
- Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation in Cyprus: social policies and social work practice.
- Minimum wage and living wage in the UK (ESRC scholarship).
- Popular Education: neoliberalism, resistance and policy translation in Chile (Chilean Government PhD scholarship).
- Nudge and the new philosophy of public policy in the US and the UK (ESRC scholarship).



Career prospects

Graduates from the MSc in Public Policy at Bristol explain why they chose the programme and what they have gone on to do since graduating.

Bristol University was one of my top choices to learn more about Public Policy because of its excellent reputation and the research profile of the School for Policy Studies.

The structure of the MSc in Public Policy caters for the individual needs of students. We had the option to focus on our area of interest in the second term by choosing elective options and selecting the dissertation topic.

I was able to get a job right after finishing my studies and I am currently working in a Public Sector Energy Utility company. I spent a superb year at Bristol and I would love to return one day.

Hira Batool Kidwai, Pakistan

Choosing Bristol was easy for me, as it is a city I know and love, and it is a university with a great reputation.

I really enjoyed the international mix of students on the course and the opportunity to gain from a diverse range of previous experiences. The academics at Bristol were very willing to engage with you on a one-to-one basis and I felt I was able to develop my writing hugely through this process.

The course gave me an excellent understanding of the policy process and introduced me to new ways of analysing policy. It's helped me to understand the broader context in which I now work - a regional policy body - and I believe it stands me in good stead for a future policy career.

Donald Wallace, UK

Socially, Bristol seemed (and turned out to be) a very active and engaging city with a friendly and lively community. I made friends for life during my short one-year stay and the University and School actively catered for it.

The focus that I was able to place on my learning really helped me in preparing me for my career.

Within a month of graduating, I had a job in Amsterdam, Netherlands, at a leading global management consulting firm.

Jan Willem Koek, Netherlands

Career prospects

In my new position, working in the research and audit department of a large regional ambulance trust, I have built on many of the skills and knowledge that I gained during my MSc Public Policy course at Bristol.

The research skills involved in assessing policies and government strategies during the course, have been useful in helping to identify sources of up-to-date guidelines and best practice for our quality improvement work.

Meanwhile, the enhanced critical and writing skills that I developed have helped me produce impressive reports that, once disseminated, may impact upon the clinical care experienced by our patients.

I feel that the course helped me to attain my present role due to the understanding of the public sector and public organisations that I accrued.

Jessica Mordue, UK



How will I be supported?

The School has a well-developed system for pastoral care. Students have a personal tutor throughout their Masters programme who can help signpost to the most appropriate University services.

There is a wide range of specialist help offered by the University.

Support for your health and wellbeing

Bristol is one of only a few universities in the UK to run a full NHS GP practice. It provides all the usual GP services and is run by a team of doctors, nurses and administrative staff who have a wealth of experience in working with students and their dependants.

Wellbeing Access

This service launched in the academic year 19/20 to provide an easily accessible contact point to help students navigate the most appropriate support for their situation quickly and easily. Trained advisers are available to help triage student enquiries relating to any requests about wellbeing and mental health support.



This might include minor and/or major life events, through to concerns about managing existing mental illness. Wellbeing Access can also facilitate access to other support services within the University, including:

- **Wellbeing Service and ResiLife**

University wellbeing advisers work with academic staff to offer professional help and guidance if a student is experiencing challenges or wants some extra support to address any personal and emotional difficulties and make the most of academic study. In our residences, there is a range of pastoral support to promote wellbeing and foster a sense of community.

- **Specialised emotional support**

The Student Counselling Service offers ways for students to maintain positive mental health, through self-help materials, workshops, and group and individual counselling. The Counselling Service also has an agreement for support provision through a local BAME charity which provides culturally appropriate counselling services.

- **Disability support**

The Disability Services Team can provide confidential advice and information about options for disability-related study support for students with a wide range of disabilities, including learning difficulties, health and mental health conditions, autism spectrum conditions, sensory impairments and mobility difficulties.

- **International student support**

Our International Team will support you from the moment you accept an offer, right through to graduation, including welcome events and practical support on visas and immigration as well as travel and living advice as you settle into life in Bristol.

How to apply

Entry requirements

Applicants must hold/achieve a minimum of an upper second-class honours degree (or international equivalent). Other academic backgrounds and relevant professional experience will also be considered, please refer to our International Office website.

All applicants are required to have reached the required profile level of English language as specified by the University's English Language Requirements Policy prior to registration on to this programme.

We welcome applications from those with non-standard qualifications who can demonstrate knowledge, experience and skills developed in the workplace, or elsewhere, relevant to the programme of study. Please use your personal statement to provide further details, and to also make it clear how this programme will support you in your goals.

Non-standard applications will require an up-to-date CV/resume and will be considered by the Admissions Tutor(s) for the programme on a case by case basis.



The information contained in this leaflet is correct at the time of printing (Nov 2022). For up-to-date information, prospective applicants should check the website:

bristol.ac.uk/sps/study/postgraduate/public-policy

bristol.ac.uk/sps

Contact information

If you have any queries about the programme please contact:

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