



Master of Arts in Public Relations and Journalism

Programme Specification

2021-22

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Introduction

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Public Relations and Journalism Degree** awarded by Richmond University, the American International University in London, using the protocols required by *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland* (QAA, 2008).

The degree is delivered at a US Liberal Arts university with a degree structure in line with comparable MA degrees in the UK. Successful students complete 8 courses amounting to 36 US / 180 UK credits, comprised of coursework (24 US/120 UK credits), an internship (4 US/20 UK credits) and a research project (8 US/40 UKcredits) component. Normally, each course carries 4 US/20 UK credits. On this basis students are required to earn 36 US / 180 UK credits including successful completion of the internship and professional research project, in order to complete their degree.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each course can be found in course specification documents and syllabi.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

1. OVERVIEW

Programme/award title(s)	Master of Arts in Public Relations and Journalism
Teaching Institution	Richmond, the American International University in London
Awarding Institution	Richmond, the American International University in London
Date of latest validation	27 March 2019 (for 5 years)
Next revalidation	2024
Credit points for the award	36 US credits 180 UK credits (FHEQ Level 7)
Programme start date	September 2016
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	QAA Masters Degree Characteristics (March 2010): Subject benchmark statement: Master's degrees in business and management (2007) For contextualization, Honours degree level subject benchmark statement for Communication, media, film and cultural studies (2008):
Professional/statutory recognition	Partnership with Public Relations Consultants Association www.prca.org.uk
Language of Study	English
Duration of the programme for each mode of study (P/T, FT,DL)	FT (one year), PT (two years)
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	Middle States Commission on Higher last renewed 2017 QAA – Higher Education Review (AP) 2017
Date of production/revision of this specification	May 2021

2. ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The **Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Journalism (PR)** at Richmond provides a combination of practical and theoretical education equipping students with the intellectual and personal skills they need to succeed in what are rapidly evolving and increasingly competitive global industries.

In terms of theoretical skills and understanding the degree provides an in-depth academic examination of the PR and media industries, their histories, how they function in the contemporary world and the role they play in international society and economic life - especially in relation to advertising and the full panoply of marketing disciplines. It will examine the issues these industries face and explore a range of different views of both PR and journalism.

Students will also benefit from a range of optional courses in the second semester of the programme, which will enable them to develop knowledge and skills in specific areas of interest.

Practical skills in both PR and journalism will be developed from the outset, with students developing and presenting their own bodies of professional work. The practical aspect of the course will culminate in a professional research project, including live PR work and journalism and, at its end, a critical reflection which will require students to relate their work to wider thinking about these industries. Students will also be required to complete an internship or, failing that, additional assignments.

A broad education of this kind equips graduates for a wide range of careers internationally while enabling them to develop specialist expertise in areas of particular interest. By ensuring that they are critical and reflective practitioners it prepares them for challenging leadership roles in a world of diversity and rapidly changing opportunities, in keeping with the university's wider mission.

Programme Goals

- To produce Masters level graduates in PR and journalism whose subject specific knowledge, performance, understanding, skills and attributes, critical thinking and cognitive abilities, and personal and enabling skills and attributes, prepare them for their careers and for further study and advanced training in these disciplines or related fields.
- To provide students with a theoretically, conceptually and historically informed analytical framework in the field of PR and journalism, reflecting a range of different perspectives.
- To provide students with the practical skills required to develop their careers in PR and journalism, and to be able to respond to change.
- To maintain academic standards equal to or better than comparable MA degrees offered by other universities internationally.

3. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Master of Arts in Public Relations and Journalism Degree

The programme is a discrete and self-contained programme of 36 US/180 UK credits. As such, the structure does not follow the progressive UK PGDip ► MA structure of some other programmes although a UK PGDip is awarded as an exit award in recognition of students who complete the required 24 US / 120 UK credits of taught course work. It is not possible for students to register for the PGDip.

The programme is delivered over one academic year full-time or two-years part-time from the start of September or January. Full-time students take six mandatory taught courses of 4 US/20 UK credits each, spread equally over the autumn and spring semesters. Then in the final semester, students take the internship course of 4 US/20 UK credits and write the research project which is submitted at the end of the summer and is weighted at 8 US/40 UK credits. Students must complete the six mandatory taught courses before progressing to the internship/research project. Part-time students take one or two courses in the autumn and spring semesters, completing the required course work over two years and complete the internship and research project in the final semester of year two. Full-time or part-time students unable to take the internship complete an extended professional research project of 15,000 words for 12 US/60 UK credits instead of the normal project of 10,000 words.

US credit is equivalent to one contact teaching hour per week and each course typically involves three to four contact hours per week over a 15 week semester, except the professional research project which requires self-directed learning with academic supervision, and the internship which requires part-time work placement. There is a ratio of 1 US to 5 UK credits at *FHEQ* Level 7 (see <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/policies/> for more information).

Details of the University's degree programmes, including approved Programme Specifications and Course Specification Descriptions (CSDs) are held in an official archive by academic year, available at <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

All students on Masters programmes are expected to be in London for thesis/dissertation supervision and seminars, unless their internship takes them outside London. The student must be registered with the University at this time if the work is to be accepted for marking.

Successful students complete 36 US /180 credits at *FHEQ* Level 7

		US Credits	UK Credits
<i>FHEQ Level 7 (Total)</i>		36	180
PRJ 7101	Journalism Practice	4	20
PRJ 7102	PR, Journalism and the Media	4	20

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APR 7104	Professional Digital Media Skills	4	20
APR 7101	Public Relations Practice	4	20
APR 7105	Advertising, Public Relations and Journalism in Context	4	20
Plus one elective		4	20
APR 7125	Fashion and Luxury Brands and the Media		
APR 7110	Political Communications		
APR 7120	Celebrities, Marketing and the Media		
ENT 7110	Entrepreneurship & Innovation Management		
INR 7121	International Relations and the Media		
MGT 7101	Project Management		
MGT 7120	Corporate Governance		
MKT 7110	Marketing in a Digital World		
VAM 7106	International Art Market		
Plus EITHER both of the following			
PRJ 7902	Internship	4	20
PRJ 7500	Professional Research Project	8	40
Or			
PRJ 7550	Extended Professional Research Project	12	60

US Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) / UK Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Public Relations and Journalism

The US Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) and UK Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Public Relations and Journalism are awarded to students registered on the MA who have successfully completed in good academic standing (with a 3.0 GPA/B average) for all courses but: 1) fail to submit the final professional research project (without extenuating circumstances eligible for resubmission), or 2) fail to pass the professional research project. Both awards are therefore conferrable as exit awards in recognition of successful completion of postgraduate coursework, but it is not possible for students to register on the US PGC or the UK PGDip.

Successful students complete 24 Richmond / 120 UK credits at FHEQ Level 7

Successful students awarded the exit awards are able to demonstrate all learning outcomes for the MA except the professional research project component – see ‘H’ in Section 4 “Programme Outcomes” below, and in the Curriculum Map (Appendix I below).

4. PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Programme-level learning outcomes are identified below, based on *SEEC* categories linked to level 7 of the *FHEQ*.

Refer to Appendix I – Curriculum Map for details of how outcomes are deployed across the programme of study.

Upon successful completion of the **MA in Public Relations and Journalism degree** successful students will be able to:

- A. Demonstrate a deep and systematic understanding of key issues, themes and debates in journalism and/or PR, while reflecting on their relationship to empirical evidence and to other relevant disciplines.
- B. Show critical and innovative responses to theories, methodologies and practices in journalism and/or PR and their impact on the how the knowledge base is interpreted.
- C. Demonstrate a deep, systematic and innovative ability to adapt and apply the practice of journalism and/or PR to multiple contexts
- D. Design and undertake substantial investigations addressing significant areas of practice in journalism and/or PR, using selected and appropriate advanced approaches.
- E. Engage with and evaluate complex, incomplete or contradictory evidence while critically reflecting on the different theoretical and methodological tools used
- F. Evidence the ability to exercise initiative in organising, pursuing and reflecting upon both supervised and self-directed individual and/or team projects, while accepting full accountability for outcomes
- G. Show the ability to gather, organise and deploy complex and abstract ideas and diverse information in complex and specialised contexts, while reflecting upon and improving the skills required for effective written and oral communication
- H. Demonstrate the ability for innovative and autonomous learning, normative and ethical reflection, self-evaluation and engagement with disciplinary benchmarks

5. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching and Learning Strategy

The teaching and learning strategy for the MA in Public Relations and Journalism degree is based on the understanding that all students are active learners and researchers and are embarking on advanced professional practice with a view to their future career development. This is designed to maximise student engagement in the programme and ensure full participation throughout. The precise approach will vary from course to course, but the learning outcomes relating to each class are designed to ensure that students immerse themselves fully in the subject and take full responsibility for their progress through the programme. The concept of progression through the distinct aspects of the degree (class-based learning focusing on theory and practice, guided independent study and practical work, internship and professional research project including a

critical reflection) is integral to the intellectual journey that the students will make during their time on the programme.

A variety of approaches will be used in teaching, including:

- Formal seminars and debates
- Formal lectures, supplemented with audio-visual materials
- Informal lectures and discussions with guest speakers or on visits
- Individual and group projects, culminating in oral presentations and written work
- Group and individual tutorials
- Self-directed and directed reading

Student knowledge will be acquired through:

- Structured seminars and debates (including the sharing of other students' learning and experience), lectures, guest lectures, visits to agencies – including supporting materials
- Directed reading and use of electronic sources
- Independent research and work experience

Student thinking skills are developed through:

- Undertaking practical exercises and making presentations
- Learning alongside others, including group work, seminars, debates and discussions
- Conducting research
- Preparing assessed work

Student practical skills are developed through:

- Applying theory to practice in practical exercises and assessed work
- Specific training related to PR and journalism and related fields, including the use of different media
- Team and individual project work and reflection thereon
- Vocational experience gained through internships

The University welcomes applications from students with disabilities. These disabilities might include a physical or sensory impairment, a medical or psychiatric condition or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, and may require additional support or adaptations to our facilities. The University endeavours to make all practical and reasonable adjustments to ensure students are able to fully participate in the University community.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment is by examination, essays, dissertations, and other forms of written work; oral presentations and group work; as well as projects and this assessment strategy usually meets the University Assessment Norms at level 7.

As seen above, the University places considerable emphasis on developing its students' learning and skills. Creating independent thinkers is a part of the University's mission statement and MA academic staff deliver on this promise in a number of different ways at the postgraduate level. A key aspect of their work involves devising methodologies, consistent with best-practice approaches within the field, with which to adequately assess students' performance. These approaches include the setting of learning outcomes

encompassing each course as well as regular discussion and interaction amongst academic staff in order to set common goals for the entire degree and each of its courses.

In terms of following up with the assessment of student learning and consistent with US Liberal Arts traditions, MA classes rely on the system of continuous assessment on a course by course basis and throughout any given semester. This approach often involves the use of short essays, research papers, learning journals, annotated bibliographies, gallery reviews, book reviews, student presentations, research proposals and general class discussion. Not every component applies to every course, but most do relate to many of the classes that are offered. There is an emphasis on writing essays, particularly research papers, at postgraduate level, and reflective work including learning journals.

The variety of instruments used permits academic staff to assess each student's developing and evolving knowledge and skills base as outlined in the previous section. For example, the research paper tests for, amongst other things, a student's ability to engage with primary and/or secondary sources of information and his or her ability to evaluate and analyze this. Site visits encourage students to engage with objects, applying theory and method taught in classes. In addition to this, the University sets specific guidelines on the weighting of coursework in order to effect balance in the process of assessment. As the coursework load for each course set out in the course descriptor shows, a variety of assessment strategies with weighting spread facilitates this across the courses, with the typical course settling for around 50% for the final research paper.

A component part of the programme's efforts to ascertain an appropriate approach to the assessment of student learning involves the use of grade descriptors (made available in the Student Handbook). This information allows the student to see the expected level of performance that co-relates with a particular letter grade summarizing his or her overall achievement level. The programme also has a formalised system of exit questionnaires and feedback meetings punctuated at key moments throughout the year (mid-semester break, end of semester and end of year) for its students as a framework through which the views and opinions of those who have experienced the programme, as students, can be captured and responded to. Evidence of this approach in action is demonstrated in minutes of meetings with students and academic staff and response to comments from the External Examiner.

The academic staff are confident that the assessment processes are sound. Much of this confidence emanates from the comments MA academic staff have received from External Examiners. But an equally important measure is the success that so many students on the Master of Arts programmes enjoy beyond their post-Richmond experiences. Those students judged as the strongest generally move on to take on challenging opportunities on postgraduate programmes and as professionals in the arts and creative cultural industries. This is testimony to their level of preparedness for the real world of careers in the visual arts, and are an indication of the academic staff's and University's ability to fulfil its mission.

Academic Standing

A graduate student is in good academic standing if maintaining a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 (B).

Graduate students with a cumulative (GPA) of less than 3.0 (B) risk dismissal from the university (see below under "Grade Point Average" and "Academic Probation").

Grades

A	4.0 Excellent
A-	3.7 Very good
B+	3.3 Above Satisfactory

B	3.0 Satisfactory (also cumulative GPA required for the award of the degree)
B-	2.7 Redeemable Fail
C+	2.3 Fail – Poor (may be awarded at graded activity level, but not at course level)
C	2.0 Fail – Deficient (may be awarded at graded activity level, but not at course level)
C-	1.7 Fail – Seriously Deficient (may be awarded at graded activity level, but not at course level)
F	0.0 Fail (may be awarded at graded activity level, and <u>is awarded at course level for any course grade calculated to be lower than B-</u>)

Grade Point Average

A grade point average (GPA) is calculated each semester and summer session and is recorded on the student's transcript. A cumulative GPA, including all graduate courses taken at Richmond, is also calculated. The numerical equivalent for the grade (see above) of each course is multiplied by the number of credits for that course to give the number of quality points for the course.

The GPA is then the sum of quality points for all courses divided by the total number of credits of all courses attempted.

- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.7 and above will be awarded the UK degree with Distinction.
- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.30 to 3.699 will be awarded the UK degree with Merit.
- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to 3.299 will be awarded a UK Pass.
- Students achieving a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 will fail the UK and US degree.

Students who choose not to submit the professional project, or who do not obtain a minimum grade of B (3.0) on the thesis/dissertation/project, may transfer programs and apply to receive UK and US exit awards in recognition of their achievement in this area. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on all coursework is required for the award of the exit awards.

6. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Details of the entry requirements, including English language requirements, may be found at the appropriate page of the University website listed below, where a comprehensive Admissions Policy and Summary of Practice document is also published.

<http://www.richmond.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate-admissions/>

7. STUDENT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Every student is advised academically by the Programme Director who takes a close interest in the students' academic progress. Students who need a particular form of academic help can approach the director who can then provide the necessary liaison with Registry Services, Student Affairs, Library and other offices forming the key parts of the academic and pastoral support infrastructure.

In accordance with the 2010 Equality Act, and with Chapter B4 of the Quality Code, Richmond endeavours to make all practical and reasonable adjustments to ensure students are able to fully participate in the University community. Students who declare a physical disability or a special educational need are accommodated to ensure the quality of their educational

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experience meets their individual requirements – the university disability officer works with individual students to determine accommodations, and works with colleagues in the Academic Registry and the Schools to see that their needs are addressed. SEN students, for instance, receive extra time in examinations, and have the option of writing exams on university-provided computers, and/or of taking exams in a separate room.

The University operates a well-staffed Student Affairs department that provides services intended to support and encourage student welfare, safety and development. This department oversees medical registration of students and provides counseling services. It also organizes a range of extracurricular activities and travel designed to further enhance students' educational experiences. Disciplinary and social grievance procedures are also overseen by this department.

8. INTERNSHIPS

The Careers & Internship Office of the University offers a formal mechanism through which students may receive work-placement opportunities. These placements are supervised, career-related work experiences combined with reflective, academic study that help students apply theoretical knowledge in the workplace. Participation in the internship programme is optional but highly encouraged because the Masters Programmes have been designed to offer students the option to graduate with both a qualification as well as experience of the workplace.

The internship has been established to act as a conduit between the classroom and a career, enabling students to meet and work with potential future employers. The internship programme demands that students interact with professionals in their field, allowing them to learn by seeing as well as by doing. Key to the success of this initiative is the relationship that has been developed with organisations and governmental agencies.

Expectations with regard to careers education, information, advice and guidance (as outlined in The UK Quality Code for Higher Education) are handled by the university's Student Affairs department. This department conducts a variety of career services for students, ranging from resource provision to a CV service, and in particular through the professional development seminar series. For full details of career services offered to students at Richmond may be obtained from the Student Affairs Department.

In addition to these services, the alumni office offers networking opportunities where students may contact alumni working in a variety of fields. The alumni office also offers these services via social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook.

9. POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICIES

Please see the Policies page on the University website listed below for the relevant academic policies of this programme.

[\(https://www.richmond.ac.uk/policies/\)](https://www.richmond.ac.uk/policies/)

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10. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The MA in Public Relations and Journalism degree is operated under the policy and regulatory frameworks of Richmond the American International University in London, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Also key to the background for this description are the following documents:

- QAA (2018). The Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. (www.qaa.ac.uk)
- QAA (2008). Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in Higher Education in England.
- SEEC (2016). Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education. Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (www.seec.org.uk).
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation. 2014: Thirteenth Edition; Rev. Ed. 2015. (<http://www.msche.org/publications/RevisedStandardsFINAL.pdf>)

Ensuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Programme

The MA in Public Relations and Journalism degree features detailed published educational objectives that are consistent with the mission of the institution. All course outlines contain course specific objectives that are regularly monitored by the individual instructors and by the faculty as a group.

The University has several methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of its provision. These include:

- External Examiners
- Internal Moderation
- Student representation
- Curricular change approval process
- Annual Programme Monitoring and Assessment
- Formal Programme Review, every 5 years
- Course evaluation
- Student satisfaction surveys and the NSS
- Feedback from employers

The MA in Public Relations and Journalism degree is provided through a system of ongoing evaluations that demonstrate achievement of the programme's objectives, and uses the results to improve the effectiveness of the programme. Ongoing evaluation is carried out for both US (the Middle States Commission on Higher Education) and UK (QAA) reviews. The University is a voluntary subscriber member of the QAA, and underwent its first full Institutional Review in May 2013 and a Higher Education Review (AP) in 2017.

Credit Equivalence

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The ratio for credit translation at the Masters level (Level 7) is as follows:

	US credit	ECTS credit	UK credit
UK Level 7	1	2.5	5
Required minimum number of credits for MA	36	90	180 (120 of which must be at Level 7)
Richmond MA in Public Relations and Journalism	36	90	180 (at Level 7)

Levels

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in the UK defines the MA degree in higher education in terms of a series of numbered levels, as follows:

Level 4-6 (previously HE1-3) – years 1 to 3 of a UK undergraduate degree

Level 7 (previously M) – UK Masters degrees and postgraduate diplomas and certificates

Level 8 (previously D) – UK Doctoral degrees

Each level is illustrated by, and each award determined by, reference to a qualification descriptor. The level 7 descriptors can be found in the *FHEQ* (QAA, August 2008).

References

QAA. *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland*. November 2014.

QAA. *The Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education*. August 2008.

QAA. *Academic Credit in Higher Education in England – an introduction*. 2009

European Communities. *ECTS Users' Guide*. February 2009; *ECTS Users' Guide—Draft Revision* January 2015.

Programme Specification Publication Dates

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Revision 9	March 2019
Revision 10	May 2019
Revision 11	May 2020
Revision 12	May 2021

Appendix I: Curriculum Map

The table below table indicates which core courses assume responsibility for delivering and assessing (x) particular programme learning outcomes.

Course ID	Course Title	Learning Outcomes							
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
PRJ 7101	Journalism Practice			x	x		x	x	
PRJ 7102	PR, Journalism and the Media	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
APR 7104	Professional Digital Media Skills		x	x	x				
APR 7101	Public Relations Practice			x	x		x	x	
APR 7105	Advertising, PR, and Journalism in Context	x	x			x		x	
Plus Either									
PRJ 7902	Internship			x			x		x
PRJ 7500	Professional Research Project	x	x		x		x	x	x
Or									
PRJ 7550	Extended Professional Research Project	x	x		x		x	x	x

Appendix 2: Time to Completion for the Various Entry Points Chart

Possible Progression Pathway									
Year 1				Year 2			Year 3		
Full time				Full time			Full time		
	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer
Sept Start	3 courses	3 courses	Internship and Dissertation		Award dated late-December				
Jan Start	N/A	3 courses		3 courses	Internship and Dissertation	Award dated early-September			
Part time				Part time			Part time		
Sept Start	3 courses split over both semesters			3 courses split over both semesters		Internship and Dissertation		Award dated late-December	
Jan Start		2 courses		3 courses split over both semesters			1 course	Internship and Dissertation	Award dated early-September