



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Programme Specification 2025–2026

Human Rights

MA
Postgraduate Diploma
Postgraduate Certificate
Individual modules

Important document – please read

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Important information regarding the Programme Specification

Last revised 13 February 2025

The Programme Specification gives a broad outline of the structure and content of the programme, the entry level qualifications, as well as the learning outcomes students will achieve as they progress. Some of the information referred to in this programme specification is included in more detail on the University of London website. Where this is the case, links to the relevant webpage are included.

Where links to external organisations are provided, the University of London is not responsible for their content and does not recommend nor necessarily agree with opinions expressed and services provided at those sites.

For queries about any of the programme information provided, registered students should use the *ask a question* button in the [student portal](#); otherwise the *Contact Us* button on each webpage should be used.

Terminology

The following language is specific to the Human Rights programme:

Core module: a compulsory module that must be taken.

Elective module: a module that is chosen from a number of options.

Dissertation module: a compulsory module that must be taken to complete the Master's degree.

Key revisions made

Programme Specifications are revised annually. The quality committee of the School of Advanced Study, as part of its annual review of standards, confirms the programme structure and the educational aims and learning outcomes, and advises on any development in student support.

Where changes have been made which may impact on continuing students, these are listed below. For all new students, the programme and general information provided in this document is correct and accurate and will be applicable for the current year.

Significant changes made to the Programme Specification 2025–2026

No significant changes have been made to the Programme Specification 2025-2026.

Programme title and qualifications

Postgraduate Degrees of the University of London may be classified. The award certificate will indicate the level of the academic performance achieved by classifying the award. The classification of the degree will be based on the ratified marks from the completed assessments.

The classification system for this programme is as follows:

Distinction; Merit; Pass

Specific rules for the classification of awards are given in the [Programme Regulations](#) under Scheme of Award.

Programme title

Human Rights

Qualifications

- Master of Arts in Human Rights
- Postgraduate Diploma in Human Rights
- Postgraduate Certificate in Human Rights

If you registered prior to 1 October 2018, you may choose to be awarded:

- Master of Arts in Understanding and Securing Human Rights
- Postgraduate Diploma in Understanding and Securing Human Rights
- Postgraduate Certificate in Understanding and Securing Human Rights

(Contact us using the 'ask a question' tab in the [Student Portal](#) homepage)

Intermediate qualifications

The intermediate qualifications for this programme are the Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma as listed above. Students may not normally request a lower intermediate qualification if studying on a higher qualification (except as an exit qualification) or accumulate these qualifications as they progress from lower to higher qualifications.

Exit qualifications

- Postgraduate Diploma in Human Rights
- Postgraduate Certificate in Human Rights

An exit qualification is an intermediate qualification, as noted above, for which the student may not have registered at the outset but which may be awarded on completion of specific modules (or credit accumulated) in a longer programme of study, if the student leaves the programme.

Exit qualifications are awarded at the discretion of the Board of Examiners and once a student has accepted an exit qualification they will not normally be permitted to continue their study of the same qualification with the University of London.

Individual modules

All of the modules from the programme, with the exception of the Dissertation (UHM500), may be taken on a stand-alone basis as Individual modules without being registered for the MSc, PGDip or PGCert (subject to module availability). Students may study for a maximum of 2 stand-alone individual modules (a maximum of 40 credits).

Credit for stand-alone individual modules (a maximum of 40 credits) will be considered provided that the application for a related qualification is made within 3 years of the completion of the relevant modules. Neither progression nor credit is automatic.

See the [Programme Regulations](#) for more information on Individual modules.

Award titles may be abbreviated as follows:

Master of Arts – MA

Postgraduate Diploma – PGDip

Postgraduate Certificate – PGCert

Level of the programmes

The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) forms part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education of the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education](#) (QAA).

The qualifications are placed at the following Levels of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ):

- MA Level 7
- PGDip Level 7
- PGCert Level 7

Individual modules are offered at Level 7.

QAA subject benchmarks group

See the [QAA website](#) for information:

The QAA has not published a postgraduate subject benchmark statement for Human Rights.

Awarding body

University of London

Registering body

www.london.ac.uk

University of London

Academic direction

School of Advanced Study, University of London

Accreditation by professional or statutory body

Not applicable

Language of study and assessment

English

Mode of study

Flexible and online study

Programme structures

The MA Human Rights consists of three compulsory core modules, three elective modules and a dissertation module.

The PGDip Human Rights consists of three compulsory core modules and three elective modules.

The PGCert Human Rights consists of three compulsory core modules.

All modules except for the Dissertation (UHM500) are available to be studied on an individual basis. The modules which can be studied individually are the same as for the MA.

Full details of the Scheme of Award are included in the [Programme Regulations](#).

Maximum and minimum periods of registration

The minimum periods of registration, from a student's effective date of registration, are:

Qualification	Minimum
MA	Two years*
PGDip	18 months
PGCert	One year
Individual module	Six months

*This period may vary if recognition of prior learning is permitted.

See the [General Regulations](#) for the maximum periods of registration for these qualifications.

Students will retain the period of registration initially given to them on registration if the maximum registration period for their qualification changes during their studies.

Study materials are made available after registration and on payment of the applicable fees.

Credit value of modules

Further information about the credit systems used by universities in the UK and Europe is provided by the [Quality Assurance Agency](#) and the [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System](#).

Where credits are assigned to modules of a programme, credit indicates the amount of learning carried out in terms of the notional number of study hours needed, and the specified Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies (FHEQ) credit level indicates the depth, complexity and intellectual demand of learning involved.

The details below indicate the UK credits and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) values.

For the Human Rights programme, credits are assigned to the modules as follows:

- 20 UK credits or 10 ECTS credits for all core and elective modules;
- 60 UK credits or 30 ECTS credits for the dissertation module.

Each qualification comprises the following number of credits:

- MA: 180 UK credits or 90 ECTS credits;
- PGDip: 120 UK credits or 60 ECTS credits;
- PGCert: 60 UK credits or 30 ECTS credits.

One UK credit equates to a notional ten hours of study.

Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning is a generic term for the process by which we recognise and, where appropriate, award credit for learning that has taken place elsewhere, before entry onto this programme of study.

Where the prior learning covered a similar syllabus to a module/course studied elsewhere, credit will be awarded as if you took the University of London module.

See the [General Regulations](#) (Section 3) and [Programme Regulations](#) for more rules relating to prior learning.

This programme will not recognise or accredit prior learning but will consider credit transfer from federation members of the University of London.

Entrance requirements

All entrance requirements for the Human Rights programme are set out on the programme page under the [Entry requirements tab](#).

Applicants must submit an application in line with the procedures and deadlines set out on the [website](#).

English language requirements

All applicants must satisfy the English language requirements for the programme. These are set out in detail on the programme page under the [Entry requirements tab](#). All teaching is in English. Therefore, students need to have the required level of written and spoken English to cope with their studies right from the start.

Where an applicant does not meet the prescribed English language proficiency requirements but believes that they can demonstrate the requisite proficiency for admission the University may, at its discretion, consider the application.

Internet access and computer specification

Students will require regular access to a portable computer with an internet connection to use the University of London's online resources and systems.

Students must be able to download and install software to their Windows or MacOS device to include secure examination browsers for online assessment purposes (if offered on their programme of study). Depending on the security settings for each assessment, students may be required to have full administrator rights on their computer to install and run the software needed to take part in the assessment. Full administration rights are likely to apply to a computer that they own but not to one provided by their employer, for example.

Computer requirements

The portable computer must have at least the following minimum specification:

- Windows: 10 and 11 on 64-bit platforms
- MacOS Big Sur (version 11) and higher
- CPUs newer than 2011 (Intel Sandy Bridge (Core i3, i5 and i7 or newer))
- OpenGL 2.0 graphics driver
- Local storage for the recording of proctored examinations (75MB per hour), if applicable
- Web camera & microphone (internal or external)
- A broadband internet connection capable of streaming live video.
- Minimum device requirements are subject to change and older operating systems may become obsolete over time.

It should also have the following applications installed:

- Word processor (for Microsoft Word documents)
- A PDF reader (e.g. Adobe)

Some modules/courses may have additional requirements such as video and audio recording options, Microsoft Excel, STATA, statistical or other specialist software. Where this is the case, students will find information on the course webpages.

Where applicable, you will be provided with any additional requirements for your assessment platform in advance of your assessment.

Certain services will require a mobile device for Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). This is a key security feature that adds an extra layer of protection for your account and data, requiring two or more steps to verify your identity when logging in. This may include accepting a sign-in notification on your smartphone or entering a unique code sent via SMS or phone call to your mobile device. It is your responsibility to ensure that your mobile device meets the specified requirements for MFA.

Please note: full mobile access is not available for all programmes. Proctored assessments will not work on any smartphone, tablet, Chromebook, Linux Operating Systems or other mobile device of any kind.

Students with access requirements

The University of London welcomes applications from disabled students and/or those who have access requirements. The University will make every effort to provide reasonable adjustments to enable those with a disability, learning difficulty or access requirements to have the same opportunity as all other students to successfully complete their studies.

The University is committed to managing the application procedure and the programme itself to ensure that services are accessible for all students and that an inclusive environment is created. Students with a disability, or others who may need access arrangements to assist in taking assessments, should complete the relevant section of the application form, or contact the [Inclusive Practice Manager](#). A separate room or other arrangements may be considered.

Requests are considered by a University panel, whose purpose is to ensure that students with disabilities and/or specific access requirements are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by such arrangements when compared with other students. These considerations remain separate from the academic selection processes.

For further information, see the [Inclusive Practice Policy](#).

Sources of funding and scholarships

Information about potential sources of funding and scholarships is updated annually and where available is included on the [website](#).

Educational aims and learning outcomes of the programmes

Educational aims

The MA Human Rights aims to enable students to develop an understanding of human rights theories and the legal frameworks which support national and international human rights systems.

The MA also aims to support students in acquiring practical skills which will enable them to work in the field of human rights.

The compulsory core modules of the MA Human Rights aim to prepare students to:

- Develop nuanced and comprehensive understanding of human rights perspectives, contexts and organisations;
- Analyse, evaluate and apply this knowledge to different cases and practices;
- Develop independent critical and evaluative skills, enabling them to compare and analyse human rights practices across different cultures and states while recognising variations of interpretation and practice in different regions of the world;
- Be able to work effectively within existing human rights frameworks to protect, promote and implement human rights;
- Understand the challenges of human rights protection, promotion and implementation in a changing global context;
- Take up careers in human rights work or enhance existing human rights careers in a variety of contexts, including civil society organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations, the public sector, and businesses.

The elective modules aim to prepare students to:

- Expand and deepen their knowledge of specialist topics within the broad field of human rights;
- Be able to independently develop programmes of action and policies as appropriate to different case studies;
- Take up careers in thematically specialised areas of human rights work or enhance existing human rights careers in a variety of contexts, including civil society organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations, the public sector, and businesses.

The dissertation module aims to prepare students to:

- Develop and apply knowledge of human rights theory, practice and methodologies towards a research question;
- Design and carry out a complex research project;
- Develop an original argument based on independently gathered evidence, contributing to the development of the field of human rights.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

MA, PGDip and PGCert students will, upon completion of the compulsory core modules, be able to:

- Describe, assess and critique introductory and advanced concepts, theories and debates in the field of human rights, including across a range of humanities and social science disciplines which have contributed to cross-cultural understandings of human rights;

- Expand and build upon introductory and advanced concepts, theories and debates in the field of human rights.

Intellectual and cognitive

MA, PGDip and PGCert students will, upon completion of the compulsory core modules, be able to:

- Explain, analyse and critique foundational and complex human rights concepts, standards and mechanisms;
- Compare and evaluate cross-cultural human rights theories, approaches, and practices;
- Understand, evaluate and compare multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to human rights theory and practice.

Transferable skills

MA, PGDip and PGCert students will, upon completion of the compulsory core modules, be able to:

- Develop analytical, legal and policy writing skills by producing a range of assessed pieces of written work according to the guidelines produced for each one;
- Develop reasoning and logic to be able to put together a complex and sustained argument pertaining to topics within human rights;
- Manage their own learning, including working effectively to deadlines; planning; and organising tasks.

MA and PGDip students who have completed three elective modules will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding:

- Understand historical and contemporary violation, defence and securing of individual and group human rights in an international and cross-cultural context;
- Acquire and demonstrate understanding of specialist and advanced theoretical and practical knowledge of particular areas of human rights theory and practice.

Intellectual and cognitive:

- Critically evaluate theoretical concepts pertaining to the violation, defence and securing of human rights, with reference to historical situations and contemporary case studies.
- Apply empirical evidence from contemporary and historical situations to theoretical and philosophical human rights frameworks.

Transferable skills:

- Develop advanced and specialist writing skills in particular applied areas of human rights through the completion of specialist assessed pieces of written work.

MA students who have completed the dissertation module will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding:

- Develop a nuanced understanding of research methodologies used across the humanities and social sciences;
- Appreciate, understand and evaluate how these methods can be used specifically to pursue human rights research;
- Develop a nuanced understanding of research methodologies established specifically for researching human rights questions.

Intellectual and cognitive:

- Critically evaluate a range of multi-disciplinary approaches to and methodologies of research, applying them as appropriate to their own original research project;
- Critically evaluate their own work, including assessing the approaches and methodologies used.

Transferable skills:

- Plan and complete a complex independent research project;
- Develop creative and comprehensive ways of thinking and approaching research questions.

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies

Students learn on this programme by engaging with academically rigorous and up-to-date learning materials and resources. For each module, students will be provided with access through the University of London's Online Library to all required reading materials from a range of appropriate sources, as well as having access to the relevant journals and academic databases subscribed to by the University.

This programme uses a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to enable students to access learning materials and knowledge sources; interact with their fellow students; use knowledge and skills in online tasks; complete assessments and receive feedback from their tutors.

The Programme Director is the main point of contact between the School of Advanced Study and the students, and is available to assist students with any questions that they may have about the academic content of the programme. The Student Administrator is also available to answer questions about the administrative aspects of students' studies. A technical team may be called upon to help with any difficulties in accessing the VLE. A key component of the student experience is peer-to-peer learning, and so students are enrolled in relevant discussion forums throughout each module on the programme.

Each module on the programme includes online assessments (E-tivities), which take the form of written work prepared in response to a task or tasks specified by the Programme Director. The E-tivities provide formative and summative feedback to the students as a means of monitoring their progress and identifying areas in which they can improve.

Timely and concise feedback for each E-tivity is provided by either the Module Convenor or the assigned Associate Tutor, as appropriate.

Core modules are assessed by three E-tivities and either the submission of coursework or a written examination accounting for 70% of the module mark. The E-tivities collectively account for 30% of the module mark.

E-tivities, along with the final assessment for each module, serve to counter plagiarism in addition to providing pedagogic merit. The final assessment for each module (examination or coursework) allows students to demonstrate that they have acquired appropriate understanding, the ability to analyse a range of materials and incorporate feedback. Students receive feedback on examined work, assessed E-tivities and written coursework. Students must also undertake a dissertation that relates to human rights. This enables the student to develop and demonstrate their capacity to carry out a substantial piece of independent academic research on a selected topic.

Students are assessed on their capacity to define a topic, to articulate a coherent scheme for examining the topic, to gather necessary data and to analyse and present this data in a way that satisfactorily analyses the topic and makes an original contribution to the field of human rights, whether theoretical, empirical or policy-orientated. The dissertation is assessed by the submission of a research proposal (15%), as well as the final dissertation itself (85%).

Assessment criteria for the programme take into account the level at which these skills have been achieved.

Assessment methods

All assessments are submitted online via a University of London platform. Students must ensure that their device is kept up to date and complies with University Computer Requirements.

An examination is defined as an element of assessment that takes place in a controlled environment. Students will be given details of how the modules on their programme are assessed, the specific environment or location that is permitted and the time allowed for the assessment. Online examinations are proctored remotely except for students who study at a Recognised Teaching Centres for which examinations are normally held at established examination centres worldwide.

Each core module will be assessed by a combination of summative E-tivities (30%) and coursework or a written examination (70%). Each elective module will be assessed by a combination of summative E-tivities (30%) and one item of coursework (70%). The assessments are designed to assess students' academic skills – for example their analytical capacities will be assessed through traditional essays. However, the MA also makes use of innovative forms of assessment which are designed to test students' capacities as human rights practitioners by reflecting the kinds of activities and tasks they might be expected to do as human rights practitioners.

The dissertation is assessed through a dissertation proposal (15%) and dissertation thesis (85%).

E-tivities are designed to encourage engagement and enjoyment of the programme among peers. Timely and concise feedback is critical to student engagement in distance learning, and is provided for each E-tivity.

For further information on assessment and the scheme of award, please see the [Programme](#)

[Regulations](#) and [Programme Handbook](#).

Each module runs for a 14-week study session that begins in either September or February with final assessments in late January or late May respectively. Towards the end of each session there will be a dedicated revision period of two weeks followed by the final assessment.

Two of the core modules, both of which run in the September or February sessions, have written examinations in late January (for the September session) or late May/early June (for the February session) with the possibility of retake in the next exam session.

Individual modules

Students registered on a stand-alone individual module will be examined in the same way as students studying for a qualification.

Full details of the dates of all examinations are available on the [website](#).

Student support and guidance

The following summarises the support and guidance available to students:

- [Student Portal](#): for accessing student induction, study skills support, careers and employability resources, student wellbeing advice.
- University of London Careers Service – offers tailored careers and employability support to students whatever their course, wherever they are studying, and whether they are starting, developing, or changing their career. Support includes webinars led by careers consultants, employer and alumni panel events and a range of online careers resources.
- The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE): This gives access to study materials including lessons, activities and assignments for each module studied.
- The VLE also includes a range of additional study resources such as:
 - Online student café and discussion areas which allow students to communicate with each other.
 - Past examination papers and Examiners' commentaries: these provide generic feedback from assessment and will be available to students after the first examination session.
- [Student Guide](#): This provides information which is common to all students and gives guidance on a range of matters from the start of a student's relationship with the University of London through to their graduation.
- [Programme Handbook](#): This tells students how to access available resources and assessment and examinations procedures.
- Module subject guides for each module studied; these introduce and develop the topics, and include recommended reading lists.

- [Programme Regulations](#): These are the rules that govern a student's registration with the University.
- [The Online Library](#): This provides a range of full-text, multidisciplinary databases where journal articles, e-books and reports can be found.
- University of London library: Registered students may use the resources located within the Senate House library.
- A University of London email account and web area for personal information management.

Quality evaluation and enhancement

The University of London delivers the majority of its online and distance learning programmes through a collaboration between the University of London Worldwide and University of London federation members. However, some of the online and distance learning programmes draw solely on academic input from the University of London and are delivered without academic lead by a federation member. The policies, partnerships (where applicable) and quality assurance mechanisms applicable for the programmes are defined in the following key documents: The [Quality Assurance Schedules, Guidelines for Examinations, General Regulations](#) and, for each programme, programme specific regulations.

Awards standards

All University of London qualifications must comply with the Office for Students' (OfS) [Conditions of Registration](#) relating to quality and standards, which includes condition B5 ([sector-recognised standards](#)). This is to ensure appropriate standards for each qualification. In addition, every online and distance learning programme that is developed by a federation member of the University of London (or a consortium with representation by more than one federation member) will be developed to the same standard as would be applied within the institution concerned. Proportionate and robust approval procedures, including external scrutiny and student engagement, are in place for all programmes. Learning materials are written and all assessments are set and marked by academic staff who are required to apply the University's academic standards.

Review and evaluation mechanisms

Some of the key mechanisms in place to assure the standards of all University of London qualifications and the quality of the student experience, include:

- Annual programme reports: produced for all programmes in order to review and enhance the provision and to plan ahead;
- Independent external examiners: submit reports every year to confirm that a programme has been assessed properly and meets the appropriate academic standards;
- Annual student performance, progression and completion statistics
- Periodic programme reviews: carried out every 4-6 years to review how a programme has developed over time and to make sure that it remains current and continues to provide a good student experience..

Enhancements are made as necessary to ensure that systems remain effective and rigorous.

Student feedback and engagement

The principal channel for collecting feedback from students is the Student Experience Survey. Carried out every year, this collects feedback from the student body on a range of topics relating to the student lifecycle.

The results are analysed externally and then considered in a number of different ways, including by the programme team, principal committees and the senior leadership team. Details of any resulting actions taken are published on the Virtual Learning Environment and the Student Portal.

Additionally, on completion of their programme of study students will be invited to take a survey that seeks to measure what they have gained from their studies.

There are also opportunities for students to get involved in governance. An undergraduate and postgraduate student member is appointed by the University to the majority of committees through an annual appointment round. Some programmes also recruit student members at the programme level. Students are frequently invited to take part in quality review processes such as Periodic Programme Reviews, Programme approval, Thematic Reviews, MOOC review panels and ad hoc focus groups. Opportunities such as these are advertised through social media and on the website. More information can be found on the [website](#).

Students can also apply to join the Student Voice Group, which meets four times a year to consider initiatives for enhancing student experience. Notes from these meetings are published on the Student Portal.

After graduation

Further study

Successful completion of the programme can allow students to progress to a higher level qualification in both the subject area and potentially many other subject areas.

Graduate employment routes

Graduates from this programme go on to a range of different graduate employment routes. This degree is particularly suitable for individuals who seek to become human rights practitioners in the NGO, business, governmental, and inter-governmental sectors. It is also suitable for those currently working in the field of human rights who wish to develop their careers by enhancing their theoretical, practical, and policy understanding of human rights.

This MA prioritises practice as well as theoretical knowledge and understanding. Our aim is to equip students with the practical skills essential to working in the field of human rights, including advocacy, research, legal analysis and fundraising, thus enabling graduates to establish, or advance, their career in human rights. The emphasis on practical as well as scholarly approaches to human rights provides graduates with a skill-set which makes them highly employable. Graduates can also proceed to further study through research degrees, building on their acquired skills in research methods and analysis.

Potential employers include international intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International, and the International Red Cross; or local or regional organisations dedicated to advocacy and defending human rights, such as The Children’s Society (UK) and businesses with an ethical trade or corporate social responsibility division.

The Alumni Community

Upon finishing a course of study, graduates automatically become part of the University of London alumni community, a diverse global network of more than one million graduates in over 180 countries, providing lifelong links to the University and to each other.

Alumni are encouraged to keep in touch after they graduate and to become active members of the alumni community; in return they receive a number of benefits and services, including an extensive programme of events and engagement opportunities.

More information is available on the alumni [webpage](#).

Follow the alumni community on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)