THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Department of Social Policy and Social Work

MASTERS PROGRAMMES IN SOCIAL POLICY HANDBOOK

2009/10

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the York Social Policy Graduate School!

The Masters programmes at York are demanding but we hope that you will find your course fulfilling and enjoyable. During work for the degree you will learn to demonstrate a systematic understanding and a critical awareness of current problems at the forefront of applied social science. You will develop an understanding of research techniques and key theoretical perspectives applicable to your subject and learn how to apply these to the creation and interpretation of knowledge.

Successful completion of the degree will indicate that you are able to deal with complex policy issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate your conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences. You will have demonstrated originality in tackling problems and will have shown that you can act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional level.

The degree will equip you with the qualities and skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, decision making in complex situations, and independent learning ability.

This handbook is intended to introduce you to, and explain the workings of, the Department and the University of which you are a part. It is an important document in that it contains an introduction to your degree programme, reference to the rules and regulations governing the degree, and outlines of all modules and the means through which they will be assessed. It also gives guidance about the aims and objectives of the modules and what you will be expected to contribute to them.

Please READ this handbook carefully and KEEP it safe. You will need to refer to it throughout your year with us. If you should misplace your copy you can download it from Yorkshare: the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Your handbook contains a range of vital information, offering a single reference source. Please treat this as the definitive statement of our commitments to you and your commitments to the Department and the University.

We hope that you will have a happy, stimulating and successful time at York.

Stefan Kühner
Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes
September 2009

Key contacts

	Office	Telephone	Email
Professor Ian Shaw (Director, SPSW Graduate School)	240	321260	ifs2
Dr Stefan Kühner (Director, Social Policy Masters Programmes)	256	321271	sk165
Samantha McDermott (Graduate administrator)	272	321233	sm557
Departmental fax number: 01904-321270			
Departmental website: www.york.ac.uk/depts/spsw			

Important dates

Work to be marked:	Due date:
Practice Essay (to be handed in to personal supervisor)	Friday week 6 autumn term
Social Policy Analysis - Essay	Wednesday week 1 spring term
Introduction to Research Methods - Critical reviews	Wednesday week 1 spring term
Comparative Social Policy: Theory and Methods - Exercise	Wednesday week 2 spring term
Advanced Quantitative Methods – Essay	Wednesday week 1 summer term
Advanced Qualitative Methods - A mixture of exercises	Wednesday week 1 summer term
Comparative Social Policy: Themes and Issues – Exercise	Wednesday week 1 summer term
Globalisation and Social Policy - Essay	Wednesday week 1 summer term
Dissertation (full-time students)	**Friday 17 September 2010**

Social Policy teaching staff and their interests

Jonathan Bradshaw, MA, BSS(Dublin), DPhil(York) Income maintenance; family policy; poverty; living standards; demography and social policy; comparative social policy	**Professor** Room: 260 Tel: 1239 Email: jrb1
John Brown, BSc (Bath), MPhil(York) Health care provision; workforce planning; disability studies	**Senior Lecturer** Room: 262 Tel: 1240 Email: jb11
Kevin Caraher, BA (Surrey) MA (Durham) PhD (Durham) International and comparative social policy; global governance; social security policies in developing countries (East and Southeast Asia)	**Online Teaching Fellow** Email: kc508
Bob Coles, BA(York) Youth policy; the Connexions Strategy and Service; services for young people with special needs; post-16 education and training	**Senior Lecturer** Room: 255 Tel: 1241 Email: rwc1
Richard Cookson, BA (York), MPhil (Oxford), DPhil (York) Benefit measurement, economic evaluation, equity in health, health care rationing, and health care	**Senior Lecturer** Room: 264 Tel: 1248 Email: rc50

Naomi Finch, BA (York), MSc (Oxon), PhD (York) Child and family policy; poverty and living standards; pensioner poverty; comparative social policy; work-family balance policy; gender and social policy	**Academic Fellow** Room: 257 Tel: 1963 Email: nlf1
John Hobcraft B Sc (Econ) (LSE) Partnership and parenthood behaviour; pathways to adult social exclusion; gender and generations; health and well being; quantitative analysis; reproductive health and rights; genes, brains and behaviour	**Professor** Room: 266 Tel: 1278 Email: jh511
Carol-Ann Hooper, BA(Cantab), DipSocAdmin(LSE), PhD(London) Gender and social policy; child abuse and protection; violence against women; women and the criminal justice system	**Senior Lecturer** Room: 258 Tel: 1243 Email: cah13
John Hudson, BSc(Brunel), PhD(Brunel) Policy analysis; comparative political economy of welfare; social policy in the 'information age'	**Senior Lecturer** Room: 278 Tel: 1245 Email: jrh10
Kathleen Kiernan BA (Liverpool), MSc(LSE), PhD (London) Family change, child well-being, consequences of demographic behaviour for social exclusion, longitudinal research, comparative analysis	**Professor** Room: 265 Tel: 1279 Email: kk500
Stefan Kühner MA (York), PhD (York) Public policy analysis; comparative political economy; politics and policies of welfare state and labour market reform	**Lecturer** Room: 256 Tel: 1271 Email: sk165
Stuart Lowe, BA, PhD(Sheffield), DipAppSocStudies(Wales) Housing policy and the law; housing needs evaluation; comparative housing, especially in east and central Europe; housing and social theory	**Senior Lecturer** Room: 251 Tel: 1246 Email: sgl1
Mary Maynard, BA, BPhil(York) Feminist theory and methodology; gender, race and ethnicity; age and aging; women's studies	**Professor** Room: 254 Tel: 1247 Email: mm45
Liz McDermott BA(Liverpool JM), MSc(Liverpool JM), PhD(Lancaster) Health inequalities; impact of sexuality, gender and social class on health; health policy; disadvantage and young people's health; qualitative research methodologies; evidence-base of social policy; mental health; global development of end of life care	**Lecturer** Room: 252 Tel: 1299 Email: em529
Lisa O'Malley, BA, PhD (York) Urban regeneration and community involvement, the voluntary sector, developments in social theory	**Lecturer** Room: 253 Tel: 1242 Email: ljg104
Carolyn Snell, BA(York), MA(York), PhD(York) Social policy and environment, public participation, local government, local sustainable development, research methods, and policy analysis	**Lecturer** Room: 263 Tel: 1244 Email: cjs130

Ian Shaw, BAEcon, MA(Sheffield), PhD(Wales), DipAppSocial Studies(Swansea) Inter-professional work; qualitative and evaluation methodology; research-practice relationships	Professor Room: 240 Tel: 1260 Email: ifs2
Christine Skinner, BA(York), DPhil(York) Family policy; child support; non-resident fathers	Senior Lecturer Room: 259 Tel: 1251 Email: cbes100

Members of staff on research leave:
During your time at the university some of the academic staff may be on research leave, and this may have an impact on the timetable. If this happens you will be advised as soon as possible.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The following members of staff should be contacted if you have any queries or want advice about matters relating to the areas of teaching and administration for which they have responsibility for the academic year 2009/10.

Head of Department: Mary Maynard
Responsible for the strategic management of the whole Department, including the research units.

Head of Social Policy Teaching Section: John Hudson
With overall responsibility for the teaching programmes and for the management of staff and of resources in social policy. The Head of Section should be contacted about the day-to-day running of the teaching section or the conduct of any member of staff.

Departmental Administrator: Jane Barrand
Supporting the Head of Department and responsible for all aspects of the management and staffing of the departmental office. She is also the Departmental Computing Office (DCO).

Chair of the Board of Studies: Lisa O'Malley — *Andrew Hill during the autumn term*
This committee is responsible to the University for the overall quality of the teaching programme and assessment procedures in social policy, applied social science and social work. It represents the main link between the Department and the University.

Chair of Taught Courses Sub-committee:
This committee takes major responsibility for the taught undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in social policy and applied social science. It reports to the Board of Studies.

Chair of the Board of Examiners:
This is the Examinations Officer, responsible for all aspects of assessment, including administering deadlines and requests for extensions, organising marking and liaising with external examiners.

Chair of the Departmental Library Committee: Ian Shaw
This officer co-ordinates the Department's library strategy, monitors the availability of literature for teaching and research and moderates student requests for library purchases.

Director of the Graduate School: Ian Shaw
Dealing with all aspects of postgraduate research study, including the MRes in Social Work. He can advise on funding and applying for postgraduate study at York and elsewhere.

Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes: Stefan Kühner
Responsible for the MA and MRes in Social Policy programmes and for the MA in Comparative and International Social Policy.

Head of Social Work Teaching Section: Juliet Koprowska
With overall responsibility for the teaching programmes and for the management of staff and resources in social work. The Head of Section should be contacted about the day-to-day running of the Social Work teaching section or the conduct of any member of staff.

The wider Department and its research units

Staff and students in the Social Policy Teaching Section form one component of the wider Department of Social Policy and Social Work, which constitutes one of the largest groups of social policy and social work researchers in Europe. The overall Head of the Department is Professor Mary Maynard.

In addition to the Social Policy Teaching Section, the Department includes the Social Work Teaching Section which mainly focuses on the training of professional social workers.

The Department also includes two research units:

- The **Social Policy Research Unit**, directed by **Professor Gillian Parker**

- The **Centre for Housing Policy**, directed by **Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick**

The research units constitute an important part of the intellectual foundation of social policy and applied social science at York. Researchers from these units are sometimes involved in teaching and student supervision. A list of senior members of staff in the research units can be found in the departmental website.

1. UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

1.1 Dates of terms

Each University term consists of ten weeks, numbered Week 1 to Week 10. Week 1 is used to deal with various matters related to administration and assessment. Teaching takes place in Weeks 2 to 10 inclusive. Introductory meetings for new students take place in Week 1 of the autumn term.

	Week 1 begins:	**Week 10 ends:**
Autumn	12 October 2009	18 December 2009
Spring	11 January 2010	19 March 2010
Summer	26 April 2010	2 July 2010

1.2 University registration

University registration arrangements are notified to masters students by the Graduate Schools Office. Students receive details by email, together with instructions for registering with the Library and Computing Services, and for applying for a University Student Card. This card has on it your examination number and your email address and can be used as a general means of identification.

1.3 College membership

Most postgraduate students have automatic membership in Wentworth College. However, college membership does not confine you to the facilities of that college. All college common rooms, dining rooms, bars, snack bars and libraries are open to all members of the University.

1.3.1 College mail

Sometimes the University sends mail to students' college addresses rather than to the Department. College pigeonholes are usually located near a porters' lodge and you should check them regularly to avoid missing some of your mail.

1.3.2 College lockers

Both residents and non-residents are entitled to ask to hire lockers in the colleges. However, demand may exceed supply.

1.4 Students' Union

All masters students are members of the Students' Union and can use the full range of services and facilities it provides.

1.5 Graduate Students' Association

At the University of York, postgraduate students are represented by the Graduate Students' Association. The GSA was formed in the early years of the University to specifically cater for the needs of postgraduate students.

ALL postgraduate students registered at the University are automatically members of the GSA. Postgraduates make up about a quarter of the student body at York, and this strength in numbers, along with our differing needs from undergraduates, ensures that the University recognises you as a separate entity. This is mirrored by the GSAs independent listing under the Education Act, independent funding, and independent representation on most University Committees, which means you can directly raise independent postgraduate issues.

The GSA provides welfare support, and runs a Trust Fund which gives long and short term loans to postgraduates in financial difficulty. In addition the GSA finances Graduate Common Rooms, Residents Associations, and nursery care. The GSA also organises social events, particularly during the vacations when many other facilities shut down.

More information, including contact details, available on:

http://www.yorkgsa.org

1.6 International Students' Association

The University of York International Students' Association is a student-run body whose aim is to provide Welfare, Culture and Entertainment for all non-British students at the University. Every student who is registered as international is automatically a member.

More information, including contact details, available on:

http://isayork.wordpress.com

1.7 Student Support and Welfare Services

The University's Student Support Network is designed to provide students with quick and easy access to a variety of sources of help and advice on all aspects of life as a student. Personal supervisors in academic departments are responsible for overseeing both academic progress and general welfare. In addition each college has a welfare team which includes the Provost and a College Dean who has special responsibility for student welfare. Every full-time student is a member of a college and part-time students can request membership of a college. Students may approach their college welfare team for help and advice whether or not they are resident in the college at the time.

Central support services available to all students include the Accommodation Office, the Open Door Team, Counselling Service for Students, Disability Services, the Student Support Office, the Equal Opportunities Office, the International Office, the Student Financial Support Unit and the Harassment Advisers (who offer support in cases of harassment). In addition administrative offices such as the Undergraduate and Graduate Offices and the Timetabling and Examinations Offices, provide information and advice. Welfare support is also available through the student-run organisations, particularly the Students' Union and the Graduate Students Association.

Information about the student support network and its co-ordination is widely disseminated, so that students seeking assistance in any quarter can, if necessary, be referred quickly to those with the specialist knowledge and skills to help them. The Student Support Services Handbook, issued to incoming students and available at http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/sso/handbook/, describes the main contributors to the Student Support Network, and includes information about the Campus Nursery, the Health Centre, and the Chaplaincy. Contacts for religions and faiths can be found from the Chaplaincy web-site http://www.york.ac.uk/univ/chap/ or the Student Support Office web-site.

Further information about support services can be found on the Student Support Office web-site:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/sso/

1.7.1 International Student Support

The University of York is a wonderful mixture of nationalities, cultures and faiths. We welcome students from almost 100 countries and as a result our students benefit from a truly international educational experience.

We know that when you are a long way from home, studying in a second language and perhaps experiencing 'culture shock' you might feel in need of some additional support.

The University is pleased to offer a range of services specifically tailored for our international students including an Immigration Advice Service, international student orientation in October and January, an Overseas Students' Association, international student representation within College welfare networks, HOST, York Ambassador's Scheme, English language support programmes and an International Student Support Co-ordinator.

Further information, including the International Student Handbook, is available on:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/sso/international/index.html

1.8 University policy on attendance

The university sets certain requirements regarding attendance at classes, which may affect international students particularly. Refer to Section 4.2 for how this is implemented in the Department.

1.9 University policy on harassment

The University of York aims to provide a working and learning environment to enable both staff and students to fulfil their personal potential. In order to achieve this, the Department and the institution are committed to the creation of a stimulating and supportive environment. The University accepts that the latter cannot be created or sustained if any of its members are subject to harassment, intimidation, aggression or coercion. Accordingly, it will regard any incident of harassment as a serious matter that can lead to disciplinary action, including expulsion or dismissal, being taken against the harasser. In addition to any penalty imposed by the University, those responsible for harassing others may be subject to criminal or civil proceedings.

Personal harassment takes many forms. It involves a range of behaviour which is unacceptable to the recipient and which creates an intimidating, hostile or

offensive environment for study, employment or social life. Deliberate harassment in any guise is morally wrong and will not be tolerated.

The **Code of Practice on Harassment**, containing details of different types of harassment and the University's policy, will be given to you with your registration material. Further copies may be obtained from the Students' Union or it may be located at:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/eo/Harassment/code.htm

This document sets out procedures for any student who feels that s/he is being harassed. You may wish to discuss the matter with your supervisor, the Students' Union Women's Officer or Welfare Officer, your provost, Nightline, the University Counselling Service or a University Chaplain. Additionally, there is a First Contact Network of people who are willing to discuss incidents or problems, however large or small they may seem. Carol Ann Hooper and Sam McDermott, from this Department, are members of this network.

1.10 Departmental policy in relation to disabled students

Tutoring matters
All students with a disability (new entrants or existing students who have declared a disability since registration) should be provided with an 'Instructions to disabled students' briefing. Tutors (with the student's permission) and students should provide key bullet points to administrative staff as set out in the 'Instructions' briefings.

Teaching and administrative matters
Administrative staff will keep up-to-date lists of students who are known to have a disability. Administrative staff will also collate the 'bullet points' provided by tutors/students and make them available, with the student's permission, through the staff intranet and to module leaders for any modules which have a disabled student attending.

Marking and examination issues
Students should not usually make any formal declaration of their disability except for any agreed particular conditions for examinations, such as additional time. Markers will not know which assignments have been submitted by a disabled student but prior to the Examination Board a disabled student has the right to ask, through their tutor and/or the Chair of the Examination Board, for their disability to be taken into account in relation to either a specific assignment or their overall profile.

1.11 Data protection

The University collects information about students for administrative, academic, statutory and health and safety reasons. It conforms with the Data Protection Act 1998 in its collection, processing and disclosure of personal data. It cannot operate effectively without processing information about you and requires your consent to do so. Your signature on your student registration form gives your agreement to the processing of your personal data for any purposes connected with your registration with the University, your health and safety and for any other legitimate reason. Further information on Data Protection issues can be obtained from the Data Protection Coordinator in the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

1.12 Library resources

During your introductory week in the Department, Sue Cumberpatch, the Academic Liaison Librarian for Social Policy and Social Work, will take new graduate students on a tour of the J.B. Morrell Library. She will provide you with various handouts and help you to become familiar with the layout of the Library.

For information on all the facilities provided by the University of York Library, including opening hours, see the Library's web pages at:

http://www.york.ac.uk/library

The main print collections to support the Department are located in the J.B. Morrell Library. There will be major building works in the library during your time here, linked to the university's expansion. This will involve some movement of stock. Please check the library pages for further information and advice.

To check what the Library holds, its location and availability, use the Library Catalogue:

http://libcat.york.ac.uk

As well as print resources, the University Library provides an extensive range of electronic sources. These include electronic journals and newspapers, bibliographic sources, and other subject related resources. More information on these resources and how to access them can be found in the Electronic Library section of the Library's web pages.

If you need help in using library resources, ask for assistance at the Enquiry Desk or email 'lib-enquiry@york.ac.uk'. For more information, contact Sue Cumberpatch ('sc17@york.ac.uk', telephone 01904 43 3891).

1.13 Photocopying

In the library you may photocopy journal articles and parts of books for your own use. Before you begin photocopying you should acquaint yourself with the laws on copyright which are prominently displayed on the library machines. You can buy a card that enables you to use the self-service copiers. Alternatively, you can leave a request with the photocopying service and pay in cash when you collect the copies but it is rarely possible to have copies produced by the service while you wait.

1.14 Computing facilities

You will need to use word processing to prepare your essays, reports and dissertations. Some modules include a computing element. All students have access to the University network through machines provided at various points around the campus. The main source of information about computing on campus is the Computing Service where you will find an Information Desk and current information leaflets on facilities and courses. You can also access My IT Account, the electronic Information Desk through the University website:

http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/myitaccount/

Appendix 1 of this handbook contains some further notes on the computing facilities available and you will receive a copy of Getting Started on Computers at York during your Departmental registration.

During your course you will learn how to use the internet at York to access information of particular relevance to social policy.

1.15 How to reach the University

By bus

A number of companies operate buses to the University: the No. 4 (ftr) departs from the railway station approximately every ten minutes. The scheduled journey time from the railway station to Heslington is 20 minutes. Other services are the C2, 27, 27a, 128 and 129. The main bus station is at Rougier Street. There is an online Journey Planner for local bus services:

http://www.yorkshiretravel.net/welcome.do

By car or motorcycle

The University participates in a Car Share scheme which is available both for local journeys to and from campus, and for one-off or regular journeys from further afield. Please feel free to check the site either if you need a lift or have spaces to offer in your car:

http://www.carshareyork.com

If you are approaching York from the A64 you should turn off at one of the exits marked *University* (A19 or A1079), in order to avoid the city centre. Subsequent turns are also signposted.

If you are coming from other directions you should either:

- take the Selby road (A19) to Fulford and turn along Heslington Lane or Broadway towards Heslington

  OR

- take the Hull Road and turn west at the junction with Green Dykes Lane which leads to University Road.

You should also note the University's car park regulations, available on:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/security/parking_new.htm

By bike
The University is well served with cycle paths and is currently improving cycle access and storage facilities. Cycle racks are available in most parts of campus. There is a network of cycle paths on campus and the City Council provides free copies of cycle route maps around the City of York:

http://www.york.gov.uk/cycling

Detailed instructions on getting to York from outside the area are available via York Information Connections on the Travel Information page:

http://www.york.ac.uk/library/subjectresources/travelinformation/

Transport Direct offers a comprehensive journey planner for mainland Britain:
http://www.transportdirect.info

There are several online maps of the city of York available, for example on Google:

http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?hl=en&tab=wl&q=york

2. DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

2.1 Opening hours

The Department is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 12.30pm, and from 1.30 to 4.30pm.

2.2 Messages and mail

Email notices and messages of interest to masters and research students are generally forwarded by the Graduate Administrator.

Incoming mail sent to you at the Department, or messages left for you by members of staff, will be found in the student pigeonholes near to the notice board.

If you want to send messages to members of the academic or secretarial staff, you should leave them with the person in charge of the reception desk. Do not put messages for staff in the student pigeonholes!

Most communication, however, is via email so you need to check your inbox frequently.

2.3 Supervision

2.3.1 Personal supervision

Every masters student is allocated a personal supervisor who will be a member of the academic staff and is someone with whom you can raise academic, personal, financial or any other issues in complete confidence.

You should view your personal supervisor as someone who is available at any time during the course. Supervisors will contact new students at the beginning of the autumn term. Thereafter, the University specifies that you should see your supervisor at least at the beginning and end of each term.

The personal supervisor is able to act as an intermediary between you, the staff running particular modules, and the Department. At times the supervisor may act as your advocate, at other times as an agent of the University. It is important that you have confidence in your supervisor, regardless of the role he or she may have to play in different circumstances. If, for whatever reason, you would prefer to change your supervisor, this can be arranged. You do not have to give the reasons. If you do wish to change supervisor, you should tell the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes. If you wish to change from the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes, then you should approach either the Head of Section or the Chair of the Board of Studies (see page 8 of this handbook).

2.3.2 Dissertation supervision

It is important to note that your personal supervisor is not necessarily the same person as your dissertation supervisor. The choice of dissertation supervisor depends on the topic on which you choose to work (see 3.1: The dissertation).

2.4 Student participation in committees

2.4.1 The Board of Studies in Social Policy and Social Work

The Board of Studies in Social Policy and Social Work is responsible for all matters concerned with the curriculum, organization and assessment of academic courses and must have these approved by University committees, including the University Teaching Committee and Senate. The Board of Studies consists of all full-time members of the teaching staff in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, representatives from other academic staff categories and members of the student body. There is a representative for each of the masters programmes, plus undergraduate student members. The Graduate Students Association organises elections at the beginning of each autumn term. The names of student members of the Board are posted on the VLE. There is a system of 'starred items' on the agenda from which student members of the Board are asked to withdraw. These concern limited issues such as staffing and staff deployment, individual student problems, examining and the assessment of students' work. Student members of the Board are treated as representatives in their own right and not as mandated delegates. The Board of Studies normally meets once a term.

2.4.2 The Social Policy Taught Courses Sub-committee

Much of the business of the Board of Studies is carried out by sub-committees. The Social Policy Taught Courses Sub-committee deals with matters pertaining to taught masters degrees and undergraduate degrees in the Social Policy Teaching Section. It normally meets once a term, shortly in advance of the Board of Studies. The minutes of the Sub-committee are considered by the Board of Studies, which must approve any decisions or recommendations of the Sub-committee.

Membership of the Taught Courses Sub-committee consists of teaching staff and elected student representatives. The procedures for the election of students and for dealing with 'starred items' on the agenda are as for the Board of Studies. For ease of communication and continuity, there is a good case for the same student representatives being elected to both the Taught Courses Sub-committee and the Board of Studies, although the decision lies with each student group.

Students wishing to place items on the agenda of either the Board of Studies or the Taught Courses Sub-committee should approach their student

representative in the first instance. Student representatives should then discuss the item with the relevant committee Chair.

2.5 Student feedback mechanisms

The formal committee structure in the Department gives some opportunity for students to air their concerns about their courses and modules. But students are also encouraged to give feedback on the masters courses informally to the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes. At the end of the academic year, a Graduate Forum is also held to collect feedback on the course as a whole.

All students in the Department are also asked to complete anonymous appraisal forms at the end of each module. The aim of this is to allow staff to work to improve the quality of the taught modules and to avoid future problems. Sometimes improvements can be made during the module itself. So if you have any ideas for improvement during a module, please tell the module leader and do not wait until the end!

Finally, staff and student meetings can be held at any time if the student body feels that there are issues to discuss. You should consult the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes if you want to initiate any such meeting.

3. Course structure and content

Social Policy, as an academic subject, provides students with the skills to appreciate and analyse contemporary social issues, the nature of social needs and policy responses to them. The social policy masters programmes at York offer a combination of taught coursework, research training and supervised dissertation work. The taught coursework allows students to explore key issues in social policy through critical analysis and argument. Research training equips them with both generic and specialist skills to carry out their own research and to come to judgements about the work of other authors. The dissertation gives students the opportunity to examine, by research, aspects of social policy in which they have a particular interest.

The masters programmes are designed as full-time courses and run for twelve months from October each year. However, it is possible to study for the programmes on a part-time basis over two years. For part-time students the course content is the same but the work is spread over different time periods. Timetables for part-time students are agreed individually with the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes.

Each of our courses aims to:

- To provide students with the opportunity to explore some of the main social issues of the day in an intellectually challenging and stimulating environment.

- To equip students with the skills to analyse social policy with a view to understanding both how policies are developed and the role they play in people's lives.

- To develop research and presentational skills to allow students to carry out, and communicate the results of their own policy research.

- To help students develop transferable skills that will be of value to them in whatever career they choose to pursue.

Each of the degree programmes place a slightly different emphasis on the focus of these outcomes: the MRes has an emphasis on the development of research methods expertise; the MA Comparative and International Social Policy stresses the international and comparative dimension of social policy analysis; the MA Social Policy allows students to emphasise a mixture of research methods, policy analysis and nationally/internationally focused policy knowledge.

Our social policy masters degrees consist of a total of 180 credits, equivalent to a student workload of 1,800 hours! 100 credits are accounted for by taught coursework and 80 credits by work for a research based dissertation of 15 - 20,000 words.

3.1 The dissertation

It is important to start work on the dissertation early in the academic year, to choose an appropriate topic which can be covered in the time available, and to take full advantage of supervisory arrangements. Many, although not all, masters dissertations involve an element of fieldwork and Guidelines for Personal Safety in Fieldwork are given in Appendix 5.

Each student chooses a dissertation topic that fits in with his or her own interests in social policy. Students are expected to think through ideas for their dissertations during the autumn term and should seek the help and advice of their supervisors and other teaching staff. They are also assigned a member of staff to supervise the dissertation. This need not be the same person who is providing on-going personal supervision.

Topics and supervision arrangements must be agreed by 31st January and approved by the Departmental Board of Studies at the beginning of the spring

term. For part-time students, arrangements must be approved by the start of the second year of registration.

During the first part of the Masters course, students will be taking taught modules, so work for the dissertation is necessarily part-time. When coursework is complete, however, students usually spend five months working full-time on the dissertation. However, they must also attend the Graduate Research Workshops during the summer term. These are designed to help you in preparing the dissertation. More advice about the writing and presentation of dissertations is given in Appendix 4 of this handbook. You will find useful notes on using references in Appendix 3.

3.2 Taught coursework modules

3.2.1 MA in Social Policy

MA in Social Policy students spend just over half of their time on the taught coursework elements of the MA, worth 100 credits. These 100 credits worth of work are made up from a number of modules which count for 20 credits each.

Students will normally take the two core modules (**C**) in the autumn term (40 credits), option modules in the spring term (40 credits) and attend the Graduate Research Workshops in the summer term (20 credits).

The table below shows the modules available and module outlines are given in Appendix 8.

Autumn Term Modules	Spring Term Modules
C Social Policy Analysis	Advanced Qualitative Methods
C Introduction to Social Research Methods	Advanced Quantitative Methods
	Comparative Social Policy: Themes and Issues
	Globalisation and Social Policy
Summer Term Modules	
C Graduate Research Workshops	

C = Core Module

All modules 20 credits

Assessment is based on modules making up 80 credits of graded coursework. The Graduate Research Workshops (20 credits) are assessed only a pass/fail basis and do not, therefore, contribute to the final grade for the Masters programme (see 4: Assessment). These 80 credits are made up of four modules: two core modules in the autumn term and two out of four option modules in the spring term.

You will have an opportunity during the Induction Week to talk to the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes about the choice of modules most suited to your interests, background and future needs.

3.2.2 MRes in Social Policy

MRes in Social Policy students spend just over half of their time on the taught coursework elements of the MRes, worth 100 credits. These 100 credits worth of work are made up from four compulsory modules which count for 20 credits each and the 20 credit Graduate Research Workshop module. Students take two modules in the autumn term (40 credits), two modules in the spring term (40 credits) and attend the Graduate Research Workshops in the summer term (20 credits).

The table below shows the modules taken and module outlines are given in Appendix 8.

Autumn Term Modules	Spring Term Modules
C Social Policy Analysis	**C** Advanced Qualitative Methods
C Introduction to Social Research Methods	**C** Advanced Quantitative Methods
Summer Term Modules	
C Graduate Research Workshops	

C = Core Module

All modules 20 credits

Assessment is based on modules making up 80 credits of graded coursework. The Graduate Research Workshops (20 credits) are assessed only a pass/fail basis and do not, therefore, contribute to the final grade for the Masters programme (see 4: Assessment).

3.2.3 MA in Comparative and International Social Policy

MA in Comparative and International Social Policy students spend just over half of their time on the taught coursework elements of the MA, worth 100 credits. These 100 credits worth of work are made up from four compulsory modules which count for 20 credits each and the 20 credit Graduate Research Workshop module. Students take two modules in the autumn term (40 credits), two modules in the spring term (40 credits) and attend the Graduate Research Workshops in the summer term (20 credits).

The table below shows the modules taken and module outlines are given in Appendix 8.

Autumn Term Modules	Spring Term Modules
C Social Policy Analysis	**C** Comparative Social Policy: Themes and Issues
C Comparative Social Policy: Theories and Methods	**C** Globalisation and Social Policy
Summer Term Modules	
C Graduate Research Workshops	

C = Core Module

All modules 20 credits

Assessment is based on modules making up 80 credits of graded coursework. The Graduate Research Workshops (20 credits) are assessed only a pass/fail basis and do not, therefore, contribute to the final grade for the Masters programme (see 4: Assessment).

3.3 Graduate Research Workshops

Graduate Research Workshops are held weekly during the summer term. They are designed to help you in preparing for your dissertation. Early sessions focus on such issues as: how to do a literature review, how to turn a topic into research questions and practical concerns about doing research. Later on students are expected to present talks on their dissertations in a setting which is informal and supportive. Group discussions about the issues raised in the talks enables students to learn from one another as well as from other members of staff. Attendance is compulsory, as is presenting your work at least once during the course of your degree. All candidates are given a pass/fail mark on the basis of their attendance and presentation.

3.4 Other opportunities provided during the course

3.4.1 Seminar series

All masters students in the Department are welcome to attend the seminars run by the Department and by the Centre for Housing Policy and the Social Policy Research Unit.

3.4.2 Language courses

Any masters student in the University can register with the Languages For All Programme in the Language Teaching Centre to learn a new foreign language or develop existing skills. For students whose first language is not English, the EFL Unit in the Language Teaching Centre runs a number of short courses during term-time. Both types of language course may incur a charge so students should check with the Language Teaching Centre for details on:

http://www.york.ac.uk/celt

3.4.3 The York Award

The York Award offers you an opportunity to gain formal recognition for the skills and experience you will acquire whilst at the University. But more than this, it offers a supporting framework which will help you to plan your own development programme, reflect on your experiences and start to think about the next stage in your career. By the time you leave the University, it is essential you know where your strengths lie and have gained the skills you need to achieve your goals in life.

The York Award is designed to enhance your university experience and to ensure that you enter an increasingly competitive job market equipped with the skills and experience necessary to hit the ground running.

The programme represents a major partnership between the University and major public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Its flexible structure enables you to plan your own programme of development, choosing from an extensive menu of supplementary courses or learning by experience from your academic, work-related and leisure activities. The course covers such issues as:

- Project management: A guide to the theory and practice of managing projects

- Discovering your future: A course in career management

- E-Commerce: A guide to the retailing world of tomorrow

- Team Development: An active course in team dynamics and personal effectiveness

The York Award is free and open to all. For more information or to register for the York Award please visit the website at:

http://www.york.ac.uk/services/careers/skills.cfm

3.4.4 Career planning

There are a number of ways in which the **University Careers Service** can help masters students to plan for their future employment or education. The masters year can pass by very quickly and its important to plan ahead from the start. Deadlines for many recruitment programmes are in the autumn, not long after you have arrived at York and many other applications may need to be made later in the year when you are working on your dissertation. The Careers Service at York suggests that you:

- Use your time at York to prepare for what you want to do after your MA/MRes: use the Careers Service website or information room to research different career opportunities; attend careers events and workshops; talk to a Careers Adviser and your supervisor about your plans; get help with applications, interviews and assessment centre activities from the Careers Service. Find details on the Careers Service website, http://www.york.ac.uk/services/careers/.

- Develop the skills and experience that will equip you for the job or course you want to follow. Use the extra-curricular opportunities on campus to become involved in the wide range of activities that provide you with what employers consider 'transferable' skills, such as gaining leadership and organisational experience. Do not forget that although many transferable skills, such as computer competency and time management, can be developed through your

studies employers like to see that you have taken advantage of a range of opportunities to develop your skills.

- Use the self-assessment exercises available at the Careers Service and pick up a copy of 'Planning Your Future' to help you to start planning your career. Use the online questionnaires available to assess your personality preferences and generate job ideas for yourself:

  www.york.ac.uk/services/careers/info_future.cfm?page=70

- Get involved in activities on or off campus, to broaden your experience e.g. clubs and societies, committee membership, part-time work, campaigning or volunteering.

- Take advantage of free or cheap facilities to improve your skills, such as computing, foreign languages or numeracy.

After completing your masters you may want to ask a member of staff for a reference. References can be written much more fully and interestingly if your student file contains more information than simply reports on your academic work. All employers want to know what you have achieved and what you can DO, not just what grades you have got. Because of this, you are asked to keep a **Personal Development Record (PDR)** through the year, noting your interests and activities outside of the formal masters programme. The PDR form is available on the VLE. Completed forms may be discussed with your supervisor and handed in before the end of the summer term to be placed in your student file.

After the masters you can also keep in touch with the Careers Service for continuing advice and information. Help may also be available from other universities via a mutual aid arrangement.

Full current details about opening times and the range of guidance and support offered by the Careers Service is available on the web at:

www.york.ac.uk/careers

4. Assessment

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The University framework

Departmental policies and practices for assessment aim to be equitable, clear, consistent and open. They follow the general principles provided in the University's regulatory framework.

The University's formal procedures relating to the conduct of assessment are embodied in the Ordinances and Regulations, principally Ordinance 7 and Regulation 2 for postgraduate degrees. Supplementary policies and procedures are set out in the University Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures. Copies of these documents are available from the Graduate Schools Office and from the University website:

www.york.ac.uk/admin/aso/ordreg

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/eto/exams/infostudents.htm

4.1.2 Types of assessment

Full attendance at classes is a **procedural** requirement of all the department's degree courses. Failure to attend classes is regarded as serious and may result in a student being required to demonstrate an adequate grasp of any material missed and repeated absences can lead to the failure of a module. All students must attend and present their work to the Graduate Research Workshops, with participation graded on a pass/fail basis that accounts for 20 credits of the degree programme; it is not, therefore, possible to pass the degree without passing the Graduate Research Workshop module.

Diagnostic assessment, in the form of a practice essay, provides an indicator of a learner's aptitude and preparedness for a programme of study and identifies possible learning problems.

Students are assessed on work from modules making up 80 credits of graded taught coursework. This assessment is both **formative**, providing learners with feedback on progress and informing development, and **summative**, measuring achievement or failure in respect of performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the masters programme.

In addition to passing the taught coursework component of the programme, each student must also produce a 15-20,000 word dissertation that counts for 80 credits of the degree. Assessment of the dissertation is purely **summative**, although students may obtain feedback on their dissertation marks after the examination process is over.

4.2 Attendance and participation requirements

Non-attendance may seriously disadvantage a student's understanding of a particular topic so the department requires that students attend all lectures, tutorials, seminars and workshops associated with both core and optional modules.

Students are expected to participate fully in each module by doing the required preparatory work and engaging in discussion and other activities. Poor participation is noted in report forms each term and drawn to the attention of the student's supervisor. It may also be referred to in references.

Any student who expects to be absent from the University for more than a week MUST gain permission from the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes.

Attendance records will be kept and monitored at the Taught Courses Sub-committee.

4.3 Practice essay

Each student is given the opportunity to write a short (2,500 words) practice essay to be submitted and marked during the autumn term. This is so that students can be given feedback and helped to 'find their feet' before submitting work that counts towards the final degree. Each student's practice essay is marked by his or her personal supervisor, who will provide constructive criticism and discuss any problems. Hopefully this should both enable students to improve their writing skills and help them to get to know their supervisors better (see 2.3: Supervision).

4.4 Assessment contributing to the final degree

4.4.1 Credits and assessment weightings

Coursework assessment is based on modules making up 80 credits of graded work. (Work for the Graduate Research Workshops (20 credits) is graded only a pass/fail basis.) The assessed 80 credits are made up of a combination of modules, depending on choices made by individual students. All assessed modules carry a weighting of 20 credits, so regardless of how modules are combined to make up the 80 credits, each student completes four modules that each contribute 25% towards the total coursework assessment.

In addition to the coursework, the dissertation represents 80 credits of work.

4.4.2 Word lengths

Most coursework is assessed by essays or exercises of a specified word length. Writing to fixed word limits is a skill and students should not exceed the number of words specified. Markers may disregard text written after the specified limit and this word limits covers the *whole* of each piece of assessment (i.e. tables, references, contents pages etc. as well as the main body of the text). The only exception to this rule is for any appendices that are provided only for information purposes such as interview transcripts or sample questionnaires. Students must indicate the word length of each piece of work on the front cover sheet and markers or moderators may check this using the electronic copies of assessment submitted by students (see 4.4.3). Guidelines for writing essays are given in Appendix 2 and notes on using references in Appendix 3. Guidelines for producing a dissertation are given in Appendix 4.

4.4.3 Deadlines and submission of work

The importance of completing work by deadlines is crucial as the degree is based on the assumption that you will be given feedback on your written work. It requires you to plan and organize your workload. Deadlines have been timetabled to enable you to begin to structure your time in ways that will enable you to begin to balance your workload between a variety of pressures, preparing for seminars and workshops, doing background reading, writing drafts, submitting assignments and meeting other commitments that you are likely to have during your time in York.

TWO typed copies of all work should be handed in to the Departmental Office by **4pm** on the due date. Handwritten work will not be accepted.

You will be asked to complete a cover sheet and sign a plagiarism statement. You will also be given a receipt for the work. Work should never be handed direct to the member of staff who taught the module - or pushed under office doors. After marking, one copy will be retained by the Department for examining purposes, the second will be returned to you.
You must also send an electronic copy of each piece of work (also by 4pm on the due date) to 'spsw509@york.ac.uk'. Electronic submissions will only be used for random checks on plagiarism (see section 4.9), and do not substitute the hard copies of your work. Please remember that the Department will NOT undertake printing/photocopying on behalf of students.

4.4.4 Late submission of work and extensions

The Social Policy Section will tolerate the late submission of work only in extenuating circumstances. Poor time management, pressure of work or computer equipment problems, for example, will not generally be regarded as sufficient excuse for lateness. Only exceptional medical and/or compassionate reasons for missing a deadline will be accepted.

The Social Policy Section does not usually grant extensions and individual supervisors should not be approached and asked for them. If, on compassionate or medical grounds, you fail to meet a deadline, or feel in advance it is likely you may miss one, you should immediately inform your personal supervisor and the Chair of the Board of Examiners. You should ensure that any relevant documentation supporting the reasons for your late submission is placed on your file. (For example, a medical note. In some cases, your personal supervisor may write a letter in support.) When you submit your essay(s), you should fill in a late submission form at the Departmental office. This, and all other documentation supporting your case, will be considered by the department's Concessions and Penalties Sub-committee which consists of the Chair of the Board of Examiners, the Head of the Social Policy Section and the Graduate Administrator. No penalties will be applied to any piece of work where there are adequate substantiated grounds for late submission.

If a student fails to provide a reason for the late submission of work or if this is not deemed satisfactory, **late submission penalties** will apply:

- 10 marks will be lost for each day (or part of each day) that the work is late, up to a total of five days, including weekends and bank holidays e.g. if work is awarded a mark of 30 out of 50, and the work is up to one day late, the final mark is 25.

- After five days the work is marked at zero.

- Note: the penalty cannot take the mark into a negative result.

4.4.5 Deadline for dissertations

Separate arrangements apply in cases where a student fails to meet the deadline for submitting the dissertation. From the beginning of the summer term to the end of the programme, full-time students are expected to be working full-time on their dissertations. Part-time students will usually be working on their dissertations for a substantial part of their second year.

It is crucial not to underestimate the amount of work needed to produce a dissertation of Masters standard. The submission deadline is a strict University requirement for course completion; extensions beyond this date can only be granted with the approval of both the Board of Studies and the Board for Graduate Schools of the University of York. The granting of extensions will only be considered in cases of illness or other highly exceptional circumstances.

In all cases, whether for an essay or a dissertation, reasons for requesting a deadline extension must relate to circumstances beyond the student's control. Poor time management or inadequate planning are <u>not</u> acceptable reasons.

Independent supporting evidence, such as medical certificates, is also normally required.

4.5 Marking of assessed work

4.5.1 Arrangements for anonymous marking

Each student is allocated an examination number when he or she first registers with the University. The number starts with a 'Y' and is shown on your University student card. It is good practice to write it on every page of work submitted for marking, and it must appear on the front cover sheet. It is important to use the correct number!

The use of examination numbers instead of student names is designed to ensure that, as far as practicable, the markers do not know which examination number corresponds to which candidate when the work is marked. Departmental secretaries and other academic and administrative staff involved in the examination process are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of students' examination numbers.

4.5.2 Marking process

Assessed work for each module on your masters programmes is marked by two members of staff – one the lead member, the other a moderator - hence the need for students to submit two copies. The general guidelines used by staff for marking are shown in Appendix 6. Marking pairs often meet beforehand to discuss what is required for a particular piece of assessment. They then meet after marking to compare marks and comments and to reach agreement on a single, final mark.

In an exceptional case where a mark cannot be agreed, the work is referred back to the Chair of the Board of Examiners who may arrange for the script to be read by a third marker. If a significant dispute over the worth of a script cannot be resolved, this is drawn to the attention of the Chair of the Board of Examiners, the mark is asterisked on the mark sheet, and the External Examiner given the opportunity to review the script (see 4.7.2: The external examiner).

4.5.3 Mark scales

The mark scale for MA/MRes work is 0-100 and departmental guidelines place marks in the following categories:

70-100	distinguished performance
60-69	good pass
50-59	satisfactory pass
0-49	fail

90-100 indicates a 'model answer'. This essay demonstrates a critical awareness of current issues and contains relevant material that would not have been anticipated on the basis of the module content. It reveals independent and critical thinking in its synthesis of ideas to bring new insights into the subject matter. Material may be of publishable standard.

80-89 indicates an excellent piece of work. An essay in this category is well-written and structured, developing a strong, well-defined argument in addressing the question set. This essay is a critical account which demonstrates a comprehensive understanding, uses a wide range of relevant literature, including primary sources, and shows evidence of original thinking.

70-79 indicates an essay that is comprehensive, well-written and well-organised. It gives a full and critical account, develops a sound argument and shows some evidence of originality whether in content or presentation of argument. It uses a wide range of literature, with perhaps some primary material or sources additional to those provided on reading lists.

60-69 indicates a good essay that answers the question fully. It uses a wide range of literature, has a clear structure and shows an in-depth understanding of the key issues involved. An essay in this category goes beyond a descriptive approach and demonstrates an ability to analyse relevant material to construct a cogent argument. It is well-written and carefully referenced.

50-59 indicates an essay that is generally sound and uses an adequate range of relevant literature to answer the question set. It shows a fair knowledge of the subject but may perhaps need clarification in the flow of its argument. Some points may need further development, perhaps with reference to more up-to-date literature. Attention may need to be given to grammar, spelling and vocabulary and more care taken with referencing.

40-49 indicates an essay that does not quite come up to Masters standard. It may contain relevant material but this is not directed clearly enough to answer the question. It may fail to cover an adequate range of the literature, being reliant on too few references with too much unsubstantiated assertion. It may reveal a lack of careful thought and take a rather simplistic approach to the question, uncritically accepting only one perspective. Essays in this category often suffer from errors of sentence construction, spelling mistakes and misuse of words.

30-39 usually indicates a misunderstanding of the issues raised by the question or an inadequate grasp of the literature. An essay in this category may contain irrelevant or repetitive material presented without a clear structure or logical argument. Often careless mistakes, poor grammar and punctuation obscure the meaning of the work.

20-29 indicates a clear inability to grasp even basic ideas. The essay is likely to be naïve in its assumptions and contain bibliographies and references that are inappropriate or incorrect.

0-19 indicates a highly deficient essay making few relevant points. These may be expressed too vaguely to have much meaning.

4.5.4 Recording of marks and return of marked work

Marks are double-checked and recorded in spreadsheet form under each student's examination number. The departmental office retains the mark sheets and copies of all work are kept available for the scrutiny of the external examiner.

A copy of each piece of marked work, together with written comments made by the first marker, is returned to the student individually. This form of feedback is intended to help students to assess their own progress on the course and to improve their future work in the light of the comments made. When work is submitted on time, tutors make every effort to return it within four weeks. If this is not possible, the tutor will let the students know.

Students can ask to check their on-going mark profile at any time but it is important to note that marks returned to students during the course are provisional until the end of the formal examination process (see 4.7: Examination procedures).

4.6 Degree classification

4.6.1 Criteria for the award of the MA (Pass) and MRes (Pass)

Each MA or MRes student completes 80 credits of assessed coursework (see 4.4.1: Credits and assessment weighting) plus 20 credits of procedural coursework (the Graduate Research Workshops) that must be passed for a Masters award to be made. The marks for the 80 credits of assessed coursework are averaged arithmetically to give a coursework average. This is added to the dissertation mark and the total divided by two to give an overall programme average. To complete the Masters successfully, students must have:

1. Completed 180 credits of modules relevant to the programme
2. An overall rounded programme average of 50% or more (49.5 or above afterwards)
3. A dissertation mark of 50% or more

And, in addition, students must also have:

4. No more than 40 credits of marks below 50%

5. No credits of marks below 40%

4.6.2 Criteria for the award of the MA (Distinction) or MRes (Distinction)

The Board of Examiners will recommend that the University awards an MA or MRes with Distinction when a candidate has:

1. Completed 180 credits of modules relevant to the programme
2. An overall rounded programme average of 70% or more (69.5 or above afterwards)
3. A dissertation mark of 70% or more
4. No marks below 50%

4.6.3 Procedures in the event of fail marks

As 4.6.1 makes clear, candidates can be awarded an MA/MRes degree with 40 credits of marks in the 40-49% range (i.e. marginally failing), providing their overall rounded programme average is 50% or above. This is known as **compensation**: candidates can compensate their below pass level marks with above pass level marks. In practice, therefore, a student who marginally fails up to two modules will not need to resubmit their coursework if their other two modules and dissertation are marked at a level that brings their rounded programme average above 50%.

Candidates also have the right to **re-submit** up to 40 credits of work that does not meet the 50% pass mark. However, University rules state that any resubmitted work will have its final mark capped at a maximum of 50%. It is up to the individual student to decide whether or not to take the option to resubmit that may be compensated by other work (i.e. work marked at 40-49%). Any pieces of work graded at below 40% will need to be resubmitted in order for a Masters award to be considered (see 4.6.1). Normally, resubmission should take place no longer than ten weeks after the originally submitted assignment is returned to the candidate, though this rule can be varied at the discretion of the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes and the Chair of the Board of Examiners, or by the Board of Examiners for the Social Policy Masters Programmes.

All candidates must pass the **dissertation** (and the associated Graduate Research Workshops) in order to be considered for a Masters award. A dissertation that marginally fails (i.e. is marked at 40-49%) can be resubmitted and candidates will normally be given advice, by the Board of Examiners, on what additional work needs to be done to reach the pass level; the dissertation must normally be resubmitted within three months of the candidate receiving this advice from the Board of Examiners. Any resubmitted dissertations will have their final mark capped at a maximum of 50%. A dissertation marked at below 40% cannot be resubmitted and, consequently, candidates receiving

such a mark will not be eligible for a Masters degree award (see 4.6.1 and 4.6.4)

4.6.4 Award of Postgraduate Certificate

As 4.6.1 makes clear, to receive a Masters degree, candidates must complete 180 credits, with an overall rounded programme average at 50% or above, no more than 40 credits below 50% and no credits below 40%. If a candidate does not meet these criteria, they may still be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate. This award will be made by the Board of Examiners to candidates who do not meet the criteria for an MA/MRes, but do meet the following criteria:

1. 60 credits of modules relevant to the programme completed

And, for those 60 credits (or, if more than 60 credits have been completed, taking the strongest 60 credits of marks):

2. A rounded average mark of 50%
3. No more than 20 credits marked at below 50%
4. No marks below 40%

In addition, the 60 credits must not include the Graduate Research Workshops which are marked only on a pass/fail basis.

4.7 Examination procedures

4.7.1 The constitution of the Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners includes all teaching members of the Board of Studies and one or more external examiners. It may also include other academic members of staff of the University who have assessed any of the students under consideration.

4.7.2 The External Examiner

The External Examiner is a senior member of another university appointed to ensure: that assessment policies and practices are fair and fairly operated; that assessment methods and the structure and content of programmes of study are appropriate; and, that comparability of standards with those of other similar institutions are maintained.

Further details on examination and other assessment procedures is available via the Examinations Office, on:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/eto/exams/infostudents.htm

4.7.3 The final meeting of the Board of Examiners

After the dissertations have been marked and the external examiner has looked at relevant scripts, a full meeting of the Board of Examiners takes place.

Although provisional module marks will have been returned to students during the course of the year, the Department seeks to protect anonymity for as long as possible during the examination process. At the meeting of the Board of Examiners, student mark profiles are considered using examination numbers rather than names in the first instance. Following the determination of a provisionally recommended degree result for each case, the examination numbers of students for whom medical or other evidence is to be tabled are logged. It is only after this stage that student names are revealed and any individual special circumstances discussed.

Students who believe that some external circumstance (such as illness) has adversely affected their performance may wish to request that this circumstance be taken into account. Where this is the case, the student should report the circumstances to the Chair of the Board of Examiners before the Board meets. A student's personal circumstances will not be discussed at meetings of either the Board of Studies or Board of Examiners without his or her knowledge.

During discussions, the External Examiner is invited to offer comments and advice on any other aspect of the assessment process.

Finally, the Board of Examiners agrees the results it will recommend to the Board of Studies.

4.7.4 Completion of the Masters

The Board of Studies makes its decision to accept and approve the recommendations of the Board of Examiners in November. At this stage the Department is able to tell students informally of their results.

It is important to note, however, that results formally remain provisional until they have been approved by the Standing Committee on Assessment and ratified by Senate. University Ordinance 7.6 outlines the role of Senate in considering the completion of degrees.

4.8 Appeals

The University's appeals procedures for Masters students are laid down in Regulation 2.8.

4.9 Academic misconduct

4.9.1 The University position

"You are responsible for ensuring that your work does not contravene the University's rules on academic misconduct, which are set out in Regulation 5. The University takes a very serious view of such misconduct and penalties will be applied to students who are found to have attempted to mislead examiners. Forms of academic misconduct include:

Cheating
Deliberate failure to comply with the rules governing examinations e.g. by making arrangements to have unauthorised access to information.

Collusion
Assisting another individual to gain advantage by unfair means, or receiving such assistance yourself.

Fabrication
Misleading the examiners by presenting work for assessment in a way which intentionally or recklessly suggests that you have collected factual information which has not in fact been collected, or falsifies factual information.

Personation
Producing work to be submitted as that not of yourself but of another, or assuming the identity of another individual in order to deceive the examiners, or soliciting another individual to act or appear as yourself, or to produce work on your behalf.

Plagiarism
Incorporating into your work without appropriate acknowledgement material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another.

Penalties for academic misconduct will depend on the seriousness of the offence. Students found guilty of academic misconduct may, for example, have their degree class reduced, fail their degree, or be asked to leave the University. If you have any queries about what constitutes academic misconduct, and in particular about the proper attribution of material derived from another's work, you should seek advice from your supervisor or tutors" (General Academic Board of the University of York, 8 July 1997).

4.9.2 Advice on avoiding problems of collusion and plagiarism

Collusion and plagiarism are both extremely grave offences and the Department is bound by the University regulations to treat these offences with the utmost seriousness.

It is important that you are able to distinguish between the useful process of **co-operating** and **collaborating** with one another in group work, and **colluding** with another person to represent someone else's work as your own. If you are ever unsure about this distinction you should seek advice from your supervisor or other member of the teaching staff. **Collusion** includes getting someone else to write an essay or part of an essay for you, or allowing your own work to be copied.

Plagiarism means passing off ideas and words of another person without proper acknowledgement. In writing essays, project reports and dissertations, you are expected to evaluate the work and ideas of other people. It is important that, in assembling evidence for your arguments, you recognise when you are referring to the opinions and interpretations of others. Plagiarism may be unintentional, but this still constitutes academic misconduct. It can usually be avoided by taking proper care in making notes from published material and by paying close attention to referencing.

There are a couple of simple rules:

- If you are referring to the work of someone else but are not using a direct quotation - for example you may be summarising the author's argument, or providing a paraphrase - you **must** acknowledge the source explicitly with a reference to the author and year, giving full details in your bibliography.

- If you are quoting someone else directly you must give a reference as in (1) but include also the page number from the original book or paper. In addition you must make sure that you reproduce the quoted passage **exactly** as it appears in the original and enclose it in quotation marks.

You will find more advice on referencing in Appendix 3.

4.9.3 University procedures for dealing with academic misconduct

These are explained fully in Appendix 2 of the University Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures. All the details are available online on:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/gso/taught.htm

4.10 University Online Plagiarism Tutorial

All students are required to complete successfully the University Online Plagiarism Tutorial before the end of the first stage or year of their programme of study. Students will not be considered for award of a degree until confirmation of successful completion of the tutorial has been received. Failure

to comply with this regulation may result in termination of registration with the University.

Appendix 1: Computing facilities

The University IT Support Office is located to the right of the footpath leading from Vanbrugh College to the J.B. Morrell Library.

All new students are automatically registered for all Computing Service facilities. The Computing Service User Guide, which you will receive at the beginning of term, explains how to use information on your Student Card to log into the computers and contains details of all Computing Service facilities and services.

The Computing Service provides classrooms of networked Windows PCs and UNIX workstations. Printers are available both centrally and near the classrooms, which are spread out around the campus. The location of rooms is listed in the Computing Service User Guide.

Many items of software, including Microsoft Office, graphics and statistical packages, are available on the University network. All masters students receive a free quota of printing equivalent to 30 pages of A4 black and white sheets per term; money must be paid into a charge account before any further work can be printed. You should ensure your account has enough credit around submission times. You can top up your printing account online, using a debit or credit card.

For more information about any of the services contact the IT Support Office. Tel: 3838; email: infodesk@york.ac.uk; website:

http://www.york.ac.uk/services/cserv/myitaccount/

Appendix 2: Guidelines for writing essays

This note is intended as a guide to what we are looking for in a good essay. Some of it, much of it even, will look blindingly obvious, but it is surprising how easy it is to forget these basic principles and to plunge in to doing a lot of work on something that turns out to be seriously off the point. The following are some of the most important points to bear in mind when thinking about and writing your essays.

Read the question
Most essay questions give some direct clues as to what sort of answer is required. There will be some key words or phrases, which obviously have to be addressed in the essay. Some of these words or phrases may even be open to different interpretations, and will need defining or debating. For example, if a

question asks 'consider the value achieved by such and such...' then a good essay will discuss how "value" might be defined in this context.

Avoid starting your essay with dictionary definitions. They are rarely the best way of defining concepts.

Answer the question
As indicated above, many essay questions bear interpretation and some are deliberately general so as to give the student the opportunity to pursue a particular interest in framing the answer. It is legitimate to discuss a particular interpretation in your answer and also to use some particular examples in presenting your evidence. Say what you are going to do. For example: 'This essay will discuss the effectiveness of pressure groups in influencing policy decisions, with reference to the role of the Child Poverty Action Group and the Carers' National Association. It will discuss their effectiveness in terms of their ability to shape discussions on significant policy issues, and their impact on the outcome of those discussions.'

It is unwise, however, to assume that a general question can be answered by drawing on one very narrow example.

Some questions have several parts, for example: 'What is known about the problem of "non-take-up" of benefits? The main policy response has been to seek solutions to the 'problem'. Are there other approaches?' Make sure that you do justice to each part of the question. You don't have to spend an exactly equal amount of words on each part, but don't spend so long on the first part that you end up squeezing the second into a couple of paragraphs.

Structure your answer
Essays should have a beginning, middle and an end, preferably in that order! The beginning should tell the reader what argument will be advanced and what ground will be covered. The middle discusses and evaluates relevant evidence, and builds up an argument. The end summarizes the main points of the argument and reaches a conclusion that answers the question. Ideally, you should be in a position to round off your essay by expressing your main overall argument in one or two sentences.
Good 'middles' generally have a number of themes or points, which are dealt with sequentially. It can be a good idea to use sub-headings to indicate what these themes are (as you will see done in good journal articles, for example). You can also use linking phrases or sentences such as: 'The second point of view I want to consider is…' You should, however, avoid numbering your paragraphs or using other devices such as bullet points. These are fine for reports, but the house-style in the Department is to avoid them in essay writing.

Draw on a range of appropriate sources

When constructing essays you will spend quite a lot of your time looking for source material —'evidence'— to help you develop your arguments. Most of this 'evidence' will come from your reading. There are a number of very important points to bear in mind in drawing together and using your sources. Most of them are to do with saying clearly what your evidence is, saying where you got it from and being fair to the range of evidence available:

- ✓ Use a reasonable <u>range</u> of evidence. You may well have to be selective in your choice of evidence if your essay is not to go on forever but you must be very careful that your selection does not distort the evidence. Don't just pick the bits that support your point of view and ignore the rest; or quote just one person's opinion when you know that others offer a completely different interpretation. It is bad practice to rely entirely on a single source of information when several are available. This does not mean that you have to have read everything. It does mean that you should be able to demonstrate that you have read a variety of sources. In any argument, there will always be more than one point of view. An essay should consider different sides of an argument, and weigh them up.

- ✓ Give proper <u>references</u>. If you are quoting directly from a published source you should give a precise reference including a page number for books or journal articles. If you are summarising an argument, be as precise as you can in your reference. It might all come from one chapter or from a few pages. The most common style for referencing in this Department is the Harvard system and you are encouraged to use this (see Appendix 3).

- ✓ Use your evidence to provide an <u>evaluation</u>. Essays should not just be a description of your own opinions. Neither should they just be a description of other people's views. The aim is to use your reading to help you build up your arguments and thus to develop your <u>own</u> conclusions. It is the material you select, and the conclusions you draw, which make your essays distinctively your own. A good way to develop your arguments can often be to look for differences in views among the sources you read. If two writers have taken different views on something, compare, contrast or discuss these views. How can these different views or perspectives help you in answering your essay question?

- ✓ Consider the <u>limitations and reliability</u> of your evidence. If you wish to quote statistics, you should always try to use the most up-to-date statistics available. Nevertheless, the most recent available data may be several years out of date. Remember that, because of the time it takes to publish, figures quoted in books and journal articles are inevitably out of date. In other cases, the definition used may not tell the whole story. For example it might be relevant to point out that the unemployment figures

published by the DfEE count people who are out of work and claiming benefit but that other commentators (give reference to these) suggest that there are 1 million other people seeking work but not claiming benefit who should be added to this total. If you are using survey material, the crucial date is not when it was published but when the fieldwork was actually carried out. This can be many months prior to publication.

✓ By all means use your own experience as part of the evidence you include in your essays, but follow as closely as you can the same principles in giving sources. If you want to say that 'staff are sceptical of the advantages of market testing' it is not sufficient simply to assert that this is the case. You should say what grounds you have for believing this statement to be true. Is it your personal opinion, a widely held view (held by how many?), or established by some survey (conducted by whom, when, and what was the question asked)? It is not always easy to do this when dealing with material which is internal to an organisation and not necessarily written down in a readily quotable form. But ask yourself what reasons you have for making this statement and be as precise as you can in setting out those reasons.

Draw conclusions that are supported by your evidence
This is absolutely crucial and you should take great care. It is very important to distinguish between inputs and outputs, aspirations and action, and process and outcome. It is equally important to be able to demonstrate cause and effect. Here are some examples:

a) Establishing that x amount more money or y more staff (inputs) is allocated to a function does not establish that the function in question is getting any better (outputs). In fact, on its own, this piece of information does not establish anything very much.

b) It may be a fact that an agency says it puts value for money or fair prices at the top of its agenda or that it intends to set ever more challenging targets or that it is going to look at the reliability of its service (aspirations) but this does not establish that action which led to this desirable state of affairs ever took place. You will have to look for other evidence if you want to conclude that the agency in question has actually been doing something.

c) A re-organisation, publication of customer charters, introduction of a planning system (process) does not establish that, say, customer service has improved (outputs). You will have to demonstrate that these processes made some change that did lead on to improved service and identify what that change is. After all, a re-organisation might just be changing the names on the doors.

d) Just because two events happen at about the same time does not establish that one caused the other. Just because the number of children staying on in further education coincided with a rise in youth unemployment does not, on its own, establish that the rise in the staying-on rate is a response to unemployment. It <u>might</u> be, but it could equally well be attributed to other factors (the success of the Government's education policy perhaps?). If you want to establish a clear connection, you will have to look for other evidence. Otherwise, you may want to advance a hypothesis - i.e. a plausible interpretation of the available evidence but which might be refuted when other evidence becomes available. You might like to suggest what other evidence would be required to test your hypothesis.

Summarise your conclusions

Round off your essay; don't just stop. Say what conclusions you reach and how confident you are in them. Are they provisional, tentative or proof positive? A really good conclusion will refer back to the demands of the essay question and the intentions you set for your essay in your introductory paragraphs and will show how you have fulfilled these demands.

Aim for work that is well written

The aim of the Department is to encourage and help students to write well. We do not explicitly take marks off for poor spelling, grammar or punctuation, but cannot guarantee that the irritation caused by these kinds of errors will not affect the subconscious judgement of the marker. One of the best ways to develop your own writing style is through reading. Journal articles are especially useful in this respect. Read them with an eye for their style, and notice which seem to you to be well written (not all of them are) and why.

Check your work

Give yourself time to read your work through carefully before you submit it. Make sure that paragraphing is used in a way that aids the reader. A good general rule is: one paragraph - one idea. Paragraphing also breaks up a mass of solid typescript so that it is easier to read. There should usually be at least two paragraph breaks on each page.

Use the spell check on your PC, but remember that this will not spot every possible mistake. The best way to check your work is to read it back to yourself or get someone else to read it to you. Check it for minor errors but also check it for meaning. Would a reader with no specialized knowledge of the subject be able to understand what you are saying with reasonable ease? If not, look again at your writing style to make sure it is as clear and jargon-free as possible.

Take account of the feedback you get

You will get written comments on each essay that you submit. Markers aim to give constructive comments and criticism so that you can build on what you have done and develop your approach. Don't forget to take this into account in your later work. Essay writing is a skill. Practice, and reflection on past practice, are part of what you can gain from the course.

The teaching staff are always happy to talk to you if you are unsure of what is being looked for in a particular essay, or if at any time you feel 'stuck' or anxious. So don't hesitate to ask.

Common mistakes

It is easy to make them, so take very great care that you don't!

Not answering the question. It is extremely easy to get engrossed in what interests you, and find that you have failed to answer the question. Even if you have written a very good piece of work, it cannot pass if you have not, in some way, addressed the question set.

Not giving clear signposts. You may think that the structure and direction of your essay is obvious. It almost certainly won't be unless you give the reader some help. Say what you are going to do in your opening paragraph, and then use sub-headings, or some other similar device, to remind the reader where you are up to.

Not using your reading properly. Show what sources you have used by referencing them correctly. And use the reading you have done to develop your own views and to help you <u>answer the question</u>.

A2.1 A note on spelling and punctuation

These notes are included as a reminder. You probably know all of it already, but there is no harm in a reminder!

Spelling

Correct spelling is important for three reasons:
- Spelling mistakes can alter meanings.
- Spelling mistakes cause interruptions to reading while the reader works out what the mistakes are.
- Spelling mistakes undermine the confidence of the reader in the content of the writing.

Most people spell most words correctly most of the time. If you know that you are poor at spelling, keep a good dictionary to hand and refer to it. If you have the use of modern word processing software, use the 'spell-check' function. But be aware of its limitations and do not rely on it alone. Always proof read your

work more than once and, if possible, ask someone else to read it before submission.

Punctuation
Punctuation has two main tasks: a functional one of making meaning clear, and a cosmetic one of enhancing style. There is much disagreement among 'authorities' over punctuation. It would be wise to give priority to making your meaning clear when deciding how your writing should be punctuated.

A passage from a translation of a work written in 1466 by Aldus Manutius is quoted by Gowers (1986: 152). It could have been written with students in mind: 'I myself have learned by experience, that, if ideas that are difficult to understand are properly separated, they become clearer;…'

In the following pages we offer some simple guidelines on the use of the most commonly encountered punctuation.

Capital letters
There are few rules about the use of capitals and they are relatively easy to remember. Use capital letters for:

- The first letter of a sentence
- The days of the week
- The months of the year
- 'Proper' names, e.g. the Alexandra Palace
- The titles of books, journals and newspapers

Full stops
- Full stops should be the punctuation marks that you use the most.
- Full stops make sentences easy to read and easy to understand.
- Full stops are used to end all sentences, with two exceptions: direct questions, which end with a question mark (?), and exclamations, which end with an exclamation mark (!).
- Full stops are used with initials and with many abbreviations, though their use with abbreviations is declining.

Commas
There are no simple rules governing the use of the comma. One can see variations in the use of commas over time and between writers who are contemporaries. However, here are some guidelines (*not* rules) which may be worthy of consideration:
- Remember that commas can change both the meaning and the emphasis of sentences.
- Avoid using too many commas in your writing.
- One of the most common uses of commas is to separate items in a list.

- Generally *in lists*, a comma is not placed before 'and' except where one is needed to avoid ambiguity e.g. 'Companies in which she holds shares include Boots, BP, Marks and Spencer, and Next.'
- Commas are used to separate a sequence of descriptive words.
- Commas are used to separate a sequence of closely related clauses ('sub-sentences').

Other punctuation breaks

Semicolon (;)
- Is a stronger break than a comma.
- Is used to mark groupings within lists in which items are already separated by commas.
- Is used to separate phrases which already contain commas.

Colon (:)
- Is used to introduce something: for example, a quotation, an illustration (words not a picture!) or a list.
- Or to introduce a series of clauses, sentences or even paragraphs, each starting on a new line, often numbered.
- Used as a substitute for i.e. or 'that is'.

Quotation marks

One of the most common faults in writing is the overuse of some punctuation marks. Quotation marks, or inverted commas, are frequently overused. One use which should be carefully restricted is the placing of words or phrases within quotation marks to indicate that they are being used in some special way, such as technically or colloquially.

Quotation marks are heavily used in academic work for a very good reason: we often quote from the work of others.

If the quotation is longer than about 40 words, do not use quotation marks. Instead, separate the quotation from the body of your text by a line space above and below it and indent the quoted material from the left.

Apostrophe

The apostrophe is used to make the possessive form of a singular word by adding **'s**. For example: the dog's dinner (the dinner of the dog).

In plural words and in some singular words ending in (e)s, the possessive may add an apostrophe alone. For example: the architects' office (the office of the architects); James' dog (the dog of James).

Beware confusing possessives with plurals. In many cases it is best to avoid a possessive with apostrophe and use the longer form 'of (the)' in order to avoid confusion.

- Apostrophes are used to indicate where letters or figures are mssing. For example: can't (cannot); I'll (I will or I shall); they're (they are); in '86 (in 1986); in the '90s (in the 1990s).
- It's means 'it is'; its means 'of it'.
- Apostrophes are not used to form plurals in the case of initials, figures or abbreviations: M.T.T.s, 1990s, MPs.
- Initials form possessives in the normal way: an MP's salary; MPs' salaries; HMG's policy.

The following short book has been prepared to meet the needs of students who wish to improve their writing skills, punctuation, spelling, grammar, style etc.:

Collinson, D., Kirkup, G., Kyd, R. and Slocombe, L. (1992) *Plain English*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Appendix 3: The use of references

The business of referencing is an important part of essay writing and of preparing a dissertation or thesis. It may seem like a technicality but it is essential to producing a good piece of academic work, and this section sets out the main rules that you need to follow. It is worth getting used to these rules early on. They will then become second nature.

Much of the activity of essay writing involves referring to, and reflecting on, other people's work. It is very important that you give full and correct references on each occasion that you draw on someone else's work. This is important for the following reasons:

- to enable the reader to go back to your sources if she or she wishes
- to enable you to demonstrate that you have drawn on a range of sources
- to ensure that you avoid being open to any accusations of plagiarism (see 4.9: Academic misconduct).

There are two main ways of providing references:

- Place a number in the text at the point where a reference is appropriate and then set out the reference in a numbered footnote on the appropriate page or in a numbered list at the end of the essay or chapter. This can get a bit messy for both the author and the reader, especially if you have lots of references or you are quoting the same work several times at different places.

- Provide an abbreviated reference (giving author(s) and year) in the text at the appropriate point and then list all the works referenced in alphabetical order at the end of the essay or chapter. This means that each work need be referenced only once even if it has been quoted several times. This is the method that we advise and is known as the 'Harvard' system.

A3.1 Examples of references in the text

a)   Direct quotation
'The advocates of the view that doctors are a dominant power, and of the alternative view that they are a declining power, share a common assumption that the power of the medical profession is more or less the same regardless of how the health-care system is organised' (Moran and Wood, 1993: 31). Direct quotation must always give the page number.

b)   Close paraphrase
Moran and Wood (1993: 31) identify a common assumption underlying the arguments of those who see doctors as a declining power and those who see them as a dominant power. Both assume that doctors' power is independent of the organisation of health care.

c)   Using your own words but drawing on the ideas of other authors
There are three views on the position of doctors in modern health care. The first is that they are a dominant power because they retain monopoly control of key decisions, the second is that they are a declining power because their decisions are increasingly open to challenge by other interest groups (managers, patients, insurance companies), the third is that their role is circumscribed by the structure of the health care organisation whether this is a state controlled system or a market system. (Moran and Wood, 1993: 29-31)

A3.2 Listing references at the end of your work
In each example above, the reference in the bibliography would read:

Moran, M. and Wood, B. (1993) *States, Regulation and the Medical Profession*, Buckingham: Open University Press

This is a reference to a book. It gives the author(s), year, title (underlined or in italics), place and publisher.

References to journal articles are presented rather differently. The title of the article is given in plain text. Then the journal title is given in italics or underlined and is followed by the volume number and page numbers of the article. For example:

Huby, M. and Walker, R. (1991) The social fund and territorial justice, *Policy and Politics* 19: 87-98

A3.3 Referencing webpages

Referencing webpages accurately is important too. However, given the recent rise of the web, firm conventions on the referencing of web pages have yet to be established. Moreover, given the ephemeral nature of many web sites and the ever-changing content of others, clear referencing is crucial for purposes of verification. In addition to the usual author, year of publication and title information, web page references need to carry two additional pieces of information: the actual address of the web page (the URL) and the date on which you accessed the page. For example:

Hudson, J. (1999) 'An Introduction to Using the Web for Research', <http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/spsw/stu.yrk/modules/webt/index.htm>, accessed on 18th September 2000

Many modern web sites use 'frames' to aid navigation. When you are using such sites, the address displayed by your web browser does not change. For example, the Departmental website always displays http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/spsw/. In such cases, you need to perform a quick manoeuvre in order to find out the precise address of the page you are viewing. Move the mouse arrow to the page you are reading and press the <u>right hand</u> mouse button. A small menu will pop up, from which you should select 'Open Frame in New Window'. On selection the page will open itself in a new window of your browser and the full web address should be displayed in the 'location' box at the top of the page.

Appendix 4: Guidelines for writing and presenting a dissertation

A4.1 What is an MA/MRes dissertation?

A dissertation is a report on an extended piece of original research and analysis on a topic of your own choice. It builds on the skills you have learned during the taught module element of the Masters, both in research methods and in substantive understanding of social policy.

Your dissertation should be 15,000 to 20,000 words in length, including references and the bibliography but excluding appendices. But it is much more than a long essay. Each successful dissertation, marked at 50% or more,

becomes a public work of reference, providing a comprehensive review of the available literature on its topic and providing new insights into the subject.

Following the award of your MA/MRes degree, a copy of your dissertation will be placed in the J.B Morrell Library. It will appear on the library catalogue and will be available for future students and scholars to consult. The actual document will be available for reference only, but microfilm copies may be made available to other university libraries if requested through the Inter-Library Loan system.

The copyright for the dissertation rests with you. Sometime a student adapts a dissertation for academic publication following an MA/MRes degree. This is something you may want to discuss with your supervisor.

A4.2 Choosing a topic for your dissertation

It is much easier to sustain the levels of work needed to complete a dissertation if you really care about the subject. Everyone at some time during the dissertation will experience feelings of elation when things are going well. At other times, feelings of despair arise when little or no progress seems to be taking place. You may be having difficulties in gaining access to people or information, getting low returns of questionnaires, or simply getting behind with your timetable. This series of peaks and troughs is normal! But if you are not deeply committed to your topic you will find it much more difficult to clamber out of the troughs.

When thinking about a topic, first of all decide on the broad area of social policy in which you are most interested. Then ask yourself some questions. What aspect of the subject would you like to know more about? What exactly would you like to know?

Now do some broad reading on the topic. Have other authors answered some of your own questions? Are there further questions to be addressed? Think about how you might go about doing this.

Try not to be over-ambitious (though this is easier said than done). It is much better and more rewarding - for you and your readers - to tackle a more limited set of questions thoroughly than to provide a superficial account of an enormous subject.

A4.3 Supervision

The University has a policy on the supervision of Masters dissertations:

- There should be a clear procedure for agreeing the subject of the dissertation, involving as appropriate the departmental Graduate

Committee or Board of Studies or course convenor, and there should be a set deadline for this purpose.

- The supervisor and student should agree a preliminary structure for the dissertation at an early stage, and a schedule of meetings.

- The student is entitled to have the supervisor read and comment on work in progress, including in the later stages when the dissertation is being pulled together. The precise arrangement will be by mutual agreement between the student and supervisor: but if the student decides not to ask the supervisor to see draft material, he or she must be made fully aware of the potential risk of this course of action. In this connection, it should also be noted that if the supervisor approves draft material or if the supervisor makes suggestions which the student then acts upon, this does not in any way predetermine the outcome of the eventual examination of the dissertation: the supervisory process and the examination process are completely separate.

- The supervisor is under no obligation to correct the student's grammar or spelling, save that special provision may be made for students whose first language is not English.

- The department or centre must ensure that there will be a schedule of named members of academic staff who will be 'on call' over the summer vacation, to the extent that the student will be able to make contact, if necessary face-to-face, with the member of staff within a day or two, in order to deal with any crisis or crises a student may encounter if his or her supervisor is away from the University.

- The department's arrangements must be made known to students in writing, usually through the departmental course handbook.

Allocation of dissertation supervisors

Dissertation supervision can be provided on a wide range of topics from within the social policy teaching section and occasionally from the research units. It is important that your supervisor is someone with whom you feel happy working on a one-to-one basis. Often the topic reflects the interests of a particular member of staff who will be an obvious choice for supervision. Sometimes there may be no such obvious choice. A list of all members of teaching staff and their interests is shown at the beginning of this handbook and lists of research unit staff and interests can be found on the departmental website.

You have to complete a form (available from the departmental office) outlining your topic and hand it in to the Director of the Social Policy Masters Programmes before 31 January for full-time students (see Planning, below) or the start of Year 2 for part-time students. All dissertation topics and

supervision arrangements have to be approved by the Board of Studies at its meeting in February (full-time students) or October, Year 2 (part-time students).

Styles of supervision

There is no one model of supervision that applies on every case. The topic selected and how it is being approached influences the pattern of support, as do the personalities of the supervisor and student. Early supervisory meetings are held to decide on the overall structure of the dissertation and may be initiated by either the student or supervisor. Thereafter, meetings may be regular, phased or intermittent depending on the student's needs and the stage the dissertation has reached.

You should contact your supervisor at regular intervals, to keep him or her up-to-date with your progress. Your supervisor will help you to organise your time and plan your work. If you want to discuss difficulties or progress, send your supervisor a brief note of explanation so that he or she can be prepared to advise you when you meet. You are much more likely to have a productive meeting if both of you know in advance what you are meeting for.

When you want comments on written work, arrange to get it to the supervisor in time for him or her to read it well before you meet. Supervisors are rarely in a position to read anything immediately it arrives on the desk! Make sure that each chapter draft is as good as you can get it before asking for comments. Supervisors are usually happy to comment once on each chapter individually and again on the whole draft dissertation to be able to advise you on the development of the argument and the balance between chapters (see Planning, below). It is not generally advisable to ask your supervisor to comment on the same chapter over and over again unless there are good reasons for this.

Although practice varies, what is important is that appropriate supervision is provided and that you obtain the support and guidance that is required. This has to be negotiated and reviewed as the dissertation progresses. It is advisable at the end of each meeting to make a date for the next one.

A4.4 Planning your work

The table below outlines the key stages in dissertation work. It does not include a separate time for writing. It is a good idea to begin writing as soon as possible, possibly even during your preliminary reading stages. You can always amend early drafts later on. If you begin by writing a skeleton introduction and a brief outline for each chapter, you will find it easier to get going when you come to work on the chapters in more detail as you go along. It also works wonders for your confidence and gives you a feel for how many words you are using before the whole thing gets completely out of control! Important aspects of research design and methodology are written most quickly and easily at the

time when they are being dealt with but are much more difficult to reconstruct later on.

The suggested timing of some stages will vary slightly depending on the methodology to be used and, for part-time students, timing of the early stages depends on how they have arranged to time their taught module work. Full-time students are expected to be working full-time on their dissertations from the end of the spring term onwards.

For both full-time and part-time students, the final deadline for submission is crucial and it is important not to underestimate the time needed for the final preparation of the dissertation. Extensions beyond this date can only be granted on the recommendation of the Departmental Board of Studies and with the approval of the Board for Graduate Schools of the University. They are restricted to cases of illness or other exceptional circumstances.

Stage	Full-time	Part-time
Thinking about topics and discussing them with possible supervisors	October to December	Year 1
Topic and supervisor agreed ready for approval by the Board of Studies	End of January	End of September Year 1
Detailed reading and planning; review of the literature	Spring term	Year 1
Designing and starting fieldwork; preparing and analysing statistical data; presenting work in progress at Graduate Research Workshop	Summer term	Year 2
Further analysis and preparation of penultimate draft	By mid-August	By mid-August Year 2
Final revision, copying and binding	By 17 September	By 16 September Year 2

You will need to make your own personal timetable more detailed as your work progresses. You may need to amend your approach if you have not attained your planned objectives at key points. Work steadily and make sure that you allow some time for slippage in the timetable. It is important not to jeopardize completion by the deadline.

Decide whether you are likely to need a fall back position. For example, if you get a lower than expected response rate to a questionnaire you may need to compensate for lack of empirical data by relying more heavily on the literature.

Remember that academic supervisors have summer holidays. You should talk to your supervisor about vacation plans. Even though a named member of staff will be 'on call' in case of emergencies, he or she will not be as familiar as your own supervisor with your dissertation. If you plan your summer carefully, you may even get a holiday yourself!

People or organisations that have taken part in your dissertation research may want to see a copy of your findings. You should consider this possibility at an early stage as it is up to you to arrange how to give feedback to people who helped you. You may want to think about producing a brief summary for distribution, rather than copies of the whole dissertation.

A4.5 Scope of the dissertation

The dissertation will be a work of reference and should have its objectives clearly stated at the start. You will need to indicate the significance of your topic to current policy concerns and available literature. You should incorporate a comprehensive literature review and show how this has informed the specific objectives of your dissertation.

There are three broad methodological approaches to take to a dissertation:

- You can base a dissertation entirely on the literature. All students will need to do a literature review but a dissertation based entirely on literature will involve more extensive reading of a wider range of literature, an analysis of the main themes, arguments and disagreements, and, crucially, your own synthesis of thoughts and ideas.

- You can carry out your own empirical work using the research techniques you have learned during the course. Although limits on your time and resources mean that you cannot carry out a national survey, for example, you can do respectable smaller scale quantitative work to which you can legitimately apply statistical techniques. You can do qualitative work involving a small number of in-depth or group interviews. Case studies can also be a useful way of exploring certain topics.

- You can carry out secondary analysis of data that have been collected elsewhere. There are a number of large scale national surveys to which you can gain access through the Department. You can use these to carry out further statistical analysis to examine angles that have not yet been covered by other researchers.

These are not all mutually exclusive. The approach you take will depend on the nature of your objectives and the form that your research questions take. You will need to talk to your supervisor about the best methods to use to realize your objectives.

It is often helpful to think of the dissertation as a story in which the plot gradually unfolds as more evidence is presented. Make sure that your argument develops in a logical fashion and keeps to the main theme. The maximum word limit of 20,000 always seems enormous at first, but later on

most students find themselves worrying about how to keep within this limit. You will find that you need to be highly selective about what you include in the final draft. This is easier if you have avoided going off at tangents during your research.

Sometimes 20,000 words only seem to represent the tip of the iceberg of all the work and reading you have done. It can be very frustrating to discover that work that has taken much time and effort appears as only a couple of sentences, a footnote, or a short table in the finished dissertation. But the essence of producing a professional piece of work is to have the confidence to be selective and discard material that is not directly relevant to your topic. You can only do this if you and your supervisor have a clear idea of the objectives of the dissertation. A clear set of objectives will help you to be critical and evaluative.

As well as addressing the questions you have set yourself at the start, you should not be afraid to pose new questions. Sometimes answering one question raises many others that may be relevant to an understanding of your topic but which lie beyond the scope of a single MA/MRes dissertation.

A4.6 Approaches to writing

You will already have had a great deal of practice in writing essays. Learn from the comments made by your markers and refer back to Appendix 2: Guidelines for writing essays, especially on checking your work and on spelling and punctuation.

Structure

You can learn a lot about how to structure a dissertation by looking at some that have been written by past masters students. These are available in the J.B. Morrell Library.

In general, Masters dissertations need to have at least five chapters:

- An introduction explaining what the dissertation is about and clearly stating your main research questions. It should explain why the questions are interesting, important and relevant, and outline how the dissertation goes about addressing them using particular kinds of research methods. It is often helpful to think of these points as **What? Why?** and **How?** The introduction should conclude by giving a brief idea of the contents of each following chapter.

- An account of what other researchers and authors have contributed to the understanding of your topic and the extent to which they have addressed your research questions. This literature review can be the main focus of the dissertation, in which case it needs to be

more comprehensive in its range and more thorough in its analysis than a review that is simply used to set a context for later empirical work. But in either case, the literature review needs to go beyond mere description. It is more than a series of mini-book reviews or a chronological account of who said what and when. Good reviews organize material gleaned from the literature into themes and subject it to critical analysis. This may involve, say, a comparison of views or perspectives on a problem, pulling out points of similarity between authors and identifying where key disagreements arise. If the literature review is to be used to set your own empirical research in context, you will need to show how it relates to your own questions. Does it, for example, highlight some theoretical idea that you want to test in practice? Does is raise new research questions that are crucial to your dissertation objectives? Or do you want to repeat someone else's research methods by looking at a particular group of people or by setting the research in a particular location?

- A description of your own <u>methodology</u> and an explanation of why this is appropriate to your specific research questions. Here you will need to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach you have taken and justify your preference for this approach. You should explain in some detail the techniques you have used. Remember that neither qualitative nor quantitative techniques are 'better' than one another for social research. Rather, the choice of technique depends crucially on the question(s) you are trying to answer. You should explain exactly how you conducted your empirical work, giving enough detail to enable the reader to evaluate your methodology. It is a good idea to start this chapter by rehearsing your research questions. Then consider the kind of information you needed to answer them. From where did you obtain this? In the case of secondary analysis you will need to describe your primary data source. If you are conducting interviews you will need to think about exactly who you needed to interview and why. How did you select your sample? How did you deal with any problems of access and recruitment? Were there any ethical issues to consider? How did you handle assurances of confidentiality? How were the interviews conducted? Is any bias likely to have resulted from the methods you used? How is this likely to affect your findings? At the end of this chapter, the reader should have a complete picture of how you went about collecting your data and should be aware of how these data were used to shed light on the research questions. You can include copies of letters, topic guides and questionnaires in appendices.

- An <u>analysis of the findings</u>. It is often helpful to structure this chapter using the themes underlying your research questions rather than by chronology or methods used. A thematic approach gives more coherence to the chapter and makes it easier to link your own findings into those of other researchers. Simply describing the research findings is not sufficient. You should offer a discussion about the implications of your findings for your broader topic. You can do this by referring back to the work of other authors in the literature review chapter. How do your results relate to these? Do they confirm or refute the hypotheses of other researchers? Take care to be evaluative and critical of your own results. Beware of the obvious traps of presenting qualitative material in quantitative terms, or inferring the reasons for respondents' answers when you have not asked them for those reasons. It is important not to 'stretch' your data to make them mean more than they actually do. Nevertheless, you can suggest or surmise possible explanations for what you have found as long as you make it clear where these <u>are</u> suggestions and not findings. You might also be able to identify where your findings act as pointers to a need for further research. It is this capacity to be reflective that distinguishes analysis from mere description.

- Some considered <u>conclusions</u>. This chapter should not simply be a summary of what has gone before. However, a brief summary, drawing together the threads from previous chapters, may well constitute a good introduction to the concluding chapter. A well-written conclusion brings the dissertation round full-circle, back to why this was an interesting, important and relevant topic in the first place. The conclusions should make some statement, firmly grounded in the work you have presented, about what you have discovered and what it adds to the body of knowledge on the subject. You should discuss the extent to which your conclusions are specific to the particular circumstances you have investigated, or whether they apply more generally. Well-reasoned and thoughtful conclusions are absolutely crucial to a good dissertation. Nevertheless, thin or weak conclusions are not uncommon! This is usually because students underestimate the time needed for analysis of their findings, run out of time and find they have to rush the final chapter. Do not fall into this trap!

The above paragraphs describe the core contents of any dissertation. The balance between one element and another will depend on your own subject matter and your methodology. You may want to have more than five chapters, especially if some sections appear disproportionately long. You should divide your material so that the overall structure reflects the way you want to develop your argument.

A short summary at the end of each chapter can be very useful in helping you see how the plot is shaping up. Reference to these summaries and to your original chapter outlines will help you to balance your work and will save you from expending too much time and effort on the early chapters to the detriment of later ones. It should also help you to avoid repetition and to frame an argument that develops smoothly and coherently. Although you should have drafted an introductory chapter at an early stage, you will need to rewrite this at the end to make sure that it really does introduce what you have written later.

Style

When your dissertation is examined, markers will be assessing your ability to present and develop an argument in a clear and rigorous manner. Acknowledge any weaknesses in your argument to show that you have thought carefully about the limitations of what you are saying.

Do not fall into the trap of thinking that there is a special 'academic' way of writing. This does not exist! You are writing, nonetheless, for an academic readership. If you are systematic and logical in your approach and anticipate readers' questions while writing, you are already being academic. The evidence you present as grounds for your argument should not distort or misrepresent the range of evidence available. You should use the evidence you have produced, analysed and interpreted to come to clearly supported conclusions. Avoid the use of jargon, slang and colloquialisms. It is usually a good idea also to avoid personal pronouns.

Be consistent with your referencing. Always provide a full reference so that a reader can look up your sources if necessary (see Appendix 3: The Use of References). If a quotation is four lines long or more, you should include it as a single-spaced paragraph on its own. Shorter quotations should be part of the main text. In both cases remember to use quotation marks and a reference.

When you are using figures or tables, consider carefully the relationship between these and the associated text. Ideally, a table and the passage of text where the contents of the table are discussed should appear together on the same page. This is not always possible but you should try to keep the two close together and make sure that your cross-referencing is precise. The reader should be able to move from the text to the appropriate table straight away without having to hunt around for it. Provide each figure and table with a full title. They should be numbered consecutively. It often helps to include the chapter number For example, Table 2.1 refers to the first table in Chapter 2. Tables should generally use horizontal ruled lines only.
Have regard to the appearance of your text on the page. It is daunting to face, and difficult to read, a whole page of solid undifferentiated text. Make judicious use of paragraphs and sub-headings to give the reader some idea of the overall

shape of the page's content and where the natural breaks in your narrative occur. Do not cram too much onto one page. Use double spacing and generous margins.

Use appendices for material that is not required in the main body of the text but which will give the reader more detailed information if he or she wants to look at it. Summarise your argument and suggest policy implications where appropriate.

Do not overlook the importance of proofreading. Do not rely on a computer spell-check. Punctuation should be checked carefully, not least for the distribution of commas. They often affect both the sense of what you are saying and the rhythm of a sentence. Proofreading, checking references and checking the numbering of chapters, pages, figures and tables is time consuming (and, frankly, rather boring!) But, done well, it will make all the difference to the impression your work creates. Do not assume that it is a task you can rush through at the last minute. Proofreading is a real skill that demands concentration and close attention to detail. It needs some 'quality time' so be sure to plan it into your schedule.

A4.7 Presenting the finished dissertation

Try to make your dissertation as professional as possible in its presentation and layout. No amount of glossy presentation can compensate for inadequate content, but poor or shoddy presentation can act to the detriment of otherwise good work. Although no marks are given for presentation, a well presented dissertation indicates that a student has made a real effort and the marker, consciously or sub-consciously is highly likely to be influenced by this. Really bad presentation can obscure meaning and marks cannot be given for material that cannot be understood.

Contents

Your finished dissertation *must* contain:

- A <u>cover page</u> giving the title of the dissertation, your examination number and the date of submission, the name of the University and Department, and the phrase "Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the MA in Comparative and International Social Policy / MA in Social Policy / MRes in Social Policy *(Delete as appropriate)*" (see Appendix 9).

- An <u>abstract</u>, providing a short (no more than one page) synopsis of the contents of the dissertation.

- A <u>contents</u> page that gives, at least, the chapter headings and page numbers. The bibliography and lists of figures and tables and the

appendices need to be listed separately. If there are clear sub-sections to your chapters, you may wish to list these as well. Remember the purpose of the contents page is to help readers to find their way around the text. So it should contain enough detail to provide useful clues, but not so much detail that it becomes confusing.

- The <u>main body of the text</u> in the order advertised by the contents page and containing all the core elements described in A6.6 above.

- A <u>bibliography</u> listing all references contained in the main text. You are strongly advised to use the Harvard system of referencing described in Appendix 3. Even if you use footnotes in your text you should still provide a full consolidated bibliography at the end of the dissertation.

You might also want to include the following:

- <u>Acknowledgements</u> of the help you have received in the course of your research.

- <u>Appendices</u> containing additional material such as topic guides and questionnaires you have used.

Format

University Regulation 2.7.5 refers to the presentation of taught masters dissertations. You are required to submit <u>*two*</u> typewritten, double-spaced copies of your dissertation on A4 paper with a margin of 1.5 inches on the left-hand side. These do not need to be hard bound but do need to be bound securely. The Campus Copy and Print Unit can bind your dissertation, using soft binding at a cost of around £3 a copy, but you should give them at least a few days notice. As you can imagine, September is a busy time for the Unit! You must also include a form which you have signed to confirm that the work is entirely your own (see Appendix 10). After examination, one copy of the dissertation will be retained for the library and one copy kept for return to you.

A4.8 Things that trouble dissertation examiners

The following is a list of, regrettably, common errors that are important in the view of examiners and which usually lead to loss of marks. The reason that the errors are common is that they are easy to make. But now that you have been warned, you should be able to avoid them!!

<u>The dissertation is not about what it says it is about</u>
Many months previously, you will have produced a dissertation proposal with a title and an outline. But in the course of your research, the exact topic, or your

approach to it, may have changed. There are all sorts of possible reasons for this. Good research makes use of a growing body of evidence to shape and create ideas. The key thing to remember is that, if you do change tack, you should make sure the whole dissertation is about the new topic. Do not copy out the original proposal in the introduction and then proceed to write about something entirely different. Make sure the title reflects the actual content of the dissertation.

Referencing is incomplete or inconsistent
You must provide accurate references for all sources you employ. If no reference is given, examiners will assume that you intend the work to be regarded as your own. This can land you in big trouble (see 4.9 Academic misconduct). If references are given in the text but are missing or incomplete in the bibliography, examiners may be frustrated or irritated and less favourably inclined towards the dissertation as a whole.

Tables are inadequately labelled
If you use figures or tables you must ensure that each has a number and a title reflecting its contents. Axes of graphs must be clearly labelled and indicate the units of measurement used. Table columns and rows must always be fully labelled. If figures or tables present data extracted or adapted from elsewhere, the source must be given in full.

Spelling, grammar or punctuation is poor
Any combination of these faults is likely to irritate examiners enormously. But, much more importantly, they are likely to get in the way of your meaning. If an examiner cannot understand what you are trying to say, you will not get any marks for it. Sloppy presentation tends to suggest sloppy thinking. Checking and proofreading are essential.

The dissertation is too long
A Masters dissertation must be between 15 and 20,000 words long, including references but excluding appendices. This all the leeway you are going to get. Examiners are entitled to stop reading after 20,000 words and ignore everything that comes after. Even if they do read all the way to the end you will lose marks. Remember that writing to a specified word length is a skill that you are expected to have developed by the end of your course.

Last words
There is no substitute for keeping a clear picture in your own mind of the desired overall shape of your dissertation. Try to develop some technique of reminding yourself of how all the different elements in your work will fit together. One way of doing this is to keep an outline list of chapter headings with notes saying what each chapter is meant to deal with. You can also use this to record how far you have got with each chapter and where further work is still needed. The key thing with this technique is that you keep the outline

list up to date. A copy given to your supervisor can be very useful in supervision sessions. You may prefer other techniques, perhaps using diagrams or charts to monitor your progress towards your final goal. Choose a method that suits you and that you find most helpful.

Have a look at some of the Masters dissertations in the J.B. Morrell Library. You will see that they vary considerably in terms of both content and style but they should provide you with help and encouragement.

A good, well presented dissertation can be a great source of pride. Remember to plan your work thoroughly, make use of your supervisor and seek advice when needed. You may find that you enjoy the work!

Three references that you might find helpful are:

Bell, J. (1999) *Doing Your Research Project: a guide for first-time researchers in Education and Social Science* Buckingham: Open University Press

Gowers, E. (1976) *The Complete Plain Words* Aylesbury: Penguin

A good Thesaurus, e.g. one published by Oxford University Press

Appendix 5: Guidelines for personal safety in fieldwork

Most of the time, research interviewing in the field is an interesting and valuable experience but occasionally problems can arise and it is important to be aware of potential risks to personal safety. This document has been prepared for students who are undertaking fieldwork as part of a degree course.

Status of the guidelines

All students engaged in fieldwork are advised to follow these guidelines but their status is advisory only. It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that the guidelines are made available to all students. Supervisors should discuss implications for the conduct of fieldwork with students and ensure that they are briefed about the range of situations they might find themselves in, especially if interviewing lone respondents, or working in an institutional setting. Students themselves may wish to take out personal insurance.

Planning visits

- Make a fieldwork programme to ensure that someone knows where you will be and when. This should identify the areas you will visit, the names

and addresses of people you have arranged to interview and the address and telephone number of any overnight accommodation to be used.

- If you expect to return home outside of normal working hours, you might want to leave details with someone whom you expect to see or contact on your return.

- In following the guidelines above, you should take care not to breach any assurances of confidentiality that you have given to interviewees.

Transport and accommodation

- Avoid going by foot if you feel vulnerable. Use a private car or reputable taxi firm.

- Plan your route in advance and try to avoid getting lost! You may need a torch after dark.

- If in doubt, take a friend with you.

- Avoid staying in accommodation that is situated in a place to which you would feel insecure or dubious about returning after dark.

Preparing for interviews

- Whenever possible, try to obtain prior information about the characteristics and histories of interviewees and about the places where they live. This is especially important if the researcher and interviewee will be alone together for the interview. It may involve making accompanied visits in advance to set up the interviews.

- If, in the light of prior information, there is any doubt at all about your personal safety, arrange for a friend to wait elsewhere in the building or in an accessible position outside.

- You may wish to carry a screech alarm of the type recommended by the Students Union.

Conducting interviews

- Always carry some form of identification with you, showing your status as a student of the University. Always show the interviewee your credentials.

- Let the interviewee know that you have a schedule and that other people know where you are.

- Note the layout of the room so that you can leave quickly if necessary.

- Abandon the interview immediately if you are in any doubt whatsoever about your safety.

If you do have any unpleasant experiences during your fieldwork, be sure to talk to your supervisor about them. He or she may be able to help with advice or even suggest help through counselling. Do NOT to deal with a problem like this on your own.

Useful links
The Social Research Association Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers is available on the SRA website:

http://www.the-sra.org.uk/staying_safe.htm

The University's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy can be found on:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hsas/

Appendix 6: Guidelines on ethical research practice

There is a Departmental policy on ethical approval for postgraduate research. Full details of the policy, process and the Students Research Ethics Form are available on the VLE.

The Department of Social Policy and Social Work belongs to the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. The Chair of this committee is Dr Robert McMurray (York Management School).

Appendix 7: Advice on giving small group presentations

Making a presentation to a group is often a requirement for a module and all Masters students give presentations on their dissertations in the summer term as part of the Graduate Research Workshops. You should not see this as a

necessary chore. It is an invaluable opportunity to develop, along with your appreciation of the subject, your speaking and presentational skills.

The four aspects discussed below are only four among many factors involved but they are essential for you to address if your session is to be a success. Also remember that even when you are not making a presentation you are still expected to prepare for the session and contribute to the discussion. The group can only be a success if *everyone* works to make it a success.

A7.1 Preparation

It is difficult to make an effective contribution if preparation is left to the last minute. That is obvious. What is also obvious, but often overlooked, is that you cannot begin to prepare adequately to take a session if you are not sure what the session should be about. Make sure that you are clear about the purpose of the session.

If you are making a joint presentation this will require a minimum of two preliminary meetings. The first will be to decide the division of labour, the second to check what everyone has done, remove duplication, and provide clear links between the different contributions.

Always try to arrive at the room in good time. This is essential to make sure the room is laid out appropriately - you can never guarantee how groups who have used the room earlier will leave it! You may want to move tables and chairs, arranging them to suit your purpose.

If you are using an overhead projector, PowerPoint or video make sure that they have been booked well in advance. Check that you are familiar with the controls. If you are using the overhead projector focus the machine before the session starts. Similarly, with the video make sure that the television monitor is on, the volume set appropriately and the video ready to start at the right place.

Do not leave general preparation of the talk to the last minute. In planning your preparation, leave yourself the flexibility to respond to problems you may encounter in gathering material for the talk. Leaving preparation to the last minute makes it more difficult to produce viable alternatives.

It is essential that you identify at the outset clear objectives for the session. This will also help you choose the most appropriate form of delivery and clarify how you will structure discussion of your formal presentation.

A7.2 Delivery

As you prepare for your presentation do not overlook the importance of considering how best to deliver the material you have organised. While it is not

unknown for a brilliant delivery to obscure a lack of substance you are more likely to encounter situations where the content of the presentation is undermined by weak delivery. All too frequently, owing to anxiety and inexperience, a presenter does not look up from his or her notes throughout the delivery. He or she speaks in a monotone and slumps back into the chair with relief as the final sentence is read. This is clearly a caricature, but the elements involved are familiar to all of us. Such a delivery does little to promote the arguments and points the presenter is wishing to convey.

Establish eye contact with the group
In making any presentation it is vital during the delivery to establish eye contact with the audience. This helps to involve members of the group with the session. When the group is very small, you should establish eye contact and address your comments to all the members of the group. However, with sessions involving 15 or more people, select three or four individuals for eye contact so that you span the whole group when locating them. This helps to bring everyone into the session.

Use your notes as a guide, not a script
Throughout your presentation you will be looking up from your notes to establish eye contact and to address your comments directly to members of the group. It is not possible to say how frequently this should occur in any particular session. The more you can do this and maintain the flow of your argument, the more your presentation will appear spontaneous and natural. Your notes then become a guide and reference for the talk rather than a script from which you read directly. You have to strike a balance between referring to notes and directly addressing members of the group. One approach to help you gain experience is to read out a particular point and then use eye contact to elaborate, develop or illustrate the point. As you become more experienced, you will be able to draw upon that experience to decide how best to use your notes in a presentation.

Simplify the layout of your notes
You may find it helpful to write your notes for the presentation as if they were for an essay. Unlike an essay, however, the material must be laid out so that you can look up from your notes confident that you can find your place instantly when you look back down. Be generous with your use of space. Have clear gaps between paragraphs and sections; break up the text with headings and sub-titles; use different coloured highlighter pens to underline and distinguish between the headings and sub-titles. Highlighter pen can also be used to emphasise key words. Avoid close writing on narrow feint lined paper. Use double spacing rather than single spacing for typed manuscript.

You could also consider putting your notes on 6" x 4" index cards rather than A4 paper. The smaller size of the index card forces you to break up your material. Some presenters also find that index cards enable them to time their

delivery with a degree of precision by estimating that each index card will take, for example 3 minutes, to present.

The layout you eventually adopt will evolve as you try different possibilities until you find a particular pattern that suits you. There is no single correct layout to which everyone must adhere. The main criterion has to be that the layout you use is one that you feel comfortable with and from which you can work easily.

Outline the structure for the session
When you prepare an essay, you plan the overall structure and indicate within your opening paragraphs how your essay will develop and the points that you will emphasise. Sometimes you may indicate what your eventual conclusion will be. Follow the same approach with your talk. Unless you tell everyone what you intend to cover and how you are going to organise the session you cannot expect them to second-guess what you will be doing. Let the group know at the beginning of your presentation what you intend to cover and hope to achieve. Provide the direction for the session. Along with eye contact, this is an effective way of involving members of the group with what you are doing.

Give the title of the session. Say what you will be covering and how you are going to organise the time. Examples on how to do this are provided by the Open University. Listen to any Open University radio programme in the social sciences or humanities. The opening minutes will indicate general points on how to establish the context and structure of a talk that you can readily adapt for your own presentation.

There is often concern over how long a formal presentation should last. This clearly depends on the objectives of the session and the approach that is adopted. The Open University limits each radio broadcast to 20 minutes. This reflects considerable experience, supported by academic research, on attention and concentration spans. As a crude rule of thumb you should try not to exceed 20 minutes formal presentation in a session.

Vary the pace of your delivery
To help attention and concentration throughout your formal presentation try to vary the pace. This can be done by raising points then taking time to illustrate, develop, and elaborate them. It is also helpful to repeat the main points you wish to put over. You should also consider the range of different approaches that are available to present material. These include handouts, blackboards, whiteboards, flip-charts, overhead projectors, PowerPoint, video, and establishing set tasks for the group to carry out. Each of these approaches works best in particular circumstances. You may want to include more than one form of visual aid in a single presentation.

Select from a variety of approaches

Handouts - Handouts can be useful to give complicated tables that would be too long or involved for members of the group to write down during the session. They can also be used to provide supplementary reading. You could use handouts to provide a synopsis of key documents that you want everyone in the group to read *before* your presentation. If you decide to do this, be sure to distribute the handout in sufficient time for everyone to have the opportunity to read it. As a rough guide, one week should be sufficient. A handout could be given out at the beginning of your talk in order to provide an outline of your plan for the session. At the end of the talk you could use a handout to list various questions or points upon which you wish to focus subsequent discussion. When you distribute a handout in a session everyone will start to read it there and then. So, to avoid disrupting the session, remember to distribute it at the point you want it read.

Blackboard, whiteboard, flip chart - Blackboards can be useful to provide an outline of the session, rather than using a handout, and can be used to record points that arise in discussion. If available, a whiteboard can be used in the same way. Some people find that the marker pens used on the whiteboard are easier to use than chalk. Remember, however, to use only special water-based, non-permanent marker pens with whiteboards. An alternative would be to use a flip-chart - a lightweight metal easel used to support a large pad of paper (usually A2 size). These appear deceptively easy to use - as you record points you 'flip-over' to clean sheets of paper - but can lead to difficulties when you want to flip backward and forward over the sheets you have used. In a small group a blackboard or whiteboard may be easier to manage than a flip chart.

PowerPoint and the Overhead Projector – These are very effective ways of conveying factual information. They can be used to present tables, diagrams and, when someone is confident in their use, such diverse material as cartoons! There are a number of points to remember:

a)   Write or type clearly and boldly. Small print can often be difficult to read.

b)   Use colours to emphasise points. For example, if you are showing a table and want to highlight a particular figure you can use a colour different from the rest of the table to focus the attention of the group upon it.

c)   When using tables and diagrams from commentaries and reports always give the full reference to your source, as you would in an essay. If the table is not as published, state that you have either 'adapted' or 'derived' it from your source.

d)   Allow sufficient time for the group to write down details from the slide before you move on to the next one (or give handouts of the slides).

e)   Number each slide and mark in your notes when to show each one. Check that the slides are in order before the session starts.

f)   Try to keep the content of the slide simple. However, this does not mean that you cannot convey complex material by, for example, placing one OHP slide on top of another or flicking back and forth between PowerPoint slides. Using this technique you can develop complicated visual images that enable you to build up tables and show the constituent parts of organisations.

g)   PowerPoint - Make sure that you have practised the presentation thoroughly beforehand and booked the equipment you need to run it. It is a good idea to have copies of your PowerPoint slides on acetate, just in case any technical hitches should occur.

Video - A video-tape can be useful to develop points. But use sparingly. Do not show a whole programme but select an appropriate section. Try to avoid the trap of using a video to 'fill-in' time.

Set tasks - Often it can be appropriate to set the group a task to convey an argument. A debate is often effective but also consider role-play exercises. As with all techniques you must be sure as to the purpose of using this approach - if you are not clear as to its use you will find it difficult to respond to the many cul-de-sacs and tangential routes that the group may well go down.

Remember, the use of any one particular technique or approach does not, per se, mean that your presentation will necessarily be a success. This depends on your competence in using the technique and, crucially, the reason why, and to what purpose, the technique is being deployed. Do not let a means to an end become an end in itself.

A7.3 Leadership

When your presentation is finished this is NOT the end of your responsibility. It is important to recognise that once you have completed your formal delivery you still have a prominent role to play in leading the discussion. You will be expected to take the lead in the group to develop the contribution and involvement of everyone present within the framework of objectives you have outlined.

The person acting as Chair for the session will assist you with the development of the discussion but will seek to complement rather than replace your

involvement. He or she will be concerned to see how far you are prepared to take the lead and build upon your introduction. You may find it helpful to ask questions at the end of your talk that will provide the focus for the initial group discussion. At the end of the discussion you will also be expected to provide a summary of the session. Again, the chairperson will help but you have to attempt to link the outcomes of the discussion with your stated objectives for the session.

A7.4 Confidence

With your presentation you are attempting to achieve a number of objectives. Along with providing basic information you are also trying to develop an argument, provide a focus for debate and, crucially, to involve and motivate all members to participate in the subsequent discussion.

For many students, presenting a paper can be a daunting, if not nerve-wracking, experience. You must try not to let your anxiety divert attention from what you are saying. If you are not careful this can undermine the force of your argument and make it difficult to achieve your objectives. To avoid this you must try to appear confident in the control of your material and in the session as a whole.

Even if you are not confident, you must give the impression of appearing to be so! If you have systematically prepared for the session —and considered the points mentioned under preparation, delivery and leadership— this should help to begin to dispel anxiety. Confidence, to a large extent, will come through experience. The important point to remember is that appearing to be confident is a skill that is every bit as vital as any other skill in making a presentation to a small group.

A7.5 General considerations

All of the points raised under Preparation, Delivery, Leadership and Confidence are no more than common sense. Remember there is no magical formula that will provide instant success when making your presentation. Like learning to swim or riding a bike you need to practice and persevere. There is no substitute to learning from experience. Inevitably this means learning from your mistakes. Do not be afraid to try different approaches and techniques. In short, be prepared to EXPERIMENT. If it does not work then learn from the experience.

It may be helpful for you to record your own comments on your performance. Write down your feelings on what worked and what did not as soon as possible after the session. It is surprising how the recollection of detail diminishes the more the presentation recedes into the past.

During the course of your masters you will listen to presentations given by both staff and other students. You will see in what circumstances various approaches worked and situations where they did not work. This is one of the most valuable sources of material from which you can build up your expertise. LEARN FROM OTHERS.

Do not, however, assume that what works on one particular occasion will necessarily be as effective or as appropriate at another time. All too often an approach that worked with one group can fail to take off with another. You must be flexible, rather than rigid, and be prepared to adapt to the character of each group. This can be difficult to do. But it is easier to achieve if you have taken the opportunity to develop a personal style with which you feel comfortable. This can embrace points of detail, such as putting your notes on index cards and breaking up text by highlighting points, through to the way you attempt to influence the dynamics of the group. If you feel comfortable with what you are doing it is much easier for you to ADAPT TO SITUATIONS as they emerge.

Finally, you will never avoid occasionally getting a presentation completely wrong. This can happen to the most experienced of presenters. But if you are willing to learn from every presentation you will begin to minimise such an occurrence and acquire skills that will be relevant for your career long after you have completed your masters.

Appendix 8: Short module outlines

The short module outlines are listed in alphabetical order. Below is a list of modules per term.

A9.1 Autumn term
Comparative Social Policy – Theories and Methods
Introduction to Social Research Methods
Social Policy Analysis

A9.2 Spring term
Advanced Qualitative Methods
Advanced Quantitative Methods
Comparative Social Policy – Themes and Issues
Globalisation and Social Policy

A9.3 Summer term
Graduate Research Workshops

Advanced Qualitative Methods

Convenors: Prof Mary Maynard and Prof Ian Shaw

Format: 2 hour lecture + 2 hour workshop each week for 9 weeks

Description:

The aim of this module is to further to develop students' knowledge of the principles underlying qualitative research design, to enable them to gain an advanced level of understanding of, and expertise in the use of, the key methods of qualitative data generation and to develop skills in qualitative analysis and interpretation. In addition to a more analytical grasp of the issues in relation to these areas, student's skills will also be developed through exploring their use in the context of ongoing and completed research. At the end of this module, students should: be able to distinguish between method and design, data generation, analysis and interpretation; have a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the collection and analysis of the principal forms of qualitative methods and the types of data they generate; have an appreciation of the range of research domains and issues to which these methodological techniques apply, including their application to practical research; be able to use the Atlas Ti software package for qualitative data analysis.

Advanced Quantitative Methods

Convenor: Dr Richard Cookson

Format: 2 hour lecture + 3 hour workshop each week for 9 weeks

Description:

The module aims to help students to develop quantitative analytical skills and to give them sufficient understanding of statistical theory to enable them to go on themselves to learn more specialised techniques as required in any further research work they undertake. In addition to skills in analysis, students are expected to learn how to interpret critically the results of their work and to be able to present results in a clear and easily understood form. The module includes a weekly hands-on data workshop in which students apply the techniques they learn in the lectures. Consequently, this module gives students a knowledge of both key statistical approaches and how to utilise them in practice using leading computer based packages.

Comparative Social Policy: Themes and Issues

Convenor: Dr Naomi Finch

Format: 1 x 3 hour session combining lectures, workshops and seminars each week for 9 weeks

Description:

This module begins with some general discussions about current debates and issues within the contemporary international and comparative social policy arena. It will then draw on existing research being carried out within the Department in order to demonstrate how topics for such research emerge, how they are conceptualised and the forms in which they are researched, how analysis and interpretation take place, and the nature of overall policy implications. The aim of the module is to introduce students to 'live' policy issues from a comparative and international perspective, for example, issues around fertility rates, gender, health insurance schemes, well-being, street children, child labour etc. etc.; provide an understanding of what it means to explore specific social policy issues from a comparative perspective; offer the opportunity to explore the nature of cutting edge up-to-the-minute research, 'warts and all'; contribute to an understanding of recent policy developments and changes in specific contexts; provide the opportunity to discuss current research issues with a range of leading researchers in the comparative and international social policy field. By the end of the module students should be able to: understand a range of current contemporary comparative issues and why these are important; be able to engage critically with ongoing research practices and offer some evaluation of them; be able to interpret and critically evaluate research findings; understand the 'messy' and non-linear nature of research; appreciate the varied ways in which social policy research may be used in policy making and implementation.

Comparative Social Policy: Theory and Methods

Convenors: Dr Stefan Kühner and Dr John Hudson

Format: 1 hour seminar + 2 hour workshop each week for 9 weeks

Description:

This module introduces some of the key theories, methods and data sources employed in comparative social policy research. Using hands-on workshops and specially written exercises, it shows how researchers undertake comparative policy analyses, highlights the key resources they use and introduces the major

computer packages they commonly utilise. By the end of the module students should be able to: undertake their own analyses of comparative social policies using key comparative data sources; utilise key computer packages used in comparative social policy analysis; understand, interpret and critically analyse comparative social policy research.

Globalisation and Social Policy

Convenor: Dr John Hudson

Format: 1 x 3 hour session combining online lectures, online discussions and face-to-face seminars each week for 9 weeks

Description:

This module is delivered via a blended mode of learning, using online lectures and online discussions plus face-to-face seminars. The aim of the module is to provide students with an introduction to: debates over the nature of globalisation and its consequences for social policy, social well-being and social divisions; emerging global social policy issues, such as poverty alleviation, pensions, health and labour rights; how these issues are debated and addressed by international organizations; how these international organizations are – or are not – being reformed to deal more effectively with the issues; the role of trans-national social actors in the new social policy agenda; how social policy is effected by globalisation in four regions, viz. Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia; and the politics of social policy in a number of national contexts. By the end of the module students should be able to: understand the terms of the debate on globalisation and social policy; access and analyse critically the social policy agenda of major international organizations; examine critically the international politics of key social policy issues in areas such as poverty alleviation, pensions, health and labour standards; and examine critically the influence of globalisation on the making of social policy in different regional and national contexts.

Graduate Research Workshops

Convenor: Dr John Hudson

Format: Up to 1 x 3 hour session each week for 9 weeks. Initial lectures/workshops followed by student workshops and presentations on proposed dissertations.

Description:

This module is tailored each year to student interests and the work to be undertaken for the dissertation. We identify topics concerning which students feel they need particular support and provide these in terms of staff lectures or facilitated workshops. Students also work intensively in groups on projects related to shared dissertation interests, producing a group report, which is not assessed but a procedural requirement only, by the middle of term. Following this, students present detailed proposals, including timetables, regarding their dissertation to the rest of the group, facilitated by a member of staff, for constructive comment, support and guidance. The aim of the module is to provide students with: the opportunity to design, undertake and successfully manage a piece of social policy research (in this case comparative or international social policy) of their own (guided) choosing; the experience of group and team work; an understanding of what it means to offer and accept supportive criticism; an understanding of ethical debates and standards in relation to research. By the end of the module students should be able to: understand some of the pros and cons of working with others; be able to identify and design a manageable research topic; be confident of being able to manage and schedule the appropriate stages in the research process; be able to communicate the nature of their dissertation proposals to others; identify and address ethical issues in relation to research.

Introduction to Social Research Methods

Convenor: Prof Mary Maynard

Format: 2 hour lecture + 2 hour workshop each week for 9 weeks

Description:

This module introduces some of the basic principles of social research. The module considers broad philosophical debates about knowledge alongside more focused issues concerning how quantitative and qualitative research can be undertaken in practice. It enables students to: understand the principles of

social research and related philosophical debates; acquire skills in the use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques of research; judge what methods and techniques are appropriate to particular research problems, and, develop their critical abilities to appraise published research findings in their own substantive areas of study.

Social Policy Analysis

Convenor: Dr Stuart Lowe

Format: 2 x 1 hour lectures + 2 hour seminar each week for 9 weeks

Description:

This module introduces some of the key concepts, techniques and theories employed in policy analysis, applies this knowledge to specific social policy issues and explores some of the key dilemmas and challenges facing the welfare state. By the end of the module students should be able to: understand the role of demographic, economic, political, social and international factors in shaping social policy; identify the complex issues surrounding the formation, implementation and evaluation of social policies; and, appreciate the institutional and organizational contexts which shape the processes by which social policies are made.

APPENDIX 9: Dissertation cover sheet

Title of your dissertation

Your examination number

**Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of
the MA in Comparative and International Social Policy /
MA in Social Policy / MRes in Social Policy** *(Delete as appropriate)*

Month/Year

**University of York
Department of Social Policy and Social Work**

APPENDIX 10: Author's declaration
- to accompany dissertation

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Department of Social Policy and Social Work

MA in Comparative and International Social Policy/MA in Social Policy/MRes in Social Policy *(Delete as appropriate)*

Author's declaration

This is to certify that this dissertation is my own unaided work and does not infringe the university regulations on plagiarism and collusion.

Signature:

Name:

Date: