Discover.
Understand.
Master your Subject.
Master your subject and fulfil your potential

A masters degree is a new challenge, and the postgraduate degrees offered by the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield give you the opportunity to study politics from a number of distinct perspectives. On your degree, you will think deeply about the most pressing political challenges and controversies. You will engage with contemporary ideas and critique established theories. You will understand the interconnectedness of the global world and the importance of culture and identity. You will develop fresh perspectives on the dynamics of power that underpin political interactions between state and society.

As a member of the Department of Politics, you will be part of a dynamic and vibrant scholarly community. You will work closely with leading academic experts whose research is making a significant and global impression, and with fellow students from across the world who share your commitment to your subject. During your time in the department, you will be intellectually stretched and challenged, and through this you will discover and fulfil your potential.

You might be considering a masters degree as the next step in your career, as a prelude to further study, or simply because of your love of the subject. Whatever your motivation, we are one of the best places in the world for you to undertake postgraduate study. For the last fifteen years we have been officially ranked as one of the top departments for research on politics and international relations in the UK, and we are consistently ranked as one of the top politics departments worldwide. We achieve this through a culture of free enquiry, rigorous analysis, and a sense of responsibility to address the most urgent issues in our society, and we ensure that this ethos is imbued in our students.

If you are ambitious, intelligent and committed to deepening your understanding of the discipline, you will be warmly welcomed into the Department of Politics.
This brochure introduces you to our exciting range of distinctive masters degrees, and to the wider opportunities that you will enjoy as a member of the Department of Politics.

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The content of our courses is reviewed annually to make sure it’s up-to-date and relevant. This is in response to discoveries through our world-leading research; funding changes; professional accreditation requirements; student or employer feedback; outcomes of reviews; and variations in staff or student numbers.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, for the reasons detailed above, changes may need to be made to modules, courses, entry requirements and fees between the date of this publication and the start of your course.

This publication is correct as at the time of print, but please see www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters for the most up-to-date information about the content of our courses. If there is any inconsistency between this publication and www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters, the information on www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters should be taken as correct.

Additional information

You can find out even more about our masters degrees online at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters

If you have any further questions about our degrees or about academic life in the department, please get in touch. Sue Kelk, our MA Administrator, is your main point of contact. You can contact Sue by email at: ma-politics@sheffield.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (114) 2221642.

If you would like to know more about the University of Sheffield, there is a wealth of information available to you. You can find out more about postgraduate study, including fees, funding, accommodation and information for international students, at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/
A world-class Graduate School

A world-class department

Our department is one of the top politics departments in the country, and has an exceptional reputation for research. We have been ranked in the top three of every one of the UK’s national research assessments since 2001; and we are one of the top-ranked departments for the study of politics worldwide. We are a research-intensive department, and research lies at the heart of everything we do. The courses and modules we offer to you are closely aligned with staff members’ research expertise, and our academics network extensively with other researchers, forming strong relationships. There is also a very lively culture of ‘engaged scholarship’ in the sense of creating new ways of engaging with organisations, communities and individuals within and beyond the University.

We are proud to offer an inclusive research culture, in which everyone is encouraged to work together, hold lively debates and benefit from others’ best practice. Our community of researchers is diverse, and draws upon a wide range of methodologies and approaches to the discipline. When you join us, we will ensure that you have many opportunities to immerse yourself in all aspects of the academic life of the department.

Research groups and areas of specialism

Our postgraduate degrees are distinct and reflect the Department of Politics’ core strengths. Our staff have a wide range of research interests and expertise, which are brought together around four research themes: International Relations; political economy; governance and participation; and political theory.

Each of these themes had its own research group, which provides an important forum for staff and postgraduate students with similar interests to collaborate and share expertise. Research groups organise activities throughout the year such as workshops and seminars, which are often attended by guest speakers from leading universities worldwide. All postgraduate students have the opportunity to become an active member of one or more of our research groups, and we welcome the insights that our students bring. You will also have the opportunity to get involved in the activities of several University research centres, including the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI), the Centre for Wellbeing in Public Policy, and the Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics.

The Graduate School

Our community of postgraduates is comprised of around 140 masters and research students. Ours is a cosmopolitan community, and we welcome many international students each year from across all continents. We understand that our postgraduates have many goals, such as furthering their subject expertise and advancing their career, and this diversity is reflected in the Graduate School’s range of activities. In addition to your course-specific teaching and learning, the Graduate School offers you a variety of ways in which to participate in the department’s intellectual community. We hold regular masterclasses, which give you the opportunity to explore important theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches in greater depth. There are regular ‘teach ins’, which address topics of major contemporary interest such as national elections and security crises. Finally, our research centres and groups host a number of activities throughout the academic year, which are open to all members of the Graduate School. We also offer support for student-led activities, such as those of the Politics Society or of the research-led groups organised by our students, such as the Postgraduate Global Development Group.
MA International Relations

On the MA International Relations, you will learn from world-leading academics who are pushing the boundaries of the discipline to develop fresh perspectives and ideas. As well as deepening your understanding of mainstream approaches, you will be exposed to important new analytical insights such as sociological understandings of international relations, critical security studies, non-Western international relations, and intersectionality. In doing so, you will critically engage with the discipline to consider both the formal and informal power relationships within world politics, an awareness of the importance of cultural and social practices, and an ability to question some of the assumptions that have traditionally defined the discipline to the exclusion of important issues such as gender, race, and class. As well as focusing on critical theoretical debates, students on the MA in International Relations will also explore the real world in all its complexity, and you will be able to choose from innovative modules that examine the most urgent issues in world politics.

Your modules

Debating International Relations
Understanding the role and forms of theory is a vital step in understanding the practice of international relations, and this module offers an advanced level appreciation of the theory and practice of international relations. It provides a detailed understanding of rival theoretical perspectives and the issues that divide them, and asks whether seemingly irreconcilable differences can be overcome.

Understanding Politics
This module situates the field of International Relations within the broader discipline, and will introduce you to key dominant analytical and methodological traditions in politics. You will reflect on your own approach to the study of politics, its strengths and weaknesses, and the value that different approaches may bring.

Two optional modules:
Each year we offer a range of modules drawing on our academics’ world-leading research. You will have several options specific to your course, and be able to select one choice from another masters course.

Dissertation in International Relations
The dissertation gives you the opportunity to put into practice all of the skills, knowledge and understanding that you have gained throughout your degree. You will use your dissertation to critically engage with theoretical perspectives and puzzles, or to research in great depth important issues in world politics, with supervision from our expert staff.

You can read more about our modules, including the exciting choices that you have available to you, on our website: www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters

Has the world of international relations changed fundamentally since 9/11?

Is the long historical practice of conducting wars in well-defined locales between professional armies of separate sovereign, nation-states over and if so what implications does this have for security policy and security theory? Is Britain’s expensive commitment to renewing Trident nuclear weapons now moribund since these cannot counteract terrorist insurgencies which can pop up anywhere in the world? Is Western humanitarian intervention a solution or is it just a reincarnation of the nineteenth-century imperial civilizing mission? And, if so, has the world really changed all that much? Is such interventionism justified on universal humanitarian lines or is it a symptom of Western provincialism? How, if at all, is Western interventionism in the Middle East especially since 2003 responsible for the rise of ISIS? Equally, to what extent are Western interventions in the Middle East a continuation of the West’s desire to secure raw materials, especially oil, that spanned the 20th century?

Debates like this are the substance of the MA International Relations. On this masters degree, you will learn from world-leading academics who are pushing the boundaries of the discipline to develop fresh perspectives and ideas. As well as deepening your understanding of mainstream approaches, you will be exposed to important new analytical insights such as sociological understandings of international relations, critical security studies, non-Western international relations, and intersectionality. In doing so, you will critically engage with the discipline to consider both the formal and informal power relationships within world politics, an awareness of the importance of cultural and social practices, and an ability to question some of the assumptions that have traditionally defined the discipline to the exclusion of important issues such as gender, race, and class. As well as focusing on critical theoretical debates, students on the MA in International Relations will also explore the real world in all its complexity, and you will be able to choose from innovative modules that examine the most urgent issues in world politics.
MA Politics, Governance and Public Policy

The MA Politics, Governance and Public Policy locates state-of-the-art academic research and theory within the contours of ‘real-world’ policy dilemmas, and emphasises policymaking as a multi-level phenomenon. On this degree, you will explore the policy process across a range of regional, national and international settings; and in doing so, you will develop a critical understanding of the relationship between input and output dimensions of governance and policymaking. The Department of Politics enjoys an international reputation in the field of governance, and you will study alongside academics with unrivalled expertise in policy analysis, democratic governance, Europeanisation, global governance and multi-level governance to develop a thorough grounding in the main theoretical debates in the field. You will also acquire important tools of policy analysis and a detailed practical understanding of the political, economic and social drivers that shape governance from agenda-setting through to implementation and evaluation.

Your modules

Analysing the Policy Process
On this core module, you will explore the theory and practice of governance and public policy in different contexts throughout the world. By considering the relationship between ‘governance’ and ‘government’, you will acquire an understanding of the different drivers behind these processes and the changing nature of socio-political networks and interactions.

Understanding Politics
This module situates the field of governance within the broader discipline, and will introduce you to key dominant analytical and methodological traditions in politics. You will reflect on your own approach to the study of politics, its strengths and weaknesses, and the value that different approaches may bring.

Dissertation in Politics, Governance and Public Policy
The dissertation gives you the opportunity to put into practice all of the skills, knowledge and understanding that you have gained throughout your degree. Typically, this will involve applying analytical frameworks studied in your course to real world challenges and dilemmas. You will use your dissertation to deeply research and reflect on an issue that really intrigues you, with supervision from our expert staff.

Two optional modules:
Each year we offer a range of modules drawing on our academics’ world-leading research. You will have several options specific to your course, and be able to select one choice from another masters course.

You can read more about our modules, including the exciting choices that you have available to you, on our website: www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters

How seriously do policymakers take research evidence?

The use of evidence in policymaking has a long history but has intensified in recent decades, spawning a variety of terms to capture the processes involved, such as ‘evidence-based’, ‘evidence-informed’ or ‘evidence-inspired’ policy. But what drives this interest in evidence in politics and policy? And how important is it in public policymaking? For some, evidence is crucial to dealing with increasingly complex public policy challenges. For others, it marks the existence of a relatively non-ideological climate where what matters is ‘what works’ rather than deeply held political convictions. Yet, evidence can also serve as a resource that can be manipulated to bolster established positions, and Mark Twain is credited with coining the phrase ‘lies, damned lies and statistics’ as a way of capturing how this particular form of evidence is used for political purposes.

Issues such as this are central to the study of governance and public policy, and raise a number of questions. Is policymaking primarily a rational process in which decision-makers have clearly defined objectives and identify the most effective means to achieve them? Or is it dominated by values and interests that sideline rational debate? Or do policymakers largely ‘muddle through’ as events constrain the possibilities for rationality or for political values as a consistent guide to action?

Working with you to explore such issues is a team of internationally renowned scholars with considerable experience of working with policymakers on real-world challenges. You will also have opportunities to participate in the department’s Governance and Participation research group, and to get involved with the activities of other research centres within the University, such as the Centre for Wellbeing in Public Policy and the Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics.
MA Global Political Economy

The MA Global Political Economy explores how the distribution of economic resources is subject to multiple and often competing political pressures, and how the effects of these pressures are experienced differently throughout the world. It is clear that the political economy has to be understood in global terms, and our academics are redefining the discipline by bringing together ideas, approaches and methods from a diverse range of disciplines to critically analyse emergent issues and problems. On this degree you will also apply innovative ways of thinking to contemporary policy problems, developing critical insights on issues such as unstable capitalism, inequalities and poverty, migration, environmental degradation and climate change, rapid technological change, and emergent new powers. In doing so, you will acquire an understanding of the interplay of economy, polity, society and culture. You will also develop a detailed appreciation of the interplay between actors and structures at different levels of the global system: from the grassroots and local levels, through community to the nation state, to the global system and its institutions.

Your modules

Approaches to Political Economy
This core module equips you with an advanced understanding of competing approaches to the study of the political economy. By exposing you to a wide range of different tools, methods, and theories, this module encourages you to think critically about the way in which we make sense of the global political economy, and the extent to which the conventional narrative of capitalist development has universal and contemporary relevance.

Understanding Politics
This module situates the study of the political economy within the broader discipline, and will introduce you to key dominant analytical and methodological traditions in politics. You will reflect on your own approach to the study of politics, its strengths and weaknesses, and the value that different approaches may bring.

Dissertation in Global Political Economy
The dissertation gives you the opportunity to put into practice all of the skills, knowledge and understanding that you have gained throughout your degree. The dissertation topic is your choice but should be based in one of the theoretical traditions set out in the core module and relate to one of the many topics covered in the seminars throughout the programme. You will use your dissertation to deeply research and reflect on an issue that really intrigues you, with supervision from our expert staff.

Two optional modules:
Each year we offer a range of modules drawing on our academics’ world-leading research. You will have several options specific to your course, and be able to select one choice from another masters course.

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Make poverty history?

As globalisation has made the world smaller, the fact that the ‘bottom billion’ people in the world still live in a state of severe poverty has emerged as a major political challenge. For a long time, researchers and politicians have been asserting that humankind has the resources and knowledge to ensure everyone has a basically decent life. And yet, they don’t. Why is this? And, what ideas seem best suited to addressing this major global issue?

This raises important questions not only about the way in which the world’s wealth is distributed, but also the way that these distributions are justified and contested. It is a question of who gets what and why. Perhaps the answer lies in ‘more and better aid’. Or, is it a case of carrying on to its conclusion the project of liberalising global trade and investment? For some, mass global poverty requires more major changes to the way that global capitalism works. Or is capitalism itself the problem?

The MA Global Political Economy explores global poverty and many other issues in this way. On this masters degree, you will be encouraged to discover the evidence, critically understand it, and work towards a goal of having something significant to say about the issue. You will have opportunities to attend research seminars in our Political Economy research group, as well as to get involved in the many world-quality research events hosted at the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute.
MA Political Theory

On the MA Political Theory, you will develop your philosophical skills and apply them to some of the most urgent political and ethical controversies in contemporary life. The masters is jointly taught by the Departments of Politics and Philosophy, two of the leading departments in the country, both of which have a large number of scholars addressing such issues. This degree is designed for students with an interest in contemporary political philosophy, and includes topics such as rights, global justice, war, and democracy. It also reflects on the relevance of the thoughts of key figures in the history of political ideas, such as Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx and Rawls. You will contemplate, discuss and tackle the big questions about political life; and drawing on the expertise of these two outstanding departments, you will graduate with sharp skills of critical analysis and a deep understanding of political theory and philosophy.

August 9th, 1945 – the United States Air Force detonates a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki in Japan, days after attacking the city of Hiroshima. Tens of thousands were killed by these actions in the closing days of the Second World War. In many ways the Second World War fits the classical definitions of a just war. But aggressive actions by the Allied Forces against civilians like the atomic bombings and the bombing of Dresden complicate matters. Can the war be judged morally justified by just war theory? And this raises the wider question of whether it’s ever right to go to war. Pacifists object to this idea, contending that no war can ever be justified. On the other hand, those who call themselves realists regard the very question as naïve – war is a fact of human life. Debates like this are the substance of political theory. Political theorists ask fundamental questions, seeking to explore how political institutions, structures and policies ought to be shaped. Studying at Sheffield, you will benefit from the outstanding team of political theorists in the Departments of Politics and Philosophy. Our political theorists run regular research events, including the annual Warrrender Lecture, so you can join our research culture and carry on the debate beyond your classes. You’ll also benefit from the close networks our academics have with NGOs, think-tanks and organisations outside of the University.

Is war ever just?

Your modules

Political Theory Research Seminar
This seminar is intended to develop your philosophical skills through close critical reading and discussion of important works in contemporary political and moral philosophy. We will discuss key papers on a number of central topics in contemporary political theory, including justice and gender, anarchism, ideal and non-ideal theory, dirty hands, collective action, voting rights and more.

Dissertation in Political Theory
The dissertation gives you the opportunity to put into practice all of the skills, knowledge and understanding that you have gained throughout your degree. You will use your dissertation to deeply research and reflect on a dimension of political theory that really intrigues you, with supervision from our expert staff.

Three optional modules
Each year we offer a range of modules drawing on our academics’ world-leading research. You will have a wide range of options specific to your course, and will be able to select modules from both the Philosophy and Politics Departments.

Aside from modules dealing with specific debates in political theory, two other optional modules include:

Work Placement
Instead of attending lectures or seminars, you will volunteer with an organisation from the voluntary sector in Sheffield. This will enable you to gain skills and experience relevant to political theory in an applied setting. You will write a piece of coursework based on a practical issue that arises in the course of the work placement.

PhD Proposal
The PhD proposal module enables students to prepare the ground for their subsequent research. It consists of an outline of their projected PhD thesis together with an annotated bibliography or literature search. It is supervised on a one-to-one basis. As well as being challenging in its own right, the result of the exercise is that students start the PhD knowing where their work is heading, and are well prepared to complete it on time.

You can read more about our modules, including the exciting choices that you have available to you, on our website: www.shef.ac.uk/philosophy/politicaltheory
Thousands of people are dying as they try to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. Many more struggle when they reach Europe to find a country where they can settle and build a new life. It’s not a unique issue – in many other parts of the world, refugee crises are overwhelming governments. Should refugees be welcomed and settled? If not, how can you humanely and legally turn them away?

What are the social and political consequences of large movements of people?

These crises and these questions come down to politics. They lie at an intersection of politics at a state level – the people and their governments – and politics at a global level – states and international institutions, like the United Nations.

This is an example of one of several major issues in European and global affairs that you can explore and analyse on this unique course.

You will join our vibrant research community, studying alongside academics who lead the world’s scholarship with their responses to the major issues in European and global politics. The Department has close links with the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute and the Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics, which analyse the economic and political turmoil in Western countries. We also have a large team of researchers which draws in academic experts from across the University.

Who will solve the tragedy in the Mediterranean?

Thousands of people are dying as they try to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. Many more struggle when they reach Europe to find a country where they can settle and build a new life. It’s not a unique issue – in many other parts of the world, refugee crises are overwhelming governments. Should refugees be welcomed and settled? If not, how can you humanely and legally turn them away?

What are the social and political consequences of large movements of people?

These crises and these questions come down to politics. They lie at an intersection of politics at a state level – the people and their governments – and politics at a global level – states and international institutions, like the United Nations.

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Research-led teaching and a dynamic learning environment

Our department has a well-established reputation for an inclusive research ethos, which finds expression in research-led teaching at the masters level. We ensure that our outstanding research directly informs the subjects that you study and the way in which you are taught. Our academics are passionate about their subject, and are equally as passionate about communicating them to their students. Because of the close link between our research and our teaching, you will enjoy being taught by staff who are at the cutting-edge of the discipline and who are developing important new insights in their field.

Seminars
Seminars are smaller classes led by an academic tutor where you have the chance to explore the topic under consideration in an in-depth and critical manner. Seminars offer an engaging and dynamic learning experience, and you will be encouraged to debate with your fellow students and academic tutors, to develop your own arguments, and to engage critically with diverse perspectives. The seminar experience is the very foundation of postgraduate level study and offers an important venue for you to develop important intellectual and transferable skills.

Lectures
In contrast to seminars, lectures are large classes where you receive a presentation on a topic by an academic and have the opportunity to ask questions. Lectures provide an excellent means for introducing you to new concepts, ideas and theories, and for helping to structure your own independent study.

Independent study
Alongside the taught part of your course, you will be expected to engage in independent study; and we ensure that you have the resources to do so effectively. Your timetable will allow you to fully prepare for all seminars; and you will be given access to extensive online resources including digitised texts and electronic journals. Independent study is a crucial skill to develop for postgraduate level study and provides you with the space to develop your own arguments and perspectives.

Dissertation supervision
Each degree entails a dissertation, which is a substantive project in which you will be expected to undertake research-led inquiry on a topic that is relevant to your degree. You will have a great deal of intellectual freedom to select your topic and define the parameters of enquiry. To support you with this, you will be given a dedicated dissertation supervisor, who will offer you one-to-one guidance at all stages of the dissertation process. For many students, the dissertation is the high-point of their studies, which makes individual supervision one of the most rewarding ways to learn.

Feedback and contact hours
Alongside these formal learning opportunities, we will provide you with the additional support that you need to flourish as a scholar. Every member of staff holds weekly feedback and contact hours, which gives you the chance to talk through your ideas, to ask questions and to get advice.
Career development and global opportunities

As a student at the University of Sheffield, you will benefit from a wide range of opportunities to acquire important transferable skills and to develop your career.

All students receive bespoke employability support from the Department of Politics. You will be allocated a dedicated personal tutor who can offer you advice and guidance, and the department has an Employability Coordinator. The department organises many events throughout the year, such as alumni talks and careers workshops, to which you will be invited.

The Faculty of Social Sciences (of which the Department of Politics is a member) has a range of opportunities specifically for postgraduate students in the Faculty. This includes the Postgraduate Advantage Scheme, which provides internship bursaries to enabled postgraduate students to gain graduate-level work experience whilst studying. Through this scheme, our students have engaged with over one hundred community organisations, charities and small-medium enterprises, with internships taking place around the world, from Sheffield to South Africa.

The Faculty has also developed a unique programme to develop student engagement in global learning, called Global Learning Opportunities in the Social Sciences (GLOSS). This exciting programme provides you with unique opportunities to understand your course in an international context, to actively engage with international policymakers, stakeholders and partners, and to become involved in the international research undertaken within the Faculty of Social Sciences.

For more information, see: www.sheffield.ac.uk/gloss/about

Part of the GLOSS programme is the Global Leadership Initiative, which gives you the chance to attend major international summits taking place during the academic year. Accompanied by academic staff, small groups of students have travelled overseas to engage with important summits, and to develop press and policy briefs regarding their proceedings. Recently, our students have attended the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, China, and the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. This is an opportunity for you to gain first-hand experience of international policy debates at the highest level, to attend press conferences and produce outputs visible to an international audience thereby enhancing your research skills and employability.

For more information, see: www.sheffield.ac.uk/gloss gli

For more general support and advice, the University has a dedicated Careers Service, which runs a programme of events and seminars specifically for taught postgraduate students. You will also be invited to the many other careers events and workshops that are held throughout the year.

For more information, see: www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/services/postgraduates
How to apply

We’re looking for excellent students with a passion for the subject and lots of ambition. As you would expect, admission to the Department of Politics is rigorous, but if you want to take your study to the next level with a masters degree, we’d love to hear from you.

Entry requirements

Each degree has its own entry requirements, which are detailed on our website. If English is not your first language, please also refer to the English Language (IELTS) requirements for your course.

Applications process

The University has its own online application system for masters courses. As part of the application, you will be asked to provide details of two academic referees and a personal statement of around 300 words outlining why you would like to study your chosen degree.

Timetables and deadlines

There is no formal deadline for applying for a masters course. However, please apply as soon as possible to guarantee your place at the start of the next academic year. The academic year begins at the end of each September. If you are applying for funding, make sure you meet the deadlines required for your funding application.

International students will have additional visa applications that will need processing, so you should allow enough time for this.

We prefer all students to begin at the very start of the semester, however we will consider applications for up to two weeks after the academic year begins.

What happens next

When you apply the Graduate Admissions team will issue an acknowledgement letter with your unique Graduate Application number. You should use this in all subsequent correspondence.

If you are offered a place you will be issued with further information about joining the University of Sheffield, including about accommodation.

If you accept an unconditional offer, pre-registration for modules will begin in August. You will receive an email inviting you to pre-register.

Further details

Further details about entry requirements and the online application process can be found on our website: www.sheffield.ac.uk/politics/study/masters

Contact us

If there is anything else that you’d like to ask, please get in touch!

Sue Kelk, our MA Administrator, is your main point of contact. You can contact Sue by email at ma-politics@sheffield.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (114) 2221642

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