

International Relations and Social Policy BSc

Study the BSc (Hons) International Relations and Social Policy degree course at Aston University to get a fascinating insight into the major political and sociological challenges facing governments across the world, and how the policies they develop impact on all our lives.

Location: Aston University, Birmingham

Course type

Full-time (Hons)

Course format

Placement year (UK/abroad)

Duration

4 years with integrated placement year /

3 years without integrated placement year

UCAS code(s)

LL2K

Start date

Clearing applications open now

Find your perfect clearing place at Aston University.

[Apply now](#)

Overview

Explore International Relations and Social Policy at Aston University

Dr Graeme Hayes, Head of Department for Sociology and Policy, discusses some of the big topics and questions you'll be exploring on a sociology or policy course, here at Aston University.

[NUE careers award](#)

The Careers and Placements team at Aston University has been voted 'best university placement team' in the National University Employability (NUE) Awards 2022.

[Society matters podcast](#)

Whatever the matter, Society matters.

Hear about some of the fascinating academic research taking place into current issues facing our society.

[Click here to listen now.](#)

[Previous](#) [Pause](#) [Next](#)

- [Aston University was ranked 6th overall in the UK for International Relations \(Guardian, 2023\).](#)
- [Social Policy at Aston University was ranked second in the UK for ‘value added’ \(Guardian, 2022\).](#)
- [The 2022 Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) data shows that our employed graduates have the 16th largest median salary overall five years after graduation at £33,400.](#)
- [International Relations at Aston University was ranked 4th in the UK for ‘student to staff ratio’ \(Guardian, 2023\).](#)

“The highlight of my placement year was working at a German company and integrating into the German culture. I developed independence and discipline that supported me in my final year, and will definitely support me in my career.”

Faith Olagbegi

BSc (Hons) International Relations and Social Policy

[Register for an Open Day](#)

International Relations and Social Policy BSc

Image not found or type unknown



[Download Print](#)

Image not found or type unknown



Image not found or type unknown



[Request a prospectus](#)

University of the year

“The highlight of my placement year was working at a German company and integrating into the German culture. I developed independence and discipline that supported me in my final year, and will definitely support

me in my career.”

Faith Olagbegi

BSc (Hons) International Relations and Social Policy

Course outline and modules

What you'll learn

On this programme, you'll explore the major political and social issues faced by governments across the world. You will develop a knowledge and understanding of the international state system, the structure and purpose of international organisations, and the roles played by international institutions, other intergovernmental organisations, multinational corporations and NGOs.

On the social policy strand of the course, you'll examine why governments take particular decisions in key policy areas. You will also explore in-depth, the outcomes and consequences of various government policies on the economy and society. In addition to this, we explore the social constraints we encounter in our everyday lives and how they are reinforced by class, race, religion and gender. To understand how these issues perpetuate existing inequalities and unequal life chances, we analyse what impact official policies have on such processes, how politics is intertwined with the profit-making aims pursued by big corporations and how their combined interests dominate our social imaginations.

You will investigate the economic, social and political forces which influence government decision-making and examine why governments take particular decisions at a global, national and local levels of government. You will also study the nature of policy delivery and management by various organisations, such as local governments, schools and businesses, which will equip you for a range of career paths.

Social Policy will prepare you with the knowledge and analytical skills that will enable you to think critically and work independently. This includes how to design a research project, collect empirical data, handle complex datasets (e.g., through applying coding techniques) and, most importantly, develop an advanced analytical mindset. This training will be essential for your final-year dissertation during which you will carry out your own individual research project. This experience will provide you with a skillset that is highly desired in a wide range of industries and areas of work.

Important strengths of the programme include its focus on key contemporary issues in international relations and policy, such as global economic change and the environment as well as international comparisons of government policies. During the final year, you will explore more specialised topics through the completion of an individual research dissertation and a range of modules covering topics such as the international relations of East Asia, US foreign policy, and the international relations between post-Soviet Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

International students

Information for international applicants

International students

Aston University is a diverse, close community and welcomes international students. Students from over 120 different countries chose to study with us every year. Based in the centre of Birmingham, Aston is not only a great place to study, it's also a great place to live.

Aston's professional work placements can improve your chance of securing a graduate job. Placements give you experience, confidence and opportunities and, as an Aston student, you'll be better prepared for your future career. One of the great things about Aston is our focus on employability. Our close links with businesses, industries and professions make this possible.

For more information on applying as an international student, visit our webpage:
www.aston.ac.uk/international/students-applying

Post-study work visa

Graduate Immigration Route

Aston University welcomed the creation of a new Graduate Immigration Route which enables international students to remain in the UK for two years after you complete your studies to find work. This new post-study work visa applies to international students completing full-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

[Find out more information about the Graduate Immigration Route.](#)

Foundation programme

Choosing to start your Aston journey with our foundation programme in social science will help you develop specialist knowledge to ensure that you are fully prepared to study your chosen undergraduate course. During your foundation year, you'll have excellent support from academics while group projects will give you the chance to meet new people, make new friends and build a network of peers who will share your university journey. We also have a Learning Development Centre that can provide additional support and offer pre-sessional English language programmes.

For International Students intending to do a foundation year, visit [ONCAMPUS](#)

[Find out more information about the Graduate Immigration Route.](#)

Modules

Year 1

Core modules:

- Introduction to the Concepts and Methods of International Relations
- Introduction to the European Union
- Critical Debates in Society and Policy
- From Social Problems to Public Policies
- Becoming a Social Scientist

Optional modules:

- The Making of the Modern World
- What's Trending (Current Affairs in Politics and International Relations)

Year 2

Core modules:

- International Relations: Theories
- Critical Approaches to Security Studies
- Critical Policy Analysis
- Research Methods
- Welfare

Optional modules:

- West European Politics and Society
- North American Politics and Society
- East Asian Politics and Society: China and Japan
- South Asian Politics and Society
- Global Society
- CSI: Crime Subversion and Injustice
- Racisms
- Health and Society
- International Relations in Political Thought
- Security Studies: Theories and Issues
- The Politics and Policies of the European Union
- International Political Economy

Year 3

This course is available as a 3 year BSc without a placement, or a 4 year BSc with an integrated sandwich placement. Both options are available to home, EU, and international students.

[Find out more about the Aston placement year.](#)

Final Year

Core modules:

- Dissertation (International Relations or Social Policy)

Optional modules:

- African Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present Day
- America in the World
- The American Presidency
- Chinese Politics and Society
- Conflict and Intervention
- Democracy, Authoritarianism and Regime Change
- Diplomacy and Soft Power
- Ethics and International Relations
- [EuroSim: Learning Negotiation through Simulation Games](#)
- Gender and Politics
- Interest Groups and Lobbying
- Political Communication
- Politics and Islam: Past and Present
- Politics and Protest in a Globalised World
- Politics of Development
- Religion and Politics in Contemporary Europe
- Sport and Politics
- Technology and Digital Politics
- The International Relations of East Asia
- The Populist Radical Right in Europe
- Understanding Foreign Policy
- Debates in Contemporary British Politics
- Political Parties
- Migration, Borders and Belonging
- Health Policy
- The Challenges of Climate Change
- Corporate Power in a Globalised World
- Work, Organisations and Society
- Bodies, Power and Resistance
- Contemporary Social Movements
- Education for the 21st Century
- Religion and Society
- Pregnancy and Politics: Cultural Norms and Family Policy
- Community Engagement
- CSI: Crime, Subversion and Injustice

Availability of any optional modules will be subject to staff availability and a minimum number of students who express an interest in studying the optional modules.

Entry requirements

Typical offers:

A Levels

BBC (standard offer)

BCC (with EPQ or Core Maths minimum grade B)

BCC ([contextual offer](#)*)

IB

29 points overall with grades **5, 5, 4** in 3 higher level subjects.

Standard level Maths and English grade 4 required in lieu of GCSE English and Maths grade C/4.

BTEC, Access & other

BTEC Extended Diploma – **DDM** (standard offer)

The University also accepts the BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate/BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma and BTEC Level 3 National Diploma/BTEC Level 3 Diploma for entry onto degree programmes, provided that they are studied in combination with other qualifications that are equivalent to three full A2 Levels.

We accept the QAA-recognised Access Diploma which must consist of 45 credits at Level 3. You must obtain a minimum of 30 distinction and the rest must be at merit or distinction. Please note that we do not accept the English and Maths components within the Access qualification and you must meet the GCSE entry requirement.

T Levels

The following T levels are accepted qualifications for this course:

- T-Level - Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction **Grade D**
- T-Level - Digital Production, Design and Production **Grade D**
- T-Level – Education and Childcare **Grade D**
- T-Level – Onsite Construction **Grade D**
- T-Level – Building Services Engineering for Construction **Grade D**
- T-Level – Digital Business Services **Grade D**
- T-Level – Digital Support Services **Grade D**
- T-Level – Health **Grade D**
- T-Level – Healthcare Science **Grade D**
- T-Level – Science **Grade D**

Further requirements

GCSE Maths – **grade C/4**

GCSE English Language *or* English Literature – **grade C/4**

Learn more about admission to this course

[View our Admissions Policy.](#)

All applications are considered on an individual basis and the whole application is reviewed carefully, including previous and predicted qualifications, experience, reference and your motivation to study the course. Whilst the grades listed here are our entry requirements, we understand that predicted grades are only an estimate. We will therefore consider applicants with predicted grades that fall below these entry requirements if the application is of a high standard. However, any offer made will not be lower than stated above.

[*Click here for details on our Aston Ready contextual offer scheme.](#)

Entry onto our [Foundation Programme](#) may be offered as an alternative to the degree course if lower entry grades are achieved. Aston University welcomes applications from students with a wide range of qualifications from the UK and overseas, including combinations of qualifications. If your qualifications are not listed here and you wish to check whether they meet the entry requirements for this course, please contact the university.

International students

Applicants whose first language is not English will be required to provide evidence of an English language qualification. Find out more about our [English language requirements.](#)

For more information about qualifications view our [Aston in your country](#) webpage.

Aston University provides a range of opportunities for international students to join our community and study on our campus. A key part of our strategy is our relationships with teaching partners, providing multiple pathways to Aston. [Find out more.](#)

Learning, teaching and assessment

What you'll learn

On this programme, you'll explore the major political and social issues faced by governments across the world. You will develop a knowledge and understanding of the international state system, the structure and purpose of international organisations and the roles played by international institutions, other intergovernmental organisations, multinational corporations and NGOs.

You will also learn about ethics and international politics, as well as investigating the economic, social and political forces which influence policy and give rise to conflicts between the achievement of economic, environmental and social objectives.

Important strengths of the programme include its focus on key contemporary issues in international relations and policy, such as global economic change and the environment as well as international comparisons of government policies. During the final year, you will explore more specialised topics through the completion of an individual

research dissertation and a range of modules covering topics such as the international relations of East Asia, US foreign policy, and the international relations between post-Soviet Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

On the sociology strand of the course, you'll gain an in-depth understanding of social processes, inequalities, organisational dynamics and inter-group relationships.

You will cover pressing social issues such as migration, climate change, welfare, crime, health and sexuality. In class, we explore the inequalities, injustices and dependencies that pattern our social lives. Through reflective learning, you will explore the social structures, such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion and identity, that have shaped your own life. You will be equipped with the skills you need, such as research design, use of the comparative method and written and oral presentation skills, to research what matters to you.

During your final year, you will get the opportunity to select the EuroSim optional module. EuroSim is an annual international intercollegiate simulation of the European Union (EU). The purpose of this module is to educate you about the inner workings of the European Union, which will provide you with a great experience of how to use politics in a real-world setting. [Find out more about the module here.](#)

Placement year

The placement year is optional for students studying international relations and social policy and is designed to give you real-life experience and to act as a springboard for your future career.

You can choose whether your placement has an international relations or a social policy focus and it may be in the UK or abroad. Placements taken by Aston students are generally paid, with the average salary being around £16,000. In recent years, Aston students have undertaken placements in a variety of organisations including the Home Office, British Energy, the House of Lords, Marks and Spencer, the British High Commission in Ghana and the Ford Motor Company.

If you choose to take a placement year, this will take place during your third year at Aston and is worth 10 per cent of the final degree result. Unlike some other universities, the placement year at Aston is not a 'bolt on' year, it is an integral part of your degree for which you are prepared in your second year.

Programme Director(s)

Dr Caroline Gray (International Relations)

Dr Tom Mills / Dr Sarah-Jane Page (Social Policy)

Politics and International Relations Research

Dr Laura Southgate

Listen to Laura discuss her research on China, US relations, and the likelihood of future conflict between the US and China.

Dr Davide Vampa

Listen to Davide discuss his research on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the relationship between the national and subnational authorities in the 5 largest countries of Western Europe.

Dr Ying Miao

Listen to Ying discuss her research on air inequality, and how socioeconomic classes can change the air quality individuals access.

[Previous](#) [Pause](#) [Next](#)

Fees and scholarships

UK students (2023/24)

Annual tuition fees: £9,250

During placement year: £1,250

International/EU students (2023/24)

Annual tuition fees: £17,750

During placement year: £2,500

The United Kingdom government has confirmed that European Union (EU), other European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss nationals commencing academic courses in England from August 2021 will no longer be charged the same tuition rates as home students. [Further information can be found here.](#)

Tuition fees for students are reviewed annually and may increase in subsequent years in line with inflation linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI) to take account of the University's increased costs of delivering the Programme. Any such increase shall always be in accordance with the law. When undertaking a placement year, a placement year fee applies.

[More information on fees and funding](#)

Scholarships

At Aston University we are committed to supporting the most talented and hardworking students to achieve their potential by providing a range of scholarships to help lower tuition and living costs. [Find out more about our scholarships here.](#)

Career prospects

International Relations and Social Policy graduates go on to a range of professions with recent roles including Account Manager, Analyst, Business Analyst, Corporate Banking Trainee, Corporate Engagement Executive, Corporate Finance Intern, Graduate Intern, Public Policy and Strategic Relationships Intern, Engagement Executive, Insurance Broker, Mental Health Support Worker, National Project Coordinator, Person Centred Support Worker and Procurement Manager.

Potential employers include Morgan Stanley, the Department for International Development, HSBC, Bosch, the Ministry of Defence, the United Nations Economic Commission, IBM, Capgemini, Virgin Active, Hays, British Gas, the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Interserve, Airbus, Solihull Care Housing Association and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We'll make sure you're career ready. Employed Social Studies graduates earn £5,800 (28 per cent) more than the UK average three years after graduation (Longitudinal Education Outcomes, 2019).

NUE not found or type unknown

Aston University was recognised as the 'Best University Placement Service'.

The Careers and Placements team at Aston University won the 'Best University Placement Service' category at the [National Undergraduate Employability \(NUE\) Awards](#) 2022. This was achieved by launching Virtual Employability Festivals and recognising the power of peer-to-peer communication by pairing 500 students looking for placements with 500 students who had completed placements.

Frequently asked questions

Why should I study International Relations and Social Policy at Aston?

Our versatile joint honours programme will offer you a fascinating insight into the political and sociological challenges facing our global society in the 21st century and we'll give you a head start on your future career. Social Policy is ranked 7th in the UK for Graduate Prospects (Complete University Guide, 2020).

Why does Aston offer a placement year for international relations and social policy?

Aston is one of only a few UK universities to offer international relations and social policy with a fully integrated placement year. The distinctive placement year is an optional feature of the programme and is designed to give our students an advantage in the graduate labour market.

What careers does a degree in International Relations and Social Policy lead to?

Our graduates are in demand from a wide range of employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors where a sound understanding of societies, organisations, institutions and communication skills are

required.

Why should international students choose Aston University?

Aston University is a diverse, close community and welcomes international students on many of our undergraduate programmes. Students from over 120 different countries choose to study with us every year. Based in the centre of Birmingham, Aston is not only a great place to study, it's also a great place to live.

Aston's professional work placements can improve your chance of securing a graduate job. Placements give you experience, confidence and opportunities and as an Aston student, you'll be better prepared for your future career.

Choosing to start your Aston journey with our foundation programme in social science will help you develop specialist knowledge to ensure that you are fully prepared to study your chosen undergraduate course.

Chat with current students

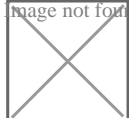
Register your interest

Register your interest form

Related courses and content

Related courses

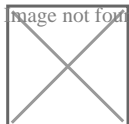
Image not found or type unknown



[Politics with International Relations BSc](#)

[View course](#)

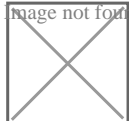
Image not found or type unknown



[International Relations and Sociology BSc](#)

[View course](#)

Image not found or type unknown



[Business Management and Social Policy BSc](#)

[View course](#)

You might also be interested in...

[NEWS - 07/12/2022](#)

[Podcast: UK's first non-white prime minister is 'big moment' – but can Rishi Sunak survive?](#)

[Having the first non-white leader of the UK is undoubtedly a “big moment” in the history of British politics, according to an academic at Aston University. But, although he may be able to count on the British Asian vote at the next general election, Rishi Sunak faces a major challenge to remain in No 10 due, in part, to the growing number of Conservative MPs intending to stand down.](#)

[NEWS - 16/11/2022](#)

[Podcast: 'History of emotions' provide vital lessons for politics and society](#)

[The 'history of emotions' can provide valuable lessons for today particularly when studying the 1920s and 30s, according to a historian at Aston University.](#)

[More news](#)

[Events - 27/10/2022](#)

[Refugee solidarity – how much can individuals and organisations do?](#)

[More events](#)

You might also be interested in...

No featured Event set to display.

Student Life at Aston

[Accommodation](#)

[We provide award-winning accommodation on our small, friendly campus in partnership with Unite Students](#)

Students' Union

Aston SU represents and supports around 14,000 students, providing a number of commercial and non-commercial services.

Birmingham life

Aston University is in a great, central location. Ideally positioned in the centre of Birmingham - one of the youngest cities in Europe - our campus is only a 10 minute walk to the city centre.

Clubs and societies

Joining a club or society is one of the best ways to get the most out of your time here at Aston. With over 130 student-led groups we have something for everyone.

Sports

Here's Sports at Aston. Discover what's happening on the Aston University campus at the Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre.

Student support at the Hub

The Hub is a central location on the Ground Floor of the Main Building where most of the student support services are located.

Student Life at Aston

Accommodation

We provide award-winning accommodation on our small, friendly campus in partnership with Unite Students

Students' Union

Aston SU represents and supports around 14,000 students, providing a number of commercial and non-commercial services.

Birmingham life

Aston University is in a great, central location. Ideally positioned in the centre of Birmingham - one of the youngest cities in Europe - our campus is only a 10 minute walk to the city centre.

Clubs and societies

Joining a club or society is one of the best ways to get the most out of your time here at Aston. With over 130 student-led groups we have something for everyone.

Sports

Here's Sports at Aston. Discover what's happening on the Aston University campus at the Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre.

Student support at the Hub

The Hub is a central location on the Ground Floor of the Main Building where most of the student support services are located.