



MSc Strategic Communication and PR
Student Handbook
2018/19



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

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Welcome

Welcome to the taught Masters programme in Strategic Communication and Public Relations at Queen Margaret University (QMU).

We hope that the course is a success for you and that studying with QMU proves to be a valuable and enjoyable experience.

The purpose of this handbook is to give you some information about the course. Its aims, content, and structure are explained in detail. Information about the School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management, the Media, Communications and Performing Arts Division, the running of the course and student support is also provided. Some regulations and procedures are outlined too.

Please work hard. Take advantage of all the various opportunities that student life has to offer as well as the opportunity to learn about, experience and become involved in the professional world of those working in strategic communication and PR roles.

Don't be shy. Show your enthusiasm, Be prepared. Take responsibility for your learning. Engage with your tutors and bring your thoughts and ideas into the teaching.

Sally Chalmers
MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations Programme Leader
April 2018



Introduction to the MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations

QMU's MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations aims not only to prepare career entry practitioners for today's communication and public relations job market, but also to provide continuing development for those already in practice, at any stage of their careers, and a route to higher academic studies.

We aim to advance knowledge and research and, through this, to influence the development of communication and public relations practice and the profession in the UK and around the world.

Input from communications and public relations employers, practitioners and the industry bodies drives the development of our MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations programme. The MSc is benchmarked against Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) career progression requirements, meaning that there is a clear articulation between the course and developing a career in public relations.

We can be sure that our students, whatever their background, will develop the knowledge, attributes and skills needed in today's communication and public relations job market whether you are seeking your first job or wanting to progress to the next stage of your career.

QMU's breadth and depth of the learning is the result of offering a full suite of courses in Strategic Communication and Public Relations. These include undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development options which are tailored to your needs whether your study full time or part time. You will also benefit from our combined teaching approach which brings you into contact with and allows you to work alongside classmates from a range of backgrounds and specialisms. Knowledge is enhanced as a result and professional networks built.

Here are some of the measures your programme scored well on in the QMU Student Survey 2017

"My course has challenged me to achieve my best work"



"My course has provided me with the opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics"



"As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects"



"I have been able to access course specific resources (eg equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to"



QMU is an accredited teaching centre of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) and a partner institution of the Public Relations Consultants' Association. QMU pioneered the development of the CIPR Diploma which is the longest standing industry-recognised postgraduate professional qualification. Today we continue to teach the new CIPR Professional Diploma, which replaced the CIPR Diploma in 2016, and are the only teaching centre north of London to offer the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) and CIPR Specialist Diploma (Internal Communications).

During your studies you will gain the knowledge, experience and confidence to enable you to embrace future challenges and make a positive and effective strategic contribution whether in a commercial, public or third sector organization, in the UK or elsewhere or in practice or through progression in your academic studies.



How your programme works

To gain an MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations award you need to obtain 180 credits.

There are a number of potential routes that students are likely to take through the programme, specifically these are:

- Full-time September start
- Full-time January start
- Part-time September start
- Part-time January start
- PG Certificate in Strategic Communication and Public Relations
- PG Diploma in Strategic Communication and Public Relations
- Agreed pathways

Students will be expected to complete with the maximum periods of registration set by QMU. These are:

Programme		Maximum period for completion	Minimum period for completion
Masters	FT	4 calendar years	1 calendar year
	NFT	7 calendar years	2 ½ calendar years
PgDip	FT	3 calendar years	1 calendar year
	NFT	5 calendar years	2 calendar years
PGCert	FT	2 calendar years	1 semester
	NFT	4 calendar years	1 calendar year

Full-time students will normally complete the programme within either 12 months (Sept start) or 18 months (January start).

Standard Full Time Route

Full-time Jan start students would begin with the semester 2 modules, then semester 1 before moving on to their final project in Jan to April of the following year

Placements may be taken in semester 1, 2 or 3.

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3
IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice	IM201 Masters Communication Project OR IM200 Masters Communication Dissertation
IM195 Strategic Internal Communications in a Digitized World	IM198 Public Affairs	
TM186 Designing Qualitative Research (if Research Methods (online) not taken in semester 2) OR IM199 Masters Communication Placement OR Option (from a selection from ASSAM optional module list)	BM104 Research Methods (online) (if 20 credit Designing Qualitative Research not taken in semester 1) OR IM199 Masters Communication Placement OR Option (from a selection from ASSAM optional module list)	

Standard Part Time Route

Part-time students may start in either September or January and may take three 20 credit modules in each academic year (QMU regulations state up to 89 credits).

PG Certificate in Strategic Communication and Public Relations

Students must gain 60 credits in three of the following modules:

Semester 1	Semester 2
IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice
IM195 Strategic Internal Communications in a Digitized World	IM198 Public Affairs

PG Diploma in Strategic Communication and Public Relations

Students must gain 120 credits in the following modules:

Semester 1	Semester 2
IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice
IM195 Strategic Internal Communications in a Digitized World	IM198 Public Affairs
TM186 Designing Qualitative Research (if Research Methods (online) not taken in semester 2) OR IM199 Masters Communication Placement OR Option (from a selection from ASSAM optional module list)	BM104 Research Methods (online) (if 20 credit Designing Qualitative Research not taken in semester 1) OR IM199 Masters Communication Placement OR Option (from a selection from ASSAM optional module list)

Each of the modules in the programme is delivered once in any academic year.

Modules taught face-to-face are delivered in short intensive teaching blocks. Please see the timetable at the end of this section. Please be aware there may be changes to this and you should check it against your QMU online timetable.

Details of routes through the programme if you are joining on an agreed pathway or have done one of the CIPR Diploma courses are available from the Programme Leader. Email schalmers@qmu.ac.uk

Details of optional modules are available from the School Office. If you have not received these please email SchoolOffice@qmu.ac.uk

Research methods teaching

As is clear from the programme structures above taking a stand-alone research methods module is an option..

There are some restrictions however and you may be required to take a standalone research methods module so please discuss this with your Programme Leader before selecting your options. Email schalmers@qmu.ac.uk

Teaching timetable 2018/19 - PROVISIONAL - to be checked against online timetable

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/current-students-general-information/timetables/>

Semester 1

2 core modules plus *Masters Dissertation preparation (if relevant)* plus option:

20 day Masters Communication Placement. *Masters Placement preparation workshops for placements in semester 2.*

OR

Understanding Research (if Research Methods (online) not taken in semester 2)

OR

Option as timetabled

QMU weeks	w/c	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	10/9/18		Induction		
2	17/9/18				IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning
3	24/9/18		Induction	IM195 Strategic Internal Communication in a Digitised World	
4	1/10/18			<i>IM199 Masters Placement preparation workshop (for placements in semester 2 and placement supervision)</i>	IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning
5	8/10/18			<i>IM200/IM201 MSc Project/ Dissertation workshop (preparation for submission in April)</i>	
6	15/10/18				
7	22/10/18		Induction	IM195 Strategic Internal Communication in a Digitised World	
8	29/10/18			<i>IM200/IM201 MSc Project/ Dissertation workshop</i>	IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning

				<i>(preparation for submission in April)</i>	
9	5/11/18		Induction	IM95 Strategic Internal Communication in a Digitised World	
10	12/11/18			<i>IM199 Masters Placement preparation workshop (for placements in semester 2 and supervision of placement assessment)</i>	IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning
11	19/11/18			IM195 Strategic Internal Communication in a Digitised World	
12	26/11/18			<i>IM200/IM201 MSc Project/ Dissertation workshop (preparation for submission in April)</i>	IM195 Media Theory and Campaigning (optional session)
13	3/12/18				
14	10/12/18				
15 - 18	17/12/18 - 7/1/19	Inter-semester break			

Semester 2

2 core modules plus *Masters Dissertation preparation (if relevant)* and option:
 20 day Masters Communication Placement in semester 2. *Masters Placement preparation workshops for placements in semester 3 or 1.*

OR

Research Methods (online) if Understanding Research not taken in semester 1

OR

Option as timetabled.

QMU weeks	w/c	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
19	14/1/19				
20	21/1/19			IM198 Public Affairs	

21	28/1/19			<i>IM199 Masters Placement preparation workshop (for placements in semester 3 or 1 in next academic year and placement assessment supervision)</i> Public Affairs	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice
22	4/2/19			<i>IM200/IM201 MSc Project/ Dissertation workshop (prep for submission in August)</i>	
23	11/2/19				
24	18/2/19			<i>IM200/IM201 MSc Project/ Dissertation workshop (prep for submission in August)</i>	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice
25	25/2/19			IM198 Public Affairs	
26	4/3/19				IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice
27	11/3/19			IM198 Public Affairs	
28	18/3/19			<i>IM199 Masters Placement preparation workshop (for placements in semester 3 or 1 in next academic year and placement assessment supervision)</i>	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Digital Practice
29	25/3/19			IM198 Public Affairs	IM197 Strategic Communication Planning and Content Creation

					(optional session)
30	1/4/19				
31	8/4/19				
32	15/4/19				
33	22/4/19				
34	29/4/19				
35	6/5/19			<i>IM200/IM201 MSc Project/ Dissertation workshop (preparation for submission in August)</i>	

Your assessments and how they will be marked

Your assessment specifications and marking criteria will be made available on the individual module Hub areas.

If you are not sure about the marking criteria that will be used when marking your work or how to interpret them, ask the co-ordinator for that module.

Key points relevant to assessment at postgraduate level are:

- The pass mark is 50%
- To pass a module, a student must also achieve a mark of not less than 40% in each of the assessment components
- The maximum mark awarded at resit is 50%
- A student will normally be required to withdraw from a postgraduate award if he or she accumulate four or more fails, whether or not these have been later redeemed through reassessment, on any standard taught modules.
- To be eligible for distinction, the weighted average of a student's marks must be greater than or equal to 70%. To be eligible for merit, it must be 60%.

QMU's assessment regulations can be found here

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/4038/assessment-regulations-2017-final.pdf>

Our academic appeals procedure is here <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/3961/academic-appeals.pdf>

Our marking is guided by these grade descriptors

<http://archive.qmu.ac.uk/quality/documents/postgraduate%20descriptors%202015.pdf>

Exam Boards are held three times a year:

- June to confirm semester 1 and 2 marks
- August to confirm reassessment marks
- September to confirm Dissertation and Project marks and make Masters awards

QMU's graduation ceremony is held once a year in July.

Assessment approaches for our core modules are:

Module	Credits	Assessment
Semester 1		
IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning	20	Case study: Media campaign analysis 50% (2500) Essay (2500 words) - 50%
IM195 Strategic Internal Communications in a Digitized World	20	Project – 2500 words (50%) Production of internal communications content supported by a reflective blog – 1500 words blog only (50%)
Semester 2		
IM197 Strategic Communication and Digital Practice	20	Campaign Plan (100%)
IM198 Public Affairs	20	Policy brief 1500 (30%); Case study analysis report 2000 (40%); Essay 1500 (30%): Occupational issues/theory
IM201 Masters Communication Project	60	Digital Campaign Project (70%) 5000 word literature review and critical reflection on the project (30%)
OR		
IM200 Masters Communication Dissertation	60	12,000 word dissertation (100%)

Who's Who

Profiles of staff in the Division of Media, Communication and Performing Arts can be found at <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/schools-and-divisions/mcpa/mcpa-staff/>

Programme Leader: Sally Chalmers

Email: schalmers@qmu.ac.uk

I work part time and my normal working hours are 09.30-14.30pm Monday to Thursday. I am not always on campus during these hours.

Programme Leaders provide academic and organisational leadership for the programmes and present students' marks to the Exam Boards. Contact me with any queries about the programme as a whole. As programme leader I also deal with any requests for extensions to submission deadlines as a result of extenuating circumstances.

I am the module co-ordinator for IM195 Strategic Internal Communication in a Digitized World; IM199 Masters Communication Placement and IM200 Masters Communication Dissertation. I also teach on IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning and IM197 Strategic Communication and Digital Practice and supervise Dissertations/Projects. I lead the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Internal Communications) at QMU.



Head of Division : Dr David Stevenson

Email: dstevenson@qmu.ac.uk

Dr David Stevenson is Head of the Media, Communication and Performing Arts Division at QMU. The MSC Strategic Communication and Public Relations sits within this Division. David is also the module co-ordinator for TM186 Designing Qualitative Research.



Dr Magda Pieczka

Email: mpieczka@qmu.ac.uk

Magda is the module co-ordinator for IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning and IM198 Public Affairs and supervises Dissertations/Projects. She also leads the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) at QMU.



Ann Turner

Email: aturner@qmu.ac.uk

Ann leads the undergraduate PR programmes at QMU. On the MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations she teaches on IM194 Media Theory and Campaigning and supervises Dissertations/Projects.



Emma Wood

Email: ewood@qmu.ac.uk

Emma is the module co-ordinator for IM197 Strategic Communication and Digital Practice and supervises Dissertations/Projects. Emma also leads the CIPR Professional Diploma at QMU.



The School Office

SchoolOffice@qmu.ac.uk

The School Office provides administrative support to the MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations programme. Email SchoolOffice@qmu.ac.uk with any queries about administrative procedures (including applications for extensions), submitting assessments, preparation of marks for the Exam Board and issue of marks.

Please visit the School Office to find out where it is and familiarise yourself with their procedures. It is located to the left of the main entrance on level 1.

Communicating with us

You will, of course, see your tutors at the teaching blocks.

In addition to that, we all use email. Please ensure that you use your QMU email, review it regularly and clear down your inbox frequently, so that it is free of clutter. We will not, for data protection reasons, communicate with you via your own personal email addresses.

Please email us on our email addresses (see Who's Who section). We will email you and send you email from your Hub area with information on your teaching.

Please note that some of us work part time so we may not be immediately available or available every day of the week.

“We have a School commitment that we endeavour to respond to student emails within 3 working days. Students should use their QMU email accounts when emailing tutors.”

Sources of information and help

In addition to this Handbook you should also

Have:

- Hub areas for each of your modules
- A PR Programmes Hub area where you can find non-module specific content
- receive guides for each of the modules detailing teaching and assessment

Read this important information:

- QMU's Taught Postgraduate Regulations <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/4009/taught-postgraduate-framework.pdf>

Find out about support available to you:

- Student Services <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/>
- The Library <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/learning-facilities/library/>
- QMU's Effective Learning Service <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/studentservices/effective-learning-service-els/>
- Support with your writing from our Royal Literary Fellows <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/schools-anddivisions/mcpa/royal-literary-fund/>
- If you have a disability (including individual learning plans) <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/studentservices/disability-service/>
- If you are an International student <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/internationalstudents/>
- The Students Union <https://www.q>
- Our Write and Cite referencing guidelines http://www.qmu.ac.uk/lb/IFS_Harvard.htm

Other important information is:

- QMU's academic timetable <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/academic-calendar/>
- Registering attendance. Find information here (scroll to the bottom of the webpage) <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/current-students-general-information/induction-for-new-students/induction-schedules-and-matriculation/>



Personal Academic Tutors (PATs)

Each student is allocated a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT).

This is a member of the departmental staff operating the degree. Their role it is to provide academic guidance and support.

PATs periodically review your progress through the programme, giving advice and assistance with any difficulties that arise in connection with your studies. Information on your PAT will be available on the Student Portal.

Masters Communications Placement supervisor

Each student is allocated a supervisor to support them during their placement. Supervisors provide 3 hours assessment supervision to each student.

Masters Communication Dissertation/Project Supervisor

Each student is allocated a Dissertation/Project supervisor. They are responsible for providing guidance on the field of study, data, literature sources and copyright, advising on the proposal, suggesting specialists the student may contact and facilitating planning and writing, ensuring academic rigour.



Join our community

There are many ways for you to become involved in your programme and in life at QMU in general. We want you to have the best experience while you are here with us so please take advantage of all the opportunities on offer.



Become the class representative

Class representatives are elected at the beginning of the academic year and receive training on their role from the Students Union. As well as helping your classmates, the tutors and QMU, being a class rep looks great on your CV.

If you'd like to know more ask Sally Chalmers (schalmers@qmu.ac.uk)

The Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC).

This operates to ensure adequate and effective discussion between students and staff. Meetings are organised by the class representative and held once a semester. The SSCC provides a forum for constructive discussion of the programme, the students' experience of the programme and of possible programme developments.

The ASSAM Masters Association

Get together with fellow masters students from across the School, be part of a community of learners and share opportunities for learning. Getting involved in your industry

Professional association membership

As a student at QMU you are eligible to join the CIPR and the PRCA. Ask Sally Chalmers (schalmers@qmu.ac.uk) for more information

Join the QMU PR Students LinkedIn group

If you are not already on LinkedIn, join, search for the above group and ask to join.

Follow our social media

-  Queen Margaret University PR Programmes
-  @qmuprogrammes
-  #qmupreexperience



Finally...remember....taking this course a great opportunity to follow your dreams, find fulfilment and explore new and challenging ideas.....so don't forget to....

ENJOY IT!