MA in Understanding and Securing Human Rights

hrc.sas.ac.uk
About the degree

The MA in Understanding and Securing Human Rights is the longest-running interdisciplinary, practice-orientated human rights master’s degree programme in the UK. It was established in collaboration with Amnesty International to provide scholarly and practical training for future human rights defenders. Located in Bloomsbury, the intellectual heart of London, it offers students easy access to world-class libraries and facilities, including Senate House Library, the British Library, and the British Museum. The degree aims to develop students as human rights practitioners and enable them to engage with the intellectual and philosophical foundations of human rights. All of our graduates are awarded a University of London degree.

Offered by the Human Rights Consortium (HRC) at the School of Advanced Study, this programme is:

- Intellectually rigorous, engaging with human rights debates at the forefront of scholarly research.
- Practice-orientated, exploring human rights issues from a practical, solution-based perspective as well as a scholarly one.
- Career-orientated, developing the next generation of human rights defenders, advocates, and researchers through an emphasis on building practical skills, including campaigning, fundraising, and research—all of which are important for work in human rights advocacy.
- Cutting-edge, widening the frame of human rights debates by looking at emerging issues, such as the impact of environmental destruction on human rights.

The degree brings together insights on human rights from a range of disciplines, including law, international relations, and sociology. This unique interdisciplinary approach will provide you with an extensive and diverse range of perspectives with which to understand contemporary human rights challenges.

If you want to work in the field of human rights, or are currently working in the field and wish to develop your career, this course is particularly suitable for you. It situates human rights theory firmly within current affairs, using case studies to consider the causes and consequences of human rights violations. For alumni of the programme, the MA has been a crucial investment in their careers as human rights advocates, with many of them finding work shortly after graduating. In the competitive field of human rights, our MA is recognised by recruiters at NGOs for imparting the necessary practical skills that employees need. You will benefit from being part of a network in which you will continue to find support after your studies end, through personal connections with staff and through our alumni network.

This degree is interdisciplinary, meaning that your understanding of human rights will be broad, complementary, and inclusive. This will enable you to understand the theoretical, legal and political, and practical aspects of human rights implementation at national and international levels, and to translate human rights theory into transformative practice working for human rights.

You will benefit from small class sizes, so you can learn, debate, and discuss ideas in a friendly and open environment while receiving individually tailored feedback on your work. Our lecturers are accessible and arranging meetings to discuss aspects of the course is actively encouraged. We provide a stimulating experience for our students that helps them achieve their intellectual and professional goals.

We prioritise practical experience as much as theoretical knowledge. Over the course of your degree, you will be given access to a wide range of human rights representatives from organisations across London through guest lectures, evening seminars, international conferences, and international study tours. Our connections ensure that you will be introduced to key contacts throughout your degree, helping you to understand the opportunities in the field and develop networks essential to working in the humanitarian and non-governmental sectors.

You are encouraged to participate in the wider activities of the Human Rights Consortium by getting involved in our research projects or human rights blog. Many students have found this interaction a unique opportunity that helps them build a career in human rights as they study.
Degree highlights

In addition to providing students with the practical skills essential to pursuing a career as human rights practitioners, this degree addresses essential questions and debates within the field of human rights, such as:

- Where do rights come from?
- What are the foundations of and justifications for human rights?
- Can the discourse of rights secure social justice and equality?

We run an annual optional one-week study tour to Geneva in the summer term that includes visits to the United Nations as well as meetings with human rights advocates inside and outside the UN framework, enabling you to learn from a wide range of experienced individuals and to build your personal networks.

The network of support has really been invaluable. I still receive emails with job adverts, and it’s so wonderful to have so many former classmates and friends working for such a diverse mix of organisations, here in London and across the world. I can’t recommend the course enough for those who want to learn more about human rights issues and prepare for a career in the third sector.

*Louise Cripps, 2010*
## Structure and assessment

The degree comprises four compulsory modules, including a dissertation, plus three optional modules. The MA is assessed through essays and examinations and through work similar to that produced by professionals in the human rights field, including legal reports, a media project, and a mock funding proposal. Class participation also forms an element of the MA assessment.

### Core modules (three in autumn term, dissertation in summer term)

- Understanding Human Rights: Ideas and Contexts [10 ECTS]
- Securing Human Rights I: Actors and Mechanisms, Skills and Strategies [10 ECTS]
- Dissertation (15,000 words) [30 ECTS]

### Optional modules (three in spring term)

- Genocide and Reconciliation [10 ECTS]
- Securing Human Rights II: Securing Human Rights in Development and in Conflict [10 ECTS]
- Translating Human Rights into Law II: Topics in International Human Rights Law [10 ECTS]
- Researching Human Rights: Social Research Methods [10 ECTS]
- Business and Human Rights [10 ECTS]
- Indigenous Peoples, Minorities and Human Rights [10 ECTS]
- Contemporary Social Movements in Latin America [10 ECTS]
- Decolonisation and Human Rights in Latin America [10 ECTS]
- The Politics of Human Rights in Latin America [10 ECTS]

Please note that the list of modules is indicative and may be subject to change.
Teaching and learning

The MA convenor is Dr Damien Short, Reader in Human Rights. Other core lecturers include Dr Corinne Lennox (Senior Lecturer in Human Rights), Professor David Cantor (Professor of Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies), and Dr Sarah Singer (Senior Lecturer in Refugee Law). Their research interests include environmental destruction and human rights, genocide, international human rights law, and the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities. In addition to their scholarly expertise, our academic staff have been and continue to act as human rights advocates, practitioners, and consultants, and their teaching draws on their extensive practical experience.

Lecturers for the optional modules bring a wealth of experience and interdisciplinary perspectives to the MA. They include Dr Julian Burger, who worked at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for more than 20 years, during which he was the head of the Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Programme.

The programme is enriched by an extensive range of guest lecturers, including academic specialists and human rights practitioners who offer practical perspectives on a number of topics. In previous academic years the course has benefited from the insights of representatives from Amnesty International, Minority Rights Group, Freedom from Torture, and the Red Cross, among others. Speakers from NGOs provide practical, policy-orientated perspectives on the impact of human rights norms and policies on the ground, thus providing different insights into the practicalities of human rights work.

The experience of our staff, plus the insights of human rights practitioners, means that the degree stays current with new developments in the field.
Entry requirements

The normal minimum entrance requirement is a First or Upper Second Class Honours degree from a university in the UK or an overseas qualification of an equivalent standard. We will consider applications from candidates who do not meet the formal academic requirements but who offer alternative qualifications and/or relevant experience.

English is the language of instruction and applicants are required to demonstrate an appropriate level of proficiency.

For more information on entry requirements, please visit sas.ac.uk/graduate-study/entry-requirements.

How to apply

Applications should be made online via the SAS website. For full details of the application process, please visit sas.ac.uk/study/humanrights.

Accommodation

Full-time students, and part-time students with disabilities, may apply for accommodation in one of the University of London’s award-winning intercollegiate halls of residence. Our Registry office will send you housing information after you have been offered a place. To learn more about accommodation options, please visit halls.london.ac.uk/our-accommodation.

Course summary

Degree structure
The degree can be taken full time over one year or part time over 24 or 36 months, with entry in October only. The degree comprises four compulsory modules, including a dissertation, and three optional modules.

Students undertaking the MA part time over 24 months will complete three modules each academic year. Those undertaking the MA over 36 months generally take one module per term; this mode of study is particularly suitable for students undertaking full- or part-time work during their studies.

Part-time students may undertake more than one internship (in both years and/or during the summer between their first and second years).

Fees 2018–19 (subject to annual uplift)
Home and EU students: full time, £8,200 | part time 24 months, £4,680 | part time 36 months, £3,215
Overseas students: full time, £14,525

Funding
The School of Advanced Study offers a number of funding options, including bursaries, scholarships, grants, and awards. For details, please visit sas.ac.uk/funding.

Learn more

Human Rights Consortium: hrc.sas.ac.uk/graduate-study
School of Advanced Study: sas.ac.uk/study
The Human Rights Consortium (HRC) at the School of Advanced Study brings together multidisciplinary expertise across a range of areas within human rights, including ecocide, the impact of environmental destruction on human rights, indigenous rights, international refugee law, and securing rights for LGBTI people worldwide. The HRC acts as a national and international collaborative centre to support, promote, and disseminate academic and policy work in human rights and hosts a number of seminars and research-led conferences on different themes in human rights throughout the academic year.

The School of Advanced Study is the UK’s national centre for the support and promotion of research in the humanities. Located at the heart of the University of London in Bloomsbury, the School provides an unrivalled scholarly community in which to pursue postgraduate study and research. Students learn from leading specialists in their fields, hone their research skills in highly regarded training programmes, expand their knowledge through an extensive calendar of events, and become part of a worldwide network of humanities scholars. Funding opportunities include AHRC-sponsored London Arts and Humanities Partnership studentships, SAS studentships, and a number of subject-specific bursaries and awards.

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Please note that tuition fees are subject to annual uplift. The University of London reserves the right to alter or withdraw courses and amend other details without prior notice.

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