Programme Specification
Definitive Document

1. Basic Information

1.1 Awarding Institution:	Plymouth Marjon University
1.2 Teaching Institution:	Plymouth Marjon University
1.3 Locus of Delivery:	Plymouth Marjon University
1.4 Final Award Title:	**Master of Arts**
1.5 FHEQ Level:	7
1.6 Programme Title:	**Social Policy**
1.7 Mode and Duration of Study:	Full Time – 12 months Part Time – 24 months
1.8 School:	School of Education
1.9 HECoS Code:	100502
1.10 Collaborative Provision Arrangement:	N/A
1.11 Admission Criteria:	Normal University entrance criteria apply (please refer to the website for further details). International students will be expected to meet the English language requirements of IELTS 6.5 or equivalent.
1.12 Accrediting Professional Body/PSRB	N/A
1.13 QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s):	Sociology; Psychology; Social Policy & Administration; Politics & International Relations Particular reference to QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for Social Policy (2015). (Currently still draft for consultation)
1.14 Other External Points of Reference:	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ); The Campaign for Social Science; QAA (2010) Master's Degree Characteristics
1.15 Language of Study (for learning, teaching and assessment):	English
1.16 Work-Based Learning Arrangements:	The applied social policy module requires students to engage in work-based research and analysis which will be organised in accordance with the Universities Placement Learning Policy. Work based learning takes place in a range of settings in the statutory and voluntary sectors, locally, regionally and occasionally nationally and internationally.
1.17 Arrangements for Distance Learning:	Blended learning is a key feature of this programme.
1.18 Original Date of Production:	September 2015

1.19 Date of Commencement: September 2016
1.20 Review Date: September 2022

2. Programme Outline

The MA Social Policy leads to an academic award and is offered as both a full-time and part-time programme of study. The programme engages students in a challenging and high-quality educational experience that focuses on a synthesis between academic, researcher and professional formation. This programme of study will provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, understanding and practical research skills required to practice effectively, collaboratively and creatively as reflexive and ethically informed research focused practitioners. There will also be emphasis on working with students to achieve their future orientated goals. A key feature of the programme is the emphasis on both breadth and depth of understanding of social policy analysis in its broader economic, social, environmental and political contexts.

In line with University Strategy and vision the programme generally empowers students to actively engage in academic, research and professional networks that offer the potential to achieve socially just and sustainable research practice in the field of social policy.

2.1 Integrating Sustainability into the Curriculum

The concept of sustainability focuses on achieving human well-being and quality of life, pursued through the maintenance, care and equitable use of natural and cultural resources. Economic, social, environmental, cultural and psychological sustainability are all seen as key in light of contemporary discourses of uncertainty, complexity and risk (Huckle 2008, Sousa 2011, Sterling 2013).   Issues of sustainability are therefore integral to study and research in social policy generally and this programme specifically.   The programme team will aim to enable students to participate in discussions and actions linked to sustainability which embrace the University's thematic concepts of global citizenship, employer engagement and digital scholarship.   This emphasis is influential pedagogically in terms of delivery of the programme.   In this context the programme team will also, for example, reduce our impact on the environment, through the use of e-learning, e-submission and e-books.

3. Distinctive Features

The proposed MA Social Policy will aim to align with the University's mission, as outlined in the Strategic Plan *'Challenging Horizons'* (2014)**:** 'Development and dissemination of cutting-edge knowledge in distinctive areas, including through innovative use of technology and new modes of delivery, to have a positive influence and make a lasting impact on society, economy, culture, environment and wellbeing' (p14)**.** The introduction and development of blended learning approaches will enable the teaching team to increase access to the PG Programme nationally and internationally. Blended learning will provide an access platform for academic online work**.** We will develop an online presence in terms of a space for 'publishing' students [peer reviewed] research and scholarly activity such as conference proceedings. Pedagogically it is intended to feature residential blocks of teaching [using campus facilities] alongside the more blended approach that will give students a measure of control over the time, place, path and pace of their studies. A further distinctive attribute of this programme will be its emphasis on the student as producers (rather than reproducers) of knowledge (Neary, 2012). This approach involves the students 'doing' social policy research (Barnett and Coate, 2005). Work based research opportunities will enable students to integrate academic and practice knowledge within an applied setting which will equip them with the skills, knowledge and opportunities for values

clarification and problem solving to maximise their potential to engage in positive change in a global era.   MA Social Policy students will be provided with opportunities to share their research through the programme with undergraduates via an annual 'student conference' organised by staff and students. An outcome of the conference will be the production of a peer-reviewed article that will be published via our web space [created to showcase the programme and outcomes]. As the programme develops there will also be scope to encourage student's active engagement in open access publication including online publication.

4. Programme Aims

The programme aims to:
- Introduce students to the study of social policy both from British and international perspectives. It explores the subject in the context of personal perspectives and position within broader political, social, cultural, economic and environmental developments.
- Develop opportunities for global, employer and digital engagement through which to create a greater capacity for social policy practice and knowledge exchange
- Develop confidence, capabilities and creativity to flourish in the worlds of study and employment

5. Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge & understanding:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:
1. depth and systematic understanding of knowledge across the social sciences and applied in social policy professional and practice contexts;
2. the ability to critically evaluate research/theoretical based knowledge and the implications for social policy practice;
3. awareness of and ability to navigate the implications of ethical dilemmas in the professional context of social policy, and work proactively with others to formulate solutions;
4. a comprehensive understanding of techniques/ methodologies applicable to social policy research related to their own area of specialism in practice.

Intellectual skills:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:
5. the ability to undertake analysis of complex, incomplete or contradictory areas of knowledge in social policy and practice and communicating outcomes effectively;
6. the ability to develop innovative approaches to the critical evaluation and synthesis of knowledge and perspectives informing contemporary practice in social policy contexts;
7. conceptual understanding that enables critical evaluation of social policy research, advanced scholarship and methodologies and argue alternative approaches;
8. initiative and originality in problem solving in social policy practice contexts;
9. the ability to act autonomously in planning and implementing an independent project, making decisions in complex and unpredictable situations.

Practical skills:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:
10. the ability to operate in complex social policy professional/practice contexts with an overview of the issues governing good practice;

11. the ability to exercise initiative and personal responsibility in professional practice;
12. the ability to adapt research and practice skills and reflexivity in identifying and developing new skills within their own specialist context and setting.

Transferable / key skills:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:
13. the ability to be reflexive in order to improve practice;
14. the ability to be an independent and self-critical learner and manage own requirements for continuing professional development;
15. the ability to engage confidently in academic and professional communication with others, reporting on research actions clearly, autonomously and competently;
16. independent learning ability required for collaborative and creative communication in research practice.

Programme modules have been mapped against programme learning outcomes

6. Learning and Teaching Methods

A creative and innovative range of learning and teaching approaches will be utilised on this programme to enable flexible, student-centred learning. Considerable emphasis is placed on critical enquiry and dialogue in relation to learning and development through research practice and for advanced scholarship. The programme seeks a balance between teaching and learning methods that include working in small groups, lecture, inputs, online activities, independent study and individual tutorials.

The learning and teaching approaches employed through the programme contribute directly to the development of key and transferable skills in social policy practice and analysis. Students are encouraged to develop confidence in using their social policy practice as a site of analysis, to enable discussion and enhance their own and others' learning. Learning about and through practice underpins this programme, and it is anticipated that this will enhance student opportunities for employability as well as enabling them to progress to doctoral study.

Supporting students in their studies will be the responsibility of all including module leaders and teaching staff. Students will be assigned a Personal Development Tutor who will provide tutorial support during their studies including the placement module. The Personal Development Tutor role contributes to ensuring a holistic approach to academic, practice and researcher formation supported by module specific support and learning resources (See also section 15). Throughout the programme students will be encouraged to identify and engage in independent reading to supplement and consolidate teaching and learning and to broaden individual knowledge and understanding of their subject area/s. Personal Development Tutors will play a significant role in supporting this dimension of the learning experience.

In line with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy the teaching team are committed to engaging with and developing further new approaches to teaching and learning, including the full and active use of the VLE, the use of open learning resources and audio capture of lectures where appropriate.

Teaching and learning on the programme will take a blended learning approach using a range of strategies to enhance potential inclusion and retention of learners. What follows is a summary of the core approaches.

Method	Description
Group Learning	A tutor-guided or student led meeting involving more than one student, and normally discussion-based.
Individual Tutorials	A one-to-one meeting with a University tutor that can be conducted in person, or via email or SKYPE. Tutorials offer guidance, supervision and support.
Independent study	Activities where an individual learner conducts research, or carries out a learning activity, on their own. Can include internet resources, sound and video files on LS, book and handout/online based exercises.
Lecture input	Classroom activities where the teacher leads the interaction and discourse.
Online activities and Electronic Communications	University's virtual learning environment to support learning in a variety of ways e.g., providing direct access to relevant reading, the development of blogs and interactive discussions, for notices and updates, exercises.
Workshops	A group learning experience offered in a variety of formats appropriate to the topic e.g., input and discussion, writing and/or participatory exercises, demonstrations and presentations.

6.1 Learning Enhancement

The programme will develop in line with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy and develop pedagogic responses in line with proposals for becoming a 'smart campus'. As the programme develops there will be increasing emphasis on blended learning via the University Virtual Learning Environment, including access to a variety of electronic resources including Epigeum for research learning. There will also be opportunities for students to enhance their learning outside of the formal programme through participation in research and scholarly workshops organized on a University wide basis alongside other PG Students.

6.2 e-Learning

E-learning and digital literacy development will be a central component of the MA in Social Policy and the programme team will work closely with Marjon E Learning Team (MELT). The relationship with e-learning and digital literacy will differ depending on the pedagogy of the module. All modules will at a minimum level provide information and links to literature and other resources on the University's virtual learning environment. Most of the modules will utilise a blended learning approach in which e-learning activities support the face-to-face interaction and learning environment as well as providing the students with opportunities to further enhance, develop and apply their social policy research knowledge. The modules will encourage students to explore both statistical and qualitative data analysis software, particularly SOPM04.

7. Modes of Assessment

Assessment has a role in providing an indication to students and staff of the level of attainment, in relation to established criteria. Moderation by an External Examiner enables a wider reference point of the standards attained.

Assessment takes place for each stage (module) of the MA in line with level descriptors for the programme. The pass mark is 50% and assessment borderlines are expressed as per the University Student Handbook.

Assessment is by coursework and includes a final dissertation of 15,000 words. A wide range of assessment methods are used on the programme in recognition of the impact assessment has on student learning and motivation, and how this informs personal and professional development. The assessment strategy recognises and values the variety of learning styles within any given cohort and takes account of students' academic and professional learning needs. Consideration is given to the development of particular key skills which may be developed through assessment. An overview of assessment details with dates will be provided in the Programme Handbooks. Module Outlines or their equivalent provide the details of individual assessment tasks. All student work is assessed in accordance with the University's Modular Degrees Regulations. Condoned failure will operate in line with the University Regulations, Policies and Procedures.

This is a summary of terms used to describe the range of assessments utilised:

Method	Description
Applied project	A practice-related project assignment, with clearly defined parameters, and decided upon in conjunction with a University tutor.
Concept Notes	A formally written collection of definitions and explanations of central concepts in the social sciences.
Dissertation	An independent study conducted under the supervision of a University tutor. Dissertations involve either the implementation of a small-scale research project or can be literature based. They demonstrate a depth of knowledge and critical awareness in a specified area, including research knowledge, through a systematic and critical enquiry. Primary research will be encouraged but this does not preclude library-based research.
Essay	A written response to a question based on synthesis and analysis, demonstrating appropriate knowledge and understanding of key current debates in the subject.
Oral Presentation	Clearly structured individual or group verbal delivery within timed conditions, delivered using appropriate methods and which demonstrates detailed knowledge and analysis.
Portfolio: (Including E portfolios)	A collection of assessments covering the learning outcomes of a module, which usually takes several different forms such as concept notes, reports, presentations and task sheets, digital media activities and reflexive inputs.
Poster/Oral Presentation	A visual and verbal presentation of complex academic material demonstrating appropriate critical knowledge and understanding concerning a chosen theme.
Project Proposal	A written funding proposal that takes into account the policy context and opportunities to develop an area of research or practice.
Reflexive Journal	A piece or pieces of writing that uses reflexive practice tools and techniques that enable the writer to develop and position them within practice, debates, literature and theory.

Summary of Assessment:

Module	Assessment Task	Load	Weighting	Learning outcomes assessed	Compulsory/ Optional
SOPM01: Contemporary issues in Social Science Research and Analysis	Concept Notes	up to 3750 words (or equivalent)	100%	1-4	Compulsory
SOPM02: International Social Policy Analysis	E Portfolio	up to 3750 words (or equivalent)	100%	1-4	Compulsory
SOPM03: Social Policy Analysis	Essay	Up to 5000 words (or equivalent)	70%	1-3	Compulsory
SOPM03: Social Policy Analysis	Presentation	Up to 2500 words (or equivalent)	30%	2-3	Compulsory
SOPM04: Research in Social Policy Contexts	Essay	up to 5000 words (or equivalent)	70%	1-3	Compulsory
SOPM04: Research in Social Policy Contexts	Research Presentation	up to 2500 words (or equivalent)	30%	4	Compulsory
SOPM05: Independent Social Policy Learning Project	Report	up to 4500 words (or equivalent)	60%	1,2,3	Optional
SOPM05: Independent Social Policy Learning Project	Project Proposal	up to 3000 words (or equivalent)	40%	4	Optional
SOPM06: Applied Social Policy	Report	up to 5000 words (or equivalent)	70%	1-6	Optional
SOPM06: Applied Social Policy	Presentation	up to 2500 words (or equivalent)	30%	1-6	Optional
SOPMD1: Dissertation	Conference poster presentation	up to 3000 words (or equivalent)	20%	1,2,5	Compulsory
SOPMD1: Dissertation	Dissertation	up to 12,000 words (or equivalent)	80%	1-4	Compulsory

8. Exemptions to University Regulations

There are no exemptions to University Regulations.

9. Work-Based Learning/Placement Learning

The programme is aligned with the University's Employability Strategy, with employability skills embedded in all areas of the curriculum. Employability will be at the heart of the programme

design, delivery and development and the proposing team have excellent working links with the University employability team who have informed the development of this proposal.

The applied social policy module and independent learning project optional modules are intended to provide practical experience in the application and usefulness of social policy analysis in 'real time' It will also enable students to develop skills in collaborative working, effective communication, planning and time management, problem solving, analytical skills, decision making skills, and team working skills.

10. Programme Structure

Full Time

Level 7

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non-Condonable
SOPM01	Contemporary issues in Social Science Research and Analysis	15	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM02	International Social Policy Analysis	15	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM03	Social Policy Analysis	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM04	Research in Social Policy Contexts	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM05	Independent Social Policy Learning Project	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Optional	Condonable
SOPM06	Applied Social Policy	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Optional	Condonable
SOPMD1	Dissertation	60	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Non-Condonable

Key: Semester X = A & B

Part Time

Level 7-Year 1

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non-Condonable
SOPM01	Contemporary issues in Social Science Research and Analysis	15	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM02	International Social Policy Analysis	15	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM03	Social Policy Analysis	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable
SOPM04	Research in Social Policy Contexts	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Condonable

Level 7-Year 2

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non-Condonable
SOPM05	Independent Social Policy Learning Project	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Optional	Condonable
SOPM06	Applied Social Policy	30	100% Coursework	Semester X	Optional	Condonable
SOPMD1	Dissertation	60	100% Coursework	Semester X	Compulsory	Non-Condonable

Key: Semester X = A & B

- A definitive module descriptor is required for each module

11. Accrediting Professional Body /Professional Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB)

N/A

12. Professional Advisory Group

There is no requirement for this programme to establish a Professional Advisory Group but there is an intention to establish a forum for the MA in Social Policy. The forum will be made up of students, academics, researchers and key partners to inform the development of the programme, map current trends and issues and to advise and participate in conference planning.

13. Academic Progression Opportunities

Successful participants could be eligible to apply for an MPhil/PhD programme at Plymouth Marjon University, or other institutions. Students will be provided with tutorial support from the

outset of the programme to help plan their academic progress.

14. Employability and Career Progression Opportunities

It is intended that the MA in Social Policy will make both a significant contribution to individual professional development (CPD) and a general contribution to innovation and creativity in the fields of Social Policy Analysis and implications for practice. Our graduates will be able to pursue a diverse range of career routes including progress to further PG Study via a doctoral route leading to a career as a researcher; managing and leading across a range of welfare contexts nationally, regionally and locally. The University also has partnerships with a range of organisations that are welfare orientated and that seeks to influence social policy.

"Social Policy graduates could expect to find work in a wide range of posts across the third-sector public services, government and business. These could include roles in central and local government departments, community bodies, charities, housing and health organisations, research consultancies and advocacy or campaigning body." Jo Lake, Head of Employability at the University.

Successful completion of the MA in Social Policy signals to employers advanced scholarship.   Part of the rationale for the programme is to enhance career prospects and progression in a competitive, challenging and rapidly changing jobs market.

The programme team will continue to work with employers to encourage them to see the relevance of the MA in Social Policy generally whilst at the same time providing a CPD route for experienced practitioners. Aspects of programme assessment e.g. the project proposal will enhance student employability and their entrepreneurial skills and attributes.

15. Support for Students and for Student Learning

The University and the programme team are committed to actively developing and maintaining a student-centred approach to learning and teaching. In addition, the student support team, alongside the programme team, offer the students a wide range of services and guidance to support them through their studies. At programme level, all students will be allocated a Personal Development Tutor for the duration of their studies. There will also be named module leads and access to the programme area lead.   At an institutional level students will be able to access the comprehensive and confidential services provided by the student support team, as well as services provided by the library, media and IT, and chaplaincy teams.

16. Student Feedback Mechanisms

Students have a number of opportunities to feed back to the programme team and institution about their experiences. These mechanisms include:
- Regular staff-student liaison meetings [at the programme level]
- Appointments with the programme area lead
- A Personal Development Tutor
- Module evaluation forms
- Students' Union
- Online discussion forum

Students will be encouraged to provide feedback on their experience of the programme through the annual Post Graduate Taught Experience (PTES) Survey.

17. Other Stakeholder Feedback

Other stakeholders including work-based placement providers and graduates will be regularly invited to feedback on the content of the programme and the development of the students' skills, knowledge and attributes. This will be reported more widely in the institution through the Annual Programme Report. See section 12 also.

18. Quality and Enhancement Mechanisms

The quality of the student experience and the standards of the awards are managed, and quality assured through the University's regulations policies and procedures. Student achievement and progression is managed through the Module Assessment Boards (MABs) and the Progression and Award Boards (PABs). Programmes are reviewed annually through University annual monitoring processes, including external examiner contributions, and incorporate student feedback mechanisms at both modular and the programme level reported formally through the University's annual monitoring and reporting cycle.