

# Master's Preparation (MP)

Framework Document  
2020-21



# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

The NCUK Master's Preparation (MP) programme is designed to prepare graduates or three-year diploma holders of recognised universities for study on specified courses at postgraduate master's or equivalent level at NCUK member institutions. The programme will be offered under the guidelines and regulations detailed in the current edition of the **NCUK Academic Handbook**.

NCUK Universities recognise the programme as meeting the English language entry requirements for international students, with progression contingent on students satisfying the performance criteria published in the NCUK Course Finder. The list of accepting universities can be seen on the university pages of the NCUK website.

Throughout the programme emphasis is placed on the integration of language learning, study skill development and the acquisition and/or re-orientation of subject knowledge. The philosophy permeating the delivery of the programme is that every teaching contact with a student is an opportunity to develop language and learning skills.

The programme has three routes:

- ⇒ **Master's Preparation Enhanced** is three terms in length and is designed for two groups of students: those who hold three-year diplomas plus work experience with a level of English equivalent to at least EAP grade E and graduates, or final year undergraduates, with an English language level equivalent to at least EAP grade E.
- ⇒ **Master's Preparation** consists of two terms and is for undergraduate degree holders or final year undergraduates with a level of English equivalent to at least EAP grade D.
- ⇒ **Master's Pre-Sessional** and is for undergraduate degree holders or final year undergraduates with a level of English equivalent to at least EAP grade D.

## AIMS

The aims of the NCUK Master's Preparation programme are to:

- ⇒ To enhance the English language ability of graduates or diplomates to a level sufficient to enable them to communicate and study effectively and confidently at postgraduate level at a Western university.
- ⇒ To develop the academic skills and an understanding of the underlying philosophies and related capabilities required for successful study at postgraduate level in Western higher education.
- ⇒ To relate the student's existing subject knowledge to that of Western graduates in similar discipline areas.
- ⇒ To cultivate a commitment to good practice in academic work and in particular an awareness of the serious adverse implications of plagiarism.
- ⇒ To provide students with the necessary skills to enable them to develop as independent, autonomous learners including the demonstrated ability to undertake a significant individual research project.
- ⇒ To give students practical experience of different methods that may be used to assess their learning.
- ⇒ To introduce aspects of Western culture and enable an understanding of the policies, procedures and regulations affecting study in the West.
- ⇒ To develop learning skills and reflective learning through the various elements of the programme.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this programme students should be able to:

- ⇒ Use English confidently in a Western academic environment and demonstrate a proficiency in English language to a standard equivalent to at least EAP grade C.
- ⇒ Learn effectively at master's level study.
- ⇒ Make effective use of a range of generic and subject specific study skills, language skills and information and communications technologies as well as self-directed study.
- ⇒ Conduct project work in appropriate subject areas including the use of primary and secondary data, the analysis of evidence and the presentation of findings.
- ⇒ Demonstrate an understanding of Western culture sufficient to aid rapid adjustment to living and studying in the west.

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The Master's Preparation programme is designed to allow entry at three points during the academic year. This is to allow students who have different levels of English (and differing academic backgrounds) to enter at an appropriate level. The programme is scheduled so that all routes can finish at the same point, and where possible, students can complete the same assignments and exams at the same time.

The first term for Master's Preparation Enhanced students is the Preparatory Term. Assessments in this term do not count towards the final grade: they are formative. In the second term – the Core Term – Master's Preparation students join those on the Enhanced pathway. The Final Term is identical for Master's Preparation Enhanced and Master's Preparation students.

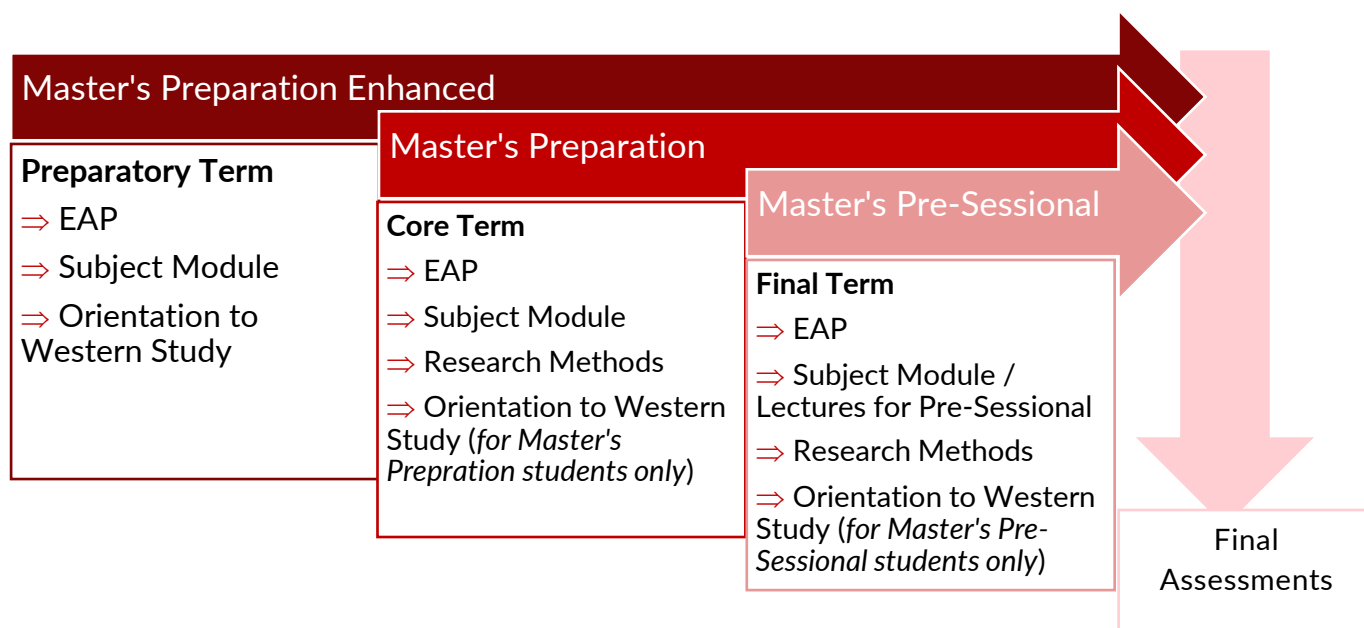
Master's Pre-Sessional students follow a modified version of the syllabus used for the Master's Preparation Enhanced and Master's Preparation. While elements of work done on the other pathways is incorporated into the Master's Pre-Sessional, they are tested differently. However, note that the final EAP examinations for Master's Pre-Sessional students are the same as those for Master's Preparation Enhanced and Master's Preparation students, and the examinations are taken at the same time.

### Orientation to Western Study

All routes undertake this module for one term when they start their Master's Preparation programme. For Master's Preparation Enhanced this is in the Preparatory Term and for Master's Preparation, the Core Term. This key-skills module is usually undertaken at the start of the Master's Pre-Sessional.

### Lectures

The Master's Preparation programme will be supported by lectures. Lectures also form the platform for tasks that contribute to the EAP grade. Where the centre also runs the Master's Preparation Enhanced and/or Master's Preparation routes it is recommended Master's Pre-Sessional students attend some lectures that are part of the subject module (usually the Management module) for those routes.



## PROGRAMME GRADING

Students receive two overall grades for the Master's Preparation Programme. A grade from A – U for EAP and a classification of Distinction, Credit or Pass for Research Methods. The detailed descriptors used to assess EAP work are provided in the EAP syllabus.

The classifications awarded for the Research Methods module are summarised in the table below:

Research Methods Classification Summary		
Grade	%	Criteria
Distinction	70 +	Excellent – exemplary execution of tasks. Objectives surpassed. Ingenuity demonstrated with creativity and skill.
Credit	60 - 69	Good – Competent work demonstrating ability to achieve objectives overall.
Pass	40 - 59	Adequate – ranging from a sufficient to a competent performance.

For information on the equivalencies of the NCUK EAP module to widely recognised English Language qualifications please see the entry requirements section of the [NCUK website](#).

# ENTRY TO THE PROGRAMME

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Students will be required to identify their proposed postgraduate study discipline prior to entry to the programme and take up subject study relevant to that discipline.

All applicants will be required to demonstrate a level of English language proficiency appropriate to the programme entry point. Students without approved English Language certification will sit a placement test approved by NCUK.

The Academic Manager or their nominee will interview all applicants; the interview will explore the prospective student's academic record, motivation, work experience and future study plans. Students will be required to produce certified copies of their university graduation (diploma or degree) transcripts and these will be used as the basis for the diagnostic sessions in their specialist subject areas. The Academic Manager's decision on the suitability of a candidate will be final.

The programme will have three possible entry points at the start of each of the routes. The minimum entry qualifications are available on the NCUK website: [www.ncuk.ac.uk](http://www.ncuk.ac.uk).

Students entering the Master's Preparation programme should normally have completed an undergraduate degree that is equivalent to a UK Bachelors, in a subject relevant to their intended progression route. Three-year diploma holders from some countries (e.g. China) may be accepted on to the **Master's Preparation Enhanced**, although such students may have limited progression.

## Entry Qualifications

Owing to the variation in degree standards from country to country, and the impact of a student's original qualification on the progression options they will have post-MP, all Master's Preparation programme applications should be sent to NCUK for evaluation (email: [nse@ncuk.ac.uk](mailto:nse@ncuk.ac.uk)). The applicant can only be enrolled once the centre has received approval from NCUK. For full details of how to refer applications, please consult the **NCUK Academic Handbook, Centre Management: Student Systems**.

# PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The Master's Preparation programme is designed to accommodate diploma and degree graduates, with varying levels of English language ability. All entry points are designed for part-time and full-time delivery. The syllabus presented in this document is divided into three terms for ease of reference: Preparatory Term, Core Term and Final Term. As a guide, each teaching week for full-time delivery will have an average directed study time of 20 hours, spread over a minimum of a 10-week term (including one week for assessments). Total learning activity including private study would be expected to exceed 40 hours per week. Hours referred to in this document are teaching hours (50 minutes per hour).

The Final Term project for Master's Preparation Enhanced and Master's Preparation students requires them to dedicate a minimum of 84 hours to independent study (this is not part of the programme's directed study time). It is expected however that students will spend considerably longer working on this aspect of the programme.

NCUK specifies minimum timetabled contact hours for its programmes but does not set a maximum class contact or total study time; it is recognised that many Study Centres will apply higher than minimum contact times to meet the learning needs of their students.

## Master's Preparation Enhanced

Term	Module	Directed Study Time	
		Per Week	Total
Preparatory (10 weeks)	English for Academic Purposes	10	90
	Orientation to Western Study <sup>1</sup>	N/A	9
	Subject Module	6	54
Core (10 weeks)	English for Academic Purposes	10	90
	Research Methods: Data Analysis and Project Planning	7	63
	Subject Module	3	27
Final (10 weeks)	English for Academic Purposes	10	90
	Research Methods: Project	7	63
	Subject Module	3	27
		<b>Total</b>	<b>513</b>

<sup>1</sup> Orientation to Western Study can be delivered separately or integrated at appropriate points in the EAP syllabus. Hours per week are not prescribed.

## Master's Preparation

Term	Module	Directed Study Time	
		Per Week	Total
<b>Core (10 weeks)</b>	English for Academic Purposes	10	90
	Orientation to Western Study <sup>1</sup>	N/A	9
	Research Methods: Data Analysis and Project Planning	7	63
	Subject Module	3	27
<b>Final (10 weeks)</b>	English for Academic Purposes	10	90
	Research Methods: Project	7	63
	Subject Module	3	27
		<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>

<sup>1</sup> Orientation to Western Study can be delivered separately or integrated at appropriate points in the EAP syllabus. Hours per week are not prescribed.

## Master's Pre-Sessional

Term	Module	Directed Study Time	
		Per Week	Total
<b>Final (10 weeks)</b>	English for Academic Purposes + Orientation to Western Study	14	126
	Research Methods: Data Analysis and Project Planning	5	45
	Lectures (target is one every two-weeks)	As arranged	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

The duration of each term may vary according to the timing of local public holidays. Terms may be interrupted by periods of holiday where necessary.

The programme may be delivered face-to-face or in blended/online modes as agreed with the Study Centre at the time of accreditation.

## **MODULE CHOICES**

Study Centres are not required to offer all the subject modules available on the Master's Preparation programme. Resources and student demand may dictate that Study Centres offer a smaller selection of subject modules. If Study Centres wish to add additional subject modules to their offering, they should inform NCUK well in advance, as the addition of some subject modules will require additional accreditation

## **CLASS SIZES**

Class sizes will vary between each element of the Master's Preparation programme. However, EAP classes and pastoral care tutorials must not exceed 16 students per class/tutorial.

Subject class sizes may be varied according to the activity e.g. lecture, seminar or tutorial. The principle to be applied to timetabling and class size should be to give students the opportunity to experience different forms of learning and to maximise opportunities for small-group work and for the development of independent learning skills. In general, NCUK would not expect tutorial or seminar groups to exceed 16 students but class sizes for lectures may be larger.

Staffing of the programme should allow for some one-to-one contact for each student.



# RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

The Study Centre must ensure that all physical and human resources are in place for the successful delivery of the Master's Preparation programme and this will be verified through the NCUK Study Centre accreditation process and the on-going quality audit.

## Staffing

Appropriately qualified staff should be appointed including an Academic Manager/Director responsible to NCUK for all aspects of the academic programme, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) specialist(s) and one or more appropriately qualified subject specialists for each route offered. Staff will all have recent university teaching experience and have experience of western universities. Administrative staff will be appointed as necessary to support the programme.

## Physical Resources

Physical resources will be dependent upon student numbers and modules delivered but typically the minimum specification will include the following:

- ⇒ A sufficient number of classrooms for the student population
- ⇒ Classrooms of a sufficient size for the student population
- ⇒ Appropriate furniture for students and staff
- ⇒ Appropriate classrooms and furniture for conducting examinations in a secure environment (including equipment for EAP listening and speaking examinations, if applicable)
- ⇒ Appropriate equipment to support the delivery of teaching (boards, projectors etc.)
- ⇒ Specialist labs and equipment for art & design, science and engineering modules (if applicable)
- ⇒ A study area/library area that
  - provides a quiet area to study
  - is equipped with all required textbooks for modules being taught, with sufficient copies for the student population (min. 1 copy per 5 students)
  - provides access to supplementary resources, including the additional textbooks and journals recommended in the module syllabus documents
- ⇒ A secure area for the storage of examination papers and completed assessments (accessible only by senior staff)
- ⇒ PCs or laptops for student use if the centre does not require students to provide their own
- ⇒ A functioning Wi-Fi connection of a sufficient speed to allow students and teachers to access relevant learning/teaching materials
- ⇒ Printing facilities for students and teachers

Where specific resources are required for a module, these will be detailed in the relevant module syllabus.

The 'teaching' area for the Master's Preparation programme should ideally be a self-contained 'centre' in which it is possible to create a Western higher education environment and ethos. The self-access study area and the ICT facilities should be available throughout the working day and in the evening.

If the Study Centre is offering online assessment through the NCUK learning and assessment platform, there are a set of IT requirements that must be met, please refer the NCUK Academic Handbook.

In addition to the requirements for the academic programme, students will also have resources for social support including access to sports and recreational facilities, food outlets and residential accommodation where required.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Comprehensive and effective quality assurance underpins all NCUK programmes. This ensures that students completing an NCUK programme are of the necessary standard to succeed on appropriate degree programmes in NCUK Universities.

We maintain academic standards and enhance quality through the procedures and infrastructure that comprise the NCUK Quality Assurance Framework. NCUK procedures are modelled on those commonly in use for collaborative provision in UK universities and where relevant, conform to Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code. The NCUK Board of Directors has delegated its authority to the Academic Quality Board. The Academic Quality Board is an independently constituted body which sits outside of NCUK's management structure and is comprised of external professorial-level academics. To protect the academic integrity of the Northern Consortium and the NCUK Universities, NCUK has a governance structure that ensures standards are maintained.

All NCUK programmes are subject to monitoring and regular review using the NCUK Product Development Framework. All programmes are subject to an Annual Validity Review that assesses the overall programme and individual modules to ascertain their validity and reliability based on quantitative data and qualitative feedback from students, Study Centres and NCUK Universities. Teaching staff have the opportunity to contribute to this process by providing feedback in Marker's Reports. All of NCUK's programmes are reviewed periodically, when a review takes place all Study Centres will be asked for feedback as part of a formal consultation. Any significant changes to NCUK's programmes are reviewed and approved by a Validation Panel made up of external subject experts. (For full details see the Academic Handbook, *Product Development Framework*)

All NCUK Study Centres are subject to a detailed accreditation process prior to delivery of NCUK programmes and are required to take part in a regular schedule of audits. In addition to this, NCUK engages regularly with Study Centres to develop and undertake a Centre Quality Plan in order to help drive continuous improvement at Study Centre level. (For full details see the Academic Handbook, *NCUK QA Framework: Study Centre Responsibilities*).