Programme Specification: Social Media and Digital Communication MA

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER⌗

Course record information

Name and level of final award	• Master of Arts - Social Media and Digital Communication The award is Bologna FQ-EHEA second cycle degree or diploma compatible
Name and level of intermediate awards	• Postgraduate Diploma (Pg Dip) - Social Media and Digital Communication • Postgraduate Certificate (Pg Cert) - Social Media and Digital Communication
Awarding body/institution	University of Westminster
Teaching institution	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution	Recognised Body
Location of delivery	Primary: Harrow
Language of delivery and assessment	English
QAA subject benchmarking group(s)	The following documents have been consulted: 'Subject Benchmark Statement: Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies' (October 2016) QAA Subject Benchmark Statements 'Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree' (September 2015) QAA Supporting Resources - Characteristics Statements
Professional statutory or regulatory body	N/A
Westminster course title, mode of attendance and standard length	• MA Social Media and Digital Communication FT, Full-time, September start - 1 year standard length • MA Social Media and Digital Communication PT, Part-time day/evening, September start - 2 years standard length
Valid for cohorts	From 2023/4

Admissions requirements

There are standard minimum entry requirements for all postgraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information. For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply.

Aims of the programme

The MA Social Media and Digital Communication has been designed to develop a critical understanding of contemporary networked digital media. Social media have challenged how we understand communication, democracy, news, relationships, privacy, advertising and entertainment. Social media have captured the attention and imagination of hundreds of millions of people. They enable their users to develop and display their creativity, to empathize with others, and to find connection, communication and communion. But social media have also captured those users' personal information, and turned their daily lives into commercial data through business models built around surveillance.

This MA degree develops an advanced and in-depth knowledge of contemporary digital media and communication through systematic study. It offers the social science and humanities expertise of Westminster's world-leading Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI). The course examines social media as industries and as central sites for understanding the cultural politics of everyday life. It explores the meanings of sharing and privacy, of remix cultures and new forms of journalism, of new forms of communication and new forms of citizenship. It connects social media to other digital phenomena such as the internet of things, Big Data, and media convergence. In its core modules, learners engage with questions of media technologies and texts, of platforms and users, and of how networked digital media are adopted and adapted in an environment built around the convergence of personal and public communication. Option modules offer specialist emphases on: digital media and critical theory; on data and society; on political economy; on activism and politics; on news and journalism; and on globalization and communication. All learners will develop high-level skills in research, critical thinking and communication.

Employment and further study opportunities

Today's organisations need graduates with both good degrees and skills relevant to the workplace, i.e. employability skills. The University of Westminster is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- Career development skills are embedded in all courses

- Opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning activities are widely available to students

- Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision

- Staff are provided with up-to-date data on labour market trends and employers' requirements, which will inform the service delivered to students.

Graduates of the MA Social Media and Digital Communication are able to work in a wide range of sectors and professions. The degree will benefit those seeking a competitive edge in a careers market that values high-level skills in communication, research and critical thinking. This degree will be of particular interest to those who plan to work in the creative industries, as well as those already working in this field. The MA Social Media and Digital Communication will also be of interest to students working in non-profit sectors, including NGOs and advocacy groups. It also provides an excellent preparation for those planning to continue their studies to PhD level. The MA Social Media and Digital Communication places particular emphasis on those transferable skills that have always been central to an education in the humanities or social sciences: these are core skills in research and analysis, in critical thinking, and in communication; our graduates develop these to advanced levels, along with their knowledge and understanding of networked digital media and their social and cultural contexts. Graduates of this degree are informed, critical, adaptable, resourceful and creative. They are able to work both independently and collaboratively in roles that require advanced skills in finding, generating, analysing and communicating ideas and information, such as research, consultancy, administration and management.

Knowledge and understanding
The core modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:
7MEDS010W Social Media KNU1, KNU2, KNU3, KNU4, KNU5, KNU6
7COMM013W Theories of Communication KNU3, KNU6
7MEDS009W Social Media Research Project: KNU1, KNU3, KNU4, KNU7

Specific skills
The core modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:
7MEDS010W Social Media SS8, SS9
7COMM013W Theories of Communication SS9
7MEDS009W Social Media Research Project SS9, SS10, SS11

Key transferable skills
The core modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:
7MEDS010W Social Media KTS12, KTS13, KTS14, KTS15, KTS16
7COMM013W Theories of Communication KTS12, KTS13, KTS14, KTS15, KTS16
7MEDS009W Social Media Research Project KTS12, KTS13, KTS14, KTS15, KTS16, KTS17

What will you be expected to achieve?

Course learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning.

These are threshold statements of achievement the learning outcomes broadly fall into four categories:

The overall knowledge and understanding you will gain from your course (KU)

Graduate attributes are characteristics that you will have developed during the duration of your course (GA)

Professional and personal practice learning outcomes are specific skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (PPP)

Key transferable skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course. (KTS)

Level 7 course learning outcomes: upon completion of Level 7 you will be able to:

- 001 Demonstrate an advanced critical understanding of social media, including their business models, technological contexts and affordances, social impacts, and cultural habits. KNU1 (KU)

- 002 Reflect critically upon the historical development of networked digital media. KNU2 (KU)

- 003 Discuss, explain and evaluate key theories of media and communication. KNU3 (KU)

- 004 Create critical insights into how social media are used in key social contexts. KNU4 (KU)

- 005 Analyse and critically appraise public debates around networked digital media. KNU5 (KU)

- 006 Apply critical perspectives on the relationships between communication technology and social change. KNU6 (KU)

- 007 Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of primary research methods for media and communication. KNU7 (KU)

- 008 Demonstrate a critical understanding of social media tools and platforms through reflective practice. SS8 (SS)

- 009 Access and employ a range of learning resources for coursework and independent research activity. SS9 (SS)

- 010 Appraise and apply a range of primary research methods for media and communication. SS10 (SS)

- 011 Devise, design and conduct an original independent media research project. SS11 (SS)

- 012 Work independently, taking responsibility for their own learning, problem solving, and time management. KTS12 (KTS)

- 013 Demonstrate and employ advanced skills in secondary research, using a range of approaches to retrieve, assess, appraise, evaluate and synthesise published research from a wide variety of resources. KTS13 (KTS)

- 014 Use advanced skills in critical and creative thinking through conducting, defending, appraising and evaluating arguments. KTS14 (KTS)

- 015 Write to an advanced standard in a range of different genres, such as essays, reports, blog posts and reviews. KTS15 (KTS)

- 016 Collaborate and participate effectively in group debate and discussion, including providing and responding to peer feedback. KTS16 (KTS)

- 017 Enhance and apply skills in preparing and delivering oral presentations. KTS17 (KTS)

How will you learn?

Learning methods

Different modules engage students with different ways of learning, to help support a variety of learning styles and personal development. While the majority of teaching is conducted face-to-face, we also support our modules with online material through the University's Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment. This material may include practical examples, technical support, key references, discussion groups and lecture notes. In addition, modules may make extensive use of a range of social media and other online platforms.

In-class contact time represents only a proportion of study for each module, and is part of a wider process of preparatory and follow-up reading and critical reflection by learners. The *out-of-class* independent study time is self-managed by learners, with guidance from academic staff, and offers scope for creative experimentation, exploration and the development of the autonomy required in professional life. This culminates in the capstone research project: each learner identifies their own area of research interest, about which they design, conduct and communicate the results of an independent critical enquiry into a question relevant to the themes and concerns of the degree.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods on the course include:

Lectures: These are designed to give learners a general overview of the topic. Lectures identify the most important relevant ideas, and invite learners to explore these further through their reading.

Seminars: These are designed to encourage learners to discuss a topic, based on the lecture and their reading. Sometimes individual learners will be asked to introduce a specific topic in a seminar.

Social media as learning spaces: Core modules make extensive use of blogs and platforms such as YouTube as learning and teaching spaces, with learners encouraged to create content that reflects on ideas from their readings and lectures.

Presentations: These offer learners experience in presenting ideas and arguments concisely, familiarising them with the preparation and use of visual aids, and teaching them how to interact with an audience. In some modules individual presentations will be formally assessed for clarity of argument, evidence of reading and effectiveness of communication.

Individual reading: A list of recommended reading for each topic will be provided for each module. This reading list represents a basis for exploration of the subject and learners are encouraged to go beyond these reading lists and make connections with other material.

Assessment methods

All assessment is of coursework; there are no exams. Learners produce a varied range of coursework for assessment, including essays, research reports, presentations, social media contributions such as blog posts, and group and individual creative projects.

Modules may include a piece of formative assessment. Learners receive feedback on this, but the assessment does not count towards their overall marks for the module. Rather, the purpose is to help them to learn and prepare for those assignments whose marks do count. Formative assessment is assessment for learning. Each module will also include between one and three pieces of summative assessment. Learners will receive feedback on this and the assessment will count towards their overall marks for the module. This is assessment of learning.

Course Structure

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the course and their credit value. Full-time Postgraduate students study 180 credits per year. Additional free text information on the choices may also be included, for example where students must choose one of two modules.. Course structures can be subject to change each academic year following feedback from a variety of sources.

Modules

Level 7

Learners may substitute one option module from this list with another relevant 20-credit level 7 module, if they receive permission from both their own course leader and the leader of the module that they wish to study.

Module Code	Module Title	Status	UK credit	ECTS
7MEDS010W	Social Media	Core	20	10
7MEDS009W	Social Media Research Project	Core	60	30
7COMM013W	Theories of Communication	Core	20	10
7BDIN008W	Data and Society: Concepts and Applications	Option	20	10
7BDIN009W	Data and Society: Research and Methods	Option	20	10
7MEDS004W	Digital Media and Critical Theory	Option	20	10
7MEST002W	Global Media	Option	20	10
7COMM006W	Media Audiences in the Digital Age	Option	20	10
7MEDS015W	Media, Activism and Politics	Option	20	10
7MEDS005W	Political Economy of Communication	Option	20	10
7COMM002W	Researching Media and Communication	Option	20	10
7JRNL016W	The Sociology of News	Option	20	10

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. In addition, timetabling and limited spaces may mean you cannot register for your first choice of option modules.

Professional body accreditation or other external references

N/A

Course management

The MA Social Media and Digital Communication is taught in the College of Design, Creative and Digital Industries. It is based in the Westminster School of Media and Communication. The management structure supporting the course is as follows:

Professor Graham Meikle, Course Leader, is responsible for day to day running and overall management of the course and development of the curriculum.

Head of School: Michaela O'Brien, holds academic responsibility for the course and for other courses run within the School.

Head of College: Professor Janet Jones, holds overall responsibility for the course and for the other courses run in the College.

This Master's course is led by Professor Graham Meikle, who has been researching and teaching about digital media for 20 years, and has published books about social media, media convergence, internet activism, online news, and the internet of things. He teaches core modules every year. All modules are led by staff who are active researchers: this means that they are engaged in developing new knowledge in this field and are able to bring this perspective to their teaching. Each student is also allocated a personal tutor, who will meet with them throughout their course to discuss progress and provide guidance. A course committee made up of staff and students meets at least once each semester, and all modules are monitored and reviewed regularly.

Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations.

Course specific regulations apply to some courses.

Academic Support

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Campus Registry. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students. Further information on Blackboard can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/studies/your-student-journey/when-you-arrive/blackboard

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments. Further information on the Academic Learning Development Centre can be found at westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development.

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students1 can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught in their College. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

Support Services

The University of Westminster Student and Academic Services department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. Further information on the advice available to students can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/student-advice

The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University. Further information on UWSU can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/students-union

How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel. University Panels normally include internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university. a representative from industry and a Student Advisor.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the evidence of student surveys, student progression and achievement and reports from external examiners, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and make changes where necessary.

A Course revalidation takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with revalidation panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

How do we act on student feedback?

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement activities at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Course representatives are elected to expressly represent the views of their peers. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the course representatives.
- There are also School Representatives appointed jointly by the University and the Students' Union who meet with senior School staff to discuss wider issues affecting student experience across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and University committees.;
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.

- Final year Undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey which helps to inform the national university league tables.

This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate, if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification is supplemented by the Course Handbook, Module proforma and Module Handbooks provided to students.   Copyright in this document belongs to the University of Westminster. All rights are reserved. This document is for personal use only and may not be reproduced or used for any other purpose, either in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the University of Westminster. All copies of this document must incorporate this Copyright Notice – 2022©

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