

# University of Glasgow

## Course/Programme Approval Process

### External Academic Consultation Proforma

#### Proposal for a **NEW programme or NEW course** or **AMENDMENT** of a programme or **SUBSTANTIVE AMENDMENT** of a course or **WITHDRAWAL** of a programme or course

<b>Programme and/or Course Name(s):</b> (please list all programme and/or courses as appropriate)	Political Communication MSc (Changes) Digital Disruption and Political Communication (New) Media and Democracy (Changes) Political Institutions and Communication (Withdrawal)
<b>School:</b>	School of Social and Political Sciences
<b>College:</b>	College of Social Sciences

### Instructions to Proposers

This proforma should be completed for **new programme** and **course** proposals, **amend programme** and **course** proposals (other than simple corrections or non-substantive changes<sup>1</sup>), and **programme** or **course withdrawals**.

Where amendments are being made to a programme or set of cognate programmes which involve either the development of new core courses or the amendment of existing courses, the external academic may be invited to comment on the documentation as a suite (rather than being asked to complete a separate consultation proforma for each course). The same approach may be used where the same or a similar amendment is being made to a suite of courses, some of which may be core to one or more programmes (for example, PGT dissertation/project option courses). In these cases, the expectation is that:

- proposals are sensibly batched (e.g., by the similar/identical motivation for and nature of the amendments proposed to courses within a programme).
- the external academic has the required knowledge and expertise and is competent to comment on the content of all programme or courses presented for consideration.
- All the programme and courses that the external academic has reviewed are listed on the proforma, and it's made clear what feedback applies specifically to which course.

If there is no External Examiner, consultation should take place with an external academic whom the School would normally approach to become an External Examiner.

The draft proposal(s) should be discussed with the external academic at an early stage. However, the external academic must be provided with the completed Programme or Course Specification document(s) in order to complete Section 1 of this proforma.

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<sup>1</sup> [Guidance](#) is available on whether a course amendment is substantive.

The external academic must be at least given **at least 1 week** to review the proposal(s) and return the form.

Programme or course proposers must respond to feedback provided by the external academic.

Evidence of the external consultation should be submitted to the Board of Studies and/or School Learning & Teaching Committee (as appropriate) with the proposal documentation; therefore, **this proforma must be completed *BEFORE* the final documentation is due for submission to the Board of Studies for scrutiny**. If this proforma is being used for a suite of courses across two or more PIP proposals, please ensure that a copy of this proforma is uploaded to each PIP proposal.

**Section 1** is to be completed and signed by the external academic.

**Section 2** is to be completed and signed by the programme or course proposer.

## Section 1: Comments from the external academic

*The University greatly values the input of external academics when programmes and courses are being developed or amended. This independent external advice contributes to the transparency of the approval process and the confirmation of academic standards.*

In the case of proposals for **new** programmes or courses, Questions 1 – 6 should all be completed.

In the case of proposals for **amended** programmes or courses, Questions 1 – 6 should be completed **where appropriate** (so if, for example, an amendment has only been made to the methods of assessment, comment need only be provided for Question 3 and the other questions can either left blank or responded to as ‘*Not applicable*’).

In the case of proposed **withdrawals**, only Question 7 should be completed.

Please provide comment on the programme and/or course(s) listed overleaf and, where appropriate, advise on how the proposal might be revised or improved. If providing comment on more than one programme and/or course, please make clear what feedback applies specifically to which programme and/or course.

The expectation is that comment will usually be provided on each programme and/or course specification (as appropriate).

### 1. Aims

Programme: This well-conceived programme offers a rigorous and contemporary exploration of political communication, equipping students with an advanced understanding of how politics, media, civil society, and public opinion interact across domestic and global contexts. It combines strong theoretical grounding with applied analysis of digital media, disinformation, and strategic communication, supported by robust methodological training. The inclusion of diverse political systems, flexible electives, and a substantial supervised research project makes the programme both intellectually ambitious and professionally relevant, particularly for careers in public affairs, media, and strategic communication.

POLITIC 5011: The new aims sharpen the course’s intellectual focus by moving from a broad overview of political communication to a more analytically coherent and contemporary framework. They foreground power, information flows, and influence as central dynamics, integrate domestic and international dimensions, and strengthen the connection between theory, empirical evidence, and real-world case studies. While retaining the strengths of the old aims, the new formulation offers greater conceptual depth, coherence, and alignment with current debates in the field.

Digital Disruption and Political Communication: This course offers a timely and well-designed exploration of digital media’s transformative role in political communication and democratic life. It equips students to critically evaluate how digital platforms disrupt public debate, institutions, and political behaviour, drawing on both key theoretical perspectives and robust empirical evidence. By engaging with contemporary challenges in platform governance and regulation, students develop a nuanced understanding of digital disruption and its broader societal implications,

fostering the analytical skills needed to assess how emerging technologies continue to reshape modern democracies.

## 2. Intended Learning Outcomes

Programme: The programme's learning outcomes are impressively comprehensive and well aligned with the programme's ambitions. Students should develop a sophisticated command of political communication theory, comparative analysis, and research design, while applying both qualitative and quantitative methods to real-world problems. The emphasis on cross-national, cross-platform analysis, independent problem-solving, and evidence-based argumentation ensures strong intellectual depth. At the same time, the focus on communication, presentation, and teamwork equips graduates with highly transferable skills, making the outcomes academically rigorous and professionally valuable.

POLITIC 5011: The new ILOs build on the old by providing clearer progression, reduced redundancy, and stronger alignment between theory, empirical analysis, and skills development. They integrate theoretical evaluation with empirical evidence, extend learning from explanation to application and investigation, and introduce explicit transferable skills outcomes. Overall, the new ILOs offer a more streamlined and transparent map of student development across conceptual understanding, analytical capacity, and academic communication skills.

Digital Disruption and Political Communication: This course clearly sets ambitious and highly valuable learning outcomes, equipping students with both theoretical insight and practical analytical skills. By its conclusion, students will understand the central debates on digital media's disruptive impact in democracies, apply key concepts to assess social media's influence on political attitudes and societal dynamics, critically interpret empirical research, and generate evidence-based knowledge of how digital media shapes actors like parties, movements, media, and citizens. It also cultivates specialist skills essential for careers in political communication.

## 3. Methods of assessment

Programme: The programme's assessment strategy is thoughtfully designed to balance academic rigour with variety and fairness. While written work remains central, the programme incorporates a wide range of assessment formats across core, methodology, and elective modules, including essays, exams, research proposals, presentations, and active participation. This diversity should allow students to demonstrate different strengths and skills. The substantial dissertation provides a strong capstone experience, encouraging independent, in-depth research and ensuring coherence and high academic standards across the programme.

POLITIC 5011: The new assessment framework preserves the structure and fairness of the old while improving clarity and alignment with the revised aims and ILOs. Group presentations, reflective reports, formative tasks, and the final case study are more

explicitly linked to analytical, applied, and skills-based outcomes. The result is a more coherent and clearly articulated assessment design that strengthens constructive alignment between teaching, learning outcomes, and evaluation without disrupting continuity.

The proposed assessment timing is pedagogically robust, well scaffolded, and closely aligned with the course's learning objectives. Ongoing regular tasks and peer review provide a strong formative foundation, encouraging sustained engagement, incremental skills development, and early identification of strengths and areas for improvement. The group presentation in Week 8 is well positioned as a developmental milestone, allowing students to draw on sufficient theoretical grounding while still benefiting from structured preparation, reading week support, and targeted feedback in Week 7. Scheduling the individual reflective report in Week 10, after feedback is received, promotes genuine reflection, engagement with feedback, and metacognitive development. The final case study deadline in the first week after the Christmas break is a considered choice, enabling students to synthesise the full course content without end-of-term compression. Overall, the sequencing maximises learning gains from feedback, reflection, and independent analysis, while maintaining coherence, fairness, and student-centred design.

Digital Disruption and Political Communication: The course features a well-balanced and thoughtfully designed assessment structure that combines collaboration, independent analysis, and active engagement. Students are evaluated through a group project (30%), fostering teamwork and practical application of course concepts; a substantial policy briefing based on a case study (2,200 words, 55%), promoting rigorous research and analytical skills; and participation in Moodle workshops (15%), encouraging interactive learning and critical discussion. This mix ensures both skill development and comprehensive understanding of digital media's role in political communication.

#### 4. Level of the course, or of the courses comprising the programme

All: Level 5 (SCQF Level 11)

#### 5. The credit rating of the course, or of the courses comprising the programme

Programme: 180

POLITIC 5011: 20


Digital Disruption and Political Communication: 20

#### 6. The potential for enhancement of students' employability/graduate attributes

All: The programme, as well as the featured courses, have strong potential to enhance students' employability and graduate attributes through its coherent structure, flexibility, and research-led design. Core courses develop highly relevant expertise in

media, democracy, digital disruption, and research methods, equipping students with analytical, methodological, and digital literacy skills valued across public affairs, policy, media, and communications roles. The wide range of optional courses allows students to tailor their learning to specific career interests, while interdisciplinary choice broadens intellectual and professional horizons. The substantial dissertation strengthens independent research, project management, and advanced writing skills, all central to graduate employability. The availability of part-time and dual-degree pathways further enhances accessibility and international exposure. Crucially, the programme benefits from the University of Glasgow's long-standing academic reputation, research excellence, and strong links to media resources, ensuring graduates emerge with both rigorous training and credible professional capital.

7. [**Withdrawals only**] In the case of the proposed withdrawal of a course or courses, please comment on implications for the associated programme or programmes. In the case of the proposed withdrawal of programmes please comment on any known implications.

<b>External Academic Name:</b>	Scott Fitzsimmons
<b>Title:</b>	Dr.
<b>Institution/Employer:</b>	University of Limerick
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	January 7, 2025

**Section 2: Response from the programme or course proposer**

1. Has the external academic suggested any alterations to the proposal? (please check box)

**Yes**

**No**

If **Yes** and the suggestions HAVE been adopted, provide details of the changes made:

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If **Yes** and the suggestions have NOT been adopted, explain why not:

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2. Has the external academic suggested further consideration of any issues? (please check box)

**Yes**

**No**

If **Yes**, provide a commentary:

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<b>Programme or Course Proposer:</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	