



University
of Exeter

Strategy and Security
Institute

MStrat

MA Applied Security and Strategy (MStrat)

Why choose the MStrat?

Security Challenges are Rising:

- Great power competition; wars are proliferating.
- Environmental damage generating insecurity across large regions.
- In an interconnected and multipolar world, strategy is more complex than ever.

Training Future Leaders:

- Established in 2012, the MStrat prepares public and private sector leaders to master the art of strategy.
- The new Incarnation of the MStrat programme remains academically rigorous and vocationally focussed, but has evolved to address modern challenges.

Flexible and Modular Design:

- The MStrat now offers a structure tailored for working professionals, enabling part-time study alongside career commitments.



What makes the MStrat unique?

- The MStrat is an interdisciplinary programme combining strategy, policy, and security studies, with a focus on real-world applications of strategy and security theories.
- Delivered by leading academics and industry experts, with strong connections to government and international organisations.
- The programme is designed for both professionals and students interested in careers in defence, security, and diplomacy, with small, diverse cohorts fostering global networking.
- We support flexible learning options: Full time (2 days per week) and part-time (1 day per week over two years). This is an in-person programme with no online or remote learning, fostering collaborative engagement.



MStrat: Programme overview

Module	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Foundations and Theory of Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module code: POLM242• Credits: 30• Contact time: 44	Foundations and Theory of Strategy		
Applied Strategy in the Contemporary World <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module code: POLM233• Credits: 30• Contact time: 44		Applied Strategy; Simulated Exercise	
Decision-Making: Command, Leadership and Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module code: POLM241 (optional)• Credits: 30• Contact time: 44	Organisational Theory; Theories of decision-making; Case studies in decisionmaking		
Security Futures <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module code: POLM240 (optional)• Credits: 30• Contact time: 44		Defence, Human, Environment, Migration Cyber, AI, Law	
Dissertation / Research Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module code: POLM243• Credits: 60 inc. Research skills training			Preparation and Delivery, 10,000 words or equivalent

Module Descriptor: Foundations and Theory of Strategy

This module aims to introduce students from different disciplinary and employment backgrounds to a common body of knowledge that will allow them to consider definitional and conceptual boundaries when studying and applying security strategy.

The module introduces students to some of the main works in traditional strategic thought and examines contemporary theoretical approaches to security and strategy.

By the end of the module students will have developed a sense of security strategy as a coherent yet complex intellectual discipline.



Module Descriptor: Applied Strategy in the Contemporary World

This module focusses on the challenges of 'doing' strategy in the real world and the risk-based approach to decision-making. Using a 'strategic sandbox' to develop an applied strategic skillset, students are shown some 'tools of the trade'. By the end of this module students will have developed some of the skills necessary for strategic decision-making in the contemporary world.

Initial focus is on why 'real strategy' is difficult, illustrated with examples of why strategy has, at times, failed. Interactive teaching sessions, akin to workshop seminars, then cover the 'tools of the trade' ensuring students to develop a range of applied skills they can apply to contemporary security issues and challenges. Learning will be reinforced with engaging and immersive applied exercises including a Field Trip and a Crisis Management Simulated Exercise.





Module Descriptor: Decision-Making: Command, Leadership and Management*

In this module, students will explore the theory and practice of decision-making in order to understand the complex concepts of command, leadership and management. The course is inter-disciplinary and broad-ranging, drawing from organisational studies, sociology, politics, psychology, and philosophy. The course begins with an introduction to organisational theory, before examining classic theories of decision-making including the works of Janis, March and Olsen, Perrow, Drucker, before applying these theories to a selection of pertinent case studies.

- **Term 1:** Organisational theory, theory of decision-making
- **Term 2:** Case studies in decision-making

*Optional

Module Descriptor: Security Futures*

This module will enhance understanding of contemporary and future themes in security and strategy.

The contemporary and future context is partly driven by a strategic environment where some of the traditional norms are being challenged by a range of factors including: the accelerating pace of technology and the 4th Industrial Revolution including issues such as Artificial Intelligence, Cyber, Space, Energy Weapons, Autonomous Weapons, and what it does to the traditional nations of strategy, such as decision-making; rising and developing powers are challenging the established order leading to a crisis of the Western Liberal Democracies; identity politics are challenging the very processes of strategy making; moreover climate change and pandemics have altered the global strategic landscape.

*This module can be substituted with a cognate module from the Faculty allowing students to tailor the programme to their professional interests.





Dissertation / Research Project

10,000 words or equivalent

- Ensures skills needed to conduct an extended piece of research and writing
- Time and guidance to engage with core debates across the sub-disciplines of politics
- Equips students with practical skills and contributes to intellectual development
- Enable students to write on a topic of their choosing with a supervisor
- Allows students to demonstrate depth and breadth of knowledge in a particular subject area of professional or intellectual interest
- A dissertation is a mark of ability to express oneself in writing
- To be completed by 30 September of year of study



Potential Cognate Modules

Example modules that might be taken in place of the Security Futures module with the Programme Director's agreement:

Code	Module	Credits
<u>SPAM002</u>	Security, Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies	30
<u>POLM084</u>	Conflict, Security and Development in World Politics	30
<u>POLM158</u>	Digital Politics and Policy	30
<u>POLM060</u>	Global Security	30
<u>POLM233</u>	Applied Strategy in the Contemporary World	30



MStrat: Delivery Model

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
		T1: Theory of Strategy T2: Applied Strategy		
	Lunch	Lunch 1200-1300		
	T1: How to Make Decision T2: Security Future	MStrat Speaker Programme		
	Break	Break		

Alumni Testimonials



Having now spent a few weeks working in the Whitehall bubble, I can cope with the relentless workload and intensity because of how the course prepared me. Learning how to better prioritise tasks, deliver high-quality outputs on time and keep seeking out new opportunities has set me above most. Days can be exhausting but my ability to cope has improved tenfold following being part of the MStrat.

I almost daily make use of the knowledge I gained. In retrospect, it is the sharpest programme I ever could have chosen. I use every chance I have to advocate for the MStrat at Exeter.

What the MStrat gave me was the ability to perform in the strategic environment and to confidently speak with senior stakeholders. The fusion of academic study, combined with applied work pushed me to think beyond commenting on decision-making to considering what I would have done in the same circumstances. This mindset has served me well in my profession and I have not come across any other Master's courses which provide such insight into the practicalities of decision making at the strategic level.

Entry Requirements

Standard entry:

2:2 Honours degree and completed application form.

Non-standard entry:

In recognition that many professionals in defence and security, such as those in the Armed Forces, entered their careers without a first degree, SSI welcomes applications from individuals without a degree who can demonstrate to the programme director through their application that they have the requisite experience and academic capability to thrive on the programme.

English language requirements:

International students need to show they have the required level of English language to study this course. **Please visit our English language requirements page** to view the required test scores and equivalencies from your country.

How to Apply

Start Date: Tuesday 23 September 2025

Application Deadline:

Visit our [Postgraduate application page](#) for details

How to Apply: Visit our [website](#)

Contact Us

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