Royal Holloway, University of London
Course specification for a postgraduate award

MA GLOBAL HEALTH: SOCIETY, CULTURE AND BEHAVIOUR

Section 1 – Introduction to your course

This course specification is a formal document, which provides a summary of the main features of your course and the learning outcomes that you might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if you take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Further information is contained in the University prospectus, and in various handbooks, all of which you will be able to access online. Alternatively, further information on the University's academic regulations and policies can be found here. Further information on the University's Admissions Policy can be found here.

The course is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or up to five years of part-time study (260 weeks) during which the student will progress through a PGCert, PG Dip and to a masters on the completion of an independent project in Y5; the PG Cert and PG Dip can also be taken independently (see attached pathway diagram at Annex I). Teaching takes place during the day over two terms from September to the following April. The dissertation is submitted in September. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, each course provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

The curriculum addresses existing and emerging health challenges of the 21st century through a social-science focused pathway leading to an MA exit route. Topics covered include the foundational concepts of the fields of Global and Planetary Health; Global Health Systems; Environmental Determinants of Health (including, climate change, pollution, conflict, poverty and development). It will equip students with sound knowledge, appraisal, evaluation, implementation, communication and leadership skills needed to navigate to a career or further academic study in the field/sectors of global health, planetary health, health policy, health system administration and environmental policy. Students will explore the intersection of human health with healthy and unhealthy environments, including environments that are polluted, overcrowded, economically deprived, politically fragile and/or disrupted by conflict and natural disasters. Students might expect to progress to careers in health or public health policy (at local or national government level, and within international organisations such as WHO, UNICEF, Red Cross, UNEP, UNESCO, etc), health administration within public and private health sectors, science publishing and journalism, allied health practice, health communication and planetary health advocacy through international NGOs.

The MA in Global Health: Society, Culture and Behaviour will critically appraise how culture, behaviour and governance, as well as environmental economic factors, impact human and environmental health, affecting us all. Global health is an area that has come into even sharper focus in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has made more visible the need to understand the cultural and behavioural drivers of human and environmental health. Shaping the health of populations across our one world society has never been more important, calling for specialists with the knowledge and skills to build cooperation and to innovate and influence change across boundaries.

The course will develop students' ability to look beyond the immediate causes of ill-health to the underlying socioeconomic and environmental determinants. It connects knowledge to global health-related challenges and solutions. These solutions will be based around creative and flexible thinking through an interdisciplinary education that will include experiential learning and case study critical appraisal, alone and in teams; students will be encouraged to take leadership and management roles within their peer groups.

While Royal Holloway keeps all the information made available under review, courses and the availability of individual modules, especially optional modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and you are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect your decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform you as soon as is practicable of any significant changes which might affect your studies.

The following is brief description for some of the most important terminology for understanding the content of this document:

Degree course – Also referred to as 'course', this term refers to the qualification you will be awarded upon successful completion of your studies. 'Courses' were formerly known as 'programmes' at Royal Holloway.
Module – This refers to the credits you will study each year to complete your degree course. Postgraduate taught degrees at Royal Holloway comprise 180 credits. On some degree courses a certain number of optional modules must be passed for a particular degree title. 'Modules' were formerly known as 'course units' at Royal Holloway.

Section 2 – Course details			
Date of specification update	May 2024	**Location of study**	Egham Campus
Course award and title	MA Global Health: Society, Culture and Behaviour	**Level of study**	Postgraduate
Course code	3651	**Year of entry**	2025/26
Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Department/ School	Department of Health Studies, School of the Environment and Life Sciences	**Other departments or schools involved in teaching the course**	n/a
Mode(s) of attendance	Full-time; part-time	**Duration of the course**	One year (52 weeks) full-time Two to five years (104 - 260 weeks) part-time
Accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirement(s)	N/A	**For queries on admissions:**	https://royalholloway.ac.uk/applicationquery
Link to Coursefinder for further information:	https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/ and https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/postgraduate/health-studies/ma-global-health-society-culture-and-behaviour/		

Section 3 – Degree course structure

3.1 Mandatory module information
The following table summarises the mandatory modules, which students must take in each year of study

Module code	Module title	Credits	FHEQ level	Module status (see section 6)
HE5003	Key Concepts in Global and Planetary Health	15	7	MNC
HE5002	Global Health Systems: Health Systems and Health Protection	30	7	MC
HE5000	Research Skills for Global and Planetary Health – MA Pathway	15	7	MNC
HE5006	Advanced Concepts in Global and Planetary Health	15	7	MC
HE5004	Social and Environment Determinants of Health	30	7	MC
HE5005	Health Communication and Presentation Skills	15	7	MC
HE5001	Independent Project – MA Pathway	60	7	MNC

This table sets out the most important information for the mandatory modules on your degree course. These modules are central to achieving your learning outcomes, so they are compulsory, and all students on your degree course will be required to take them. You will be automatically registered for these modules. Mandatory modules fall into two categories; 'condonable' or 'non-condonable'.

In the case of mandatory 'non-condonable' (MNC) modules, you must pass the module to successfully graduate with a particular degree title, or before you can proceed to the next year of your course where studying part-time. In the case of mandatory 'condonable' (MC) modules, these must be taken but you can still progress or graduate even if you do not pass them (see Academic Regulations on condonable fails). Please note that although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, changes to your degree course may be made where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events. For example; where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of external advisors, to enhance academic provision.

3.2 Optional modules

In addition to mandatory modules, there will be a number of optional modules available during the course of your degree. The following table lists a selection of optional modules that are likely to be available. However, not all may be available every year. Although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, new options may be offered or existing ones may be withdrawn. For example; where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of External Advisors, to enhance academic provision. There may be additional requirements around option selection, please contact the department for further information.

Optional modules.

There are no optional modules	

3.3 Optional module requirements

There are no optional modules, though in three modules (Research skills; communication skills and the independent project) students choose between an MA or MSc pathway.

Section 4 - Progressing through each year of your degree course

For further information on the progression and award requirements for your degree, please refer to Royal Holloway's Academic Regulations.

All postgraduate taught students are required to take and pass the non-credit bearing Moodle-based Academic Integrity module SS1001 in order to be awarded. The pass mark for the module assessment is stated in the on-line Academic Integrity Moodle module. Students may attempt the assessment as often as they wish with no penalties or capping. Students who otherwise meet the requirements for award as stipulated in the Academic Taught Regulations but fail to pass the Moodle-based Academic Integrity module will not be awarded.

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in summative or formative coursework assignments. Please note that if you hold a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa and you choose to leave (or are required to leave because of non-progression) or complete early (before the course end date stated on your CAS), then this will be reported to UKVI.

Section 5 – Educational aims of the course

The aims of this course are to:

- Enable students to critically appraise, and be able to apply, the key concepts underpinning the field of global and planetary health, in alignment with the Education Framework of the Planetary Health Alliance (https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org/education-framework).
- Develop competence in key qualitative and quantitative research methods employed in the fields of global and planetary health to a level where students are able to apply these, individually and in groups, to research projects, service evaluations, writing evidence-informed policy, media articles, public engagement and academic study design.
- Equip students with a strong critical grounding in interdisciplinary approaches to complex socioecological problems so that they are able to apply these when planning research projects, service evaluations, writing evidence-informed policy, media articles, public engagement and academic study design
- Develop students' skills in analysing, evaluating and critiquing secondary and primary data, including skills in extracting such data from large public datasets to evaluate and evidence the current state of global human health, air quality, water quality, land coverage, biodiversity and development status.
- Build students' confidence in presenting global and planetary health evidence and proposed solutions informed by this evidence to diverse audiences.
- Equip students with the skills needed to work in teams and independently and to plan, undertake, evaluate, deliver and communicate research findings and evidence.

Section 6 - Course learning outcomes

In general terms, the courses provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (*Categories – Knowledge and understanding (K), Skills and other attributes (S), and Transferable skills (*)*)

Course learning outcome	Stage 1/Term 1	Stage 2/Term 2	Stage 3/Term 3
Students will be able to critically appraise key concepts in Global and Planetary Health. Students will be able to critically appraise advanced concepts in Global and Planetary Health. Students will demonstrate critical understanding of, and where to access, key literature and datasets from the fields of global and planetary health. Students will demonstrate how to evaluate how human behaviour and/or how the environment impacts on human health Students will demonstrate ability to explain and present complex ideas in academic writing. Students will demonstrate critical awareness of the Planetary Health Alliance's Educational Framework and be able to apply it to key 21st century health challenges. Students demonstrate ability to critically evaluate how human health and the health of the environment is measured, including through awareness and use of appropriate databases, and are able to apply this to relevant topics.	1. Evaluate the appropriateness of the different methodologies available to Global and Planetary Health Researchers to specific challenges by appropriate selection and use in a study design, assessed through project outline and plan. Demonstrate ability to align the chosen methodologies to the requirements of an MA exit pathway (e.g. focus on qualitative research, lived experience, co-design and participatory involvement) 2. Demonstrate ability to integrate appropriate stages of the research process of a global and planetary health study, and the significance and value of these stages, into a study design, assessed through project outline and plan. 3. Demonstrate proficiency in at least one methodology by designing appropriate data collection tools to collect and evaluate primary and/or secondary data. 4. Demonstrate project management skills in planning a research project. 5. Demonstrate competence with key software packages introduced during the module by using them to collect, evaluate, analyse and present data.	1. Identify, critically appraise and evaluate key databases on the state of the environment, assessed through inclusion in the policy brief assessed output. 2. Critically evaluate barriers to and facilitators of a healthy environment, including the roles played by access to (one or more of) adequate food, shelter, clean water, fresh air and green space, assessed through inclusion in policy brief assessed output. 3. Critically appraise the current regulation, treaties and other instruments available to protect the conditions on which human health depends, assessed through inclusion in policy brief assessed output. 4. Critically appraise the tensions inherent in allocating finite resources appropriately and communicate this effectively using language and presentation methods appropriate for the target audience, assessed through inclusion in policy brief assessed output. 5. Demonstrate an understanding of evidence-informed policy recommendations and how to deliver them to policymakers and influencers, assessed	1. Students are able to critically evaluate the different methodologies available to Global and Planetary Health researchers, with a focus on qualitative, participatory and creative research methodologies and approaches commensurate with the MA exit route (e.g. focus on qualitative research, lived experience, co-design and participatory involvement). 2. Demonstrate ability to integrate appropriate stages of the research process of a global and planetary health study, and the significance and value of these stages, into a study design, assessed through project outline, plan, and implementation and write up. 3. Demonstrate proficiency in at least one methodology by designing appropriate data collection tools to collect and evaluate primary and/or secondary data. 4. Demonstrate project management skills in planning, undertaking and delivering an independent project. 5. Demonstrate competence with key software packages introduced during the module by using them to collect, evaluate, analyse and present data in the independent research project.

Students demonstrate ability to evaluate and critically appraise the complex interplays between human and environmental health by taking a socioecological systems approach. Students can critically analyse the key barriers to equitable distribution of healthcare. Students can critically appraise relevant regulation and policy to explain how human and environmental health can be protected or is challenged and are able to apply this in written and verbal outputs. Students can critically appraise the costs and benefits of a chosen topic for the improvement of human health and present a business case for supporting an intervention to improve the current baseline. Students will be able to Identify, critically appraise and evaluate key databases on the state of the environment, assessed through inclusion in the policy brief assessed output. Students will be able to critically evaluate barriers to and facilitators of a healthy environment, including the roles played by access to (one or more of) adequate food, shelter, clean water, fresh air and green space. Students will be able to critically appraise the current regulation, treaties and other instruments available to protect the	1. Evaluate how human health is measured, including through awareness and use of appropriate databases, and be able to apply this to relevant topics, assessed through the written output. 2. Evaluate and appraise the complex interplays between human and environmental health by taking a socioecological systems approach, assessed through demonstration of this in a written output. 3. Critically appraise the key barriers to equitable distribution of healthcare, assessed through consideration of this in written output. 4. Critically appraise relevant regulation and policy to explain how human and environmental health can be protected or is challenged, assessed through consideration of this in written output. 5. Critically appraise the costs and benefits of a chosen topic for the improvement of human health and present the case for supporting an intervention to improve the current baseline, assessed through application of this to a chosen topic in written output. 1. Critically appraise key concepts in Global and Planetary Health, assessed through academic writing; policy brief or presentation.	through inclusion in policy brief assessed output. 1. Critically evaluate target audiences, assess their information needs and develop outputs tailored to those needs, minimising the likelihood that information will be misunderstood by non-expert audiences. Assessed through development of activity for the public engagement day. 2. Evaluate data and research findings and critically appraise how difficult-to-reach or resistant populations might be engaged. Assessed through development of activity for the public engagement day. 3. Produce and deliver a piece of work that communicates research aims, results or outputs, tailored to a particular audience, for publication OR presentation OR public engagement. Assessed through development of activity for the public engagement day. 1. Critically evaluate target audiences, assess their information needs and develop outputs tailored to those needs, minimising the likelihood that information will be misunderstood by non-expert audiences. Assessed through development of activity for the public engagement day. 2. Evaluate data and research findings and critically appraise how difficult-to-reach or resistant populations might be engaged.	

conditions on which human health depends. Students will be able to critically appraise the tensions inherent in allocating finite resources appropriately and communicate this effectively using accessible language and presentation methods appropriate for the target audience. Students will demonstrate an understanding of evidence-informed policy recommendations and how to deliver them to policymakers and influencers, assessed through inclusion in assessed output. Students are able to critically evaluate the different methodologies available to Global and Planetary Health researchers, with a focus on qualitative, participatory and creative research methodologies and approaches commensurate with the MA exit route. Students demonstrate the ability to integrate the stages of the research process of a global and planetary health study, and the significance and value of these stages, into a study design. Students demonstrate proficiency in at least one methodology by designing appropriate data collection tools to collect and evaluate primary and/or secondary data. Students demonstrate project management skills in planning, undertaking and delivering an independent research project.	2. Demonstrate knowledge of, and where to find, key literature and data from the fields of global and planetary health, assessed through the final piece of academic writing; policy brief or presentation. 3. Evaluate how human behaviour and/or the environment impact on human health, demonstrated through the topic chosen for the assessed output. 4. Demonstrate ability to explain and present complex ideas, assessed through the assessed output. 5. Demonstrate awareness of the Planetary Health Alliance's Educational Framework and ability to apply it to key global and planetary health challenges, assessed through the academic essay.	Assessed through development of activity for the public engagement day. 3. Produce and deliver a piece of work that communicates research aims, results or outputs, tailored to a particular audience, for publication OR presentation OR public engagement. Assessed through development of activity for the public engagement day.	

Students demonstrate competence with key software packages introduced during the module. Students will synthesize information and data to produce evidence-informed policy recommendations that can be delivered to policymakers and influencers. Students will be able to critically evaluate target audiences, assess their information needs and develop outputs tailored to those needs, ensuring that information will not be misunderstood by non-expert audiences. Students will be able to evaluate data and research findings and critically appraise how difficult-to-reach or resistant populations might be engaged. Students will be able to produce and deliver work that communicates research aims, results or outputs, tailored to a particular audience, for publication OR presentation OR public engagement.			

Section 7 - Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning within the courses are informed by the active research of staff, particularly in the areas of: global health, planetary health, health risk (in particular from infectious disease), health in developing regions, infodemiology (the management of large quantities of information generated during a public health event), critical health geopolitics and international health policy, health evaluation and metrics, and global health leadership

The course builds up students' knowledge, skills and practice from a general grounding in the core concepts and conceptual framework of planetary health to practical applications of that knowledge, including the interrogation and evaluate of key data sets; in planning, undertaking and delivering the results of an independent research project; in producing written output and project plans tailored to different audiences; to scaffolding students towards their independent research project through planning, protocol development, and ethical approval. Students will develop and demonstrate knowledge of core subject material and specialised research areas and will be encouraged to lead peer group activity and project planning to develop leadership skills. Teaching and learning is mostly by means of lectures, supervised discussion seminars, coursework assignments, a supervised individual project, and guided independent study. Assessment of knowledge and practical skills is typically by coursework assignments and a dissertation. Group-led seminars expose and enable students to practice their teamwork, leadership, communication, and negotiation skill throughout the programme which will then be assessed in debate sessions, written outputs, policy briefs and public engagement. Students will be offered choices of formats for their outputs (e.g., academic essay; business plan or policy brief as independent project output) to help scaffold them towards their preferred career path – academic, private sector, public sector, NGO, publishing, journalism or policy. The assessments are also designed to be part of students' learning experience and are designed to develop work related skills so that students have confidence in meeting employers' requirements when they graduate or feel confident in applying for PhDs.

Contact hours come in various forms and may take the form of time spent with a member of staff in a lecture or seminar with other students. Contact hours may also be laboratory or, studio-based sessions, project supervision with a member of staff, or discussion through a virtual learning environment (VLE). These contact hours may be with a lecturer or teaching assistant, but they may also be with a technician, or specialist support staff.

The way in which each module on your degree course is assessed will also vary. Assessments designated as 'summative' will receive a mark which will count towards your overall mark for the module, and potentially your degree classification, depending on your year of study. On successful completion of the module, you will gain the credits listed.

More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online Module Catalogue. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university and may also be checked routinely by external agencies.

Section 8 – Additional costs

There are no single associated costs greater than £100 per item on this degree course.

These estimated costs relate to studying this particular degree course at Royal Holloway. General costs such as accommodation, food, books and other learning materials and printing etc., have not been included, but further information is available on our website.

Section 9 – Indicators of quality and standards	
QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level	7
Your course is designed in accordance with the FHEQ to ensure your qualification is awarded on the basis of nationally established standards of achievement, for both outcomes and attainment. The qualification descriptors within the FHEQ set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The qualification descriptors contained in the FHEQ exemplify the outcomes and attributes expected of learning that results in the award of higher education qualifications. These outcomes represent the integration of various learning experiences resulting from designated and coherent courses of study.	
QAA Characteristics Statement (Master's Degrees) – September 2015	https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/supporting-resources
Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of courses in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.	

Section 10 – Further information
This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate when taking full advantage of the learning opportunities that are available. More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online module catalogue. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university, and may also be checked routinely by external agencies. Your course will be reviewed regularly, both by the university as part of its cyclical quality enhancement processes, and/or by your department or school, who may wish to make improvements to the curriculum, or in response to resource planning. As such, your course may be revised during the course of your study at Royal Holloway. However, your department or school will take reasonable steps to consult with students via appropriate channels when considering changes. All continuing students will be routinely informed of any significant changes.

Section 11 – Intermediate exit awards (where available)		
You may be eligible for an intermediate exit award if you complete part of the course as detailed in this document. Any additional criteria (e.g. mandatory modules, credit requirements) for intermediate awards is outlined in the sections below.		
Award	**Criteria**	**Awarding body**
PG Diploma	Passes in at least 120 credits, with fails of between 40% to 49% for up to 40 credits condonable (with the exception of any course specific requirements).	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
PG Certificate	Passes in at least 60 credits with no condonable fails	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College

Section 12 - Associated award(s) with Banner Codes	
Postgraduate Certificate in Global Health: Society, Culture and Behaviour	3653
Postgraduate Diploma in Global Health: Society, Culture and Behaviour	3652

ANNEX 1: Course structure and part-time pathways

TERM 1 (Term 1 can be taken alone as a PG Cert; or taken over 2 years PT)			
Module 1: Key Concepts in Global and Planetary Health (15 credits)	Module 2: Global Health Systems and Health Protection (30 credits)	Module 3: Research Skills for Global and Planetary Health (15 credits) (MA Pathway)	**Part time:** Year 1: Module 1 + 3 Year 2: Module 2
TERM 2 (Term 2 can be taken alone as a PG Cert; added to Term 1 for a PG Dip; or taken over 2 years PT)			
Module 4: Advanced Concepts in Global and Planetary Health (15 credits)	Module 5: Human Health and the Environment (30 Credits)	Module 6: Science Communication, Writing and Presentation (15 credits) (MA Pathway)	**Part time:** Year 1: Module 3 Year 2: Module 4 + 6
TERM 3			
Independent Research Project (60 Credits) MA Pathway			**Part time:** Year 1-3: Module 7 (Can be completed in Year 2)