

MA/PG Dip/PG Cert in Security Studies

For the MA you will take modules totalling 180 credits. The mandatory dissertation module is comprised of 30 credits and two compulsory modules of Introduction to Critical Research Methodologies (15 credits) and Critical Engagement with Literature (15 credits). The other 120 credits will be taken from categories of optional modules, as well as from the available short courses for which you will complete additional assessments.

For the PG Dip you will take modules totalling 120 credits from the following optional modules and for the PG Cert you will take modules totalling 60 credits from the following optional modules.

Optional Modules

Optional modules are delivered at set points in the year and the number of modules you will be able to take per category is indicated below. **Please note that the below modules are some examples of optional modules that may be available; we cannot guarantee that these modules will be offered or that there will be places available. It is important to note that the assessment pattern and semester of each optional module is subject to change in each academic year.** We would therefore ask that you please check specific module availability with kiass@kcl.ac.uk before applying to the programme. King's College London reviews the modules offered on a regular basis to provide up-to-date, innovative and relevant programmes of study. Therefore, modules offered may change.

Category 1: Select up to 2 from the following modules:

Module Code	Module Name	Description	Summative Assessment	Semester	Credits	Cost
7SSSM002	Global Challenges: Ecology, Health and Migration	The module assesses causes of and remedies for different but related cross-border security challenges: climate change, environmental degradation, the loss of biodiversity, pandemics and immigration. It looks at current and long-term threats to the ecosystem and examines the risks of perpetuating current practices of energy use, food production and exploitation of other natural resources. It explores threats to health, especially	Essay (2,500 words)	Mar-Apr Sep-Oct	15	2026/27 £1,783

		epidemics or pandemics of contagious diseases, in local and global contexts and evaluates prevention, response and the securitising narratives surrounding outbreaks. It critically analyses the causes of and discourses on migration and evaluates government and societal responses. It invites reflection on innovative approaches which may point the way towards more successful action to address these existential challenges.				
7SSSM001	Geopolitics & Rising Powers	This module examines the international historical evolution of the concept of geopolitics. We start by examining the origins of international order and disorder; the ideas, ideologies, and systems of power (including inequalities) that shape it and challenge it; the key systems and actors who comprise it; and the forces of disorder that are challenging, disrupting and redefining order in the 21st century. In this way, we examine how geopolitics shapes ideas and systems of order (and disorder), and vice versa. We then explore small and middle powers' approach to geopolitics, interrogating questions of agency, collective action, multilateralism, and security. This will take into account historical contexts and their influence on small and medium states' actions in the Western-dominated world order. Finally, the module examines new forms of competition and collaboration between states and non-state actors, reassessing core assumptions about state power and seeking to redefine traditional questions of order and disorder.	Essay (2,250 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783

7SSSM007	Conflict, Security & Justice	This module examines conflict through the lenses of human security, social justice and community. It draws on approaches from peace, conflict and security studies to analyse the causes of conflict, theoretical and practical aspects of non-violent approaches to conflict and resistance, tipping points into violence and the conflict 'continuum' of prevention, termination, resolution and transformation. It acknowledges the role of states in shaping perceptions and experiences of security and threats to it, but its focus is specifically on the role of community in both driving and resolving conflict in societies of both the so-called Global North and Global South. It pays particular attention to local perspectives, the role of communities and under-represented local actors such as young people and women, the dynamics of conflict and concepts of justice and the relationship between 'the local' and global dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding. It explores such phenomena as the role of the far and right in formal politics and underground networks, their connection to divisive nationalism and manifestations of everyday and systemic violence. With the aim of stimulating deeper analysis of how conflicts emerge, can be regulated, prevented from becoming violent and resolved sustainably, the module explores a range of perspectives and approaches (eg feminist and gender studies, peace studies, non-violent resistance and post-colonialism) and brings these approaches to life by engaging you throughout in applying them to real life examples and case studies.	Peace and Conflict Impact Analysis (2,500 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783
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7SSSM004	Law, Ethics & Human Rights	This module examines the fundamental legal, ethical and moral principles of human security in practice. It explores causes and consequences of threats to human rights and social justice across the globe, such as violent nationalism, persecution of minorities and displacement. It critically appraises efforts of governments, international organisations and non-governmental advocacy networks to secure and protect human rights and promote good governance, and examines the legal international framework, such as conventions on the right to asylum, against torture and the protection of equal rights of women. It considers the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect civilians, as well as technological challenges to existing international law, such as unmanned aerial vehicle (drones) operations.	Essay (2,500 words)	Jul-Aug Jan-Feb	15	2026/27 £1,783
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Category 2: Select up to 2 from the following modules:

Module Code	Module Name	Description	Summative Assessment	Semester	Credits	Cost
7SSDJ181	International Relations: Theory & Practice	Theory enables us to simplify, study and thereby comprehend the immensely complex world we inhabit. This module provides a substantive outline of three approaches of International Relations Theory (realism, liberalism and constructivism). It will introduce you to key principles, concepts as well as differences within each approach. The module aims to provide you with a foundation of knowledge on these theoretical approaches which you can then apply to contemporary issues and practices in International Politics.	1. Book or article review (1,000 words) 2. Essay (2, 000 words)	Sep-Oct Mar-Apr	15	2026/27 £1,783

7SSDJ157	Sea Power & National Strategy, 1815-1914	This module examines the role the sea played in British diplomacy, security and politics between the Napoleonic and First World Wars. Britain's situation as an island nation, separated from mainland Europe, played a key role in her development during the 19th century. The effective exploitation of sea power enabled her to develop and sustain a worldwide empire and trading network, insulate herself from the ravages of Continental wars and foster scientific and technological innovation. Therefore, it will explore the relationship between sea power and national strategy during this period, focusing on the far reaching impact maritime affairs had on international relations, political and economic development and the conduct of the First World War.	1. Critical analysis of two source extracts (1,500 words) 2. Essay (1,500 words)	Sep-Oct Mar-Apr	15	2026/27 £1,783
7SSDJ174	Understanding Deterrence in Theory & Practice	This module provides an introduction to deterrence. It considers the relations between states, and how states exploit various levers of power in that context, and focuses on the use, or the threat of the use, of force as one of those levers of power. The module exploits practical application of theoretical understanding as far as possible, to introduce the key concepts, as well as test and critique the theories. Although one of the case studies explored considers the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the module is focused on the concept of deterrence in the broadest sense, and nuclear deterrence strategy is very much considered in that broad context. The module draws on international relations theory, strategy, technologies, ethics and (though in a very limited way) psychology to provide a richly textured view of the role of deterrence in the 21st century.	Essay (2,500 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783

7SSDJ183	Proxy Wars & Hybrid Warfare	Proxy conflicts are wars in which the warring parties are indirectly backed by external powers, each of which are intervening on a clandestine or semi-overt basis because their interests are at stake, or because rival powers are already embroiled in them and pursuing their own strategic goals. The USA, for example, accused Iran of waging proxy warfare across the Middle East by backing Shiite militias in Iraq, Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, and the Houthi led Ansar Allah movements in Yemen. The USA claimed that Tehran's objective was to undermine their enemies in the region, notably the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia and dominate the Middle East. Hybrid warfare, or war in a grey zone, as it is dubbed by some American authors, presents a challenge to democratic governments because it offers no clear cut evidence of a direct attack that Western powers can counter, and it is accompanied by sophisticated propaganda coverage lead to the USA and other allied governments to question whether an act of aggression has taken place. It is the conflict of these kinds that we will be examining in this module. We will be asking ourselves why these conflicts occur, how they are fought, and more importantly, what their implications are.	Essay (2,500 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783
7SSDJ180	Cyber Security in the Information Age	While the term 'cyber' has been extensively used as a buzzword in policy circles, few truly understand the transformational impact of the cyber revolution on the nature of warfare, strategy and international security. This module introduces the complexity of cyber operations in the 21st century, not only making sense of the cyber domain as a new domain of	1. 15 min video presentation 2. Policy paper (1,500 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783

		warfare but also looking at how cyber power can be defined in the context of new strategies and a changing international security environment. It goes beyond the debate about 'cyber security' or 'cyberwar' to account for the complexities of different vulnerabilities and insecurities emerging from the cyber domain that can be exploited by a variety of conventional and unconventional 'cyberwarriors'. The module prepares students for applying geo-strategic and military strategic thinking to the cyber domain to understand the complexity of different risks, threats and challenges that individuals, organisations, corporations and states are confronted with in the cyber domain. It will also look at how cyber tools can be used for espionage and subversion as a means of force multiplication to achieve strategic political ends and how to achieve resilience in the cyber domain.				
7SSDJ171	Intelligence, Espionage & Surveillance	This module is designed to explore the complexities of intelligence within the field of security studies. It is not explicitly a history of intelligence use, incorporating as well the study of various intelligence theories, how intelligence failures occur and how they might be avoided. It deals with practical issues of intelligence analysis, explores intelligence organisation in the western world over the last 70 years, and examines the use of intelligence in attempts to maintain international security.	1. Source analysis report (750 words) 2. Essay (750 words) 3. Essay (1,500 words)	Sep-Oct Mar-Apr	15	2026/27 £1,783

7SSDJ188	Women, Peace & Security	This module aims to equip students with the conceptual and empirical knowledge to engage in critical discourses on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda which developed from the roots of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted in 2000. In order to achieve this, it engages with questions of security, war and peace in a wider context than the Agenda itself. It combines reflections on gender and gender relations, looking at feminist perspectives on the roles of women and relations between men and women, within society and in war and peace, but also examines men and masculinities in these contexts. Where it focuses strongly on women the aim is to highlight that a view of international and intra-societal relations, as well as security and violent conflict, can reveal different aspects of these contexts than an apparently gender-neutral perspective. It takes a historical long view in order to facilitate a more differentiated understanding of the genesis, scope and challenges of the WPS Agenda's evolution and implementation today. This requires an appreciation and understanding of the complex linkages between gender(s) and other identity constituting factors, such as for example class or ethnicity, gender relations, security, violent conflict and different conceptions of peace.	Essay (2,500 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783
7SSDJ182	International Political Economy	The International Political Economy (IPE), which is sometimes referred to as the Global Political Economy (or GPE), is concerned with the relationship between economics and politics. More specifically, it is the study of how the economic sphere impacts the political sphere, and vice versa.	Essay (2,400 words)	Jul-Aug Jan-Feb	15	2026/27 £1,783

		For political economists, the discipline not only encompasses issues concerned with interactions between these two spheres but also the cross-fertilisation of methods that are used in the study of economics and politics. The focus of this module, however, will be on the former, the interaction between economics and politics, as we uncover and critique the overlap and interaction between these two spheres. In order to engage with the IPE discipline, we will combine a theoretical approach, a contextual and evolutionary approach and through looking at various determinants and dynamics that impact and are concerned with the IPE. A number of examples will be used to explain the critique of the IPE determinants and dynamics, so as to provide as a palpable way of explaining the theoretical and scholarly underpinnings of these aspects of IPE.				
7SSDJ223	Sanctions, Strategy & Statecraft** ** Not to be taken with Sanctions & Statecraft short course	This module will explore the intersection between statecraft and strategy, with a particular focus on the role of sanctions as a tool of influence in foreign policy. Sanctions, defined as the restrictive measures imposed by states or groups of states to achieve influence, are an important part of efforts to regulate the international system in the twenty-first century. Often described as measures sitting ‘between war and words’, sanctions are seen as offering a powerful means of influencing behaviour in a volatile world where military force is rarely seen as a desirable option. Drawing on a range of contemporary and historical case studies including Iraq, Iran, Russia, Libya, the United States and China, you will learn about the nature and evolution of sanctions, as well as how they have been	1. Policy memo (1,500 words) 2. Presentation of policy memo	Jul-Aug Jan-Feb	15	2026/27 £1,783

		deployed as part of a broader strategy aimed at achieving coercive influence. The module will also explore how sanctions are designed and implemented, and under whose authority. At the other end of the spectrum, you will learn about how states targeted by sanctions have sought to resist or circumvent restrictive measures, and what this means for the practice of sanctions more broadly.				
7SSDJ187	Strategy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence** ** Not to be taken with Artificial Intelligence in National Security short course	How will artificial intelligence affect warfare? Will armies be equipped with autonomous swarms? Can you defend against them? Will 'killer robots' make ethical decisions about force? Can they be regulated? This module considers the ways in which artificial intelligence impacts strategy, now and into the future. Recent years have seen rapid developments in AI techniques and abilities. Many aspects of AI have potential military applications, and some have already begun to be employed by armed forces and other security actors. AI has the potential to dramatically alter some fundamental tenets of strategy; reshaping human society and the organisations that wage war; and posing acute ethical dilemmas.	Essay (2,500 words)	Jul-Aug Jan-Feb	15	2026/27 £1,783
7SSDJ189	Intelligence in Conflict	This module is about the use and abuse, problems and challenges of intelligence in conflict. We need to develop a better understanding of intelligence sources, the technology and methods used to collect information specifically in relation to conflict. We need to establish the relationship between information collection and information analysis to produce intelligence, and understand that more is not necessarily better, though it is tempting to assume that the more information available, the	Essay (3,000 words)	May-Jun Nov-Dec	15	2026/27 £1,783

		better the decisions will be. And we need to understand more about human decision-making, the balance between intelligence and intuition and the resulting distances that this can produce. History is replete with examples of the use, and misuse, of intelligence in war, so we'll explore these through the different types of intelligence sources, and a series of case studies of conventional and counterinsurgency conflicts.				
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Category 3: Select up to 3 from the following modules

Module Code	Module Name	Description	Summative Assessment	Semester	Credits	Cost
7SSWN187	Insurgency and Counterinsurgency	This module is about forms of conflict known as insurgency, acts of rebellion against constituted political authorities. There are many ways of challenging the political order through violent and non-violent means, and the subject of insurgency is consequently a broad one. For many years, it has suffered relative professional and academic neglect, perhaps because it is so complex and perhaps also because it generates much confusion and debate. Ultimately, it refuses to be straitjacketed into the rubric of 'regular' war, a situation compounded by a series of recent conflicts that throw into question strategic assumptions about contemporary and future warfare. This module takes an evolutionary approach to the study of insurgency. Insurgency can be traced back millennia as a means of mobilising collective action by the population against an established administrative authority or state, but we	Essay (3,000 words)	Sep-Dec	15	2026/27 £2,408

		focus in this module on the more recent history of insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN).				
7SSWN229	Conflict in Russia and the Post-Soviet Space	The war in Ukraine has brought into sharp relief an enduring set of security issues related to Russia and its fellow post-Soviet states. This course focuses on the most acute and destructive end of the security spectrum: the armed conflicts that have plagued – and continue to plague – the independent states of the former USSR. These include civil wars, insurgencies, terrorist campaigns, and even (supposedly unfashionable) inter-state warfare. While each conflict must be examined within its own context, a number of structural conditions are shared across the post-communist space, and all have far-reaching implications for future Eurasian security.	Essay (3,000 words)	Sep-Dec	15	2026/27 £2,408
7SSWN200	Seapower	This module begins by highlighting the complexities of defining what seapower is and how differing approaches to the employment of naval force have evolved over the past century. The components of seapower are outlined, as is the relationship between technological innovation and the evolution of naval power. The module further explores the concepts of securing command of the sea and, conversely, denying its use to opponents. Unlike land warfare, the purpose of naval force is not to take and hold ground, but rather to protect maritime communications and influence events ashore. In this role naval power projection and expeditionary warfare are examined. In addition to the wartime activities of naval forces the considerable array of peacetime duties, ranging from diplomatic tools and confidence-building measures, constabulary and humanitarian operations are explored. Historic case studies are	Essay (2,500 words)	Sep-Dec	15	2026/27 £2,408

		employed to outline timeless principles and key moments in the evolution of modern seapower. These are balanced by contemporary examples, like anti-piracy operations or the current maritime build-up in the Asia-Pacific region to illustrate the continued importance of seapower in the contemporary world.				
7SSWN182	Middle Eastern Security	This module provides students with an opportunity to study them in depth, adding to knowledge gained in the core modules. The first part of the module sets the scene by examining the imperialist history of the region and the forms decolonization took, before considering two enduring influences on regional affairs – the impacts of oil and Islam. The second part of the module focuses on Zionism and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has wracked the region from the middle part of the 20th century to the present day. The third part of the module will look at conflict in the Persian Gulf region, including the Iran-Iraq war, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, the two Gulf Wars (1991 and 2003) and the subsequent insurgency in Iraq. Finally, the module examines the development of democracy in the Middle East, including the Arab Spring of 2011 and the subsequent conflicts.	Essay (2,500 words)	Jan-Mar	15	2026/27 £2,408
7SSWN348	Counterterrorism, Political Violence and Human Rights	Security and intelligence responses to terrorism and political violence have been rapidly evolving in recent decades, with important implications for the state and for human rights. This module critically analyses the latest research on the effectiveness of counterterrorism policies, and examines whether and how such security measures can be “balanced” against human rights, such as individual liberty and freedom of expression. We will examine how	Essay (2,500 words)	Jan-Mar	15	2026/27 £2,408

		practices such as torture, civilian killing and preventive detention impact on human rights and assess whether and how democratic governments can be constrained from engaging in such practices. We will ask: do human rights matter to states and practitioners in the field of counterterrorism? And does respect for human rights have a negative or positive impact on the effectiveness of counterterrorism? A comparative approach is taken throughout the module, with in-depth studies of contemporary cases from the United States, United Kingdom and France, and historical cases of responses to political violence in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. There will also be an opportunity to discuss Hamas' major attack on Israel of October 2023 and the highly destructive scale of state violence carried out by Israel in the context of its subsequent war in Gaza in comparative perspective with previous cases such as the US-led 'War on Terror.'				
7SSWN337	The Future of War	At a time when many longstanding assumptions about international security and contemporary conflict are disintegrating rapidly, it is more important than ever to consider the evolution of humankind's motives and capabilities for organised violence. In the decades to come, how will wars be fought and for what reasons? Where is conflict most likely to occur, and why? Who will be the primary combatants, and how will technological innovation change the essence of warfighting? How should states and populations prepare for this future conflict landscape? Drawing upon the breadth of research within the War Studies discipline, we will reflect on	1. Scenario Project, Part I: Proposal (800 words) 2. Scenario Project, Part II: Scenario (2,200 words)	Apr-Jun	15	2026/27 £2,408

		the prevailing assumptions underlying the study of future war, examine key strategic and technological innovations driving the evolution of war and warfare, and explore the political and social foundations of future conflict scenarios. We will evaluate the potential for new types of conflict actors and battlefields. In the end, we will consider whether any model or methodology can predict the future of war – and the implications of this very human failure to anticipate our capacity for violence.				
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Category 4: Select 3/6/9 short courses & then take assessments for 15/30/45 credits

Module Code	Module Name	Description	Assessment	Semester	Credits	Cost
7SSSM011 7SSSM009 7SSSM010 7SSSM012	Security Studies Applied Security Studies Security and Defence Studies Themes and Issues in Security Studies	The online short courses currently available include: Artificial Intelligence in National Security China-West Relations: Dilemmas & Lessons Defence Innovation and Strategic Management Ethics and Decision-Making in Modern Warfare Ethics and Leadership Indo-Pacific Security Introduction to the Just War Tradition Managing Acquisition in Defence Major Dilemmas in Counterterrorism Military Healthcare Ethics Protecting Civilians in Conflict Sanctions & Statecraft Strategic Communications Understanding Modern Warfare War and Conflict: Reintegration (DDR) Wargaming & Strategy	1. 1 hr pre-assessment webinar 2. 3,000 word assessment	Available all year round	15	\$249* x 3 for short courses & £250 assessment fee * payment is made through the edX platform in US dollars.

Mandatory Dissertation Modules

Module Code	Module Name	Description	Assessment	Semester	Credits	Cost
7SSDJ162	Introduction to Critical Research Methodologies	The module will begin with a discussion on how to frame a research project, exploring how to move from a general topic to a more targeted research question. Subsequent units move past framing questions, delving into different ways of thinking about how to approach answering them. You will deliberate how to go about investigating a particular issue or problem by considering the two main approaches to studying human activity, the humanities and social sciences, and how theoretically based or historically-based approaches can assist you in your research. During these units, you will consider how to construct and use theoretical frameworks, conduct historical textual analysis and explore other methodological considerations involved in the study of the past. The module will then move on to qualitative research methods, aiming to develop your understanding of the philosophy of science underpinning qualitative research, how to select samples of case studies and data in your research projects and how to apply qualitative methods to research questions. Finally, you will discuss how to approach the planning and conduct of ongoing research projects, as well as explore some of the issues you need to consider when planning your work, such as whether your project has any ethical implications.	Essay (2,500 words)	Jul-Aug Jan-Feb	15	2026/27 £1,783

7SSDJ168	Critical Engagement with Literature	This module aims to develop your ability to engage with academic literature. It will progress from identifying and understanding relevant pieces of literature to critically, assessing pieces of academic writing on their merits and to adjudicate between them. The module will develop your ability to differentiate between different types of written literature on their merits – identifying the rigour behind the work and, thus, its authority as a source for an academic essay. This will begin the process of questioning the content of scholarly writings and of situating them in relation to each other and to your own ideas and arguments. There will be an exploration of these general themes of critical engagement with literature through a series of case studies drawn from a range of disciplines, including history, international relations and strategic studies. The case studies will also be used to challenge you with differing bodies of academic writing. The module will culminate in production of a literature review on a specified question.	Literature review (2,500 words)	Sep-Oct Mar-Apr	15	2026/27 £1,783
7SSDJ177	Dissertation	The duration of this module is four months with various entry points throughout the year. You will be allocated your supervisor when you select your dissertation topic during Introduction to Critical Research Methodologies module. You should seek to schedule between 4-6 substantive meetings with your supervisor in order to discuss your ideas. You will also be able to discuss your ideas with your peers in the KEATS discussion forum. Your supervisor is there to support you, but this is your project, and you are responsible for the research you will be undertaking.	Dissertation (10,000 words)	Duration of module is 4 months. Entry points: Sep, Nov, Jan, Mar, May, Jul	30	2026/27 £3,566