



Faculty of Engineering and Environment

Department of Computer Science and Digital Technologies

**MSc Computing and IT  
(Distance Learning)**

**Programme Handbook  
2015-16**

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## 1 Welcome from the Programme Leader

Welcome to our MSc Computing and Information Technology (DL) programme. This is an introductory programme at postgraduate level that was originally designed for non-computing and IT graduates. It has also proved to be beneficial for students with experience in computing and IT, who now feel that they need to progress in their careers. These students gain a greater understanding of management issues in the area of IT and have exposure to a range of current technologies.

The programme is taught entirely by distance learning. If you are within travelling distance of the university you are welcome to use any of the facilities we have available on campus including the library, our specialist computing laboratories, the open access IT areas and even the Students Union.

If you really are a distance learner then the university offers you equivalent facilities through special provisions made available by Library Services; access to Desktop Anywhere which provides a range of software for off-campus students; and a virtual learning environment.

Shelagh Keogh

## 2 About this handbook

This handbook is designed to provide a guide to your programme of study at Northumbria. It should be read alongside the University and Faculty Student Handbooks which contain more general information about being a student at Northumbria within the Faculty of Engineering and Environment, Department of Computer Science and Digital Technologies.

It does not provide all of the information that you will need although it attempts to tell you where to find most of that information. The latest version of much of the further information that you need is to be found in a comprehensive and definitive form on the Northumbria website. Use the link at the top of the home page (<http://northumbria.ac.uk>) and this will take you to your My Northumbria page.

**Please keep this handbook somewhere safe – you may need to refer to it throughout your course of study.**



## 3 Who's Who and Communication?

### 3.1 Who to go to for help

Staff from the Department and from the wider university (such as the Library, IT Services and Student Support and Wellbeing) are here to help you get the most out of your Programme. In this section, we introduce you to some of the key people who will support you at School and subject area level.

#### Student Support

**Office Location:** Ellison Building - Room B201

**Email:** [ee.studentsupport@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ee.studentsupport@northumbria.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 191 243 4722

**Office hours:** 8.30 am – 5 pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30 – 4.30 pm on a Friday

This is a dedicated point of help for students. It should be your first point of contact for all queries.

#### Programme Leader: Shelagh Keogh

**Office Location:** Pandon Building – Room 112, First floor

**Email:** [shelagh.keogh@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:shelagh.keogh@northumbria.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** +44(0) 191 2437293

**Office Hours:** 09.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday

The best way to contact me is by email.

Your Programme Leader is the academic leader for your Programme and is responsible for managing the programme on a day to day basis, working with other University staff – academic, administrative and technical – as needed. Your Programme Leader is committed to helping you get the most out of the Programme and, where relevant, will liaise with your Module Tutors and other relevant staff to make sure that they are aware of your needs and of how you are doing.

#### Programme Administrator: Andrew Cox

Your Programme Administrator holds all the key information regarding your programme. This is the person who manages such processes as enrolment, option choice, day to day correspondence, confirmation of attendance letters, marks entry, etc.

Andrew can be contacted via the **Pandon Student Office** or directly:

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 191 227 3601

**Email:** [a.cox@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:a.cox@northumbria.ac.uk)

#### Module Tutor

For each module of study, you will have a designated Module Tutor. The Module Tutor is responsible for the organization of the module and supporting your learning and assessment on that module. All module tutor details can be found on their respective Blackboard/eLearning module platforms.



## 3.2 Communication

### Contacting Your Programme Leader

The best way to contact your programme leader is via email ([shelagh.keogh@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:shelagh.keogh@northumbria.ac.uk))

As a distance learner I do not expect you to be a visitor, but if you are in Newcastle then you are most welcome to call and visit. As a member of academic staff I am often away from my desk teaching or dealing with other university business so you will need to arrange an appointment to avoid disappointment. You can do this via email.

### Email

Email is used extensively throughout the University and is a very effective method of communication between students and staff. You will be automatically allocated an email address by the University once you have enrolled. Do remember that the Northumbria email address is the one that should be used when contacting University staff. It is also the one that is used by staff to make contact with you, so do make sure that you check it regularly, particularly if you also use a personal email account or ensure that Northumbria email is forwarded to your most frequently used account. Please be aware that staff may not reply to your email immediately due to their other duties and activities.

### eLearning Portal

The eLearning Portal (eLP) [Blackboard] is a very important resource for students. You will find specific information related to the modules you are taking and, in many cases, significant sections of the distance learning material. The eLP information for each module will also contain assignment briefings, instructions, and announcements. Individual module tutors may also make available copies of lecture and seminar handouts.

There is another special area for you, as a student on this programme. It is entitled '**BB20007: Computing and Information Technology (DL)**'. This includes useful information on the course. Your Programme Leader uses this area to pass on information concerning programme matters.

**PLEASE NOTE: *IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT THAT IF YOU HAVE AN ISSUE YOU CONTACT US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE – WE ARE HERE TO HELP***

## 4 Programme Information

Here you will find specific information on your programme of study. There is a national requirement that all university programmes of study have a publicly available Programme Specification and this section is based on that programme specification. The full and definitive version of the programme specification can be found at <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/programmespecs/>.

### 4.1 Programme Aims

This programme primarily aims to provide a flexible programme of study for those wishing to obtain a recognised postgraduate qualification in the field of information technology. The programme allows a number of alternatives for a study programme tailored to the requirements of the students.

It also aims to:

- Provide a rigorous and flexible learning environment that accommodates student need and enhances the student experience
- Provide a communications and Internet based learning infrastructure whose quality is tested via module feedback, programme evaluation questionnaires and programme committees
- Facilitate updating and advancement from first degree level studies taken normally in a subject other than computing to postgraduate level in Information Technology with particular emphasis on the business application of knowledge and techniques
- Enhance the career prospects of individuals and encourage them to undertake further studies.

### 4.2 Programme Learning Outcomes

#### a) Knowledge and Understanding

Students will be able to demonstrate specialist in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of:

- A1) the main areas of Information Technology, including the key areas of databases, web site development, e-business principles and management
- A2) essential facts, concepts, principles, theories, methods, techniques and tools in the application and management of a range of current and emerging information technologies
- A3) the main features and major issues associated with the establishment and management of an information technology project
- A4) the professional, ethical and legal issues involved in the development and operation of a range of information technologies.

#### b) Intellectual Skills

Students will be able to:



- A1) apply knowledge and understanding to systematically identify and analyse complex problems of a familiar and unfamiliar nature and offer appropriate strategic solutions using a range of effective methods and tools
- A2) critically examine, understand, apply, discuss and evaluate the philosophies, techniques, tools, and methods relevant to information technologies for a range of applications and a variety of domains
- A3) use evidence and criteria to integrate, evaluate, interpret and synthesise information and data from a variety of sources, discriminating between what is primarily essential or useful, and what has secondary value
- A4) reflect on the professional, ethical and legal issues surrounding the development and use of information technologies
- A5) critically examine and understand the ways of defining, promoting, controlling and validating the attainment of quality in the field of information technology
- A6) develop a professional attitude and approach to personal development and technology/skills updating
- A7) identify, plan and execute a significant individual project or dissertation by conducting independent research and applying originality plus a range of specific skills and established techniques in research methodologies and literature reviewing.

**c) Practical Skills**

Students will be able to:

- C1) apply a range of techniques and knowledge in the analysis, design, and development of enabling solutions to information problems in a variety of both real world and theoretical contexts
- C2) apply in a business or industrial environment the processes and principles associated with professionalism in IT
- C3) use appropriate techniques, tools and knowledge to support effective project management
- C4) tender for, contract, plan and manage an IT project, applying appropriate quality controls and measurement
- C5) search for, select, retrieve, evaluate and apply information to support research, using a rigorous, scientific approach.

**d) Transferable/Key Skills**

Students will be able to:

- D1) learn independently, enhancing their existing skills and developing new ones to a high level, enabling them to sustain their own continued professional development
- D2) demonstrate creativity in problem solving and decision making in complex and unpredictable situations
- D3) effectively and professionally communicate information, ideas, arguments, problems and their solution in written and oral form to specialist and non-specialist audiences



- D4) demonstrate initiative, personal responsibility, personal enterprise, self reliance and self direction, acting autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional level
- D5) manage their time and resources efficiently
- D6) engage in critical self appraisal of their own learning experience, personal strengths, limitations and performance
- D7) demonstrate research skills at an appropriately advanced level.

### 4.3 Programme Structure

The core modules currently on the programme are given below in the Programme and Assessment Schedule (Section 5). Please note that more information can be found on the individuals modules by using the module search facility ([http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/legacy\\_links/moduleinfo](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/legacy_links/moduleinfo)) on the University web site – here you look up a module by the module code (e.g. CM0719).

Note: Students who have studied 15-credit modules on the previous programme structure are not permitted to study the equivalent 20-credit or 10-credit modules. In this case they will need to discuss their study plan with the Programme Leader.

When students have passed 120 credits and have an overall average of at least 50% they are permitted to progress to the Individual Project/Dissertation. This is a 60-credit, yearlong module. Students normally choose to study CG0174, the Individual Project. This module is also included on the MSc Computer Science. Students may, however, consider EN0752, which is studied on the engineering programmes.

### 4.4 Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The learning, teaching and assessment methods fully comply with the University and School strategy and guidelines, and the QAA Code of Practice on Assessment. The methods provide wide diversity, incorporating the best techniques to fit both the particular subject under study and the depth of learning required at postgraduate level.

At the start of each semester all students are provided with full details of the learning, teaching and assessment styles for each module. Learning and teaching takes place through the provision of a set of learning materials provided to each student for each module. The materials contain all the basic module content required for each module; identification of any essential texts required for study; the extensive functionality offered by the eLP; the use of appropriate module texts; access to appropriate, industry standard software through Desktop Anywhere. Supplementary material, such as solutions to seminar exercises, is made available on eLP as the module progresses. Deep learning is facilitated by applying theoretical concepts in practical ways in order to reinforce session topics.

The taught modules are followed by the Individual Project or Dissertation which is the showcase for Masters students to demonstrate their technical, intellectual and research skills. All students are prepared for the project via earlier modules covering both project management and research methods. Students are encouraged to identify a project that is linked to industry or based on a real-world problem, to increase the project's validity and the University's enterprise links.





Assessment is seen as an integral part of the learning process and the programme has been designed to ensure that the overall balance of assessment tasks measures the learning outcomes in an effective and efficient way. Both summative and formative elements are utilised, the latter to provide students with feedback which is developmental and timely.

Great care has been taken to ensure that the learning outcomes for each individual module are not over-assessed, and do not produce unmanageable workloads for students and staff. This measure ensures that students can produce work to the best of their abilities and that staff can be confident that the marks they give are correct.

Learning, teaching and assessment of transferable skills permeate the whole of the programme but are especially focused upon in the modules for project management, research methods, hypermedia, databases, systems analysis and design and the Individual Project/Dissertation.

In accordance with the Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards, this programme has a formal progression point after completion of 120 credits.

#### 4.5 Feedback

Formative assessment and feedback is incorporated into modules wherever appropriate and students are encouraged to participate in formative to develop the skills, techniques and expectations of summative assessment.

Summative assessment methods could include assignments, examinations, technical reports, case study analyses, presentations, portfolio and project work. Currently there are no examinations in any module on this programme.

## 5 Programme and Assessment Schedule

### Proposed Module Delivery Schedule 2015/16

<b>Semester 1</b>	Sep - Jan	<b>CM0728 Website Development and Deployment (20 credits)</b>
<b>Semester 2</b>	Feb - May	<b>CM0720 Systems Analysis and Design with UML (20 credits)</b>
<b>Semester 3</b>	Jun - Aug	CM0731 Computer Networks (20 credits) <b>IS0752 Research &amp; Project Management (DL) (20 credits)</b>

**September 2015** students will normally take the modules in **bold** above

**January 2016** students will start their studies with CM0720 and then also proceed as shown above in bold. They will complete their cycle of taught modules with:

<b>2016/17 Semester 1</b>	Sep - Jan	<b>CM0719 Database Modelling (20 credits)</b>
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### Module Delivery Schedule 2017/18

<b>Semester 1</b>	Sep - Jan	<b>CM0719 Database Modelling (20 credits)</b>
<b>Semester 2</b>	Feb - May	<b>CM0718 Program Design and Implementation (20 credits)</b>
<b>Semester 3</b>	Jun - Aug	<b>CM0731 Computer Networks (20 credits)</b> IS0752 Research & Project Management (DL) (20 credits)

## 6 Resources and Laboratories

### 6.1 Computers

You will require access to a computer. For a **minimum** specification for a PC look on the university web page:

<https://elp.northumbria.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/orgs/ORG1/Notices/minimumspecification.html>

For projects, the following may also prove useful:

- Microphone (or headset)
- Webcam
- Skype

**Note:** through desktop Anywhere you will have access to the Microsoft Office suite.

### 6.2 E-Portal (Blackboard) and Modules

Each module is allocated an area on the e-Portal (Blackboard). Blackboard calls each of these areas a 'Course'. The Blackboard 'Course' with information about your modules, will contain the following types of information although the names of the areas within Blackboard can be changed by each module team:

**Announcements:** Here tutors can leave messages regarding any aspect of the module from alerting you to the fact that materials have been added to the module to a new discussion thread for you to participate in.

**Module information:** Module information and documents will be placed in this section.

**Assessment:** Full details of the module assessment are given in a separate section usually called the Assignment.

**Module Schedule:** A suggested plan of when you should address each topic in the Learning Materials. For full-time students this would give a rigid pattern of weekly lecture and seminar topics, but as a distance learning student you may adapt the schedule to fit round your work and personal circumstances. Start and end dates for a module, however, are still fixed by the academic calendar.

**Learning Materials:** The main source of material needed to study the module. Instructions on how to approach the learning material are also made available here.

**Reading:** Details of the essential book(s) you will need to supplement the Learning Materials and suggested further reading.

**Staff information:** Information about the members of staff teaching on that particular module.

**Additional module material:** Additional content including readings, exercises, etc

**FAQ:** A discussion board for frequently asked questions.

**Communication:** Access to email where you can email individual staff, the student cohort or individual students on your module. This section also provides access to discussion boards, group pages, and a collaboration facility, which operates in a similar way to a chat room.



**Tools:** This includes a facility for finding out what additional information or material has been added to the 'Course' since your last visit to the site. You can also find out if new announcements have been made, and there is also a 'Science Toolkit' which contains various calculation aids, such as conversion tables for measurements.

**Note:**

- If you are enrolled on a module that is marked 'not available' you should contact the module tutor, programme leader or programme administrator.
- If you believe that you should be enrolled on a module but you do not see it on your list of modules then you should contact the programme administrator or programme leader and ask to be enrolled.

### 6.3 University Email

Each student is issued with a university e-mail account. This is the email address normally used by tutors who wish to communicate with their students. It is the only address that can be used by the eLearning Portal (Blackboard). Your email can be accessed at <https://mail.northumbria.ac.uk/owa>

Enter your **username**, but preceded by **UNN/** (e.g. UNN/u123456) then your **password**. Your username and password can be found on your Student Enrolment Form.

An alternative link to your email can be found from the university Home Page at <http://northumbria.ac.uk>.

- Select the **Staff/ Student** link and you will be presented with a list of useful locations;
- select **Web Mail** to access your university email.

You may also access your university email from within the Welcome page of this eLearning Portal (Blackboard). There is a section called **Useful Tools**. Select the **Email** option to bring up the university e-mail window.

You will now have access to your e-mail messages in an environment that looks similar to Outlook or Outlook Express.

**Notes:**

- Students accessing the university e-mail facility from a computer at their place of work can sometimes experience difficulties brought on by contention with the firewall at the company.
- If you experience difficulty in responding to messages (the Reply or Forward windows do not open) you might find that you need to turn off your Pop-up Blocker. You do this by accessing Tools in Microsoft Internet Explorer, then Pop-up Blocker.

### 6.4 desktop ANYWHERE

desktop ANYWHERE is a way for students to access the University IT facilities from most computers which have a connection to the Internet.

Using a web browser you can access:

- Your files on the U drive (allocated space to store your files, back up at various time periods)
- Standard desktop applications (including the Microsoft Office suite of programs)
- Your email using Outlook



- Electronic Information Sources

You can access desktop ANYWHERE at <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/its/dta/> or by following the desktopAnywhere link from the university home page: <http://northumbria.ac.uk>.

You may also access desktop ANYWHERE from within the eLearning Portal (Blackboard) <http://elp.northumbria.ac.uk>. There is a section on the Welcome page called **Useful Tools**. Select the desktop ANYWHERE option to bring up the logon window.

In order to use desktop ANYWHERE you will need:

- An Internet connection and a standard web browser (Internet Explorer 6.0 or above, Netscape version 7). Apple Mac users should use Netscape.
- Minimum screen resolution 256 colours.
- The Citrix® ICA client. This is a small piece of free software which makes the connection to desktop ANYWHERE and takes little time to install. Note: this software will stay on your machine so that you should not have to install it again

Enter the **Username** and **Password** that you were given on your Student Enrolment Form at the initial logon screen.

## 6.5 IT Helpline

If you experience difficulties accessing any of the IT resources at the university you may contact our IT Helpline to ask for assistance. You may do this by phone or by using the Self-Service facility.

### By Phone:

Ring +44 (0) 191 227 4242. You will have to identify yourself, so have your university Username available. This can be found on your Student Enrolment Form. You may also be asked for your date of birth and address to confirm your identity.

Be clear about the problem and be prepared to quote any error messages you have seen.

### By Using the Self-Service Facility:

As an alternative to phoning the IT Helpline you can use the IT Services Self-Service facility. This can be found:

- Access the university Home Page at <http://northumbria.ac.uk>
- Select the **Current Student** link and you will be presented with a list of useful locations
- Select **IT Helpline** to access this facility

On entering the Self-Service facility you will see notices about known problems and a list of any incidents you have reported, together with their current status. You may also report a new incident (a problem you are experiencing).

**Note:** The IT Helpline will not provide assistance with problems you may have with your own computer and its software.



## 7 FAQs

For Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) you should look in the eLP at the FAQ tab in **BB20007: Computing and Information Technology (DL)**. Here are some FAQs we have noted:

### What do I do if I can't keep up with my studies?

Contact your module tutor for specific advice about a module. Contact your programme leader for advice about the implications for withdrawing, and the Student Office for guidance about fees implications. If you decide that you must stop studying the module, it is essential that you do this as early as possible because fees are calculated based on the point at which you tell us that you have withdrawn.

### What do I do if I can't get an assignment in on time?

Contact your Programme Leader about the possibility of an extension. Assignments may not be submitted late without prior approval. The Student Handbook gives further details of this. In future, you may need to contact the Student Office for permission.

### Help, I failed a module! When can I do the referral?

At the end of each academic year you will be considered by the examination board for referral work. The outcome of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) board will also be input to the PAB.

### Can I visit the university?

If you are near enough to do so, you are very welcome to visit the university and use its facilities, including the University Library and IT facilities. You might also like to come for the Award ceremony when you take your degree! As a Northumbria student, you are also a member of the Students' Union and can use its facilities. You should obtain a Library Card before visiting the university. This is a smart card which gives you access to the library and other buildings.

If you would like to meet one of your tutors, please e-mail for an appointment. The Programme Leader is always delighted to meet students in person.

Northumbria Students' Union (NSU) is here to make sure you have the best experience possible. NSU is one of the largest and most exciting Unions in the country and that's all because of YOU. We represent you, the student, on all levels, on the issues students are concerned about; receiving a great academic experience, being very employable when you graduate, being safe on campus and in the city and having a fantastic time while a student.

NSU is run by students for students. You can have your say in what NSU does and how it is run, by contacting your [Sabbatical Officers](#) or by coming along to [Student Council](#)

**MEMBERSHIP:** As a student of Northumbria University you are automatically a member of the Students' Union. We also sell NUS Extra Card from the Students' Union at both [Coach Lane](#) and [City Campus](#) giving you discounts in shops and online, but you don't need one to use any of our services.

**DIVERSE:** Your Students' Union is a place which brings together students from all walks of life, all parts of the country and the world and many different cultures. NSU provides lots of opportunities for you to [Get Involved](#), make lasting friendships, increase employability and have FUN!

**INDEPENDENT:** NSU is independent of the University, with its own staff, services and decision-making structure. Run by students for students, providing the best services and opportunities for students we push for change from the University to deliver for students. Find out more at our [You Said, SU Did](#) page. If you need advice about academic appeals or other issues, we can help. Check out the [Advice Page](#).

**VALUE:** Your NSU offers the best value for money, and everything you spend goes straight back into the Students' Union to fund all the activities that we run for you.

If you would like more information check out the website [www.mynsu.co.uk](http://www.mynsu.co.uk) or come and see us at our [offices](#) in City, Coach Lane and London.

\* \* \*

The libraries at City Campus and Coach Lane provide access to a wide range of print and electronic resources including over half a million print books, over 700,000 eBooks and more than 50,000 electronic journals. More details can be found on the University Library website:  
<http://library.northumbria.ac.uk/home>

**City Campus Library** (number 14 on City Campus map) is housed near the Student Union building (number 30 on City Campus map).

**Coach Lane Library** is situated on the East Side of the Campus, in F Block (number 16 on Coach Lane Campus map).

City Campus library is open 24/7 during term time and from 9am to midnight during vacation times. Coach Lane library is open 7am until midnight (Monday to Friday), 9am until midnight (Saturday and Sunday). Opening hours are prominently displayed in the foyers of the library buildings, any changes are advertised on the Library website and on social media. Opening hours vary during bank holidays and are subject to change, so please check before you travel.

You will need to keep your smartcard with you to gain access to and leave the libraries. Your Smartcard is a universal card which not only gives access to the Libraries and other University buildings, but it also allows you to print, copy, scan, borrow books and make cashless payments.



The Library Catalogue can be accessed on and off-campus through the University Library website and the dedicated catalogue computers on each floor of both Libraries. The catalogue can be used to search for books and eBooks located in the University Library. It is quick and easy to use and will give you the information you need to locate the material on the shelves or read online. eBooks can be read on and off-campus, anytime, anywhere. NORA can be used to search for, and retrieve, up-to-date scholarly materials including articles, reports and statistics that are relevant to your studies. You can browse through all the online resources relating to your subject in one place including databases, journals and websites.

Students are entitled to borrow up to 15 items at any one time. Items can be issued using the self-issue machines on the ground floor of City and Coach Lane Libraries. You can renew your library books online through the MyLibrary section of MyNorthumbria or via the Library Catalogue.

Northumbria students can use other libraries such as the Robinson Library at Newcastle University and Newcastle City Library using the SCONUL access scheme. For more information see the Library SCONUL information page: <http://library.northumbria.ac.uk/sconul-holiday>

The Northumbria Skills Programme is a comprehensive skills programme designed to develop the key skills you need to succeed at university and beyond provided by the Library. It runs throughout the year and provides classroom style skills sessions on many topics including academic writing skills, giving accomplished presentations, and referencing your work correctly, as well as regular drop in surgeries. Some sessions are bookable; simply consult the timetable on the Northumbria Skills Programme website: <http://library.northumbria.ac.uk/skillsdev-nsp>

Skills Plus is the Library's collection of online learning materials, with a focus on digital literacy and study skills that can be accessed on and off-campus. Using these resources is an excellent way to develop your skills through a range of online tutorials with quizzes, video demonstrations and printable help guides. <http://nuweb2.northumbria.ac.uk/library/skillsplus/topics.html?l3-0>

If you need help or advice, on or off campus, you can contact Ask4Help. The Ask4Help service provides you with help and support to access a range of University services including Library, Disability Support, Student Finance and Careers. The quickest way to find answers to some of the most popular questions asked by students is to look at Ask4help online. You can also contact us by phone and speak to a member of our dedicated enquiry team or email us your questions.

[www.northumbria.ac.uk/ask4help](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/ask4help)  
[ask4help@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ask4help@northumbria.ac.uk)

0191 227 4646

