MA (Research) Law and Society
For students entering in 2008

Awarding Institution:	University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	University of Reading
Faculty:	Social Sciences
Programme length:	12 months full-time; 24 months part-time
Date of specification:	September 2008
Programme Director:	Dr Lawrence McNamara (Director, Taught Postgraduate Studies)
Board of Studies:	School of Law (LLB/LLM)
Accreditation:	Nil

Summary of programme aims

The MA (Research) Law and Society is a research-oriented programme that equips graduates with a sound and thorough understanding of the ways that law and legal knowledge form a part of the political, cultural and economic fabric of local, regional and international entities. It aims, especially, to provide students with the research skills needed to undertake postgraduate social science research in law and the administration of justice. In this vein, its objectives are to provide students with advanced skills in legal research, the ability to undertake high level analysis of law and legal issues, a grasp of the research methods that underpin the discipline and its places in the social sciences and the humanities, and a grounding in social science research methods and their application with an emphasis on socio-legal research.

The MA (Research) Law and Society seeks to enable students to:

- Develop their knowledge and understanding of legal approaches to social, cultural and political issues;
- Develop advanced skills in legal research and a sound understanding of the methodological issues related to doctrinal, socio-legal, legal philosophical, and other approaches to legal and social research;
- Develop students' ability to identify and apply appropriate social science research methods to issues of law and the administration of justice;
- Develop and enhance their knowledge and understanding of their chosen area of legal studies and their ability to engage in higher level socio-legal analysis of law and legal issues;
- Prepare for doctoral research in law or to undertake a professional career in legal practice, legal policy, legal research or the administration of justice, while contributing to scholarly research in the discipline.

Transferable skills

The programme provides a range of transferable skills associated with research in the social sciences, including the ability to construct and manage a research project; the ability effectively to analyse and evaluate legal, socio-legal and related non-legal sources, information and data; the ability coherently to communicate in written and oral form the results of research and the rationale and process behind them; and, generally, the ability to develop high level skills of critical and independent thought and analysis.

Programme content

The programme consists of 180 credits, comprised of a dissertation (60 credits) and a taught element (120 credits).

Within the taught element there are core modules: LWMTRM Research Methods (30 credits), LWMRLK Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing (10 credits), GSM001 Principles of Research Design 1 (10 credits), GSM004 Data Collection and Analysis 2: Interviewing & Observation (10 credits), GSM006 Data Collection and Analysis 4: Analysing Language and Text-Based Data (10 credits), and GSM009 Generic Transferable Skills Programme for Social Sciences (10 credits). The remaining 40 credits of the taught element are comprised of optional modules which must be taken from the list of General Law School options below.

In selecting their modules and the areas and/or methods on which they choose to focus, students will be encouraged in discussion with the programme director to identify and articulate the connections between them and reflect on the cohesion of their own particular programme of study.

Of the 120 taught credits, students must be enrolled in a minimum of 45 credits in each of the Autumn and Spring terms. (For this purpose a 30 credit module taught across two terms will count as 15 credits in each term.) All module selections are subject to timetabling requirements.

Compulsory modules

Code	Title	Credits	Level
LWMTDI	Dissertation	60	M
LWMTRM	Research Methods	30	M
LWMRLK	Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing	10	M
GSM001	Principles of Research Design 1	10	M
GSM004	Data Collection and Analysis 2: Interviewing & Observation	10	M
GSM006	Data Collection and Analysis 4: Analysing Language and Text-Based Data	10	M
GSM009	Generic and Transferable Research Skills	10	M

Law School general optional modules (subject to availability in any given year): 40 credits from this group must be taken.

LWMRSM	Research in EU Trade and Commerce	20	M
LWMRIP	Research in Intellectual Property	20	M
LWMRHR	Research in International Human Rights Law	20	M
LWMTEL	EU Labour and Equality Law	20	M
LWMTEF	European Legal Frameworks: Constitutionalism, Democracy and Citizenship	20	M
LWMTDS	International Dispute Settlement	20	M
LWMTIL	International Law in Theory and Practice	20	M
LWMTWL	War Law	20	M
LWMTLT	International Law and Terrorism	20	M

Lists of modules available in any given year and updates to the above lists can be found through the Postgraduate pages on Law School's web site: www.reading.ac.uk/law.

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The programme may be undertaken over two years on a part-time basis. In the first year of study, a student will be required to complete LWMTRM Research Methods (30 credits), LWMRLK Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing (10 credits), GSM001 Principles of Research Design 1 (10 credits), GSM009 Generic and Transferable Research Skills (10 credits), and optional modules of at least 20 credits but not more than 40 credits. In the second year, students will be required to complete GSM004 Data Collection and Analysis 2: Interviewing & Observation (10 credits), GSM006 Data Collection and Analysis 4: Analysing Language and Text-Based Data (10 credits), and any remaining optional modules and LWMTDI Dissertation (60 credits). The programme may not be completed over more than two years.

Progression requirements

▪ **Full-time Candidates**

For Masters Degree
To pass the MA (Research) Law and Society, a student must complete 180 credits in which she or he:
(a) obtains a "Pass" in GSM009 Generic and Transferable Skills; and
(b) achieves an average mark of 50 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded, including a mark of 50 or more for the Dissertation; and
(c) has no mark below 40.
In addition, the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

To be eligible for a Merit, a student must satisfy the pass requirements with an average mark of 60 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded, including a mark of 50 or more for the Dissertation.

To be eligible for a Distinction, a student must satisfy the pass requirements with an average mark of 70 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded, including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation.

For PG Diploma
To pass the Postgraduate Diploma a student must complete 120 credits in which she or he:
(a) obtains a "Pass" in GSM009 Generic and Transferable Skills; and
(b) achieves an average mark of 50 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded; and
(c) has no mark below 40
In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

Students who satisfy the pass requirements and achieve an average mark of 60 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded will be eligible for a Merit. Students who satisfy the pass requirements and achieve an average mark of 70 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded will be eligible for the award of a Distinction.

For PG Certificate
To pass the Postgraduate Certificate a student must complete 60 credits in which she or he:
(a) obtains a "Pass" in GSM009 Generic and Transferable Skills; and

(b) achieves an average mark of 50 or more across all credits in which a numerical mark is awarded; and

(c) has no mark below 40.

Or

(d) achieves an average mark of 50 or more across 60 credits in which a numerical mark is awarded; and has no mark below 40.

- **Part-time Candidates**

  A part-time candidate may only proceed into his or her second year if he or she has achieved 2 marks of at least 50% in his or her first year. Thereafter, the progression requirements of full-time students outlined above will apply. A part-time candidate who chooses not to proceed to his or her second year may be considered for the award of Certificate in Law if he or she gains an average mark of 50 or more in modules worth 60 credits and has no mark below 40.

Summary of teaching and assessment

The programme is structured around the core requirement that students should undertake detailed, advanced research in some aspect or aspects of law. The core Research Methods module is taught over Spring and Autumn terms with a 2-hour seminar each week and assessed through coursework, presentations and class attendance and participation. Other core taught modules are delivered by the Graduate School of Social Sciences. These courses are taught using seminars and assessed through coursework. The Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing module is taught using seminars and assessed on the basis of coursework.

Teaching and assessment in all other taught modules will either be conducted on a seminar basis or will take the form of individually supervised guided research and writing. The dissertation will use individually supervised guided research and writing. Each candidate's programme is tailored to best reflect their needs, interests and goals. Details of the methods of assessment in individual modules are given in the Module Description Forms.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation
70 – 100%   Distinction
60 – 69%   Merit
50 – 59%   Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:
40 – 49%   Work below threshold standard
0 – 39%   Unsatisfactory Work

Admission requirements

Applicants are normally expected to have a degree in any of law or social sciences with a first or upper second class honours or equivalent. However, the School welcomes applications from those who have lower degree qualifications and/or other backgrounds. Applicants in this category would normally be expected to show the capacity to undertake advanced, research-oriented study in law, either by virtue of good performance in relevant aspects of their academic studies or work experience.

Admissions Tutor: Dr. Lawrence McNamara (l.mcnamara@reading.ac.uk)

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

Within the School of Law, personal and academic tutors will provide help and guidance on academic, and where appropriate, other matters. A member of the academic staff of the School acts as Careers Advisor and the School has a Director of Taught Postgraduate Studies (Dr Lawrence McNamara), a student support officer (Mrs Jane Mills) and a postgraduate programmes administrator (Mrs Carolyn Davidson) to provide support and advice to postgraduate students. In addition, all students receive a detailed Handbook to help them study law successfully. Students will have access to a wide range of historical and legal databases and the University Library has good holdings in history, law and legal history.

The MA (Research) Law and Society is built around the school's strengths in research. It links especially to the research degree programmes at PhD level and the activities of the Graduate School for the Social Sciences and the Graduate School of Arts and Humanities. The Law School also series of events each year in which MA (Res) students are strongly encouraged to participate and take an active role. These events include a postgraduate research symposium and staff seminars by Reading and visiting academics. Candidates in the MA (Research) Law and Society will be encouraged to pursue PhD studies and the School will work with candidates to assist them in identifying and applying to the appropriate research councils or other funding bodies so that they are as well-placed as possible to secure PhD funding. The School of Law has ESRC '+3' recognition by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Career prospects

With its emphasis upon legal research skills and independent research, this programme is particularly suited to those who are thinking of entering the legal profession, pursuing career paths in research-based positions in national or international government or non-government institutions, or who wish to pursue a PhD in law or related areas. Pursued as a part-time programme, it is also of great value to people who are already undertaking academic research in other disciplines or to members of the Legal Profession, especially barristers, who wish to build their skills of legal analysis with a view to contributing to the literature upon which superior courts, parliamentary bodies and law reform agencies frequently rely.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

From time to time opportunities for internship and similar placements arise and the School facilitates a number of such opportunities. MA (Research) students would be actively encouraged to apply for such opportunities, and assisted in pursuing these and other relevant opportunities.

Educational aims of the programme

The MA (Research) Law and Society is an interdisciplinary programme that seeks to facilitate graduates in developing a deep understanding of legal approaches to social, cultural and political phenomena; advanced skills in legal research; and a sophisticated appreciation of the relationships between law and other disciplines. It aims to enable students to undertake advanced analysis of law and legal issues, and to provide them with the research skills needed to undertake higher level research in the field of law as a preparation for doctoral study or further academic or professional development.

Programme Outcomes

The programme gives students opportunities to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and attributes in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:	Teaching/learning methods and strategies
• A comprehensive, systematic and accurate knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of law through writing a dissertation; • A comprehensive and critical awareness of the various sources and materials used in legal research and the methodological issues which arise in the use of them; • A sound understanding of the legal and ethical issues which may arise in the course of legal research. • A sound understanding of the methods and issues associated with social science research and the place of law and legal research in relation to that broader framework.	• Individual supervision of essays and dissertation • Research for module essays and assignments • Participation in Research Methods, Research Design and Generic and Transferable Skills modules • Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading *Assessment* • Essays • Seminar presentation in Research Methods • Critical evaluation of research proposals • Assessed work in Research Design module • Dissertation Proposal • Dissertation

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
• Interpret and utilise primary and secondary sources and to recognise and evaluate methodological issues which arise in their selection and use; • Adopt a systematic and coherent approach to the integration and synthesis of significant quantities of information from a range of primary and secondary sources relevant to the field of law; • Form and communicate complex arguments in an effective manner that demonstrates an awareness of the relationship between law and other disciplines; • Communicate the results of research and arguments in a coherent and articulate way both orally and in writing; • Formulate sophisticated research questions and identify strategies for exploring them; • Think critically and independently; • Develop a critical self-awareness as a legal researcher.	• Individual supervision of essays and dissertation • Research for module essays and assignments • Participation in Research Methods, Research Design and Generic and Transferable Skills seminars and submission of assessed and non-assessed work. • Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading *Assessment* • Essays • Seminar presentation in Research Methods • Dissertation Proposal • Dissertation

C. Practical skills – able to:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
- Ability to plan and implement a primary research project while working independently; - Locate, extract and critically evaluate legal information from primary and secondary sources in physical and digital forms; - Select and apply appropriate methodological approaches to analyse legal sources; - Engage in individual and group discussion and debate on legal issues; - Critically evaluate research design in proposals written by others; - Ability to critically evaluate the writing of others and to write at an advanced level	- Individual supervision of essays and dissertation - Research for module essays and assignments - Participation in Research Methods and Research Design seminars and other MA (Res) Law and Society optional modules and submission of assessed and non-assessed work. - Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading *Assessment* - Seminar presentation in Research Methods - Assessed work in Research Design and other MA (Res) Law and Society optional modules. - Dissertation Proposal - Dissertation

D. Transferable skills – able to:
- Communicate complex ideas and information effectively in speech and writing;
- Ability to construct and manage a research project;
- Deal effectively with a range of sources and types of information in an appropriate manner;
- Demonstrate sound use of electronic resources where appropriate;
- Manage time and workloads effectively;
- Demonstrate self-direction and independence in exercising their own initiative and personal responsibility;
- Continue to develop knowledge and understanding to a high level.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

All of these skills are essential for successful completion of the programme and will be developed through:

- Individual supervision of essays and dissertation
- Research for module essays and assignments
- Participation in Research Methods, Research Design, Generic and Transferable Skills, and other MA (Res) Law and Society optional modules, and submission of assessed and non-assessed work.
- Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading

Assessment

- Essays
- Seminar presentation and coursework in Research Methods
- Assessed work in Research Design and and other MA (Res) Law and Society optional modules,.
- Dissertation Proposal
- Dissertation

Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.