

MSc in Informatics (BIT)
For students entering Part 1 in 2011/2

Awarding Institution:	University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s):	
Faculty:	Henley Business School at Univ of Reading
Programme length:	2 years
Date of specification:	23/Aug/2011
Programme Director:	Prof Kecheng Liu
Programme Advisor:	
Board of Studies:	Informatics MScs
Accreditation:	To be considered later, possibly by the Chinese Computer Society; Fully approved and recognised by the Chinese Ministry of Education

Summary of programme aims

The programme aims to offer opportunities to local students entering postgraduate education at high, international standards. It will prepare students for responsible professional leadership and management roles in the fields of applied informatics such as Computing, Information Technology, business and management at postgraduate level. The programme will enhance the students' existing knowledge and skills in key technological and business areas, with a balance of international themes and local relevance. Students will be able to apply their knowledge and skills in planning, management, design and implementation of IT based solutions to business problems.

Transferable skills

In parallel to subject competence that students are required to acquire from their programme of study, they are expected to enhance their research, team work, communications, information handling, problem-solving, project management, creativity, and analytical skills. This is achieved through a mix of different methods of teaching and learning (lecture/practical, classroom-based/problem-based, theory-oriented/skill-focused) and different methods of assessments (examination/coursework). A key part of the study programme is the MSc dissertation project in which students will be trained and assessed as specified in the module specification, in most of the transferable skills (e.g. independent research, critical analysis and project planning and management).

Programme content

A student must complete all compulsory modules. In addition, optional modules should be undertaken to make up the rest of the credits required. The student must also complete a dissertation.

Compulsory Modules

Code	Title	Credits	Level
INMB61	Applied Informatics	20	7
INMB62	Research Methods	20	7
INMB64	Dissertation	60	7

Students must choose four optional modules to the value of 80 credits. A complete list of optional modules is available from the Programme Director, and a list of current options can be found in the relevant Programme Handbook. There is no guarantee that in any one year all modules will be available. New optional modules may also be added.

An exemplary list of optional modules include IT Project Management, Business Domain and Requirements Analysis, Organisational Design and Management of Information, Systems Analysis and Design, Business Intelligence and Data Mining, Distributed Communications and Middleware and Business Communications and Negotiations.

IN modules are offered by Informatics Research Centre.

With advice from the BIT programme manager, students will indicate their preferred options from the list of optional modules. Based on the choices made and consultation with the relevant staff, the four most popular options will be run each semester.

Part-time or modular arrangements

A full-time student is expected to complete the study programme in 18 months; while the completion time for a part-time student is 36 months. This programme can be started in October or in March.

Progression requirements

A student may undertake an optional module at any time, without necessarily being constrained by the completion of compulsory modules.

The dissertation project can commence after satisfactory completion of the Research Methods module.

Assessment and classification

All the modules will be delivered by lectures, tutorials and practicals. Teaching and learning of a module consists of three phases: the Pre-intensive, Intensive and Post-intensive study periods, each lasting 10 days. The face-to-face contact is 32 hours concentrated in the Intensive period of 10 days, taught by a Reading lecturer. The Pre-intensive and Post-intensive study periods are supported by a local staff member in forms of timetabled tutorial sessions (5 hours each phase) and individual meetings, and contact using email.

Distribution of learning hours for each module is as follows (all taking place in Beijing):

	Pre-Intensive	Intensive	Post-Intensive
Elapse Time	10 days	10 days	10 days
Total learning hours	60	70	70
Contact hours (lecture/tutorial/pract.)	10	32	10
Independent study	50	38	60

A dissertation project will be supervised by a principal supervisor (a lecturer from UoR) and a local supervisor. The topic of a dissertation will be chosen by a student in consultation with the prospective supervisors and approved by the BIT programme manager. Distribution of learning time for the dissertation is as follows:

	Pre-intensive (in Beijing)	Intensive (in Europe or in Beijing)	Post-intensive (in Beijing)
Elapsed time (full-time)	2 months	15 days	3.5 month
Elapsed time (part-time)	4 months	15 days	7 months
Total learning hours	200	150	250
Contact hours (supervision meetings)	20	10	20
Independent-study	180	140	230

Examinations of all taught modules will take place at the end of each semester (i.e. each six months).

A student who has not passed a module (including the dissertation) may re-sit once only; the format and timing of the re-sit will be stated in the module description.

Three exit points are built into the programme, and a student will be awarded the highest qualification he/she has achieved. A Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) requires 60 credits; a Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) requires 120 credits; an MSc requires 180 credits including a dissertation.

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

For Masters Degrees

To pass the MSc students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained:

- 2.1 Honours Bachelors Degree or equivalent in IT, management or relevant fields; or
- equivalent experience, subject to the UoR APEL rules.

For an applicant whose first language is not English, an IELTS 6, TOEFL 540 or equivalent is required.

Exceptionally, if an applicant has worked in an English language environment for a minimum of 3 years, an English test, organised by The University of Reading's Centre for Applied Language Studies, may be conducted in lieu of formal qualifications.

Admissions Tutor:

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support is provided by a wide array of services across the University, including: the University Library, the Student Employment, Experience and Careers Centre (SEEC), In-sessional English Support Programme, the Study Advice and Mathematics Support Centre teams, IT Services and 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 Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and advisers in the Student Services Centre. The Student Services Centre is housed in the Carrington Building and offers advice on accommodation, careers, disability, finance, and wellbeing. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions and runs workshops and seminars on a range of topics. For more information see www.reading.ac.uk/student

In the middle of the intensive phase and at the end of each module, a questionnaire will be distributed to students for teaching assessment. Two elected student representatives in each cohort will be responsible for representing students' interests and voicing any concerns to the lecturers and Programme Manager. The elected student representatives will be members of the Student-Staff committee of the Graduate School of BIT in which the programme is based. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by the Programme Directors and Programme Managers, relevant to the site where he/she is based at the time (BIT or UoR). Support is also available from the Students Service Offices at BIT and UoR. To add section: Transfer between programmes A student is permitted to transfer between this programme and the MSc Applied Informatics or MSc Business Informatics programme, subject to the approval by the receiving Programme Director. Transfer of a dissertation project, after it commences, is normally not permitted.

Career prospects

This Masters degree is designed to be industry oriented with the possibility of allowing students to carry out in-depth academic enquiries. The prospective students may be fresh graduates or experienced professionals. They can undertake the programme of study on a part-time or a full-time mode. Given these, it is expected that graduates from this programme will be able to take the following responsibilities either in industry or academia: systems manager, IT operations manager, systems analyst, software engineer, application architect/developer, project leader, researcher/educator/trainer.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

Students will have the opportunity to come to the UK for a maximum period of 6 months in their dissertation visits. This allows them to receive direct supervision from their dissertation supervisors. Their experience of education and research in Europe will add much value to their career development. A bench fee will be charged for visits longer than 3 months.

Students, however, will not be encouraged to take any placement or jobs during their dissertation visits.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Information Systems (IS) planning and management:
 - IS architecture and components
 - IS development and methodologies
 - Business processes and IS design
 - Project management and planning
 - Business intelligence analysis
2. Practice
 - Problem identification and critical analysis
 - Design, development and evaluation
 - Management and organisation
 - Professionalism and ethics
 - Commercial and industrial exploitation
3. Communication and interaction
4. Theory
4. Theory

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The course concentrates on aspects 1 and 2. All modules collectively will cover the identified scope. Introduction to new concepts as well as the use of practical case studies will enable students to think critically. Aspects 3 and 4 are covered within other modules such as Research Methods and Informatics.

Assessment

Knowledge is tested through a mixture of formal examinations and practical work. The dissertation project will also assess the knowledge, understanding and ability of applying them in solving problems.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding related to aspects outlined above
2. Apply such knowledge and understanding to the formulation of IS solutions
3. Recognise and analyse criteria and specifications appropriate to a specific problem
4. Critically evaluate and test a computer based solution to business problems
5. Reflect and communicate
6. Recognise and conform to appropriate professional, ethical and legal practices

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1 and 2 as above.
3, 4 and 5 will be taught as part of the compulsory modules, and will be exercised in the dissertation. The Options will also address these aspects. 6 will be taught in the modules on Professional Issues and Research Methods.

Assessment

These skills are tested through a mixture of formal examinations and practicals. The dissertation will also assess these skills.

C. Practical skills - able to:

1. Analyse business problems, specify business requirements
2. Specify, design and construct IS solutions
3. Evaluate the solutions

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1, 2, 3 will be covered both in the business and IT related modules. Both are present as the cores. 3 will be also addressed in the Research Methods module.

4. Recognise risks and safety aspects
5. Communicate, present and disseminate the solutions

4 and 5 will be covered in the Research Methods module and the Dissertation Project.

Assessment

Skills 1 to 5 will be assessed by a mixture of practical work and examination.

D. Transferable skills - *able to*:

1. Independent research, including planning and management
2. Literature research
3. Time management
4. Critical analytical skills
5. Communication and presentation in a professional manner
6. Technical documentation in English

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1 will be covered in all modules as each student is required to conduct a substantial amount of independent study before and after the intensive study blocks.

1, 2, 3 and 4 will be addressed in the dissertation project.

5 and 6 will be addressed in the Research Methods Module and the Dissertation Project.

6 will be addressed in all modules, especially in the course work.

Assessment

All will be assessed by examination, practical work and 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 process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.