

MA(Res) in Modern History **For students entering Part 1 in 2011/2**

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| Awarding Institution: | University of Reading |
| Teaching Institution: | University of Reading |
| Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s): | |
| Faculty: | Arts, Humanities and Social Science Faculty |
| Programme length: | 1 years |
| Date of specification: | 23/Aug/2011 |
| Programme Director: | Dr Linda Risso |
| Programme Advisor: | |
| Board of Studies: | Postgraduate Studies in History |
| Accreditation: | |

Summary of programme aims

The MA (Res) in Modern History aims to provide students with the skills and confidence to undertake an original piece of research in their chosen historical area, and to provide an underpinning for further research at doctoral level as well as offering a satisfying and rewarding experience for those who take the MA (Res) as an end in itself. Additionally, the programme aims to augment students' existing skills so that they may further a career in a cognate profession and within the knowledge economy more generally.

Transferable skills

The University's Strategy for Teaching and Learning has identified a number of generic transferable skills which all students are expected to have developed by the end of their degree programme. In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to enhance their skills relating to career management, communication (both written and oral), information handling, numeracy, problem-solving, team working and use of information technology.

The MA (Res) in Modern History is designed to ensure that students continue to develop these transferable skills, in parallel and integrated with the acquisition of more specialist knowledge, understanding and skills concerned with the conduct and management of historical research and enquiry appropriate at a postgraduate level. The programme is recognised by the AHRC as providing appropriate research training.

Programme content

In the Autumn term, all students follow one core course. The first of these, Modern History: Theory, Practice and Themes deals with the theory and practice of history through a number of case studies designed to develop students' awareness of the development of different fields of study within history and the different methodological and theoretical approaches which have been applied to them. In the Spring Term the second core course is Historical Skills and Resources, it is an intensive induction into fundamental bibliographical, archival and methodological skills. Students also begin work on the dissertation, initially identifying and refining a suitable topic and locating potential primary source material under the guidance of a tutor who continues to act in a supervisory capacity throughout the student's period of registration. In the Autumn and Spring term, students choose one option in each term, which complement the work done on the Modern History: theory, practice and themes course; they continue the course on Historical Skills, leading up to an oral presentation on their research topic; and they intensify work on the dissertation. The Summer term is given over to detailed research and writing up of the dissertation under the guidance of the supervisor.

Further elements, such as database training, foreign language work or palaeography, may be arranged according to the specific needs arising from the research project, and will normally be substituted for the Spring term option.

The MA (Res) in Modern History is designed within a 180 credit modular structure, with 90 credits awarded for the dissertation, 30 credits for the module in Historical Skills and Resources (compulsory core course), 20 credits for the module in Modern History: theory, practice and themes (compulsory core course), and 20 credits for each of two option courses as shown in the table below.

| Code | Title | Credits | Level |
|--------|---|---------|-------|
| HSMSR1 | Historical Skills and Resources | 30 | 7 |
| HSMTP2 | Modern History: theory, practice and themes | 20 | 7 |
| HSMDN3 | Dissertation | 90 | 7 |
| HSMOP1 | Option 1 | 20 | 7 |

Part-time or modular arrangements

The programme may be taken part-time over two years or in 'flexible' modular form over 3-5 years. Part-time and modular students take the same modules as full-time students, and normally in the same order, but with appropriately revised deadlines. Normally the first module taken will be Modern History: theory, practice and themes.

Progression requirements

N/A

Assessment and classification

The relationship between class contact hours, visits to Libraries and Archives, workshops, tutorials and student-centred learning varies across the modules and is detailed in the individual module descriptions. In general, the programme is structured so that the Spring term provides a foundation for the inculcation of methodological principles, core research skills and broad debates and students apply this broad based learning to 'microcosmic' situations.

Assessment is solely by means of coursework. This comprises one essay of 4,000 words in respect of all four taught modules. The student's individual research project is assessed by a dissertation of 20,000 words. Where an additional element, such as foreign language work, has been substituted for one of the options, this will be examined by an appropriate test of similar weight.

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

For Masters Degrees (180 credits)

To pass the degree of Master students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 in the module on Historical Skills and Resources. 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 awarded eligible for a Merit.

For Postgraduate Diplomas (120 credits)

Students take the following Modules:

| Code | Title | Credits | Level |
|--------|---|---------|-------|
| HSMSR1 | Historical Skills and Resources | 30 | 7 |
| HSMTP2 | Modern History: theory, practice and themes | 20 | 7 |
| HSMDE1 | Diploma Extended Essay | 30 | 7 |
| HSMOP1 | Option 1 | 20 | 7 |
| HSMOP2 | Option 2 | 20 | 7 |

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40 in the module on Historical Skills and Resources. 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 awarded eligible for a Merit.

For Postgraduate Certificate (70 credits)

| Code | Title | Credits | Level |
|--------|---|---------|-------|
| HSMSR1 | Historical Skills and Resources | 30 | 7 |
| HSMTP2 | Modern History: theory, practice and themes | 20 | 7 |
| HSMOP1 | Option 1 | 20 | 7 |
| HSMOP2 | Option 2 | 20 | 7 |

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40 in the module on Historical Skills and Resources. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

Students have the right to one re-sit of any failed element. They may also wish to re-sit a 'failing' element but are not obliged to do so. Taught modules are normally re-examined in September; a failed dissertation is due for re-submission within one year of the original submission date. Candidates presenting themselves for re-examination are not eligible for the award of a Distinction or Merit.

Admission requirements

Entrants to the programme are normally expected to have obtained an Upper-Second Honours degree in a course with a substantial element of History. However, approaches are warmly invited from overseas candidates and from those with non-traditional qualifications who can demonstrate suitable ability and commitment. Each application is considered on its merits.

Admissions Tutor: Linda Risso

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 (SECC), 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 School, a Director is in overall charge of the programme and has responsibility for allocating students to modules and to research supervisors, ensuring that students and supervisors meet regularly, overseeing the progress of individual students, providing detailed feedback on their work, as well as offering pastoral care and support. The programme begins with an induction session. Students are provided with a handbook which outlines the programme, gives bibliographical advice and contains practical information about staff, sources of specialised help, submission deadlines, etc. Students are encouraged to attend meetings of the History Research seminar and the Postgraduate History Group. The latter comprises MA, MPhil and PhD students, and arranges seminars on a three-weekly basis throughout the year, and it is within its programme of seminars that MA (Res) students give an oral presentation on their research topic in a setting which is both supportive and stimulating. Students are also provided with details of research seminars at other institutions, notably those held at the Institute of Historical Research, of which the School of History has institutional membership. The School of History has a Library which complements the material held in the Main University Library. As well as its holdings in books, the School Library has complete runs of some significant periodicals, such as *Past and Present*, and provides a quiet study space, photocopying facilities and networked computers. The Rural History Centre has an extensive and nationally important library and archive collection. A prize, based upon the Jeanette Martin Fund, is awarded annually for the best dissertation by an MA (Res) student.

Career prospects

Our postgraduates are trained in clear thinking, research skills, diligence, independence, adaptability and the ability to understand people and situations in the world at large. Additionally they have the ability to locate, collate and process a wide variety of information, assess its value and use it to arrive at sound conclusions. This makes them attractive to a wide range of employers, especially in the 'knowledge economy'. In the past, graduates have used the MA to move into, or further existing, careers in cognate areas, such as museum work, information science and teaching, but they increasingly use the MA as a springboard into a range of occupations, including banking, accountancy, law, commerce, computing, management and the civil service. A significant number go on to Doctoral study in History, either at Reading or elsewhere.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

The intensive nature of the full-time course means that it is not tailored to any period of study abroad. Those taking the course part-time or on a modular basis over 3-5 years may have the opportunity to study abroad as part of the Socrates scheme. This is arranged on an ad hominem or ad feminam basis.

Programme Outcomes

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

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. nature of debate and dispute in historical writing and discourse
2. the range of primary and secondary sources available for the study of modern history
3. elements of change and continuity in modern history
4. methods and skills appropriate to the study of modern history
5. strengths and weaknesses of different disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of modern history

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Acquisition of knowledge of fields 1-5 is promoted across the programme through seminar discussions, seminar presentations, guest lectures, site visits, tutorials and workshops. The Modern History: theory, practice and themes module makes specific use of a wide range of textual readings, primary and secondary, to illuminate the nature of debate and dispute in the practice of history (field 1) and, through case studies, to illustrate how different disciplinary approaches to a problem can condition perception (field 5). The workshop associated with the Stenton Lecture focuses on approaches to the writing of history. This complements the teaching in the Historical Skills and Resources module, which also deals particularly with fields 1, 2 and 4.

Assessment

Students' knowledge and understanding are tested through assessed essays and the dissertation. They may also be assessed by a project (depending on the choice of option).

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - able to:

1. integrate theory and practice
2. analyse and interpret data and information
3. evaluate and select relevant research methodologies
4. negotiate both primary and secondary sources
5. think critically, logically and independently, leading to an ability to manifest a nuanced appreciation of issues and an ability appropriately to challenge received opinions
6. provide a synthesis of the current state of scholarship and debate in their chosen area of

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

These Skills are developed throughout the programme through seminars, guest lectures, workshops, site visits and through individual consultation with essay supervisors, the research supervisor and the Programme Director. They are most especially the focus of attention in the research and writing of the dissertation, which is performed as an original piece of work, based upon primary sources and which involves engagement with current scholarship. The inculcation of these intellectual skills is also a significant aspect of the Historical

specialism.

7. define and solve problems
8. demonstrate an understanding of their own modes of interpretation and an awareness of hermeneutical complexity in analysing texts
9. demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge

C. Practical skills - able to:

1. locate information sources, including through the use of IT
2. select, collate and present information in a variety of contexts
3. develop and implement an individual research programme and strategies
4. engage in group discussion
5. Write an accurate text, using properly referenced footnotes

D. Transferable skills - able to:

1. communicate effectively, both by oral and written means, and also graphically, subject to the particular choice of option
2. operate effectively within a group
3. demonstrate time/task management skills
4. handle information, including through the use of specialist databases as appropriate
5. undertake autonomous learning
6. solve problems
7. deal with complex issues in a systematic and creative manner
8. exercise initiative and personal responsibility
9. show a competence in numeracy within the parameters of the subject

Skills and Resources module.

Assessment

Intellectual skills are assessed through coursework essays, particularly the bibliographical essay which is part of the Historical Skills and Resources module. This requires students to show an awareness of historical theory as appropriate to their own field of enquiry, to critically appraise the primary sources and to situate their own research within the subject's broader historiographical context. Above all, it is in the dissertation that students are assessed on their possession of these skills and ability to apply them in practice. They may also be assessed by means of a project (depending on the choice of option).

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Skills 1, 2, and 3 are developed primarily through the research project, which involves tutorial supervision and feedback from the research supervisor and programme Director as well as upfront student activity. These skills are also the focus of specific seminars and guest lectures in the Skills and Resources module, with 'hands on' sessions being devoted to IT training. Skill 1 is also developed through site visits to Libraries and archives. Skill 5 is embedded in all modules, as is skill 4, which is additionally honed through the oral presentation on the research project and through participation in postgraduate and History research seminars.

Assessment

Skills 1-5 are formally assessed through coursework essays and the dissertation and skills 3 and 4 are additionally tested informally in individual tutorials with staff and by participation in the postgraduate seminar. They may also be assessed by means of a project (depending on the choice of option).

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The teaching and acquisition of these transferable skills is firmly embedded in all areas of the programme. Thus, the ability to write clearly and in a style appropriate to purpose (eg: a progress report, textual analysis, coursework essay, dissertation) is a *sine qua non* of success in all aspects of the MA (Res). All students are expected to participate in and lead seminars and group discussions and to defend their research proposals; and they will also develop and maintain cooperative networks and working relationships with their peers, essay and research supervisors and other members of academic staff within the University. And a graphical presentation, e.g.: using PowerPoint, is a requirement of certain options. Team working feeds into skill 5 which is primarily embedded in the research project: e.g.:

coursework essay topics are initially generated by the students and reflect their individual interests. Skill 3 is inculcated throughout the programme, for example in prioritising assignments and working to deadlines, and is particularly evidenced in the research project which involves the establishment of research goals and intermediate milestones and the prioritisation of activities. The location, collation and processing of substantial handling of substantial amounts of information is above all integral to the research project, though the skill pervades all of the modules. The option on *History and Computing* deals with some specific issues concerned with this, including the use of databases. A basic appreciation of numeracy is developed through an awareness of chronology, cataloguing systems and estimation, with some modules taking this further as appropriate to the subject matter.

Assessment

The transferable skills are assessed formally by means of coursework essays and the dissertation. They are tested informally at peer group sessions, seminars and tutorials.

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.