MA (Res) in History
For students entering in 2014/5

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:	12 months
Date of specification:	08/Sep/2014
Programme Director:	Dr Linda Risso
Programme Advisor:	
Board of Studies:	Postgraduate Studies in History
Accreditation:	

Summary of programme aims

The MA (Res) in History covers the period from 1500 up to today. It is aimed at providing a stimulating and challenging programme for anybody looking to fulfil their intellectual curiosity and to follow their research interests. Through a combination of core and optional modules the MA (Res) in History programme is designed to support student planning to pursue a career in education, to work in museums and archives and to build the basis of their doctoral research.

These aims are achieved by:
- providing guidance on planning, researching and writing a dissertation;
- familiarising students with fundamental IT, bibliographical, library and archival skills;
- providing for such specific needs (e.g. training in palaeography, a foreign language or computing) as may arise from a particular research project;
- providing an understanding of the nature of historical enquiry, evidence and argument;
- providing a forum which brings together postgraduates and staff for discussion of common historical problems;
- promoting an awareness of the University's resources, research culture and environment.

Students who are successful in obtaining the award of an MA will demonstrate an ability to locate and interpret source material, handle complex issues and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. They will have shown evidence of critical awareness and originality in the application of relevant historical techniques and knowledge. They will be capable of self direction in tackling and solving problems and, with further training, would be expected to remain at the forefront of their chosen areas of specialism.

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 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 postgraduate level.

Programme content

The course consists of five assessed modules:
- History: Theory, Practice and Themes (20 credits, two x 2500 word essays). This module takes place in the Autumn Term. It concentrates on the theory and practice of history through a number of case studies designed to develop students' awareness of different methodological and theoretical approaches.
- Historical Skills and Resources (30 credits, one 4,000 word essay, one presentation and one blog entry) This module takes place in the Autumn Term. It provides students with an opportunity to have the hands-on experience of working on broadly defined primary sources. This module is run in cooperation with the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) and Special Collections at the University of Reading.
- Two Options (20 credits each, two x 2,500 word essays for each option) In Autumn and Spring terms, students choose two Options, which consist of a series of 8 two-hour seminars each. Provided they have the approval of the MA Director, students can replace one of their Options with an independent study on a topic if their choice. The list of Options offered each academic year depends on staff availability.

- Dissertation (90 credits, 20,000 word dissertation submitted in September) Students work closely with their supervisor on their research project. In the Spring Term, students attend a series of workshops dealing with issues like Source Criticism, Project Management and Bibliographical Skills.

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

Module code	Module Title	Credits	Level
HSMSR1	Historical Skills and Resources	30	7
HSMTP	History: Theory, Practice and Themes	20	7
HSMDN3	Dissertation	90	7
HSMOP1	Option 1	20	7
HSMOP2	Option 2	20	7

Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)
Students take the following Modules:

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Level
HSMSR1	Historical Skills and Resources	30	7
HSMTP	History: Theory, Practice and Themes	20	7
HSMDE1	Diploma Extended Essay (6,000 words)	30	7
HSMOP1	Option 1	20	7
HSMOP2	Option 2	20	7

Postgraduate Certificate (70 credits)
Students take from among the following modules:

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Level
HSMSR1	Historical Skills and Resources	30	7
HSMTP	History: Theory, Practice and Themes	20	7
HSMOP1	Option 1	20	7
HSMOP2	Option 2	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 to be worked out with the MA Director. Modular students are expected to take at least one module per year apart from the final year of dissertation submission; otherwise they should seek temporary suspension.

Progression requirements
N/A

Summary of Teaching and Assessment
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.
Assessment is by means of coursework and one presentation. This comprises two essays of 2,500 words in respect of all four taught modules and a presentation for the Historical Skills module.
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.
A prize, based upon the Jeanette Martin Fund, is awarded annually for the best dissertation by an MA (Res) student.

For Postgraduate Diplomas (120 credits)

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)

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*.

Fail marks*
Students have the right to one re-sit of any failed element (below 40) for a pass mark of 50. They may wish to resubmit a 'failing' element (40-49) again for a pass mark of 50, but are not obliged to do so. Taught modules will normally be re-examined during the term of original submission, but not later than 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: Dr Linda Risso (l.risso@reading.ac.uk)

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 Careers, Placement and Experience Centre (CPEC), 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, academic issues (eg problems with module selection) and exam related queries. 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.

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'. Our HSMSR1 module runs in collaboration with the Museum of English Rural Life and Special Collections. It offers opportunities for further training to students interested in pursuing a career in Museology and Archival Studies. 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 history
3. elements of change and continuity in history
4. methods and skills appropriate to the study of history
5. strengths and weaknesses of different disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of 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 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 specialism
7. define and solve problems
8. demonstrate an understanding of their own modes of interpretation and an awareness of hermeneutical complexity of analysing texts
9. demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge

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 perforce 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 Skills and Resources module.

Assessment
Intellectual skills are assessed through coursework essays, particularly the 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).

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

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).

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

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 (e.g.: 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.

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.