

MRes in Law and Society (full-time)
For students entering in 2016/7

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:	10/Nov/2016
Programme Director:	
Programme Advisor:	
Board of Studies:	Law

Summary of programme aims

The M 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 to provide students with the opportunity to gain a grounding in general social science research methods and their application with an emphasis on socio-legal research.

The M 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). The dissertation must be written on a topic that falls broadly within the realm of socio-legal studies. (Socio-legal studies are defined by the ESRC as being concerned with the social, political and economic influences on and impact of the law and the legal system.

Within the taught element there are core modules: LWMTRM Research Methods (30 credits) and LWMRLK Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing (10 credits). The remaining 80 credits of the taught element are comprised of optional modules which may be taken from the Programme Director of PGT Studies in Law.

Permission to take unlisted modules will only be granted in exceptional circumstances; for example, where a student has work experience in a field then permission may be granted to take a module relevant to that field. Note that, as with all modules, any pre-requisites or co-requisites will also need to be satisfied. All module selections are subject to timetabling requirements.

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 ordinarily be enrolled in a minimum of 40 credits in each of the Autumn and Spring terms. (For this purpose a module taught across two terms half of its credits will be allocated to the first term and half to the second.)

Compulsory modules

Code	Title	Credits	Level
LWMTDI	Dissertation	60	7
LWMTRM	Research Methods	30	7
LWMRLK	Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing	10	7

A full list of the optional modules is available from the Programme Director.

Part-time or modular arrangements

The programme may be undertaken over two years on a part-time basis. In the first year of study, a student will normally be required to complete LWMRLK Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing (10 credits), and other optional modules of at least 40 credits and not more than 80 credits. In the second year, students will normally be required to complete LWMTRM Research Methods (30 credits), and any remaining optional modules and LWMTDI Dissertation (60 credits). Modules will be assessed in the year in which they are taken. The programme may not be completed over more than two years.

Progression requirements

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 satisfies the requirements for a Certificate in Law (see below).

Summary of Teaching and Assessment

Teaching methods will vary from module to module but teaching will primarily be by means of seminars. Certain modules may be partially taught by means of lectures and tutorials. All modules, other than the Dissertation, will be assessed by one of or a combination of: a timed, unseen examination; a timed, seen examination; assessed written work; other forms of assessment (such as participation in class or an oral class presentation).

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

Further information on the classification conventions, including borderline criteria, are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/exams/PGclassification-post-2008.pdf>

For Masters Degree

To qualify for Distinction, students must gain an overall average mark of 70 or more over 180 credits and a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation, and must not have any mark below 40. In addition, the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

To qualify for Merit, a student must gain an overall average mark of 60 or more over 180 credits including a mark of 50 or more for the Dissertation, and must not have any mark below 40. In addition, the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

To qualify for Passed, a student must gain an overall average of 50 or more over 180 credits and a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and must not have any mark below 40. In addition, the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

For PG Diploma

To qualify for Distinction, students must gain an overall average mark of 70 or more across 120 credits and must not have any mark below 40. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

To qualify for Merit, students must gain an overall average mark of 60 or more across 120 credits and must not have any mark below 40. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

To qualify for Passed, students must gain an overall average mark of 50 or more over 120 credits and must not have any mark below 40. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

For PG Certificate

To qualify for a Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an overall average mark of 50 or more across 60 credits and must not have any mark below 40.

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.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate the ability to undertake research and writing at a high standard. It is usual for the programme director to ask applicants for samples of written work and applicants may be interviewed. Applicants for these programmes are also advised to include with their application a statement of around 300 words indicating areas of research interest and how the proposed programme of study fits with their future plans.

Admissions Tutor: Simon Flacks s.j.flacks@reading.ac.uk, 0118 378 8469

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-session 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

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, individual programme directors for each taught postgraduate programme, a Senior Tutor for students on taught postgraduate programmes, a student support officer and a postgraduate administrative officer to provide support and advice to postgraduate students. In addition, all students receive a detailed Handbook to help them study law successfully.

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. M Research students would be actively encouraged to apply for such opportunities, and assisted in pursuing these and other relevant opportunities.

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:

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.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Individual supervision of essays and dissertation
Research for module essays and assignments
Participation in Research Methods and Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing modules
Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading

Assessment

Essays
Seminar presentation in Research Methods
Assessed work in Research Methods module and Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing module
Dissertation Proposal
Dissertation

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - *able to*:

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.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Individual supervision of essays and dissertation
Research for module essays and assignments
Participation in Research Methods, and Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing 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*:

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;

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Individual supervision of essays and dissertation
Research for module essays and assignments
Participation in Research Methods and Legal Knowledge, Legal Writing, seminars and other M Research (Law and Society) optional modules and

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

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 M Research (Law and Society) compulsory and 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, Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing and other M Research (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 Legal Knowledge and Legal Writing and other M Research (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 process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.