

**MA by Research Legal History (full-time)**  
**For students entering in 2017/8**

Awarding Institution:	University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s):	
Programme length:	12 months
Date of specification:	28/Nov/2017
Programme Director:	Prof Chris Hilson
Board of Studies:	Law (Postgraduate)

**Summary of programme aims**

The MA by Research Legal History is an interdisciplinary programme that equips graduates with a sophisticated understanding of legal and historical approaches to social, cultural and political phenomena, advanced skills in archival research, and the ability to undertake high level analysis of law and legal issues. Its aim is to provide students with the research skills needed to undertake postgraduate research in the field of legal history.

The MA by Research Legal History seeks to enable students to:

- Develop their knowledge and understanding of legal and historical approaches to the study of social, cultural and political issues;
- Develop advanced skills in archival research and a sound understanding of the associated methodological issues;
- Develop and enhance their knowledge and understanding of their chosen area of legal history and their ability to engage in higher level analysis of law and legal issues;
- Prepare for doctoral research in legal history or to undertake a professional career while contributing to academic research in legal history.

**Transferable skills**

The programme provides a range of transferable skills, including the ability to construct and manage a research project; the ability effectively to analyse and evaluate legal and historical 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 following modules are compulsory for all students.

Code	Title	Credits	Level
LWMHDP	Dissertation Plan	20	7
LWMHAA	Accessing and Interrogating Archives	20	7
LWMHDI	Research Dissertation	90	7
LWMHRS	Research Seminar Presentation	10	7

Students must also complete 40 credits from the following list of modules.

Code	Title	Credits	Level
LWMHMA	History and Management of an Archive	20	7
LWMHCT	Critical Thinkers	20	7
LWMHSP	Sourcing the Past	20	7
LWMHAI *	Archival Internship	40	7
LW3HEL *	History of English Law	20	6
LW3CJ *	Criminal Justice	20	6

\* These modules may only be taken with the permission of the Programme Director.

Students may take alternative unlisted modules offered by any School or Department in the University, with permission of the programme director. Generally, permission to take unlisted modules will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Note that, as with all modules, any pre-requisites or co-requisites will also need to be satisfied and that it may also be the case that students also require approval from the department which runs the module in question.

All module selections are subject to timetabling requirements.

**Part-time or modular arrangements**

The programme may be undertaken over two years on a part-time basis. Selection of modules between the two years will be agreed at the commencement of the programme. It is expected that students will normally complete at least 60 credits in year one, and that this will include the modules in Research Methods in Legal History and Archival Research. It is also expected that students will normally commence their dissertation in year one. Modules will be assessed in the year in which they are taken.

### Progression requirements

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

The programme is structured around the core requirement that students should undertake detailed research in some aspect of legal history. Teaching and assessment will primarily take the form of individually supervised guided research and writing, with each candidate's programme tailored to best reflect their needs, interests and goals.

As part of the compulsory module in Accessing and Interrogating Archives, all students will be required to attend an intensive week long course in archives and libraries for historical research, which will be hosted by the Institute of Historical Research. The course will be held at the IHR itself in London during the winter term. The Law School will cover the cost of fees for this course. In addition, events and evening seminars will be held at Reading Law School throughout the academic year, giving students a chance to develop their research skills and explore new research avenues with experts in their respective fields. Students will be expected to attend four such events during their course in order to fulfil the assessment requirements for the compulsory module in Research Methods in Legal History.

The Research Seminar Presentation module will be provided by staff with relevant expertise in the subject area and the Research Seminar Presentation Module Convenor.

Students are also able to participate in the seminars which form part of the undergraduate module in History of English Law and may also attend the School of Law's foundational course of lectures for Masters Students, The Foundations of English Law. Students may attend other module classes and training at the Graduate School as appropriate to their needs and interests and at the discretion of the Programme Director and relevant Module Convenor.

Where a student has not studied law at undergraduate level they may be advised to attend additional relevant seminars offered on the undergraduate programme in order to compensate for any gaps in subject knowledge. Students will receive no credit for attendance at seminars in these modules.

Assessment and teaching terms of Level 7 modules are as follows:

term	code	module	assessment	credit	level
1	LWMHAA	Accessing and Interrogating Archives	Attendance at IHR workshop and 2 x 6 page essays (formulated in accordance with the School of Law's Assessed Work Rules)	20	7
1-2	LWMHDP	Dissertation Plan in Legal History	Attendance at four research seminars at Reading and submission of detailed dissertation proposal	20	7
2-3	LWMHDI	Research Dissertation	20,000 word research dissertation due in September	90	7
3	LWMHRS	Research Seminar Presentation	Research Poster and 20 minute presentation in September	10	7
2	LWMHMA	The History and Management of an Archive	12 page essay (formulated in accordance with the School of Law's Assessed Work Rules)	20	7
2	LWMHCT	Critical Thinkers	12 page essay (formulated in accordance with the School of Law's Assessed Work Rules)	20	7
2	LWMHSP	Sourcing the Past	12 page essay (formulated in accordance with the School of Law's Assessed Work Rules)	20	7
2-3	LWMHAI	Archival	See module description	40	7

## Internship

### 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 Degrees (180 credits)

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

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

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

### For PG Diplomas (120 credits)

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

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

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

### For PG Certificates (60 credits)

To qualify for a Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average of 50 or more in modules worth 60 credits and have no mark below 40.

### Admission requirements

Applicants are normally expected to have a degree in any of law, humanities 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 study in law and history, either by virtue of good performance in relevant aspects of their academic studies or work experience.

**Admissions Tutor:** Dr. Steve Banks email: [s.banks@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.banks@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, In-sessional English Support Programme, the Study Advice and Mathematics Support teams and IT Services. 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 the Support Centres. If a student has a general enquiry and is unsure where to seek help, they should visit their Support Centre. There are five Support Centres across the University, including one based at the London Road Campus. The Support Centre will be able to advise on matters such as extenuating circumstances, module selection, suspensions, withdrawals, timetable queries and transferring programme. The Support Centre will also be able to signpost students to Carrington building where other University services related to disability, financial support, counselling and

wellbeing, accommodation and careers can be found. More information on what student services are available can be found here: <http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials>.

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.

All students will be issued with the Law School Guide and the School's Legal Skills Guide, which provide extensive information on resources and study skills. 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 by Research Legal History is built around the school's existing strengths in legal historical research, together with expertise within the wider University in history and the history of political thought. It draws on the close links fostered between the School of Law and other academics and institutions by the Forum for Legal and Historical Research at Reading. The Forum, which seeks to promote the growth and development of research networks and communities in legal and historical research, runs a series of events each year in which students are strongly encouraged to participate and play an active role.

### **Career prospects**

With its emphasis upon legal and historical research skills and independent research, this programme is particularly suited to those who are thinking of entering the legal profession, or who wish to pursue a PhD in history, law or related areas. Pursued as a part-time programme, it is also of great value to people who are already undertaking academic research or members of the Legal Profession, especially barristers, who wish to build their skills of legal and historical 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 by Research students would be actively encouraged to apply for such opportunities, and assisted in pursuing these and other relevant opportunities.

### **Programme Outcomes**

#### **Knowledge and Understanding**

##### **A. Knowledge and understanding of:**

1. The programme gives students opportunities to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and attributes in the following areas:
2. A comprehensive, systematic and accurate knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of legal history through writing a dissertation;
3. A comprehensive and critical awareness of the various sources and materials used in legal historical research and the methodology issues which arise in the use of them;
4. A sound understanding of the legal and ethical issues which may arise in the course of legal historical research.

##### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

- Individual supervision of essays and dissertation
- Research for module essays and assignments
- Participation in IHR workshops
- Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading

##### *Assessment*

- Essays
- Research Seminar Presentation
- Dissertation Proposal
- Dissertation

#### **Skills and other attributes**

##### **B. Intellectual skills - able to:**

1. Interpret and utilise primary and secondary sources and to recognise and evaluate

##### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

- Individual supervision of essays and dissertation

- methodological issues which arise in their selection and use;
2. 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 legal history;
  3. Form and communicate complex arguments in an effective and historically sensitive manner;
  4. Communicate the results of research and arguments in a coherent and articulate way both orally and in writing;
  5. Formulate sophisticated research questions and identify strategies for exploring them;
  6. Think critically and independently;
  7. Develop a critical self-awareness as a legal historical researcher.

### **C. Practical skills - *able to*:**

1. Ability to plan and implement a primary research project while working independently;
2. Locate, extract and critically evaluate legal historical information from primary and secondary sources in physical and digital forms;
3. Select and apply appropriate methodological approaches to analyse legal historical sources;
4. Engage in individual and group discussion and debate on legal historical issues.

### **D. Transferable skills - *able to*:**

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

- Research for module essays and assignments
- Participation in IHR workshops
- Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading

#### *Assessment*

- Essays
- Research Seminar Presentation
- Dissertation Proposal
- Dissertation

### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

- Individual supervision of essays and dissertation
- Research for module essays and assignments
- Participation in IHR workshops
- Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading

#### *Assessment*

- Research Seminar Presentation
- Dissertation Proposal
- Dissertation

### **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 IHR workshops
- Participation in events and seminars held at the University of Reading

#### *Assessment*

- Essays
- Research Seminar Presentation
- 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.**