

Programme Specification

MA English Literature (full-time)

PFTZENGLITHM

MA English Literature (part-time)

PPTZENGLITHM

For students entering in 2027/28

This document sets out key information about your Programme and forms part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

Awarding Institution	University of Reading
Teaching Institution	University of Reading
Length of Programme	MA English Literature (full-time) - 12 months MA English Literature (part-time) - 2 years
Accreditation	N/A
Programme Start Dates	September
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A

Programme information and content

The MA in English Literature equips you with essential research skills for the advanced study of English literature beyond a bachelor's degree and into doctoral study, and also provides a learning environment in which you can specialize within this literature. These research skills include: drawing up research questions, close reading and the analysis of literary form, understanding literary genres, archival research, making persuasive arguments (both oral and written – in essays and dissertations), using academic libraries and online research resources, and using theoretical, historical and interdisciplinary information to interrogate literary texts. The MA invites you to think critically about the organisation of English studies, and especially about the social, national and chronological categories that are often invoked to explain literature. In addition to doctoral study, this programme could prepare you for a wide range of professions. Graduates of this programme have gone on to careers in areas including teaching, museums, libraries and archives, politics, media research, and university teaching and research.

Programme Learning Outcomes

-MA English Literature (full-time)

During the course of the Programme, you will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills, knowledge and attributes (known as learning outcomes) For this programme, these are:

	Learning outcomes
1	Identify and develop your interests within the field of English studies, leading to a deep knowledge and understanding of certain sub-fields.
2	Demonstrate advanced research skills, including using archives, formulating significant and rigorous research questions, and using these to address a range of appropriately chosen texts.

3	Think critically, and engage questioningly with contemporary conversations about literary texts, and theoretical debates; question your own assumptions and methodology, and others'.
4	Close read, analyzing the form and content of language and, above all, the intersection of the two, and negotiate nuance and ambiguity.
5	Present the results of your research (or reading, or critical thinking) lucidly and confidently, both orally and in writing.
6	Synthesize an original written argument, locating analysis of particular texts within a broader theoretical and contextual setting.

You will be expected to engage in learning activities to achieve these Programme learning outcomes. Assessment of your modules will reflect these learning outcomes and test how far you have met the requirements for your degree.

To pass the Programme, you will be required to meet the progression or accreditation and award criteria set out below.

Module information			
The programme comprises 180 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.			
Compulsory modules			
Module	Name	Credits	Level
ENMMAT	Materiality and Textuality	40	M
ENMMEDS	Dissertation	80	M
The remaining credits will be taken from the list of optional modules from the School of Literature and Languages or from an approved list of modules.			
Part-time or flexible modular arrangements			
The programme can be taken part-time over two years. In the first year of study, you would normally be required to complete ENMMAT (Materiality & Textuality), plus one optional module. In the second year, you would normally be required to complete two further optional modules and ENMMEDS (the Dissertation). The programme may not be completed over more than two years.			

Placement opportunities
N/A

Study abroad opportunities
N/A

Optional modules
The optional modules available can vary from year to year. An indicative list of the range of optional modules for your programme can be found online in the Course Catalogue. Details of optional modules, including any additional costs associated with the optional modules,

will be made available to you at the start of the programme (or, for part-time students, at the start of the relevant year), and you will be given an opportunity to express interest in the optional modules that you would like to take. Entry to optional modules will be at the discretion of the University and subject to availability and may be subject to pre-requisites, such as completion of another module. Although the University tries to ensure you are able to take the optional modules in which you have expressed interest this cannot be guaranteed.

Teaching and learning delivery

Teaching takes place through small seminar groups and one-to-one supervision of the 15000-word dissertation, as well as through digital resources. The focus of the degree is on developing your independent critical and analytical thinking, and reading and writing – seminar discussion is an essential first step in this process during which you build the confidence and skills to engage with differing topics, questions and opinions. Total study hours for the programme will be 1800 hours. In addition to the scheduled contact hours, you will be expected to undertake significant guided independent study.

In the first semester (in Materiality and Textuality), you are introduced to archival research training by seminar tutors together with University library liaison staff and archivists; you will work together with your tutors in the University's Special Collections. You will be invited to develop an archival research project which you then write up for your assessment.

Dissertation research is introduced by two seminars, an introductory one, and one in which you are invited to reflect on the feedback you have received so far in the programme. After this, students and supervisors meet for around four hours of one-to-one supervision; students are then expected to work largely independently on their dissertation until submission.

Elements of your programme will be delivered via digital technology.

The scheduled teaching and learning activity hours and amount of technology enhanced learning activity for your programme will depend upon your module combination. In addition, you will undertake some self-scheduled teaching and learning activities, designed by and/or involving staff, which give some flexibility for you to choose when to complete them. You will also be expected to undertake guided independent study. Information about module study hours including contact hours and the amount of independent study which a student is normally expected to undertake for a module is indicated in the relevant module description.

Accreditation details

N/A

Assessment

Summative assessment of 20-credit modules tends to be by 4,000-word essay, though practice may vary. There is, then, mostly one assessment point per module. The dissertation includes formative assessment whereby students share draft sections of their dissertations.

Before embarking on their dissertation work, there is a seminar in which students are invited to reflect on all the feedback they have received in the previous two semesters.

Progression

N/A

Classification

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 Master's Degree

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Master's degree:

Award of a Master's degree

(i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 180 credits

(ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 120 credits

(iii) no credits with a mark below 40%

(iv) a mark of 50% or more for the Dissertation

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Master's degree, the following **further** conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 180 credits and marks of 70% in at least 90 credits

AND

Where the dissertation is included in the conditions for the award of a Master's degree, a mark of at least 60% in the dissertation

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 180 credits and marks of 60% in at least 90 credits
AND
No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Diploma

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma:

Award of a Postgraduate Diploma

- (i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 120 credits
- (ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 80 credits
- (iii) no credits with a mark below 40%

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, the following further conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 120 credits and marks of 70% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 120 credits and marks of 60% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Certificate

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate:

Award of a Postgraduate Certificate

- (i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 60 credits
- (ii) No credits with a mark below 40%.

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the [Assessment Handbook](#) under:

- Section 19: Awards: Postgraduate Master's, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate

Please note that there may be a specific version for your year of entry.

Additional costs of the programme
None.

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2026.
--

Students may consider purchasing a laptop to help support their learning. Information on recommended device specifications can be found on the DTS Student Hub .
--

For further information about your Programme please refer to the Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions, which are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/module/>. The Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions do not form part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

MA English Literature (full-time) for students entering in session 2027/28

28 July 2026

© The University of Reading 2026