



PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR

M.ST. IN HISTORY

This document describes the overall objectives of the M.St. in History, and of the specialist streams within the programme. The degree is designed to provide training in the general techniques and theories appropriate to the study of post-medieval History, and in their application to specific subject areas within the field.

The course lasts nine months

1	Awarding institution/body	University of Oxford
2	Teaching institution	University of Oxford
3	Programme accredited by	not applicable
4	Final award	M.St. in History
5	Programme	History
6	UCAS code	not applicable
7	Relevant subject benchmark statement	History (no postgraduate benchmark statement)
8	Date of Programme Specification preparation	13 December 2002 Amended November 2003; January 2008
9	Educational aims of the programme	

The programme builds upon its students' undergraduate work, enabling them to

- develop the techniques, skills and knowledge required to contribute to the study of History; to become familiar with the range of approaches, to evaluate them critically, and to engage in advanced discussion in the field.
- develop the ability to carry out research, involving conceptual innovation and the identification and use of new information; and to acquire the experience of investigating and writing up an extended research project.
- acquire specialised and general skills of relevance to the continued professional development of historical understanding, and which are also transferable into a wide range of employment contexts and life experiences.
- the three distinct streams within the programme give students the opportunity *either* to re-skill themselves in an area of history which was underrepresented in their undergraduate syllabus, *or* to explore in more depth an area of history in which they hope to progress to independent research. The currently available streams are: British and European history since c. 1500; Commonwealth, Imperial and Global history since circa 1840; and History of the United States from the 18th century to the present.

10	Programme outcomes		
A	<i>Advanced knowledge and understanding of:</i>		<i>Related teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
1	Aspects of <i>either</i> British and European History since c. 1500, <i>or</i> Commonwealth, Imperial and Global History, <i>or</i> History of the United States from the 18th century to the present		The programme offers, with appropriate tailoring for each of the streams, options in political, social, cultural and international history, with compulsory elements in historical methods and related skills, which allow the student to develop a broad understanding of the field. Students are offered a programme of weekly advanced seminars and also occasional special lectures.
2	how primary evidence is employed in historical argument		Primary materials are used in every option and their use is reinforced by training in technical skills (such as, e.g., palaeography) and languages. The dissertation typically requires the use of primary materials.
3	the development of History as a subject, the role played by conceptual frameworks and models in the investigation of the specific subject areas available in this programme, and the theoretical foundations of the discipline		The required methodology courses are specific to each stream and provide opportunities for sustained reflection on these issues. Each stream also considers the historiography of the particular subject studied.
4	analytical and practical research skills		Each option demands a different set of information sources and bibliography and is constructed to ensure that the student is introduced to these.
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Assessment of the acquisition of these skills is carried out by a variety of methods. Formative assessment occurs through feedback on written and oral presentations in tutorials, supervisions and seminars. Summative assessment of the course elements is by two 5,000-word essays and a class presentation, one three-hour examination, and a 15,000-word dissertation.</i></p>			
B	<i>Intellectual skills: the ability to</i>		<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
1	undertake sophisticated analysis		There is emphasis throughout the programme on the application of analytical and conceptual skills. The course attempts to impart the ability to think about history conceptually. This is in addition to the traditional academic skills: the careful and critical reading and exegesis of secondary studies and primary texts; the ability to gather, sift, synthesise and interpret data; the practice of description and narrative.
2	argue persuasively		Practical rhetorical skills are developed by means of formal presentations, and frequent submission of written work. Oral and written presentations from students must demonstrate

		the ability to identify issues, to formulate questions that are susceptible to testing, and to marshal evidence and analysis in a logical and coherent way at an appropriate level for a graduate course.
3	approach problems with creativity and imagination	Developing the creativity and human sympathy of all students is integral to the programme. These attributes, allied to the exercise of disciplined imagination, are regarded as essential if students are to comprehend the seemingly alien values and expectations of past societies and cultures.
4	develop the exercise of independence of mind, and a readiness to challenge and criticise accepted opinion	This ability is honed in debate in classes, and in written work. In particular, students are explicitly trained to identify the probative value of evidence, and to analyse cause and effect.
5	complete a demanding research project in History	This involves understanding what constitutes an historical problem, identifying the appropriate methodological approach, reading the relevant secondary literature, identifying primary sources, collecting information, processing it appropriately, applying the appropriate conceptual framework, setting out the argument and evidence coherently, and presenting it within the available time.
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Formative assessment is a regular feature of the programme. Students typically meet in small groups and submit written work regularly; this allows for constant monitoring of their progress. The dissertation is guided and monitored on a regular basis by a specialist supervisor, and is evaluated by expert examiners. The final, summative assessment of the dissertation is undertaken by the Board of Examiners with the support of specialist assessors (who must not have been involved in supervising the individual candidate) and monitored by an external examiner.</i></p>		
C	Practical skills: the ability to	<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
1	write well for a variety of audiences and in a variety of contexts	The organisation and presentation of written work is an integral part of the course. Continuous scrutiny of and feedback on written work, whether of tutorial papers or dissertation, aim to promote written work which is marked by well-structured and coherent argument, in a prose that is clear, fluent and elegant.
2	engage in oral discussion and argument with others, in a way that advances understanding of the problems at issue and the appropriate approaches and solutions to them	The weekly routine of tutorials and/or classes, and seminars provides ample opportunity to develop and refine high-level skills in oral discussion and presentation.
3	ensure, often working independently, that the fullest range of evidence and opinion can be brought to bear on a problem	Emphasis is placed on showing an awareness of the variety of bibliographical resources – library catalogues; electronic information systems – to

		identify and retrieve materials and commentary.
4	employ research tools and quantitative methods	Training is provided in the use of the research tools appropriate to each option, whether textual, or historical.
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Opportunities for class or seminar presentation, and also regular individual meetings with supervisors and tutors, enable a continuous monitoring of the development of practical skills. Formal skills courses are assessed by means of both formative and summative assessment. Students have opportunity to comment regularly on their learning experience, and supervisors report termly on their students' progress; these reports are available for discussion with the student, supervisor, and the Programme Convenor, and also for review by a student's college.</i></p>		
D	Transferable skills: the ability to	<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
1	find information, organise and deploy it	Information retrieval, especially through the informed use of IT, is integral to many aspects of the programme.
2	work well independently, with a strong sense of self-direction, but with the ability to work constructively in co-operation with others	Students are encouraged to contribute to class discussion from the basis of their own independent study.
3	effectively structure and communicate their ideas in a variety of written and oral formats	The ability to present ideas effectively and to respond to the ideas of others constructively is integral to the nature and construction of the programme.
4	plan and organise the use of time effectively	The ability to produce material within time constraints and against tight deadlines, whether within the framework of oral presentation, written work, examinations, or dissertations is enforced strongly, and imparts good time-allocation habits.
5	draw on information, and with a trained analytical intelligence, consider and solve complex problems, in ways that are imaginative, yet sensitive to the needs and cultural expectations of others	These abilities are all central to the outcomes of this programme.
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>The transferable skills identified above are essential elements of the programme. As such their presence or absence is the focus of much of the regular comment provided by course tutors and supervisors in their weekly contacts with students; and in the varying forms of formal and informal feedback provided to students throughout the course.</i></p>		

General teaching/learning methods and strategies

Each of the students' assessed courses [see below, **section 11**] has a different teaching strategy. This depends in part on the nature of the subject matter, in part on its place in the cumulative process of learning over the course. All employ the interweaving, in slightly different proportions, of four kinds of learning experience: lectures, classes, supervisions, and seminars.

1	Lectures: There are usually no dedicated lectures for this programme, but students are encouraged to attend the lectures offered to supplement advanced undergraduate study for the subject areas or disciplines on which they are focusing. Such lectures are provided within the general Oxford syllabus, and are designed to 'package' large bodies of knowledge into a compact and coherent form that can be assimilated and usefully pursued by students. But they are not merely 'talking text-books'. Lectures provide examples of how complex materials can be organised into intellectually persuasive patterns, and enhance the development of intellectual and practical skills.
2	Classes and tutorials: These are the main form of interactive learning. In core skills classes, they may be fairly large, and in specialist classes, they may be very small (one to three students). Their function is to allow the students to investigate the assigned topics in an interactive forum, or to practise the skills (in the case of conceptual or practical skills) with staff moderation, guidance and supervision.
3	Supervisions: The supervisor's role is to provide general programme orientation and guidance, but primarily to guide the development of the student's dissertation. This is done by means of frequent face-to-face meetings, which interactively define the problem, choose the approach, and monitor the progress of the dissertation.
4	Seminars and special lectures: There are regular weekly staff-graduate research seminars in most areas covered by the streams of this programme, and they usually feature visiting and local speakers (staff members as well as advanced graduate students) for a one-hour presentation followed by questions and informal interaction. In addition, there are many special lectures, as well as regular seminar series in cognate subjects.

11	Programme Structures and Features	
	The course lasts for 9 months. The M.St. requires two essays of up to 5,000 words, one class presentation, an examination on the methodology or theory course, and a 15,000-word dissertation. The course has a natural progression, building on the conceptual and practical skills that students will have developed in their undergraduate degrees, and culminates in the examinations and dissertation.	
	<i>Course</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	<p>A period / area of</p> <p>(a) British and European History since c. 1500</p> <p>(b) Commonwealth, Imperial and Global History</p>	<p>These thematic courses are assessed by two essays and a class presentation, and the essays submitted for examination must show a chronological or thematic spread.</p> <p>(a) Students choose one of the Optional Subjects from the M.Phil. in Modern European History which are taught in small classes and provide an excellent opportunity for peer input and participatory learning;</p> <p>(b) Students follow options in <i>either</i> Commonwealth, <i>or</i> South Asian, <i>or</i> Chinese history. The classes and tutorials provided for this stream are designed to introduce</p>

	(c) History of the United States from the 18th century to the present	students to the major problems of colonial and post-colonial societies in Africa , the Middle East, and Asia. (c) The history of the United States, and the colonies that preceded it, since 1600
2	<p>A course in methodology or theory in the subject area of</p> <p>(a) British and European History since c. 1500</p> <p>(b) Commonwealth, Imperial and Global History</p> <p>(c) History of the United States from the 18th century to the present</p>	<p>In classes and tutorials students acquire appropriate theoretical, conceptual or methodological competence and skill, assessed in a three-hour examination</p> <p>(a) in weekly classes over one term students familiarize themselves with either ‘Methods in early modern history’, or ‘Modern political and social theory’, or ‘Sources and methods’;</p> <p>(b) In classes for the Historiography course, and tutorials students acquire appropriate theoretical, conceptual or methodological competence and skills;</p> <p>(c) Through classes on ‘Methods and evidence in the history of the United States’ and tutorials students acquire familiarity with both primary sources on which historians base their understanding of the past, and secondary sources illustrating the methodology characteristic of US history.</p>
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Formative assessment is provided by written comments on essays and dissertation work in progress and by discussion in tutorials and classes.</i></p> <p><i>Summative assessment is by a three-hour examination, two 5,000-word essays, and one assessed class presentation based on written notes.</i></p>		
3	Dissertation	
<p>The dissertation is a long essay (15,000 words) guided by an expert supervisor, that is designed to bring together research skills, methodological training, substantive historical studies and independent research and writing, and that constitutes tangible evidence of the desired outcomes.</p> <p>Mere summaries of the secondary literature do not count as satisfying the requirement of the dissertation. In order to be acceptable, the dissertation must have an element of originality. This can be provided by making use of fresh historical evidence, or by applying a fresh conceptual, analytical, or methodological approach to existing evidence, or a combination of these elements. For example, new archival evidence may be applied to an existing debate. Alternatively, existing evidence may be applied to a novel hypothesis, or perhaps to a new way of formulating and testing an existing hypothesis.</p>		
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>The dissertation is guided and monitored on a regular basis by a specialist supervisor. The final, summative assessment of the dissertation is undertaken by the Board of Examiners with the support of specialist assessors (who must not have been involved in supervising the individual candidate) and monitored by an external examiner.</i></p>		

12	Support for students and their learning	
	A	<p>Libraries</p> <p>Reflecting the nature of History as primarily a text-based discipline, and the essential requirement for adequate Library resources, students in this programme have access to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Bodleian Library. This is the main library of the University, as a copyright library it receives <i>inter alia</i> all significant works published in the U.K. Its collections are very rich for all periods of European history. Its associated central libraries also provide significant holdings for the students on this course, particularly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the manuscript and early printed material available in Duke Humphrey's Library • the Radcliffe Camera, with its large History holdings on open shelf; • the Indian Institute Library (Indian and South Asian History); • Rhodes House Library (British Empire and Commonwealth); • the Taylor Institute (European languages and Literature); • the Vere Harmsworth Library at the Rothermere American Institute (American History). 2. The Modern History Faculty Library and other subject specific libraries: Students have access to the Libraries of all Faculties whose holdings are relevant to the particular options they are studying. 3. College libraries are usually open only to members of their own college, though access may be granted to other members of the University who can show academic need for consulting material only available in a particular college. There are two notable exceptions, Nuffield College library with its unrivalled collection on recent social and economic history, and St Antony's College library with its special holdings on area studies such as European and South Asian Studies: both Colleges operate a generous access policy for non-members. <p>Borrowing facilities exist in all the Libraries, apart from the Bodleian which functions as a reference Library.</p> <p>The range of general and specialised Library resources, and the quality of holdings and accessibility support the taught courses and dissertation work.</p>
	B	<p>Museums and Collections</p> <p>Students may draw on the resources of the Ashmolean Museum, and the expertise of its staff.</p> <p>The collections and archival resources of the Museum of Modern Art, of the Christ Church Picture Gallery, the Museum of the History of Science may provide additional inspiration or background for a variety of projects.</p> <p>The Oxford County Central Library in Westgate, including the Oxfordshire Studies section, also admits University graduates, and often provides a useful additional study resource.</p> <p>Effective use is often made of the ethnographical and anthropological holdings of the Pitt Rivers Museum by students in the Commonwealth, Imperial and Global History streams.</p>
	C	<p>IT resources</p> <p>Most Colleges have IT rooms; assistance is available from the College's Computing officer.</p> <p>The History faculty has a graduate student resource centre, with some 18 powerful computers, connected to the university network and backed up with printers, scanners, statistical packages and</p>

	<p>other software etc. The Faculty's IT Officer is available to assist all graduates, and is extensively called upon. The Faculty also operates a small laptop loan scheme for graduates who need for short periods of time portable computing facilities for the efficient collection of data in libraries or record offices. The Faculty building in George Street also provides wireless access to the University network.</p> <p>The Oxford University Computing Services also provides facilities for graduates, and a variety of training programmes, several of which are specifically geared to students in the Humanities and Social Sciences.</p>
D	<p>Advice concerning the Syllabus</p> <p>Basic information concerning the programme structure and requirements can be found in the 'Instructions to Candidates' which are published on the History website in a print-friendly format. The Modular Handbook provides in parallel descriptive information about specific options within the programme.</p> <p>Students select their options and the topics for their extended essays and the dissertation in discussion with their supervisors and the Programme Convenor. Students have opportunity to comment regularly on their learning experience, and supervisors report termly on their students' progress; these reports are available for discussion with the student, supervisor, and the Programme Convenor, and also for review by a student's college.</p> <p>Academic guidance may also be provided by the student's College Advisor or the College's Tutor for Graduates. Their roles are more usually pastoral, concerned with matters of funding, housing, or other personal concerns.</p>
E	<p>Other support</p> <p>There is a dedicated Research Training programme of classes and events open to all graduate students which meets normally weekly over two terms and which offers professional training covering, e.g., library holdings, working in archives, financial support for post-graduate work and post-doctoral research, academic publishing.</p> <p>The University Language Centre offers all students taught classes in general language in 6 modern languages and materials for private study.</p> <p>The History Faculty in conjunction with the Language Centre also offers dedicated language courses for historians: languages recently covered included Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.</p> <p>Classes in palaeography, taught by specialist staff from the Bodleian Library, are routinely offered for late medievalists and early modernist; other needs can often be covered through collaboration with other faculties such as Medieval and Modern Languages and Classics.</p> <p>The Oxford University Counselling Service provides free, confidential support to all students.</p> <p>College support structures: graduate students will find other sources of support for graduates within their college. They vary from college to college but may include a Dean or Tutor for Graduates, membership of the Middle Common Room and therefore representation on the College's Governing Body and access to pastoral tutors or the college chaplain.</p> <p>There are feedback and complaints procedures for graduate students within the History Faculty, within the colleges or via the University Proctors' office. Details of Faculty and University procedures are provided in a dedicated booklet posted on-line by the History Faculty Graduate Office.</p>

13	Criteria for admission	
<p>The courses are intended to introduce students to History or to allow them to study a new period in depth, or develop their knowledge of an aspect of the field that has already been studied. Prior requirements are therefore not laid down, though knowledge of a relevant foreign language is expected. Students come after having studied History, or humanities with some element of history, at undergraduate level.</p> <p>Applications to programmes of graduate study within the History Faculty will normally be considered in the light of a candidate's ability to meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The applicant has provided appropriate indications of proven and potential academic excellence. Appropriate indicators will include two or more references, academic transcripts or their equivalent, samples of academic work (which can include examples of visual arts work) produced by the student, interview(s). 2. The applicant has provided sufficient evidence, in the view of the assessors, to suggest that they have the academic ability and commitment (including the required linguistic competence; non-native speakers of English should have achieved an IELTS 7.5 or TOEFL 650 (275 in the computer-based TOEFL test) or above) to pursue the chosen programme to a successful conclusion within the required time limits. 3. The programme of study that the applicant wishes to pursue is well suited to the academic interests and abilities to which they have drawn attention in their application, and (where appropriate) the applicant has undertaken any preliminary academic work or course which is normally considered indispensable to acceptance on the proposed programme of study. 4. The History Faculty is able to provide appropriate supervision and facilities for the candidate's chosen programme of work. <p>It is essential to note that well-qualified candidates may not be offered a place because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding is not available (places offered on a conditional basis will not be confirmed without a financial guarantee); • There are constraints on the availability of facilities, research funding and on supervision; • There are limitations on the size of taught courses; • Appropriate supervision may not be available for a particular area of academic interest; • Other candidates have been judged to have greater academic ability; • Colleges may not have places available. <p>Applications are considered by the Course Convenor and/or the subject interviewer, the prospective supervisor, and the Director of Graduate Studies. British students who are regarded as being on the borderline, and candidates transferring internally in Oxford from other courses, are likely to be interviewed.</p>		
14	Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning	
<p>Reports from external examiners regularly address issues relating to curriculum, and quality and standards of teaching and learning. These are reviewed by the Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee, by the Faculty Board of Modern History, by the Humanities Board, and by the University's Educational Policy and Standards Committee [EPSC].</p> <p>Student feedback is solicited regularly, mainly in the regular meetings with supervisors. Feedback forms for classes and lectures are available from the Graduate Office of the Faculty, and the termly meeting of</p>		

	<p>the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee provides a forum for discussion of all issues raised by graduates.</p> <p>Any changes to the programme are considered by the Graduate Studies Committee. This makes recommendations to the History Faculty Board which reports to the Humanities Divisional Board. This reports in turn to the Educational Policy and Standards Committee which ultimately approves all significant programme changes.</p> <p>All new academic staff of the History Faculty attend training sessions on teaching run by the University's Learning Institute, and have a one-to-one session with Learning Institute staff to assess training needs. Mentors are appointed for all new lecturers. Formal review takes place in the second and fifth years of appointment. Teaching is reviewed annually by two peers (including the mentor in the case of new appointees) through the History Faculty's Research Monitoring and Appraisal Scheme. In 2003, the History Faculty introduced internal workshops on lecturing and small class teaching. All lecturers taking on graduate students are encouraged to attend training on supervision techniques, provided by the Learning Institute.</p> <p>Success rates are monitored by the Graduate Studies Committee, the GJCC, the History Faculty Board, the Divisional Board and the Educational Policy and Standards Committee of the University.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Regulation of assessment</p>
	<p>The Director of Graduate Studies in agreement with the Programme Convenors for the M.Phil. in Modern European History and the M.St. in History nominates a joint Board of Examiners for these two degrees for approval by the Examinations Committee of the History Faculty and the History Faculty Board, and the examiners are then appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors of the University (subject to their approval). The Examination Committee appoints a chairman from the internal members of the board of examiners. The History Faculty Board is responsible for establishing and publishing the marking and classification conventions for these degrees; on issues of classification the Board will take advice from the Board of Examiners.</p> <p>The Board of Examiners is responsible for setting all papers, and marking the scripts, essays and dissertations of the examinees. They may appoint assessors to assist in the setting and marking of the more specialist papers, and for marking dissertations, where the subject matter is not within the expertise of two of the examiners. Each script, essay and dissertation is blind-marked by two examiners or assessors; where their marks differ they will discuss the case to obtain an agreed mark. If they are unable to agree, a third examiner, usually an external examiner, will be asked to read the work and give it a mark. After the marking is complete, the Board of Examiners meets to classify the students in accordance with the rules established by the Examinations Committee. The examiners provide a full report on the examination, which is widely discussed.</p> <p>Students may submit complaints at any stage of the examinations procedure via their college authorities to the Proctors of the University. Details of complaints procedures are given in a dedicated booklet available from the Faculty's Graduate Office.</p> <p>A key role in this process is played by the External Examiners. They act as impartial advisors,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To verify that standards are appropriate to the award, in part by comparison with the standards of comparable institutions, and to ensure that the assessment procedures and the regulations governing them are fair and otherwise appropriate. 2. To ensure that the conduct of the examination and the determination of awards has been fairly conducted, and that individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the regulations and conventions of the Examining Board. This will entail signing the Class List as an endorsement that the processes of examination and classification have been fairly conducted. <p>External Examiners are expected to report to the Vice-Chancellor in each year in which they act. Their</p>

reports are expected to cover all the following points

- the standards demonstrated by the students
- the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award
- the design, structure and marking of assessments
- the procedures for assessment and examinations
- whether or not external examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material necessary to make the required judgements
- students' performance in relation to their peers in comparable courses
- the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonance with the explicit roles required of them
- the basis and rationale for any comparisons made
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort
- the quality of teaching and learning which may be indicated by student performance

The Report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, and will be considered by the Humanities Board and by the Educational Policy and Standards Committee of the University.

The Report will also be scrutinised by the Graduate Studies Committee, and the Faculty Board of History. Where an External Examiner's Report contains particular suggestions or criticisms, it is the responsibility of the Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee and Examination Committee to ensure that full consideration is given to these, to institute further discussion or action, and to inform the External Examiner within a reasonable time of what is done.

16 Indicators of quality and standards

The report on History by the EPSC Review Committee in 2002 endorsed the findings of earlier reviews that 'the quality of the teaching is excellent'. The committee's external members were 'enormously impressed with many aspects of the provision within Modern History, and especially with the commitment of academic staff to the learning and teaching provided for students'.

Reports from Examining Boards regularly address issues relating to quality and standards.

The History Faculty's External Advisory Panel reviews quality and standards and provides valuable feedback from the worlds of international academia, the professions, business and secondary education.

The History Faculty gained a 5 rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

A large proportion of students continue into doctoral work or professional degrees at Oxford, and at other leading universities in Britain and overseas. Graduates of the course are in high demand in the media, in government, and in voluntary, not-for-profit, and advocacy groups. Many graduates have continued after their doctoral studies into academic employment as researchers and teachers in Higher Education.