



PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR

M.ST. IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES

This document describes the overall objectives of the interdisciplinary M.St. in Medieval Studies. The degree is designed to provide an induction to the field of medieval studies, and training in a variety of techniques and theories appropriate to research in several specialist fields of interest in the European Middle Ages.

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 Medieval Studies
5	Programme	Medieval Studies in the Humanities
6	UCAS code	not applicable
7	Relevant subject benchmark statement	Interdisciplinary programme (no postgraduate benchmark statement)
8	Date of Programme Specification preparation	20 October 2006 Amended 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 the European Middle Ages; 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; acquire the experience of investigating and writing up an extended research project.
- acquire specialist and general skills of relevance to the continued professional development of a cultural understanding of the past, and which are also transferable into a wide range of employment contexts and life experiences.
- the interdisciplinary approach of the programme gives students the opportunity *either* to re-skill themselves in an area of study which was underrepresented in their undergraduate syllabus, *or* to explore in more depth an area of the medieval cultural heritage in which they may hope to progress to independent research.

10	Programme outcomes		
A	Advanced knowledge and understanding of:		<i>Related teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
1	Aspects of <i>either</i> medieval history, <i>or</i> medieval languages and literatures, <i>or</i> medieval art, <i>or</i> medieval music, <i>or</i> medieval philosophy, <i>or</i> medieval theology		Tailored to the previous training of individual students and their development aims, the programme offers each year a themed interdisciplinary methodological seminar, a range of Option Papers in the participating areas of research, and skills classes in relevant languages, palaeography, etc. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in specialist programmes of weekly advanced seminars and also occasional special lectures.
2	how primary evidence is employed in several areas of medieval studies		Primary materials are typically used in Option Papers, and their use is reinforced by training in 'technical skills' and languages. The dissertation typically requires the use of primary materials.
3	the development of conceptual frameworks for work in specific subject areas available in this programme		The compulsory interdisciplinary methodology seminar invites to reflect on such conceptual frameworks, and the Option Papers are to be seen as their practical application in a particular field.
4	analytical and practical research skills		Each Option Paper requires a different set of bibliographical sources and technical resources, 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, classes, and seminars. Summative assessment of the course elements is by three essays of between 5,000 and 7,000 words and a 12,000-word dissertation.</i></p>			
B	Intellectual skills: the ability to		<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 issues or topics 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 class 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 programme.
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, in discussions with supervisor(s), and in written work. In particular, students are explicitly trained to identify the probative value of evidence, to practise objectivity, and to analyse cause and effect.
5	complete a demanding research project	This involves understanding what constitutes a problem or issue in their particular area of in-depth research, 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 normally guided and monitored on a regular basis by two supervisors, 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 programme. Continuous scrutiny of and feedback on written work, whether of class presentations or dissertation, aims to promote written work which is marked by well-structured and coherent argument, in 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, 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>The weekly opportunities for class or seminar presentation enable a continuous monitoring of the development of practical skills. Formal skills classes 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>		
<i>D</i>	<i>Transferable skills: the ability to</i>	<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 courses, they may be fairly large. 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. Occasionally, highly specialist interests or training needs of a student may be better served by tutorials (one or two students in face-to-face meeting with a tutor), and it was agreed that the programme should allow the flexibility to accommodate such needs as far as possible.
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 up to 45 minutes of 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 three essays of between 5,000 and 7,000 words (one based on the palaeography/codicology class, and one on each of the Option papers), and a 12,000-word dissertation. The course has a natural progression; building on conceptual and practical skills acquired in their undergraduate degrees, and culminates in the examination essays and the dissertation.	
	<i>Course</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Option Papers in a field of medieval studies in two of the following disciplines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeology • English • History • History of Art • Medieval Languages and Literature • Music • Oriental Studies • Philosophy, and • Theology 	<p>These thematic courses are each assessed by an essay of up to 7,000 words; as an integral part of their attendance, candidates will also be expected to prepare one or two class presentations, or write tutorial essays in advance of scheduled meetings, whichever is appropriate for the particular option's teaching format;</p> <p>Students are invited to choose, in consultation with their supervisors and/or the Programme Convenor and medieval graduate papers available in the participating faculties and</p>

		departments; in addition, it may from time to time be possible to generate an <i>ad hoc</i> paper which allows an in-depth study of an issue which is of particular significance for a candidate's engagement with medieval studies; more often than not, the latter will be an Option with an interdisciplinary focus which is not ideally served by standard, subject-specific papers;
2	A core seminar programme with an interdisciplinary theoretical and thematic focus,	Attendance at this seminar is compulsory for the entire degree programme cohort; the Programme Convenor will invite visiting academics and Oxford senior members to offer seminar papers which exemplify the different but often complementary approaches to medieval sources in their areas of expertise;
3	A set of established palaeography and/or codicology classes in one of the participating faculties/departments	These classes constitute a significant element in the research training of candidates for this degree programme, as this will enable them to consult original documents in parallel or even in preference to edited resources;
4	Ancillary training in one of the following languages: Latin, Old English, Old Norse, Old French, Old High German, Old Irish, Middle Welsh, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic; other languages may be added to this list	One such language class over all three terms is a compulsory programme element, including the formative tests set by the class teacher; the board of examiners receives a progress report, but marks will <i>not</i> be included in the overall degree result;
<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; also, where appropriate, by tests, class preparations, and class presentations. .</i></p> <p><i>Summative assessment is by essays between 5,000 and 7,000 words for each of the Option Papers and in most cases for the Palaeography/Codicology classes (though in some cases the relevant Faculty may prescribe a document transcription exercise instead of the essay). In the ancillary skills suitable tests and/or course preparation will form part of the formative assessment, but the convenors of these training programmes will report on each candidate's participation and performance to the board of examiners, allowing them a full appraisal of the student's overall engagement with the programme.</i></p>		
3	Dissertation	
	<p>The dissertation is a long essay (12,000 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 specialist supervisors. 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 medieval studies much of the work will be based on textual and pictorial evidence, and Oxford's excellent Library resources will facilitate that. Students in this programme have access to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The major holdings of the Bodleian and its associated central libraries; including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duke Humphrey's Library with its manuscript and early collections, and the associated palaeographical and codicological reference literature • the Radcliffe Camera, with its large History and Theology holdings on open shelf; • the Taylor Institute (European languages and literature); • the Sackler Library (Archaeology, Classical languages, literature, and history, Art history) 2. Departmental and other subject specific libraries: Students have access to the Libraries of all Faculties and Departments 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. <p>Borrowing facilities exist in many of the Libraries, apart from the Bodleian Library 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 programmes in general and dissertation work in particular.</p>
B	<p>Museums and collections</p> <p>Students following the early medieval period options may draw on the resources of the Ashmolean Museum, and the expertise of its staff.</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 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 Department of the History of Art has a similar resources room with specialist</p>

	<p>software for art-historical purposes. Most other faculties and departments contributing to this interdisciplinary programme also have dedicated IT resources on their premises.</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 course structure and requirements can be found in the 'Instructions to Candidates' which are published on the History website in a print-friendly format. For up-to-date information on specific options it is advisable to consult the Medieval Studies at Oxford website (see http://www.medieval.ox.ac.uk/index.shtml), or relevant departmental webpages.</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>The History Faculty provides a dedicated research training programme of classes and events, normally through weekly meetings over the first two terms, open to all graduate students. This programme offers professional advice and training covering e.g. library holdings, working in archives, financial support for postgraduate work and post-doctoral research, academic publishing, etc.</p> <p>The University Language Centre offers all students taught classes in general language in 6 modern languages and materials for private study. - In collaboration with the Language Centre the History faculty also dedicated language classes for Historians, usually covering languages such as Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.</p> <p>The History Faculty's Professor of Diplomatic arranges regular teaching in Latin Palaeography, and in addition the Faculty arranges palaeographical training in the vernacular, with an emphasis in the late medieval and early modern periods. – Other faculties have similar arrangements in their areas of expertise.</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 available from the History Faculty Graduate Office.</p>

13	Criteria for admission	
	<p>The programme is intended to introduce students to Medieval Studies in an interdisciplinary context, or to allow them to investigate a new approach in depth while developing their knowledge of an aspect of the field that they already studied at undergraduate level. Prior requirements are therefore not explicitly laid down, though knowledge of a relevant foreign language is usually expected. Students come after having completed an arts or humanities undergraduate programme in most cases.</p> <p>Applications to this programme of graduate study 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 score of 7.50 or above, or a TOEFL score of 630 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 or another relevant department are 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 confirmed for 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 normally considered by the Programme Convenor, 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 programme's management committee, by the Faculty Board of 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 programme's management committee and 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 in Humanities departments attend training sessions on teaching run by the Institute for the Advancement of University Learning and have a one-to-one session with IAUL staff to assess training needs. Mentors are normally 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. The History Faculty, for instance, has in 2003 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 IAUL.</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 Convenor nominates a Board of Examiners for this degree, and the examiners are then appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors of the University. The Board of Examiners appoints a Chairman of Examiners from their number. The Examinations Committee of the History Faculty Board is responsible for establishing and publishing the marking and classification conventions for the degree, in consultation with participating departments naturally; on issues of classification the Committee will take advice from the Board of Examiners.</p> <p>The Board of Examiners is responsible for marking the essays and dissertations of the examinees. They may appoint assessors to assist in the 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 reconciled 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 the Proctors of the University. Details of complaints procedures are given in the dedicated booklet available from the History Faculty Graduate Office.</p> <p>A key role in this process is played by 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 reports are expected to cover all the following points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the standards demonstrated by the students

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>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.</p> <p>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 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.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>Indicators of quality and standards</p>
	<p>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 History, and especially with the commitment of academic staff to the learning and teaching provided for students'.</p> <p>Reports from Examining Boards regularly address issues relating to quality and standards.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The History Faculty gained a 5 rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.</p> <p>A large proportion of students continue into doctoral work or professional degrees at Oxford, and at other leading universities in Britain and overseas. Many graduates have continued after their doctoral studies into academic employment as researchers and teachers in Higher Education.</p>