



PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR

M.ST. IN LATE ANTIQUE

AND BYZANTINE STUDIES

This document describes the MSt programme in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, which is designed to induct students in the humanities into the fields of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, and to prepare them for doctoral research in these areas.

The programme 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	MSt in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies
5	Programme	Committee for Byzantine Studies, reporting to the History Faculty
6	UCAS code	Not applicable
7	Relevant subject benchmark statement	History; Classics and Ancient History (including also Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek) there are no postgraduate benchmark statements
8	Date of Programme Specification preparation	Updated 4 December 2008
9	Educational aims of the programme	

'Late Antique and Byzantine Studies' are concerned with the civilization of the late Roman empire, east and west, its medieval successor state centred on Constantinople, and the neighbouring world, from the accession of Diocletian in 284 to the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. The programme builds upon its students' undergraduate work, enabling them to

- develop the techniques, skills and knowledge required to contribute to the study of late Antique and Byzantine civilization from one or more approaches (historical, literary, art historical, archaeological, religious); 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 the understanding of late Antique and Byzantine civilisation, and which are also transferable into a wide range of employment contexts and life experiences.

10	Programme outcomes	
A	Knowledge and understanding of:	<i>Related teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
1	the scope of Late Antique and Byzantine studies	The course offers options in history, literature, art history, archaeology, religion, with compulsory elements in 'technical skills' and languages, which allow the student to develop a broad understanding of the field. Students are offered a programme of weekly graduate classes in core subjects (History, Art/Archaeology, Literature), advanced seminars and also occasional special lectures.
2	the use of primary evidence	Primary materials are used in every option and their use is reinforced by training in 'technical skills' and languages, and access to materials in the Bodleian, Sackler, and Oriental Institute Libraries as well as the Ashmolean Museum. A dissertation typically requires the use of primary materials.
3	the historical significance of the Late Antique and Byzantine world	The insistence that a range of options be taken ensures that the student has a wide perspective on the field.
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, supervisory sessions, graduate classes, and seminars.</i></p> <p><i>Summative assessment takes place in an examination at the end of the academic year. The examination consists of one or two three-hour papers and pre-submitted written work. The pre-submitted work takes the form of two extended essays of 5,000 words each, plus, in the case of candidates only taking one timed examination, a 10,000-word dissertation (for which they may substitute two additional 5,000-word essays)..</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 other cultures conceptually. This is in addition to traditional academic skills: the careful and critical reading and exegesis of secondary studies and primary texts, and the ability to gather, sift, synthesise and interpret data, and the practice of description and narrative.
2	argue persuasively	Practical rhetorical skills are honed 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 tutorials and classes, in formal presentations, 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 in Late Antique and Byzantine studies	This involves understanding what constitutes a 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 are required to attend two graduate classes on their core subjects throughout their first two terms, at which they make regular oral presentations. They are also offered up to four individual tutorials per term on their core subjects (two out of Late Antique History, Late Antique Art/Archaeology, Byzantine History, Byzantine Art/Archaeology, and Byzantine Literature). For each tutorial they write a 3,000-word essay. Two of these essays form the basis of the extended essays submitted for examination at the end of the year, drafts of which are discussed in two extra tutorials. In addition, intensive tuition (through classes/tutorials) is provided in ancient/medieval languages and in technical skills. Those opting to take a Special Subject (i.e. candidates who choose to study technical skills or to take a single language paper) write a 10,000-word dissertation (or two 5,000-word essays) under the guidance of an expert supervisor. Through the regular submission of written work and regular oral discussion in classes, tutorial and supervisory sessions, the progress of individual graduate students is carefully monitored, and feedback is regularly provided.</i></p> <p><i>The final summative assessment is undertaken in the formal examination at the end of the year: timed papers and pre-submitted written work are marked by a 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, extended essays, or dissertation, aims to promote written work that 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, 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 material and commentary.
4	employ appropriate research tools	Training is provided in the use of the research tools appropriate to each option, whether textual, archaeological or historical.
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Through tutorials and other opportunities for class or seminar presentation, the development of practical skills can be monitored. Formal skills courses are assessed by means of both formative and summative assessment. Termly reports identify both points of excellence and of concern, e.g., the ability to present and defend an argument or thesis convincingly and cogently.</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 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 organise workshops and conferences which are attended by students both from within Oxford and elsewhere; these are monitored by staff
3	effectively structure and communicate 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.

Assessment:

The transferable skills identified above are essential elements of the programme. As such their presence or absence is the focus of much of the 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.

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 experiences: lectures, classes, supervisions, and seminars.

1 Lectures: These are provided on each of the main areas of the course. Their task is to 'package' large bodies of knowledge into a compact and coherent form that can be assimilated and easily pursued by students. But they are not merely 'talking text-books'. Lectures provide examples of how complex material 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 teaching. Their function is to allow the students to investigate the assigned topics in an interactive forum, or to practice the skills (in the case of conceptual or practical skills) with staff, moderation, guidance and supervision. Some of the classes are small enough (one to three students) to be regarded as tutorials.

3 Supervisions: The supervisor's role is to provide general course 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 is a regular weekly staff-graduate seminar which features visiting and local speakers for a one-hour presentation followed by an hour of questions and informal interaction. There are also seminars with student presentations as an element in the history, text, and archaeology options. In addition, there are many special lectures, as well as regular seminar series in cognate historical, archaeological and literary subjects.

11	Programme Structures and Features	
<p>The course lasts for nine months and is divided into two equipollent fields of study, Late Antiquity and Byzantium. Two basic pathways lead into each field of study, and graduate students are required to choose between them at the outset. The first offers intensive training in any one of the following ancient and medieval languages – Greek, Latin, Slavonic, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic. The second is designed for those who already have considerable competence in their chosen language and whose principal interests lie in History, Art and Archaeology, or Religion. They are required to study one or two of a range of specialist Auxiliary Disciplines (Epigraphy, Palaeography, Numismatics, Sigillography, Papyrology or Artefact Studies [two of the following - Ceramics, Metalware, Ivories, Codices, Carved Marbles]), and to choose a Special Subject from a list in their preferred subject area (History, Art and Archaeology, Literature, or Religion). All those taking the course (on both pathways) are required to undertake a programme of directed study on History, Art and Archaeology, either in the Late Antique or in the Byzantine field. If they already have the required level of linguistic competence, they may substitute Byzantine Literature either for History or for Art/Archaeology in their chosen field of study.</p>		

<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Assessment takes different forms in relation to different subjects. There are timed examinations to test language attainment, competence in Auxiliary Disciplines, and knowledge of texts selected for close study as part of language training. The core paper on Late Antiquity and Byzantium (History, Art and Archaeology, and, in the cases specified above, Literature) are examined by two extended essays, each of 5,000 words. For Special Subjects, candidates have the option of submitting a dissertation of 10,000 words or two 5,000-word essays.</i></p>					
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<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Formative assessment is provided in discussion in weekly classes and through individual tutorial sessions.</i></p> <p><i>Summative assessment is by two 5,000-word essays, which must be submitted by the beginning of the third term of the course.</i></p>					
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<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Formative assessment is provided by discussion of the exercises undertaken during language tuition and by commentary on oral translations of passages from the prescribed texts presented in classes. Summative assessment is by three hour examinations. Candidates normally take two papers: (1) unseen</i></p>					

translation; (2) translation and commentary on prescribed texts. A candidate may, with the approval of his/her Supervisor and with the authorisation of the Committee for Byzantine Studies, take the unseen paper by itself, and substitute a Special Subject for the second paper on prescribed texts.

C	Auxiliary Disciplines	Graduate Students who do not take the Language and Literature pathway are required to study and gain competence in Auxiliary Disciplines. They make their choice between the following options: (1) any two from Epigraphy, Palaeography, Numismatics, Sigillography; (2) Papyrology, which is calibrated as a double Auxiliary Discipline; (3) Artefact Studies, dealing with any two of Ceramics, Metalware, Ivories, Codices, Carved Marbles.
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Assessment:

Formative assessment is provided by discussion of exercises undertaken in classes and by feedback on tutorial essays.

Summative assessment is by three-hour examination paper, except in the case of Papyrology which is examined by two pre-submitted essays of 5,000 words.

D	Special Subject teaching	<p>Graduate Students who have opted to take the Auxiliary Disciplines pathway and those taking the Language and Literature pathway who have gained permission to take a single timed examination (unseen translation) take a Special Subject either in History or in Art and Archaeology or in Literature or in Religion. The following list includes subjects currently on offer from University postholders. The list is not exhaustive. Graduate Students may, in consultation with their Supervisors, devise a Special Subject tailored to their own research interests, for which approval shall be sought from the Committee for Byzantine Studies.</p> <p><i>Overview of Special Subjects.</i></p> <p>(a) History: from paganism to Christianity - the Roman empire in the fourth century; the Sasanian empire; the sub-Roman west in the sixth century; the east Roman empire in the age of Justinian; nomads, Slavs and the southern powers, 370-700; the rise of Islam; Syria 400-800; Armenia 600-900; Byzantium and the Arabs ca.650-ca.860; the Christianisation of the Balkans and Russia; Islamic history 600-1000; Byzantium and Armenia 850-1050; Byzantium in the age of Constantine Porphyrogenitus; Arab and Norman Sicily 827-1250; the Seljuqs; the Komnenian revival; the Palaiologan age.</p> <p>(b) Art and Archaeology: Late Antique sculpture/portraiture; monumental art and architecture in Late Antiquity; city, countryside and economy in Late Antiquity; pilgrimage in Late Antiquity; Constantinople; Islamic art and archaeology 650-900; early Islamic monetary history; Byzantine manuscript illumination; Byzantine monumental art; Byzantine regional archaeology; Islamic art and archaeology 900-1250; royal art and architecture in Norman Sicily 1130-1194; Palaiologan art and architecture.</p> <p>(c) Literature (texts prescribed in translation):</p>
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		<p>literature in Late Antiquity (Greek); literature in Late Antiquity (Latin); literature in Late Antiquity (oriental – either Arabic or Syriac or Armenian); Hebrew/Aramaic texts; Byzantine historiography in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; Byzantine poetry from John Geometres to Theodore Prodromos; Byzantine popular narratives; Byzantine scholarship.</p> <p>(d) Religion: Judaism in Late Antiquity; the Arian controversy; Augustine; Gnosticism and Manichaeism; Christological debate, fifth-seventh centuries; Iconoclasm; early medieval Islamic thought; Byzantine spirituality.</p> <p>Teaching is provided in tutorials, which may be supplemented by lectures. A number of individual essay topics (typically 4-6) will be set, to ensure that graduate students both gain general knowledge of the specialised field of investigation and subject specific sub-areas to close critical scrutiny.</p>
E	<i>Dissertation (based on Special Subject choice)</i>	<p>The dissertation is a long essay (10,000 words), which is guided by an expert supervisor, who will normally be the Special Subject tutor, in 4 preparatory and 4 further supervisory sessions. It is designed to bring together research skills, methodological training, substantive study in the fields of History, Art/Archaeology, Literature or Religion, and independent research and writing. It should constitute tangible evidence of desired outcomes. Alternatively, graduate students may submit two extended essays (each of 5,000 words), which are developed out of two tutorial essays selected, in consultation with the tutor, from the total of six essays presented and discussed in weekly tutorials. Two further tutorials are devoted to discussion of drafts of each extended essay. Such essays are designed to bring together research skills, methodological training, substantive study in the fields of History, Art/Archaeology, Literature or Religion, and independent research and writing, on a smaller scale than the dissertation but in two distinct sub-areas of a Special Subject.</p>
<p>For both dissertations and extended essays, mere summaries of the secondary literature do not count as satisfying the requirements of the MSt degree. In order to be acceptable, the dissertation or extended essays must provide evidence of critical judgement and independence of thought. 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. Alternatively, existing evidence may be applied to a novel hypothesis, or perhaps to a new way of formulating or testing an existing hypothesis.</p>		
<p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p><i>Formative assessment is provided in feedback on weekly tutorial essays and in comment on drafts of written work for pre-submission.</i></p> <p><i>Summative assessment of the dissertation or the two extended essays is undertaken by the Board of Examiners with the support of specialist assessors (who must not have been involved in supervising the individual candidate's dissertation or essays) and monitored by an External Examiner.</i></p>		

12	Support for students and their learning	
A	<p>Libraries</p> <p>Since Late Antique and Byzantine Studies is a multi-faceted discipline students in this programme need access to both libraries for text-based work and museums for work that is object-oriented.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The students use the major holdings of the Bodleian, particularly the collection of Greek texts (classical, patristic and Byzantine) in the Lower Reading Room. 2. The Sackler Library holds material on late antique history, archaeology and art history, amalgamated from the collections from the Ashmolean Library, the Griffith Institute, and the Classics Faculty Library. 3. The library of the Oriental Institute has rich collections of Syriac, Armenian, and Islamic material. 4. The Taylorian Institute has collections of medieval Greek and Slavonic texts. 5. Patristic and religious material is available in Pusey House and the Theology Faculty Library. 6. The History Faculty Library holds multiple copies of essential titles. 7. College libraries. <p>Borrowing facilities exist in all the libraries, apart from the Bodleian, which functions as a reference library.</p>	
B	<p>Museums</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objects. Several options in the Late Antique and Byzantine Studies programme relate to material culture. Artefacts that illustrate these options are housed in the Ashmolean Museum, where there is an extensive collection of Early Christian and Byzantine objects. 2. Coins. The Heberden Coin Room of the Ashmolean Museum has a very useful collection of late Antique and Byzantine coins, including a large and representative group of Palaeologan coins. 3. Archives. The Institute of Archaeology houses a number of late Roman and Byzantine archives, which are available for consultation. <p>The range of general and specialised resources in the Libraries and Museums, and the quality of the holdings and accessibility, support the taught options and the dissertation work.</p>	

C	<p>IT resources</p> <p>Most Colleges have dedicated Graduate IT rooms; assistance is available from the College's Computing office.</p> <p>The History Faculty has a graduate student resource centre, with 17 powerful new 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. Graduate students taking master's programmes in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies are also entitled to use all facilities, including computing facilities, in the Stelios Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies.</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.</p>
D	<p>Advice concerning the Syllabus</p> <p>The Handbook for this course provides basic information concerning the course structure and requirements, and specific options.</p> <p>Students select their options, and the topic for their dissertation, in discussion with their supervisor. Reports are made termly, and are available for discussion with the student, supervisor and the Chairman of the Committee for Byzantine Studies.</p> <p>Academic guidance may also be provided by the student's College tutor of the College's Tutor for Graduates. Their roles are more usually pastoral, concerned with matters of funding, housing or other personal difficulties.</p>
E	<p>Other support</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 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, Modern Languages and Classics Faculties, within the colleges or via the University Proctors' office. Details of Faculty and University procedures are provided on relevant websites.</p>
13	<p>Criteria for admission</p>
	<p>The programme is intended to introduce students to Late Antique and Byzantine Studies or to allow them to deepen their knowledge of an aspect of the field that has already been studied. Prior requirements are therefore not laid down, though some knowledge of a relevant ancient or medieval language is expected. Typically students come after having studied western medieval history, classical languages and literature, religion, or archaeology.</p> <p>Applications to programmes of graduate study within the Humanities Division (of which the Faculties of History, Medieval and Modern Languages, Classics, Oriental Studies, and Theology form a part) 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

	<p>or their equivalent, samples of academic work (which can include examples of visual arts work) produced by the student, interview(s).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 630 (267 in the computer-based TOEFL test or 109 in the internet-based TOEFL) or level B in the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English, 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 relevant Faculties 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 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 Applications Sub-committee of the Committee for Byzantine Studies. British students who are regarded as being on the borderline, and candidates transferring internally in Oxford from other programmes, are likely to be interviewed.</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning</p>
	<p>Reports from external examiners regularly address issues relating to curriculum, and quality and standards of teaching and learning. These are reviewed by the Committee for Byzantine Studies, the Graduate Studies Committees of the Faculty Boards of History, of Classics, and of Medieval and Modern Languages, and the Faculty Boards of History, Classics, and Medieval and Modern Languages, also by the Academic Committee of the Humanities Divisional Board and by the University's Education Committee.</p> <p>The course sub-committee of the Committee for Byzantine Studies, made up of core teaching staff, reviews the course in detail on a termly basis. 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 History Faculty, and the termly meetings of the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee of the relevant Faculties provide a forum for discussion of all issues raised by graduates.</p> <p>Any changes to the programme are considered by the Committees listed above. Recommendations are finalized by the History Graduate Studies Committee, and then reported through the History Faculty Board to the Humanities Divisional Board. The Division in turn reports to the University's Education Committee which ultimately approves all significant programme changes.</p> <p>All new academic staff of the University 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</p>

	<p>needs. Mentors are appointed for all new lecturers. Formal review takes place in the second and fifth years of appointment.</p> <p>For staff of the History Faculty, 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 University's Learning Institute.</p> <p>Staff of the Modern Languages and Classics Faculties are appraised under the University's staff appraisal scheme.</p> <p>Success rates are monitored by the Graduate Studies Committee, the GJCC, the History Faculty Board, the Divisional Board and the Education Committee of the University.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Regulation of assessment</p>
	<p>The Board of Examiners for the MSt in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies is appointed by the Committee for the Nomination of Examiners in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, subject to the approval of the Vice-Chancellor and the Proctors of the University. The Board of Examiners is responsible for establishing and publishing the marking and classification conventions for these degrees. The Board of Examiners appoints a Chair of Examiners from among their number.</p> <p>The Board of Examiners is responsible for setting all papers, and marking the scripts and pre-submitted written work of the examinees. They appoint assessors to assist in the marking of pre-submitted extended essays and dissertations, as well as in the setting and marking of papers, where the subject matter is not within the expertise of two of the examiners. Each script, extended essay or dissertation is blind-marked by two examiners or assessors; where their marks differ they will discuss the script to obtain an agreed mark. If they are unable to agree, a third examiner will be asked to read the script and give it a mark. After scripts have been marked, the Board of Examiners meets to classify the students in accordance with the rules established the Committee for Byzantine Studies. 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 given to all graduate students of the History Faculty, including those following the MSt. in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies.</p> <p>A key role in this process is played by the External Examiner. He or she acts as an impartial advisor, providing the Committee for Byzantine Studies and the University with informed comment on two major issues.</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 • 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 EPSC.

The Report will also be scrutinised by the Committee for Byzantine Studies, the Faculties of History, of Medieval and Modern Languages and of Classics, particularly their Examinations and Graduate Studies Committees.

Where an External Examiner's Report contains particular suggestions or criticisms, it is the responsibility of the Committee for Byzantine Studies 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 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 External Advisory Panels of the History, Modern Languages and Classics Faculties review quality and standards and provide 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, the Modern Languages sub-faculties gained ratings from 5 to 5* and the Classics Faculty gained a 5* rating.

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 business (especially finance and consulting), 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.