



# **PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR**

  

# **M.ST. IN MEDIEVAL HISTORY**

This document describes the overall objectives of the M.St. in Medieval History. The degree is designed to provide training in the general techniques and theories appropriate to research in medieval history, and in their application to specific research topics within the field.

The programme lasts eleven months.

<b>1</b>	<b>Awarding institution/body</b>	<b>University of Oxford</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Teaching institution</b>	<b>University of Oxford</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Programme accredited by</b>	<b>not applicable</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Final award</b>	<b>M.St. in Medieval History</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Medieval History</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>UCAS code</b>	<b>not applicable</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Relevant subject benchmark statement</b>	<b>History (no postgraduate benchmark statement)</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Date of Programme Specification preparation</b>	<b>20 October 2006</b> <b>Amended November 2008</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Educational aims of the programme</b>	

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

- develop the techniques, skills and knowledge required to contribute to the study of Medieval 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 specialist and general skills of relevance to the continued professional development of historical understanding, which are also transferable into a wide range of employment contexts and life experiences.
- the programme aims to cover British and European history between *c.* 300 and *c.* 1500, and gives students the opportunity *either* to re-skill themselves in an area of medieval history which was underrepresented in their undergraduate syllabus, *or* to explore in more depth an area of medieval history in which they hope to progress to independent research.

<b>10</b>	<b>Programme outcomes</b>	
<b>A</b>	<b>Advanced knowledge and understanding of:</b>	<i>Related teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>Aspects of British and European Medieval History</b>	The programme offers options in late antique and early medieval, high medieval, and late medieval 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.
<b>2</b>	<b>how primary evidence is employed in historical argument</b>	Primary materials are used in every option and their use is reinforced by training in 'technical skills' and languages. The dissertation typically requires the use of primary materials.
<b>3</b>	<b>the development of medieval history as a subject, the role played by conceptual frameworks and models in the investigation of the subject area, and the theoretical foundations of the discipline</b>	The core methodology course will help students to familiarize themselves with a broad range of historiographical and methodological issues in the history of Britain, Europe, and Byzantium from late Antiquity to circa 1500;
<b>4</b>	<b>analytical and practical research skills</b>	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 classes, supervisions and seminars. Summative assessment of the programme is by two 5,000-word essays for the option paper, participation in the core methodology course complemented by the submission of a historiographical / methodological essay of between 3,000 and 5,000 words, and a 15,000-word dissertation.</i></p>		

<b>B</b>	<b>Intellectual skills: the ability to</b>	<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>undertake sophisticated analysis</b>	There is emphasis throughout the programme on the application of analytical and conceptual skills. The course attempts to impart the ability to think about medieval 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.

<b>2</b>	<b>argue persuasively</b>	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.
<b>3</b>	<b>approach problems with creativity and imagination</b>	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.
<b>4</b>	<b>develop the exercise of independence of mind, and a readiness to challenge and criticise accepted opinion</b>	This ability is honed in debate in classes and supervisions, 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.
<b>5</b>	<b>complete a demanding research project in Medieval History</b>	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 two or three small classes 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>		

<b>C</b>	<b>Practical skills: the ability to</b>	<i>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>write well for a variety of audiences and in a variety of contexts</b>	The organisation and presentation of written work is an integral part of the course. Continuous scrutiny of and feedback on written work, whether of class papers or dissertation, including surveys preparatory to the dissertation, aim to promote written work which displays well-structured and coherent argument, presented in clear, fluent and elegant prose.
<b>2</b>	<b>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</b>	The weekly routine of classes, seminars, and parallel dissertation supervision provides ample opportunity to develop and refine high-level skills in oral discussion and presentation.

3	<b>ensure, often working independently, that the fullest range of evidence and opinion can be brought to bear on a problem</b>	Emphasis is placed on showing an awareness of the variety of bibliographical and archival resources – library catalogues; electronic information systems – to identify and retrieve materials and commentary.
4	<b>employ research tools and quantitative methods</b>	Training is provided in the use of the research tools appropriate to both the option paper and the individual dissertation project, 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 courses are assessed by means of both formative and summative assessment. Termly reports by the candidate and the dissertation supervisor 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	<b>find information, organise and deploy it</b>	Information retrieval, especially through the informed use of IT, is integral to many aspects of the programme.
2	<b>work well independently, with a strong sense of self-direction, but with the ability to work constructively in co-operation with others</b>	Students are encouraged to contribute to class discussion from the basis of their own independent study.
3	<b>effectively structure and communicate their ideas in a variety of written and oral formats</b>	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	<b>plan and organise the use of time effectively</b>	The ability to produce material within time constraints and against tight deadlines, whether within the framework of oral presentation, essay submissions, or dissertations is enforced strongly, and imparts good time-allocation habits.
5	<b>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</b>	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 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 five kinds of learning experience: lectures, classes, supervisions, tutorials, and seminars.

<b>1</b>	<b>Lectures:</b> There are no dedicated lectures for this course, but students are encouraged to attend the lectures offered to supplement advanced undergraduate study for the areas on which they are focusing. Such lectures 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.
<b>2</b>	<b>Classes and tutorials:</b> These are the main form of interactive learning at master's level. In the core course they comprise the whole degree cohort, which is expected to be additionally enhanced by the participation of doctoral students in the early phase of their research. For the option papers, which are intended to complement in terms of the time frame candidates' dissertation project, classes are expected to be small, though again afforded by some doctoral students in the same area. The function of such classes 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. Some of the classes are small enough (one to three students) to count as tutorials, and in certain circumstances tutor and student(s) may arrange for specialist or remedial training by establish an appropriate question and bibliography; the student will be expected to produce essays for discussion with and comment by the tutor.
<b>3</b>	<b>Supervisions:</b> 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.
<b>4</b>	<b>Seminars and special lectures:</b> There is a regular weekly research seminar in medieval history as well as a variety of seminars with a specialist focus such as late Antiquity or medieval ecclesiastical history, for instance. They usually feature visiting and local speakers 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 historical subjects.

<b>11</b>	<b>Programme Structures and Features</b>	
<p>The course lasts for 11 months. The M.St. requires two 5,000-word essays for the option papers, participation in the core methodology course complemented by the submission of a historiographical or methodological essay of between 3,000 and 5,000 words, 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.</p>		
	<i>Course</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>A period of Medieval History</b>	<p>These thematic classes are assessed by two essays, and the essays submitted for examination must show a chronological or thematic spread. The following classes are currently on offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) for early medievalists: Saints and sanctity in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages;</li> <li>(b) for high medievalists: The twelfth-century renaissance;</li> <li>(c) for late medievalists: The use of English and the public sphere, c. 1300 to c. 1550;</li> </ul>

2	<b>A course in methodology or theory of Medieval History</b>	In classes and tutorials students acquire appropriate theoretical, conceptual or methodological competence and skills peculiar to the medieval period;
<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 two 5,000-word essays for the option papers, participation in the core methodology course complemented by the submission of a historiographical/methodological essay of between 3,000 and 5,000 words.</i></p>		
3	<b>Dissertation</b>	
<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	<b>Support for students and their learning</b>	
A	<b>Libraries</b>	<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"> <li>1. The major holdings of the Bodleian and its associated central libraries; including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duke Humfrey's Library and Room 132 for consultation of manuscripts and early printed books, national and international catalogues of manuscripts and historical libraries</li> <li>• Upper and Lower Reading Rooms in the Old Library for research reference in History, Classics and Theology</li> <li>• the Radcliffe Camera, with its large History and Theology holdings on open shelf;</li> <li>• the Taylor Institute (European languages and literatures);</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. The 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.</li> <li>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. Some colleges have in addition extensive manuscript and archival collections on their own premises.</li> </ol>

	<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>B</b>	<p><b>Museums</b></p> <p>Particularly students following the early medieval period options may draw on the resources of the Ashmolean Museum, and the expertise of its staff.</p>
<b>C</b>	<p><b>IT resources</b></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 17 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.</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>
<b>D</b>	<p><b>Advice concerning the Syllabus</b></p> <p>An on-line modular Handbook for graduate programmes in History and the 'Instructions to Candidates' on this course provide basic information concerning course structure and requirements, and specific options.</p> <p>Students select their options and the topics for their extended essays and dissertation in discussion with their supervisor and the Course Convenor. Reports are made termly, and are available for discussion with the student, supervisor, and the Course Convenor.</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>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Other support</b></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 Faculty, within the colleges or via the University Proctors' office. Details of Faculty and University procedures are provided in the on-line modular Handbook for graduate programmes in History.</p>

<b>13</b>	<b>Criteria for admission</b>	
<p>The programme is intended to introduce students to Medieval History. Prior requirements are therefore not laid down, though some knowledge of a relevant foreign or ancient language will enhance the benefits candidates may expected from their degree work. 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"> <li>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).</li> <li>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 7.5 or above, with a minimum of 7.0 in each component, or a TOEFL score of 630 or above, with an essay-writing score of 5.0 or better) to pursue the chosen programme to a successful conclusion within the required time limits.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>4. The History Faculty is able to provide appropriate supervision and facilities for the candidate's chosen programme of work.</li> </ol> <p>It is essential to note that well-qualified candidates may not be offered a place because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure funding is not available (places offered on a conditional basis will not be confirmed without a financial guarantee);</li> <li>• There are constraints on the availability of facilities, research funding and on supervision;</li> <li>• There are limitations on the size of master's programmes;</li> <li>• Appropriate supervision may not be available for a particular area of academic interest;</li> <li>• Other candidates have been judged to have greater academic ability;</li> <li>• Colleges may not have places available.</li> </ul> <p>Applications are considered by the Programme 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 programmes, are likely to be interviewed.</p>		
<b>14</b>	<b>Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning</b>	
<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 History, by the Humanities Board, and by the University's Education Committee.</p> <p>Student feedback is solicited regularly, mainly in the regular meetings with supervisors. Feedback forms for classes and lectures are available from the Faculty's WebSite, and the termly meeting of the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee provides a forum for discussion of issues raised by graduates.</p> <p>Any changes to the programme are considered by the Graduate Studies Committee. This makes recommendations to the Faculty Board which reports to the Humanities Divisional Board. This in turn reports to the Education 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 usually 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 Humanities Divisional Board and the University's Education Committee.</p>
<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>Regulation of assessment</b></p>
	<p>The Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Programme Convenor nominates a Board of Examiners for this degree for approval by the Examinations Sub-Committee of the History Faculty Board, and the examiners are then appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors of the University. The Board of Examiners elects a Chairman of Examiners from their number. The Graduate Studies Committee of the History Faculty is responsible for establishing and publishing the marking and classification conventions for these degrees; on issues of classification the Committee will take advice from the Board of Examiners.</p> <p>The Board of Examiners is responsible for marking examination essays and dissertations of the candidates. They may appoint assessors to assist in the marking of the more specialist essays, and for marking dissertations, where the subject matter is not within the expertise of two of the examiners. Each 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 the external examiner, will be asked to read the work and moderate the mark. After the marking is complete, the Board of Examiners meets to classify the students in accordance with the rules established by the Graduate Studies 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 provided in the on-line modular Handbook for graduate programmes in History.</p> <p>A key role in this process is played by the External Examiner, acting as impartial advisor,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> <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"> <li>• the standards demonstrated by the students</li> <li>• the extent to which standards are appropriate for the award</li> <li>• the design, structure and marking of assessments</li> <li>• the procedures for assessment and examinations</li> <li>• whether or not external examiners have had sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material necessary to make the required judgements</li> <li>• students' performance in relation to their peers in comparable courses</li> <li>• the coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and their consonance with the explicit roles required of them</li> <li>• the basis and rationale for any comparisons made</li> <li>• the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort</li> <li>• the quality of teaching and learning which may be indicated by student performance</li> </ul>

	<p>The Report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, and will be considered by the Humanities Board and by the Education 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><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>Indicators of quality and standards</b></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 Modern History Faculty gained a 5 rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.</p> <p>A large proportion of students continue into doctoral work 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>