

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Masters of Arts Degree programme and Postgraduate Diploma exit award in History**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2008**.

The aims of the programme are to:

- provide advanced study of History from one or more perspectives and time periods including British, European and World history, Gender History, Public History;
- examine critically current knowledge, and the essential concepts and theories that inform the study of History;
- provide the opportunity for advanced study of specialised topics within History that involve the critical assessment of both primary source material and secondary literature;
- examine critically current techniques of enquiry and research in the chosen specialism(s) within History;
- provide applied training in the methodologies and techniques needed for research leading to MPhil/PhD in History and related fields;
- foster the ability to learn independently, whether for further research, for career enhancement or for personal intellectual development;
- develop the written and oral presentation skills needed for effective communication of research findings at postgraduate level.

This MA has been specially devised to provide an advanced level study of the theories and practical skills that underpin the discipline of history. It does so through a Core Course, studied by all students, which examines key concepts, theories and methodologies. Additionally, students take a skills course (in either its modern history or gender history variant) which pursues these conceptual questions further in relation to the practical applications of historical research (e.g. media and museums). Finally students also choose a number of Option courses, which cover leading edge research in an array of key fields of Modern, World, European, British and Public History. The programme is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or two years of part-time study (104 weeks). Teaching takes place during the day over two terms from September to March. The dissertation is submitted in September. On successful completion of the programme a student should have an understanding of the area of the MA at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the programme provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

Further information

[Learning outcomes](#)

[Teaching, learning and assessment](#)

[Details of the programme structure\(s\)](#)

[Progression and award requirements](#)

[Student support and guidance](#)

[Admission requirements](#)

[Further learning and career opportunities](#)

[Indicators of quality and standards](#)

[List of programmes, with details of awards, degree titles, accreditation and teaching arrangements](#)

This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the Programme are closely informed by the research interests of the staff in Royal Holloway's History Department. In general terms, the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding:

- an advanced knowledge and critical understanding of the major concepts and theories that inform the subject;
- the various explanations and theories for changes and continuities in history;
- the underlying social, cultural, economic, religious, ideological and political changes occurring during the periods studied;
- the location and organisation of primary and secondary sources of evidence, both textual and otherwise, relating to the chosen field of history;
- the variety of media and resources for the public presentation of history;
- the research skills that are commonly used in the study of history.

Skills and other attributes:

- assimilating, interrogating and evaluating critically a wide range of material required for research into history, including both documentary and other sources;
- interpreting developments within a long-term framework;
- the ability to analyse and assess complex historical debates in a variety of areas and topics within history and to engage in constructive debates with other students and with course teachers;
- analysing and synthesising complex and often contradictory material to create coherent and logical arguments supported by relevant evidence;*
- addressing complex problems of history, and making judgements on the basis of incomplete data;
- making productive use of research institutions: libraries, record offices, museums, world-wide web and other useful sources of information;*
- the capacity to evaluate when it is appropriate to employ aggregative and historical methodologies such as historical databases, prosopography, and various cliometric techniques;
- independently planning and executing an original Skills Project;
- independently planning and executing an original and extended piece of research for the Dissertation;
- the ability to reflect critically on the results of research investigations and the methods used to obtain these;*
- the ability to convey the results of research clearly and systematically in a manner comprehensible to the non-specialist, both orally and in writing;*
- independent learning and scholarship;*
- In addition to the above skills, the programme fosters the development of a range of personal attributes that are important to the world of work, and that strengthen the ability to engage in continuing professional development and to contribute to the wider community. These include: personal motivation; the ability to work, as appropriate, both autonomously and with others; self-awareness and self-management; critical reflection; intellectual integrity; flexibility, adaptability; and creativity.*

* transferable skills

[Back to top](#)

Teaching, learning and assessment

The interest and enthusiasm of students are nurtured through their close involvement with the current research of established scholars. As befits an advanced research programme, all teaching is highly interactive, with an emphasis on open discussion within a 'community of scholars'. Methods used to develop knowledge and understanding are seminars, discussion groups and student oral presentations. In the Core course, assignment sheets are given to students each week to provide suggested reading and advance notice of topics for forthcoming discussion. In the skills courses, teaching involves small groups with presentations from the tutor and/or visiting speakers and/or weekly reports from students.

Option classes are taught on the basis of themes intensively prepared by students themselves and then debated collectively with the group and the tutor.

Discipline-specific and transferable skills are developed throughout the programme by means of group discussion; a range of other participative activities (e.g. short student papers; the reciprocal pre-circulation of discussion points by all students in a class) and by guided independent research or study. All courses will contribute to the acquisition of these skills but the compulsory Core course in Modern History and the Dissertation are particularly important in this respect. Research skills are developed to a professional level through the design and production of the independent research dissertation, which also serves to integrate knowledge and skills acquired throughout the programme.

Assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills is by coursework essays, by other related coursework as appropriate (e.g. skills project) and by independent dissertation. The assessment methods used for a particular course will vary in accordance with the knowledge and skills being developed by that course (see next section for details). Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

[Back to top](#)

Details of the programme structure

The MA in History programme consists of taught courses (75% of the final award) and a Dissertation (25% of the final award). The taught components are usually each worth half a unit, although a minority are full unit courses. Each MA student must take taught courses to the value of three course units. They must also write a dissertation worth a full course unit. Thus the value of the MA overall is four course units. The programme structure for the PgDip is the same as below, with the exception that students do not undertake the dissertation. Weightings for courses within the PgDip are proportionate, but exclude the dissertation.

Full-time students will complete the equivalent of three full units taught courses in the first two terms, and complete their dissertation in the summer months for submission in early September. Part-time students will normally complete methodology, skills and option courses to the value of two units in the first year of study, and choose more options (to the value of one course unit) and the dissertation in the second year of study. The brief outline of the programme is show below; however students can obtain further details from the Programme Handbook and the Director of the MA in History.

Course code	Course title	Course unit value
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A. Core Course

Compulsory for all students:

HS5450	History Past and Present: Definitions, Concepts and Approaches	0.5 units (12.5%)
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B. Skills courses:

Compulsory for all students:

HS5455	Studying and Communicating the Past	0.5 unit (12.5%)
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C. Option Courses

Students on the Public History stream must take the following courses:

HS 5461	The Public Communication	0.5 units (12.5%)
HS5462	Voice of the Public	0.5 units (12.5%)
HS5460	Pathways to the Past	1 unit (25%)

Students on all other programmes choose option courses to a total course value of **TWO** units accounting for 50% of the programme. RHUL options are usually worth 0.5 units, so students would normally choose

FOUR in total. The list of available options varies from year to year. Students should consult the departmental literature and/or online postgraduate course catalogue.

N.B.

Subject to the agreement of the Director of the MA in History, students may also choose option courses to a maximum value of ONE unit from a cognate MA within Royal Holloway or from another History MA programme within the University of London (i.e. those courses offered by other London Colleges within the federal basketing system).

D. Dissertation

HS5410	Dissertation (compulsory for all students except Public History)	1.0 unit (25%)
HS5463	Project Dissertation (compulsory for Public History students)	1.0 unit (25%)

Please note that not all courses run each year. A full list of courses including optional courses for the current academic year can be obtained from the [Department](#).

EXIT CODES

Students are initially registered under the general title of MA in History (Banner code 2338). Depending on the choices of option course taken, each student will exit with a specific degree subtitle tagged by an exit code. The most usual exit codes are listed below. If students have related questions, or are unclear about the impact of their option choices on their degree subtitle, they should consult the Director of the MA in History at their earliest opportunity.

MA in History: Gender and Women's History (Banner Code 2354)
MA in History: Modern History (Banner Code 2355)
MA in History: Modern History and Gender History (Banner Code 2356)
MA in History: Public History (Banner Code 2422)
MA in History: Early Modern History, Literature and Culture (2302)
MA in History: Hellenic Studies (2378)

[Back to top](#)

Award and Progression requirements

In order to progress into year two, part-time students must normally pass taught courses to the value of two course units by the end of year one.

In order to be awarded the Master's degree a student must achieve a mark of at least 50% in all taught courses and the dissertation. Provided there is evidence of compensating strength elsewhere, and at the discretion of the Examining Board, a failure mark of between 40 and 49.99% may be condoned in one course, except for the Dissertation, which must be passed with a mark of 50% or more. A student who does not successfully pass a course at the first attempt may be allowed to re-sit or repeat on one occasion.

In order to be awarded the Master's degree with Merit a student must achieve a weighted average of at least 65% over all courses, with no mark in any course falling below 50%. A Merit cannot normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme.

In order to be awarded the Master's degree with Distinction a student must achieve a weighted average of at least 70% over all courses, with no mark in any course falling below 60%, and normally with a mark of at least 70% in the dissertation. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme.

The **Postgraduate Diploma** may be awarded if a student:

- Achieves an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%; or

- Has failure marks of between 40 and 49.99% in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment and which therefore may be condoned:
- And has either chosen not to proceed to the dissertation, or has failed the dissertation on either the first or second attempt.

[Back to top](#)

Student support and guidance

- Course information and induction notes are sent to all students before their arrival.
- An Induction Meeting at the beginning of the Autumn Term provides students with both College and Departmental orientation.
- The MA Handbook and Workbooks are supplied to all students on the first day of the programme. (The Handbook is also available online.)
- Personal Advisers. The role of the Personal Adviser is to offer students advice on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. The Director of the MA in History acts as Personal Adviser to all students on the programme. The Director is available for consultation by students during her advertised office hours.
- All tutors are available for consultation by their students at advertised office hours.
- Dissertation Supervisor. Each student is assigned a supervisor, who gives advice on the selection of the topic, supervises the research programme, and provides feedback on one draft of the dissertation.
- The Skills Project (for HS5455) is supervised by the Skills course tutor.
- The Departmental Staff-Student Postgraduate Committee, which has at least one member from each History MA programme, acts as a two-way channel of communication between the Department and the student community.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources are available in the College libraries and in the Computer Centre. However, as takers of a postgraduate degree, MA students will be expected to access as a matter of course the British Library and other specialist collections in Senate House and other University of London libraries.
- Students enjoy access to the College Careers Service and to the Departmental Careers Adviser.
- Students enjoy access to all the College support services, including the Student Counselling Service, Health Centre, Educational Support Office for students with special needs, College Chaplaincy and the Student Union.
- Students enjoy membership of a number of research centres and libraries in Central London, including the University of London's Institute of Historical Research and Senate House library. They also have easy access to the British Library and the National Archives, as well as a host of research archives.
- Off-site workshops and field trips will be arranged for students taking the Public History masters.

[Back to top](#)

Admission requirements

Students are normally expected to have an upper second class honours degree in History or a related subject from the UK or an equivalent qualification from overseas. Applications from overseas students and from mature students are welcome. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes. All 'non-standard' applications are viewed sympathetically, each case being considered individually on its merits.

[Back to top](#)

Further learning and career opportunities

This MA programme provides an attractive, advanced qualification for those seeking employment in fields involving the professional creation, evaluation and dissemination of knowledge. Our graduates have gone on to become, amongst other things: business people, writers, archivists and librarians, full-time researchers, journalists, PR consultants, university lecturers and teachers. It is also an ideal qualification for those intending to undertake postgraduate research in Modern History leading to MPhil/PhD. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

[Back to top](#)

Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. 60% of the History Department's research profile is of 3* and 4* standard.

[Back to top](#)

List of programmes with details of awards, teaching arrangements and accreditation

The programme and its streams are taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and the MA leads to an award of the University of London. The Postgraduate Diploma leads to an award of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. Programmes in History are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme codes are given in parentheses.

Master of Arts in History

Generic Programme

MA in History (2338)

Exit awards

MA in History: Gender and Women's History (2354)

MA in History: Modern History (2355)

MA in History: Modern History and Gender History (2356)

MA in History: Public History (2422)

MA in History: Early Modern History, Literature and Culture (2302)

MA in History: Hellenic Studies (2378)

Postgraduate Diploma in History (Exit Award only)

PGDip in History (2392)