

BA History
For students entering Part 1 in 2006

UCAS code: V100

Awarding institution:
Teaching Institution:
Relevant QAA subject benchmarking group:
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Date of profile: October 2006
Programme Director:
Programme Adviser:
Board of Studies:
Accreditation:

The University of Reading
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History
Programme length: 3 years
Dr David Stack
Dr David Stack
History
not applicable

Summary of programme aims

The single subject degree in History offers insights into the richness and variety of human experience. Throughout this process of discovery, students encounter a wide range of subjects and approaches, while having the opportunity to pursue their own enthusiasms and to benefit from the research expertise and activities of staff. We aim to familiarise students with a broad chronological range, whilst providing them with the opportunity of specialisation in particular periods and topics of British, European and American history. It also enables students to pursue their own interests through an independent study and a dissertation. Subject-based and transferable skills are developed in a programme which encourages a scholarly, committed and enthusiastic engagement with the study of the past.

Transferable skills

The University's Strategy for Teaching and Learning has identified a number of generic transferable skills which all students are expected to have developed by the end of their degree programme. In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to enhance their skills relating to career management, communication (both written and oral), information handling, numeracy, problem-solving, team working and use of information technology.

History is a discipline which lends itself to critical judgment and problem-solving, both through personal engagement with issues and through dialogue and group discussion. Also integral is the collection, collation and analysis of substantial quantities of material and its communication and presentation. History also prompts an awareness of numeracy through chronology, periodisation, and basic quantification. In addition, the development of powerful tools of research, analysis and presentation associated with information technology is reflected in several ways, such as in the location and retrieval of bibliographic and source material, the production and presentation of student work, and, where appropriate, the use of more sophisticated databases and exploitation of the internet.

Programme content

Students must take 120 credits in each Part. In Part 2, students have a choice of Periods within the categories of medieval, early modern and modern history. At Part 3, students will have a choice of Topics and Specials.

Part 1 introduces students to the discipline through study of historical causation, contextualisation and the utilisation of both primary and secondary sources in History. In Part 2 students are required to engage with a broad span of historical periods which develop both their range of knowledge and their analytical/critical skills, and to carry out independent work in historiography and applied historical skills. Part 3 involves the study in depth of Topics and a Special Subject which require that students apply their analytical skills in focussed areas and undertake independent research, especially in the Dissertation.

Not all Optional modules will necessarily be available in any year. Admission to optional modules will be at the discretion of the Programme Director.

Part 1 (three terms)

Credits

Compulsory modules

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|----|---|
| HS1APH | Approaches to History | 20 | C |
| HS1LMH | Landmarks in History | 20 | C |

Optional module which may only be taken if the compulsory modules are also studied

| | | | |
|--------|---------------------------|----|---|
| HS1DSH | Directed Study in History | 20 | C |
|--------|---------------------------|----|---|

Students must make up the remaining number of credits from modules chosen from the Part 1 module catalogue.

Part 2 (three terms)

Students must take 120 credits of which at least 100 must be at I level.

Compulsory modules

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------|----|---|
| HS2HTP | Historical Themes in Practice | 10 | I |
| HS2TIH | Themes and Issues in History | 20 | I |

(Students may replace the Themes and Issues in History with a 20-credit module offered elsewhere in the University).

Optional modules

Periods

Students must take three Period modules (20 credits) with the co-requisite skill module (10 credit), totalling 90 credits. At least one of these must be from the Early Period and one from the Modern Period. A complete list of Period options is available from the BA Programme Coordinator, and a list of current options can be found in the BA Programme Handbook.

Of the 120 credits in Part 2, 5 credits are taken up by Career Management Skills.

Part 3 (three terms)

Students must take 120 credits of which at least 100 must be at H level.

Compulsory module

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------|----|---|
| HS3HLD | Long Dissertation | 40 | H |
|--------|-------------------|----|---|

Optional modules- Topics

Students must take two 20-credit Topic modules. A 20-credit module offered elsewhere in the University may replace one 20-credit module.

A complete list of Topic options is available from the BA Programme Coordinator, and a list of current options can be found in the BA Programme Handbook.

Optional modules – Special subjects

Students must take one Special subject, consisting of co-requisite A and B papers of 20-credits each (40-credits in total).

A complete list of Special Subject options is available from the BA Programme Coordinator, and a list of current options can be found in the BA Programme Handbook.

Progression Requirements

To proceed from Part 1 to Part 2, students must:

- (a) obtain an average of 40% across 120 credits taken in Part 1
- (b) obtain at least 40% over both compulsory modules in History
- (c) achieve not less than 30% in any module except that marks of less than 30% in a total of 20 credits may be condoned provided that the candidate has pursued the course for the module with reasonable diligence and has not been absent from the examination without reasonable cause.

To proceed to Part 3, it is sufficient to have obtained an overall average of at least 40% over 120 credits. Clause (iii) above also applies.

The degree is designed in end-stopped stages relating to the qualifications of Certificate, Diploma, and Honours Degree according to the National Qualifications Framework. Each stage is discrete yet developmental. Part 1 provides a general introduction to the discipline and methodology of history through the Approaches module, and to periodisation and causation in history through the Landmarks module. This foundation is reinforced and extended in Part 2 through students' engagement with three different Periods and by means of the work required for the Historiographical Essay and Independent Study. At Part 3, students' historical skills are refined to a high level of sophistication through the Long Dissertation and the Special Subject in particular, and their historical knowledge is extended through the Topics which also allow students to themes and issues in depth.

Summary of teaching and assessment

At Part 1, teaching is by large group lectures reinforced by seminars of c. 15 students, and for those taking the Directed Study, individual supervision is provided. At Parts 2 and 3, it is principally by seminars, of around 25 students in Periods, 15 in Topics, and 8 in Special Subjects. At all levels, independent research is expected and encouraged. It is most apparent and significant in the preparation of the Independent Study, Directed Historiographical Essay and the Long Dissertation, although individual supervisory support is also provided.

All parts are assessed by a mixture of coursework and timed examination. The Part 2 Independent Study, Skills in Periods modules and the Directed Historiographical Essay are based solely on coursework, while the Long Dissertation includes a substantial element of oral presentation.

Assessment criteria for each of the Levels are given in the School Handbook but it should be noted that Part 2 modules will count for 33% of the final assessment and Part 3 modules for 67% of the final assessment.

Admission requirements

UCAS Tariff: 300 points from three A levels only. History at Grade B. Total points exclude Key Skills and General Studies.

International Baccalaureate: 32 points, with History at grade 6 or Advanced GNVQ: 18 units at Distinction overall; or Scottish and Irish Highers: 5 Bs or equivalent thereof.

Those with non-standard qualifications will be considered on an individual basis.

Admissions secretary: Mrs Elizabeth Berry, e.l.berry@reading.ac.uk, tel 0118 378 8148

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT services, which has several hundred computers, and the University Library which across its three sites holds over one million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning ([S@IL](#)) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students combining history with a language, and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme.

Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, the Careers Advisory service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

In the School, students are provided with handbooks which outline the programme, provide guidance on study skills, and contain information on staff, facilities and sources of specialised help within the University. Additional support is given through orientation sessions on module choices, the Independent Study and the Long Dissertation. Advice is also given by the Director of Teaching and Learning. There is full written feedback on essay work. Each module teacher gives personal guidance and feedback and sends termly reports on progress to Personal Tutors for discussion with students. The PAR scheme also assists in helping students assess their development. There is also a School Library which provides quiet study space, a photocopier and networked computers.

Career prospects

History graduates are trained in clear thinking, research skills, diligence, independence, adaptability and the ability to understand people and situations in the world at large. As such, they are eagerly sought after by employers. In addition they are given specific vocational training and orientation through a second year Career Management Scheme run by the School in conjunction with the Careers Advisory Service. Past graduates have used their degree as a springboard for various areas of employment such as accountancy, banking and commerce, law, publishing, information science, museum work, teaching and social work. Many also enter the business world through management training schemes operated by national companies in retailing, marketing, sales, computing, while others go into the civil service and local government. Several graduates also go on to postgraduate study in History, both at MA and PhD level, at Reading and elsewhere.

Opportunities for study abroad

Students in the School of History have the opportunity to spend a period of study abroad (normally in Part 2) as part of the Socrates scheme, or in conjunction with the American Studies programme's exchange.

Educational aims of the programme

The programme aims to provide a thorough degree-level education in History which develops the student's knowledge of events, structures, and historical agents or actors, a sophisticated and sensitive understanding of the complex interplay between cause and effect in the historical process, and a critical awareness of the variety of ways in which the past has been interpreted in historical writing.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the broad sweep of post-classical history and its principal divisions2. a range of eras and cultures, within a degree structure flexible enough to allow breadth or specialisation3. the contextualisation of forces, events, and individual experiences in the historical process4. the nature and variety of historical sources as defined by period and culture5. the nature of debate and dispute in historical writing | <p>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</p> <p>. Part 1 incorporates topics and texts from all eras. At Parts 2 and 3 single subject students must take one Period from each of the medieval, early modern and modern groups, but opportunities exist for geographical specialisation.</p> <p>At Part 1 formal lectures impart crucial information and perspective, which is reinforced and deepened by regular seminars. As the degree progresses, less use is made of the lecture form and students engage with historical problems and texts through the structured exploratory contexts of the seminar and the workshop. Class sizes become progressively smaller as greater emphasis is placed on student-centred learning. The importance of both primary and secondary texts is registered throughout the degree, and is established at the outset particularly in the Approaches module, being reinforced not only in the Directed Historiographical Essay but also in the Long Dissertation.</p> <p>Assessment</p> <p>Students' knowledge and understanding are tested through a combination of seen and unseen examinations, a variety of coursework assignments, including essays, projects and the Long Dissertation. Understanding is also assessed in the oral presentation associated with the Long Dissertation.</p> |
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Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - able to:

1. accumulate and apply information and perspective in a structured manner
2. identify and appreciate the forces which generate historical change
3. analyse and solve historical problems, and formulate arguments based on evidence
4. develop a critical and nuanced appreciation of issues, and challenge received conclusions
5. negotiate both primary and secondary sources in history, and demonstrate how they inter-relate
6. develop creative intelligence in independent research and interpretation

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Through specific focus on topics, issues and texts in seminars, workshops and personal study, students are enabled to develop critical modes of enquiry about the selection and treatment of material. Through essay, project, and dissertation preparation, the research and analytical skills are reinforced which are necessary to form and to validate arguments and judgments. The Directed Historiographical Essay focuses students on methodological issues in historical writing, while the Long Dissertation requires them to engage creatively and critically with primary sources and/or historical interpretative works.

Assessment

Essay and project work tests all aspects of intellectual skills, while examinations assess the ability to marshal information and arguments under given time constraints, and according to a variety of conventions, involving open book, seen and unseen papers. The Independent study and Long Dissertation represent the evaluation of personal research and creative interpretation.

C. Practical skills – able to:

1. develop and carry out individual research programmes and strategies
2. locate and synthesise large quantities of material
3. prepare bibliographies and references according to the conventions of the discipline
4. use IT to access sources and information relating to the subject
5. engage in group discussion and debate on historical issues
6. develop a critical self-awareness as a working historian

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

All of the practical skills are present in each Part, and are developed through essay and project work as well as through seminars and workshops. The Skills in Periods modules consist of various appropriate exercises aimed to promote, amongst other things, research, IT and referencing skills. Feedback on an individual basis combined with the University's personal tutor system encourages constructive self-criticism.

Assessment

The Special Subject papers test the ability to cope with and interpret large quantities of material. Independent Research skills are assessed in Part 1 through the optional Directed Study, in Part 2 with the Independent Study and ultimately in the Part 3 Long Dissertation. The portfolio required for the Skills in Periods reveals the diverse range of practical skills acquired as appropriate to the module.

D. Transferable skills – able to:

1. present findings and arguments in a cogent and coherent manner, both orally and in writing
2. use IT for word-processing and information retrieval
3. use library resources to optimum effect
4. operate effectively in a group
5. show a competence in numeracy within the parameters of the subject
6. assess aptitudes in preparation for a career
7. work to deadlines

Teaching and learning strategies and methods

The use of IT is encouraged throughout the degree especially in the Landmarks module at Part 1, and in the Skills in Periods. Seminars develop oral skills and group work. Essay work develops writing skills, library research and the keeping of deadlines. The Careers module at Part 2 introduces students to vocational issues. A basic appreciation of numeracy is developed through an awareness of chronology, cataloguing systems and estimation, with certain modules taking this skill further as appropriate to their subject matter.

Assessment

Written skills are examined at every stage both under timed conditions and in course work. Oral skills are examined in the presentation associated with the Long Dissertation. The Independent Study requires students to demonstrate competence in at least two of the skills outlined in the University Strategy in addition to written presentation skills.

Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.