

Programme Specification 2023-24

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH STUDIES

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	Faculty of English
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Master of Philosophy
5	Programme title	English Studies
6	JACS code(s)	Q300
7	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
8	Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
9	Date specification was produced	July 2022

Educational aims

- To give students with relevant experience at first-degree level the opportunity to develop a conceptually and historically sophisticated approach to literary study, both in taught seminar groups and individual research; also to carry out focused research under close supervision in their field of interest.
- To enable students to acquire or develop skills in order to practise research in the field in a professional manner; to give students the opportunity to develop a critical and methodological framework, and to acquire relevant bibliographical and electronic skills.
- To prepare students (where relevant) for doctoral research in a range of different research areas with a literary dimension.

These aims are achieved by:

1. training students to develop a feasible research project, and to produce written work based on such a project to a clearly-defined timetable;
2. introducing students to the principal research resources of their field (including the use of information technology);
3. training students in the necessary skills of bibliographical description and analysis, including, where relevant, of manuscripts or of early printed books;
4. providing language teaching, where relevant;

5. strategically widening students' range of reading in the field of their dissertation topic, while encouraging the development of specific insights which might form the basis for an original contribution to the field;
6. developing students' competence in critical approaches to literature and literary and cultural production, and in the critical assessment of research in the field;
7. providing seminar teaching on a range of topics that may be either conceptually or historically oriented, and giving students the opportunity to prepare coursework essays in these areas;
8. developing students' competence in contributing to weekly seminars, and in presenting their own work and discussing the issues arising from it with an audience of peers and senior members of the Faculty;
9. the submission of regular written exercises of varying lengths that demonstrate the acquisition of the skills outlined above.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course students should have developed:

1. a deeper knowledge of literature and its contexts (critical, cultural, historical), in general, and of their chosen area of research in particular;
2. a critical understanding of the material, cultural, theoretical and social contexts which inform their chosen area of research and of the scholarly debates within it.

Skills and other attributes

By the end of the course students should have:

1. demonstrated independent judgment based on their own research;
2. acquired or consolidated the skills of professional discovery, and of recording and presenting scholarly research, including critical, IT, bibliographical and other skills;
3. learned how to timetable independent research so as to produce written work of a high standard to a clearly defined timetable;
4. learned how to participate articulately and effectively in seminar discussions.

Programme structure

Students take two main seminar courses in Michaelmas Term and three in Lent Term, assignment to which is based on their indicating in advance an order of preference from which the Faculty then infers an optimal allocation. In addition, students attend research training lectures and associated training activities in both Michaelmas and Lent. Over the course of all three terms they also attend a minimum of ten sessions drawn from a wide-ranging list of Research Seminars. Dissertation supervisions are distributed across the three terms in the ratio 2: 2: 4, the dissertation itself (submitted in June) being the sole focus of study in the Easter Term.

Students are welcome to attend lectures in the English Faculty, as well as, if they wish, lectures in other Faculties whose teaching might be of interest and relevance.

Teaching and learning methods

Students will benefit from a combination of learning methods and strategies provided in three different contexts:

1. individually supervised, though independently-conducted, research into a chosen area of research;
2. regular taught and research seminars;
3. research training lectures, talks and activities.

Assessment

The course is assessed by a variety of means.

1. Formative assessment: a short written exercise, submitted in Michaelmas Term, on the subject of the dissertation.
2. Summative assessment: *either* two 5,000 word coursework essays, one submitted at the end of Michaelmas Term and one at the end of Lent Term, on subjects arising from taught seminar courses; or, for students of medieval literature, the option instead to offer one exercise in textual and related studies (TRS), submitted at the end of Michaelmas Term, on a subject arising from the TRS course, and one 5,000 word coursework essay, submitted at the end of Lent Term, on a subject arising from a taught seminar course. In either case, the two elements submitted together comprise 50% of the final result.
3. Summative assessment: for students of early modern literature, a summative but zero-weighted test in palaeographical skills, taken at the end of Michaelmas Term.
4. Summative assessment: one 12,000 to 15,000 word dissertation, submitted in June at the end of the course, which comprises 50% of the final result.

Entry and progression requirements

The Entry requirement is a First class or High 2.1 undergraduate degree (or international equivalent thereof).

There is no formal progression requirement at any staging point within this nine-month course, but students are offered additional advice and support if their progress at any point indicates that they may have difficulty passing the course.

To pass the course, students must submit appropriate work for all summative parts of the course and must achieve an *average* mark of 60 out of 85 across the various weighted assessment elements. There is normally no provision for re-sits or the re-submission of coursework or the dissertation. However, if there are exceptional, mitigating circumstances that may account for a student's underperformance on an element of the degree, an appeal can be made to the Examinations Access and Mitigation Committee in the light of this.

The overall result for the MPhil is classed as follows by the University: Fail (<60); Pass (60-74); Distinction (≥75).

Student Support

All students are members of a College as well as the Faculty and have access to support from both College and University. Each student has a Faculty supervisor who gives advice on navigating the course as a whole and on writing the dissertation in particular. Advice on coursework essays and other exercises is offered by the convenor of the course for which they are written. Feedback on one draft of each coursework essay is provided by the dissertation supervisor.

A list of preliminary reading for Michaelmas Term is sent out in the summer preceding the start of the course. At the start of the course online documentation is provided to students

covering: the structure of the degree; the scheme of examination; the marking scheme; the examination timetable; and transfer from MPhil to PhD. They are also supplied with a timetable of courses, detailing all relevant MPhil teaching and the Faculty's Research Seminar programme. Information is given and/or further advice is available on the opportunities provided by various University institutions for learning languages. Students are also introduced to the University Library, the English Faculty Library, and the library network's IT resources. Computer and printing facilities are available for student use in the libraries.

Progress is monitored through the discussion with each student of draft sections of their dissertations by their supervisor, and through submitted work: the first coursework essay or TRS exercise, which is submitted at the end of Michaelmas Term, is returned to the students and their supervisors with examiners' comments in Lent Term and the Lent Term coursework essay is returned to the students and their supervisors with comments in Easter Term.

Each student's College provides one or more Tutors for Postgraduate Students, and they also play a role in induction, support and guidance. Some Colleges appoint subject mentors for their postgraduate students, too.

Management of teaching quality and standards

The Faculty participates in the University's quality assurance and enhancement system. The University ensures high standards of teaching and learning in the following ways:

1. the completion of reflective, centrally-coordinated quality assurance processes by each Faculty and Department, to enable central overview of provision and assist in dissemination of good practice;
2. scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners for all teaching programmes;
3. encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally-benchmarked surveys;
4. mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes.

In addition, MPhil students complete, for the Faculty, regular teaching evaluation questionnaires on the MPhil. An MPhil Student Representative is also elected in Michaelmas Term to represent the interests of MPhil students to the Student Consultative Committee and the Faculty Board.

Both the Faculty and University provide complaints procedures in case difficulties arise.

Postgraduate Employability and Career Destinations

Preparation for employment is provided in the opportunities for acquisition of relevant skills outlined above. The Careers Service maintains links with employers and takes their needs and opinions into account in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, Faculty and department to act as a point of contact. A significant proportion of graduates of the MPhil will go on to study for a PhD at Cambridge or other universities.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually. However, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant Faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/camdata/archive.html