Assessment of Taught MA Programmes in the Department of History

(Scheme to be applied to the entry of October 2007 and subsequent entries)

Each of our MA programmes comprises a one- or two-term core course (counting for 20 credits in total), two or three Options (of 20 credits each), to a total of 80 credits, plus a module in research training (10 credits), making a total of 90 credits for the coursework element. There is also a dissertation which counts for 90 credits in the case of the MA dissertation (maximum 20,000 words), and 30 credits in the case of the Diploma dissertation (maximum 7500 words). In all students accumulate 180 credits for the MA and 120 for the Diploma.

From October 2003, one of the first-term units, generally the core course (or first half of a two-term core), will not contribute to the final assessment, whereas the other three units (one in the Autumn Term, two in the Spring Term) will each be examined by as Assessed Essay of around 4500 words. In units where there is no examined work, students will write a procedural essay or essays totalling between 2500 and 4000 words. The exact nature of the procedural work will be at the discretion of the course tutor. The research training module is taken by all MA students; it is not examined.

Details of deadlines for the submission of work are contained in course handbooks.

Marks are on the University graduate mark scale of 0 - 100.

Class descriptors:

50 is the threshold for a Pass at MA level, 70 for a Distinction.

To achieve the mark of 50, students will demonstrate where appropriate:

- a good knowledge and clear understanding of the sources;
- a critical understanding of issues raised in the secondary literature;
- a good knowledge and understanding of historical context and its relevance to the interpretation of the sources;
- the ability to write essays in which a historical argument is sustained by a proper use of historical evidence drawn from primary and secondary sources to demonstrate the capacity to undertake research;
- the ability to produce a major piece of historical writing, demonstrating the ability to devise, undertake and complete a sustained piece of independent historical research.

To achieve the mark of 70, students will demonstrate where appropriate:

- an above-average ability to perform at MA level, as above;
- the ability to produce a mature piece of sustained historical writing, demonstrating independence, originality of approach, depth of understanding, and reaching conclusions of wider interest and significance on which a publication might be based.

Where more than one department is involved, care is taken to translate any other department=s marks on to the History mark scale before these are entered on the record.
Assessment:

With the three Assessed Essays, students must normally obtain an average of 50, with only one essay falling below 50. Under University rules, essays scoring under 50 can be referred and resubmitted. The examiners will advise students in May if they are required to rewrite any part of the assessed work, and any such essays would be resubmitted by the 30 September deadline along with the dissertation. They can then be raised to the level of a bare pass (50); they cannot be raised above 50.

The Department does not impose progression hurdles. 50 will, from next session, be the common pass mark for both MA and Diploma courses. If in May a student, on the average of the three essays, is seen to fall well short of the pass mark - scoring 45 or less - that student will be advised to move from the MA to the Diploma. In these circumstances he or she will submit a Diploma dissertation of 7500 words instead of the longer MA dissertation. The deadline for submitting the Diploma dissertation is 30 June.

The result of the MA is based on a weighted average of all work (this is normally 50% for the three essays, 50% for the Dissertation). In the case of Diploma candidates the dissertation counts for 30% of the total. If they are not satisfied with a student=s performance the examiners can, at their discretion, refer either the dissertation or one of the essays for re-submission. They cannot, however, refer an essay that has previously been referred and rewritten.

A Distinction is awarded where the Dissertation achieves a mark of 70 or above and where the three assessed essays are of a high level capable of sustaining the award of a distinction at the discretion of the Board of Examiners.

GRWH
15.06.07