

## MA in GENDER RESEARCH

### PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1. Awarding Institution	The University of Newcastle upon Tyne
2. Teaching Institution	The University of Newcastle upon Tyne
3. Final Award	MA
4. Programme Title	Gender Research
5. Programme Accredited by	N/A
6. UCAS Code	N/A
7. QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A
8. Date of PS Production/Revision	20/7/03

#### 9. Programme Aims

The degree programme aims to:

- i) provide students with the opportunity to address systematically a range of issues concerning the construction of gender and sexuality and questions of difference and equality.
- ii) provide students with a framework in historical and contemporary feminist thought from which to understand structural and cultural gender inequalities.
- iii) develop students' skills in critical analysis, reasoning, synthesis, logical thought, evaluation, debate, and inter-disciplinary approaches to understanding gender.
- iv) provide a foundation from which to pursue advanced Postgraduate study in Gender Research
- iv) provide learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and in gender research in particular.
- v) provide the theoretical policy and practical skills to enable the students to produce an MA dissertation and, where appropriate, successfully to pursue further postgraduate study for a PhD or enhance their CPD activity.
- vi) provide a programme that complies with University and QAA Codes of Practice
- vii) provide high quality research training at Masters level in line with the ESRC's postgraduate training guidelines

#### 10. Intended Learning Outcomes, Teaching and Learning Strategies and Methods, Assessment Strategies and Methods

##### A. Subject Specific/Practical Skills

This programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate:

- A1. Understanding and analysis of the theory of gender and feminist theory.
- A2. Understanding and analysis of specialist topics, as described at A5, above.
- A3. Understanding and practical experience of methods for investigating topics within gender research.
- A4. Skills in analysis, debate, logical thought, and interdisciplinary approaches to gender research.

### *Teaching Strategy*

A1-A4 are provided by lectures and seminar groups. A1 is provided throughout the modules and especially in Theories of Gender. A3 is provided especially in the methods modules (*Introduction to Qualitative Methodology in the Social Sciences*, *Introduction to Quantitative Methodology in the Social Sciences* and *Feminist Research Issues*) as well as in students' work on their individual dissertations.

### *Learning Strategy*

Students have the opportunity to grasp these subject specific skills in lectures and seminars throughout the programme as well as in their own independent study – reading, essay-writing and dissertation research.

### *Assessment Strategy*

A1-A4 are assessed by essays. A3 is assessed by exercises in the methods modules (listed above) and by completion of the dissertation.

## **B Training in Research Methods**

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

### **B1 Principles**

- (i) an ability to define and formulate research problems, questions and hypotheses.
- (ii) an understanding of the rationale for research methods, to evaluate and select them.
- (iii) an understanding of sampling, sampling error, and biases in results.
- (iv) an understanding of, and ability to apply, concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability.

### **B2 Data collection and analysis**

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection.
- (ii) an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources.
- (iii) an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data.
- (iv) proficiency in a range of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

### *Teaching strategy*

B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the modules Thinking About Research, Dissertation Preparation and Regional Development: Methodology, Analysis and Statistics. B1 (iii) and (iv) will be delivered through the Quantitative and Qualitative Methods modules. Teaching for B2 (i - iv) will be delivered principally through the Quantitative Methods and Qualitative Methods modules. B2 (i-ii) are covered also in Regional Development Theory and Policy, Regional Governance and Regional Development: Methodology, Analysis and Statistics.

The teaching strategy for B1 (i-iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops, research seminars and both discipline specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops, teaching and research seminars and data analysis practicals.

### *Learning strategy*

For B1 (i - ii) students learn through team-based problem solving exercises, the individual preparation of a research proposal and attendance at research seminars. B1 (iii-iv) is learnt through research seminars, workshops and data practicals. For B2 (i - iv) students learn principally through data practicals and attendance at research

seminars. Overall, all B1 and B2 are undertaken in completion of the Research Dissertation.

#### *Assessment strategy*

B1 and B2 are assessed through production and presentation of a Research Proposal, the completion of a series of data practicals, the production of a Critical Methodological Review, a group report and presentation in Thinking About Research and the Research Dissertation.

### **C. Knowledge and Understanding**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate:

C1. Advanced knowledge and understanding of historical and contemporary feminist theory and key theoretical debates within gender research.

C2. Advanced knowledge and understanding of gender inequalities and the social and cultural constructions of gender and sexuality.

C3. Advanced knowledge and understanding of social scientific research methods and appropriate research methods for investigating gender.

C4. Advanced knowledge and understanding of inter-disciplinary approaches to understanding gender.

C5. Advanced knowledge and understanding of topics within gender research, selected by students as part of the *Specialist Study* module. Students may select to study with an available member of staff from those who are affiliated to the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies (about 20 in any one year).

#### *Teaching Strategy*

Advanced knowledge and understanding (C1-7) are imparted via lectures and seminar classes where group discussion and debate are promoted.

#### *Learning Strategy*

Students are expected to read and study independently throughout the degree. They are provided with separate reading lists for each module, which are extensive but prioritised. Active participation in seminar discussions and student presentations aid their developing understanding.

#### *Assessment Strategy*

Knowledge and understanding (C1-7) are assessed by essays for each module (two modules may be combined and assessed by one extended essay up to two times on the course). Advanced knowledge and understanding of a specialist topic and research skills (C3) are assessed by dissertation.

### **D. Cognitive Skills**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate:

D1. The ability to critically assess theories and arguments relevant to gender research.

D2. The ability to critically assess, present and summarise data and material relevant to gender research.

#### *Teaching Strategy*

D1 is provided throughout the modules, but especially in *Theories of Gender*. D2 is provided in seminar groups, essay-writing and students' study for their dissertations.

### *Learning Strategy*

Students are introduced to key themes in lectures and seminar classes where active participation provides the chance to develop D1 and D2. They are expected to supplement this with independent reading and study.

### *Assessment Strategy*

Cognitive skills are assessed by coursework – essays and dissertations.

## **E. Key Skills**

The programme provides the opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate:

E1. The ability to communicate verbally and in writing.

E2. The ability to use library and other information sources skilfully and appropriately.

E3. The ability to use IT resources skilfully and resourcefully.

E4. The ability to plan, organise and prioritise work activities in order to meet deadlines.

E5. The ability to work independently, using initiative and with individual guidance from staff.

### *Teaching Strategy*

Key skills are integrated into lectures and seminars and some (especially E1, E2, E5) are promoted particularly in group discussions and debates. E2 is formally taught in a workshop on library and IT skills. E5 is provided particularly in students' study for dissertation.

### *Learning Strategy*

Students are encouraged to acquire key skills through active participation in the formal workshop for E2 and in lectures and seminars. The dissertation provides many opportunities to develop all the key skills identified, with dissertation supervisors providing appropriate advice and guidance, through the development of a dissertation proposal (E3, E4, E5), the literature search (E3, E5), through the empirical data collection and analysis (where appropriate) (E2, E3, E5), through supervision meetings (E4, E5) and through writing the dissertation itself (E1).

### *Assessment Strategy*

Key skills are not independently assessed, but are integral elements of successful completion of most aspects of the programme, such as essay writing (E1-5), participation in lectures and seminars (E1), preparation for (E2, E3, E4, E5) and writing of (E1) the dissertation.

## **11. Programme Features, Curriculum and Structure**

### **i) Programme Features**

This programme may be taken full-time for one year or part-time for two years. The start date is in September. Taught elements are during semesters and dissertation work is conducted mostly in the summer with the dissertation being submitted in late August. The programme has three key elements: compulsory modules in theories of gender research and substantive topics related to gender research; compulsory modules in methods of gender research; dissertation. A special feature of the programme is that it is inter-disciplinary with contributions from staff from the social sciences, humanities, medicine, law and education. It is run under the umbrella of the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, and 'housed' in a 'home' department

(currently, the Sociology and Social Policy in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology).

## ii) Curriculum and Structure

(a) A candidate admitted as a full-time student shall take the following compulsory modules to a credit value of 180, studied over a period of 12 months in Semester 1, Semester 2 and the research semester of a single academic year.

Full-time pathway:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Descriptive title</i>
Semester 1		
SPS840	(20)	Theories of Gender
LES802	(10)	Introduction to Information Skills
LES801	(10)	Thinking About Research: Puzzles, Paradoxes and Problems
LES804	(20)	Qualitative Methodology in the Social Sciences
Semester 2		
LES805	(20)	Quantitative Methodology in the Social Sciences
SPS842	(10)	Dissertation Preparation
SPS834	(10)	Social Divisions and Inequality
SPS825	(10)	Specialist Study
SPS841	(10)	Feminist Research Issues
Research Semester		
SPS843	(60)	Research Dissertation

(b) A candidate admitted as a part-time student shall take the following compulsory modules to a credit value of 180, studied over a period of 24 months in Semester 1, Semester 2 and the research semester of a single academic year

Part-time pathway:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Descriptive title</i>
Year 1, Semester 1		
SPS840	(20)	Theories of Gender
LES802	(10)	Introduction to Information Skills
Year 1: Semester 2		
SPS834	(10)	Social Divisions and Inequality
SPS841	(10)	Feminist Research Issues
SPS825	(10)	Specialist Study
Year 2, Semester 1		
LES804	(20)	Qualitative Methodology in the Social Sciences
LES801	(10)	Thinking About Research: Puzzles, Paradoxes and Problems
Year 2, Semester 2		
LES805	(20)	Quantitative Methodology in the Social Sciences
SPS842	(10)	Dissertation Preparation
Research Semester		
SPS843	(60)	Research Dissertation

The programme is modular and comprised of 180 credits. Students take 120 credits of compulsory modules which provide the theoretical (*Theories of Gender*), methodological (*Introduction to Information Skills; Thinking About Research: Puzzles, Paradoxes and Problems; Feminist Research Issues; Dissertation Preparation; Introduction to Qualitative Methodology in the Social Sciences* and *Introduction to Quantitative Methodology in the Social Sciences*) and substantive (*Social Divisions and Inequality* and *Specialist Study*) frameworks of the programme.

Skills in these three areas are then further developed through students' construction and completion of a unique dissertation project (60 credits). During this, they are able to apply and develop the subject specific skills, knowledge and understanding (A1-5, B1-4), cognitive skills (C1-2) and key skills (D1-5) gained during the taught components to a project. Dissertations may be empirical or library-based; all involve a substantial amount of library study and familiarity with the literature and key debates in the selected subject area. Students are guided through their projects by a an expert in that area from the wide range of staff who contribute to the programme. Former students who have progressed to PhD study have used their MA theses as a springboard into the advanced study required for their thesis.

## **12. Criteria for Admission**

### *Entrance Criteria*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> class degree from a UK University or its overseas equivalent is the normal minimum qualification for entry. Due to the inter-disciplinary nature of the degree, we do not specify any degree subjects; rather, we wish to see evidence of applicants' ability to tackle subjects from a range of disciplines.

Applicants for whom English is not a first language or whose first degrees were not taught in English are required to demonstrate proficiency in English, usually by means of an IELTS score of 6.5 or greater.

### *Applicants with Non-Standard Qualifications*

Applicants who hold non-standard qualifications and /or have relevant experience, will be considered on an individual basis. This is seen to be an important aspect of our admissions criteria because gendered inequalities are often the cause of women's under-representation in further education and we do not, of course, wish to continue these inequalities in our admissions policy.

### *Admissions Policy*

Upon receipt of a completed application-form, UK-based applicants are invited to visit the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies and attend an interview. Offers are made to suitably qualified candidates following interview and are usually conditional upon the candidate achieving a minimum of a 2<sup>nd</sup> class degree (if they do not already hold such a degree) and upon a satisfactory reference.

Applicants not based in the UK are not required to attend an interview.

### **13. Support for Students and their Learning**

#### *Induction Week*

The first week of the programme provides an opportunity for students to ease their way into academic life and life on the MA. It includes:

- *an initial meeting with the Degree Programme Director* of the MA Gender Research and MA Gender Studies degrees and other members of staff depending on their availability, to welcome the students to their MA and the CGWS; issue the Degree Programme Handbooks; explain to students the structure of the programme, timetable, module options; encourage them to attend events, such as seminar programmes, in the CGWS and participating departments; describe the facilities and resources available to them throughout the University; tell them and/or introduce them to their personal tutors.
- *a social event.* After the initial meeting with the degree programme director, new and returning students are invited to meet and get to know each other as well as staff who participate in the CGWS. This meeting is usually held in collaboration with a participating department, so there is an opportunity for students to meet other students and staff from another degree programme.
- *an initial meeting with personal tutors.* Each MA student is assigned a specific member of academic staff whose role encompasses both academic and non-academic issues. We try to match students to members of staff who share similar research interests.
- *library tour.* Students tour the Robinson Library and are introduced to the use of some of its resources, specifically its gender-related material and bibliographic databases, by the Liaison Librarian.
- *IT resources.* Students are introduced, by means of a workshop, to the IT resources available to them at the University.

#### *Study Skills Support*

- the Degree Programme Handbook includes a section on 'Writing a Good Essay' and we suggest all students consult the extensive range of study guides available in the Robinson Library.

#### *Academic Support*

- each student is allocated a personal tutor - a specific member of academic staff for pastoral and academic advice and guidance. Formal meetings with tutors for the discussion of progress and problems are held termly during the taught part of the programmes and all students have personal and email access to their tutors should problems arise.
- each student is allocated a supervisor who is a specialist in the student's selected subject area, to personally supervise their dissertation project and to advise them on the production of their dissertation. Students are also given a reading list of 'guidebooks' for the completion of research projects and the production of dissertations.
- the Degree Programme Director is responsible for overall management of the programme and is also available for advice and discussion of any academic or pastoral issues which arise.

#### *Pastoral Support*

- students are allocated personal tutors who are available throughout the programme to offer pastoral and academic advice and guidance. Students are reminded that they have personal and email access to their tutors at any time should problems arise.

- the Degree Programme Director is responsible for overall management of the programme and is also available for advice and discussion of any academic or pastoral issues which arise.

#### *Support for Students with Special Needs*

- the Degree Programme Handbook contains information about the Disability Unit and how to access it. The DPD regularly consults with the Disability Unit about the needs of students with disabilities.

#### *Learning Resources*

- the CGWS provides an expert and enthusiastic group of teaching staff, from several disciplines throughout the University. This multi-disciplinary structure enables students to access resources, academic and social, in several departments.
- the Robinson, Law and Medical Libraries provide an extensive range of appropriate books, journals and bibliographic databases.
- the Degree Programme Handbook provides initial reading lists for each module, and students are given extensive additional reading lists by each module leader at the start of each module.

### **14. Methods for Evaluating and Improving the Quality and Standards of Teaching and Learning**

#### *Student Evaluations of Individual Units and the MA Programme*

- on completion of each module in the taught component of the programme, student opinion is gathered by means of evaluation questionnaires.
- opinion about the degree programme may also be communicated directly to the Board of Studies or to the Staff Student Committee via the student representatives.
- student opinion is also elicited at the year end review conducted by the DPD.

#### *Feedback on Student Evaluations of Individual Units and the MA Programme:*

- opinions gathered from any of the three routes listed above are summarised by the DPD and presented to the Board of Studies for discussion. Discussion and actions agreed are reported to students via the student member of the Board.

#### *Individual Modules and the MA Programme:*

The structure and content of individual modules and the MA programme are constantly reviewed and updated in light of:

- student evaluation and end of year review data
- feedback from past graduates
- feedback from the University Degree Programme review
- feedback from external examiners
- relevance of the programme in relation to developments in Gender Studies, in particular, in relation to the Women's Studies Association, UK
- relevance of the programme in relation to key intellectual debates and developments
- relevance of the programme in relation to funding sources

#### *Committees Responsible for Monitoring and Evaluating Quality and Standards*

- Board of Studies. Monitoring and evaluation quality and standards are primarily the responsibility of the Board of Studies. Membership of the BoS consists of the main programme teachers and a student representative, nominated by the students.



- Board of Examiners. Issues related to assessment, marks and awards are the remit of the BoE. It is comprised of the main teaching staff and 2 external examiners, 1 who covers, broadly, social sciences, another whose expertise is mainly humanities.
- Staff-Student Committee. Wider student issues, possibly related to quality and standards of teaching and learning may also be raised at Staff-Student Committee meetings. The committee addresses issues for the MA in Gender Research, the MA in Gender Studies and the MAs in the 'home' department. Its membership is 2 staff members and 4 student members. It meets once per semester.

## **15. Regulation of Assessment**

### **i) Assessment Rules and Degree Classifications**

The course consists of two parts: the taught modules and the dissertation. Both parts must be completed satisfactorily to obtain the MA degree. The taught component is assessed by coursework, typically essays. The pass mark for each module is 50%. Candidates have the right to reassessment in only one failed module per year, provided the fail mark is not below 40% (two modules for full-time students). Part-time students carrying a failed module have the right to progress to the second year until arrangements have been made for its reassessment. Each essay is assessed by the module leader and an internal second marker and then a selection of each student's work is considered by external examiners. The dissertation is assessed by the supervisor, an internal second marker and an external examiner.

An MA with distinction will be awarded for an overall mark of 70%, or to students who show outstanding merit throughout the programme but who have not obtained 70%. A student who is not, for academic or other reasons, able to fulfil the requirements of the dissertation may be awarded a Diploma in Gender Studies; this will be awarded only to student who obtain at least 50% overall on the taught modules. Only one failed module may be condoned for either the MA or Diploma.

The degree programme Marking Schema is detailed in the Handbook, a copy of which is circulated to each student.

The programme conforms with the HE Qualifications Framework.

### **ii) The Role of the External Examiners**

Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the programme, two external examiners are appointed, one with expertise in gender and the social sciences, one with expertise in gender and humanities. These examiners are distinguished members of the academic community. Currently the external examiners are Dr Sue Scott and Dr Patsy Stoneman. The external examiners' role is to moderate. In order to do so, they:

- see and approve assessment questions
- see essays and comment upon standards of marking
- examine dissertations
- attend the Boards of Examiners meetings
- report to the University regarding standards and comparability of standards.

The Faculty Research modules (modules coded LES...) are first considered at a Faculty Board of Examiners where the marks are agreed and then communicated to the MA Gender Research Board of Examiners. A separate external examiner has been appointed to consider the Faculty Research modules.

### **16. Indicators of Quality and Standards**

The MA is not accredited by any professional body. However, the DPD is a member of the Women's Studies Association, UK which regularly considers and reviews teaching in this area.

The noted journalist and social commentator, Bea Campbell is a Visiting Professor at the CGWS, and a regular contributor to the MA programme.

The proposed course will run for the first time in 2004-05. Indicators of quality and standards will therefore be available for 2005-06.

### **17. Other Sources of Information**

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes which a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the opportunities provided on the MA. More detailed information can be found in the Degree Programme Handbook and in module documentation. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Key Information about the programme can be found in:

- the Degree Programme Handbook
- the Regulations of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne
- the University's Postgraduate prospectus and the brochure for the CGWS
- the website for the CGWS ([www.ncl.ac.uk/cgws/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cgws/))

Dr Vicki Robinson  
Degree Programme Director  
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