

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION**

<b>1</b>	<b>Awarding Institution</b>	Newcastle University
<b>2</b>	<b>Teaching Institution</b>	Newcastle University
<b>3</b>	<b>Final Award</b>	MA
<b>4</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	MA in the History of the Americas
<b>5</b>	<b>UCAS/Programme Code</b>	4079
<b>6</b>	<b>Programme Accreditation</b>	N/a
<b>7</b>	<b>QAA Subject Benchmark(s)</b>	N/a
<b>8</b>	<b>FHEQ Level</b>	7
<b>9</b>	<b>Date written/revised</b>	21/04/08

**10 Programme Aims**

- [a] To provide students with a range of learning opportunities (in relation to analytical, key, research and subject-specific skills) within the field of the History of the Americas
- [b] To provide a curriculum that is responsive to both the research preparation and professional preparation Master's funding schemes of the AHRC
- [c] To enable students to develop their capacity to learn in preparation for or as part of continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning
- [d] To provide access to Higher Education to students from a variety of educational backgrounds, and to provide a bridge to further postgraduate qualifications
- [e] To provide students with the opportunity to gain the basic skills and knowledge required to continue with academic research in History at PhD level, or to enter the workplace in a variety of professions requiring high levels of skill such as literacy, research and project management.
- [f] To expose students to cutting-edge research environments in the spheres of History and encourage engagement by students with current staff research
- [g] That the programme meets the requirements of a Master's level qualification as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- [h] That the programme conforms to University policies and to QAA codes of practice

**11 Learning Outcomes**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for (subject) (X).

**Knowledge and Understanding**

On completing the programme students should:

- A1 have advanced knowledge of the modern histories and cultures of some of the societies of the Americas
- A2 have advanced knowledge of core theoretical debates concerning identity, power, and resistance
- A3 have an in depth understanding of a particular problem and appropriate methodologies pertaining to its study

A4 have advanced knowledge and understanding of the debates and methodologies relating to comparative study  
A5 have detailed knowledge which comes from undertaking a sustained original piece of research into the history of a region/theme in the Americas.

### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

The primary method of imparting knowledge and understanding [A1-A4] are seminars, supplemented by lectures (for theoretical and advanced overviews of module subjects), individual tutorials for the return of coursework, and self-directed learning (to facilitate the development of a comprehensive understanding and critical awareness of current research and advanced scholarship). [A1-5]

The structure of the MA is designed so that all students take Core Modules in the Practice of History and Advanced Themes in the History of the Americas. This will give them an advanced understanding of a broad range of key theoretical and analytical frameworks [A1-2]. Students will also develop a critical understanding and knowledge of the methodologies and sources used by historians [A3-5].

Additional 20-credit modules will provide further knowledge of specific chronological / thematic areas [A1] which will provide excellent preparation for further research or professional practice depending on module choice.

The dissertation will impart skills and knowledge through hands-on specialist research [A5].

Throughout the programme students are encouraged to read widely and extensive bibliographies are supplied. Students are encouraged to use a wide range of learning resources, such as books, journal articles, primary sources (e.g. Robinson Library Special Collections, Durham University Library) and on-line resources and databases available at the Robinson Library (e.g. Edina, JSTOR).

The dissertation provides students with the opportunity to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of a particular aspect of the history of the Americas and its significance within the existing historiography of this discipline.

### **Assessment Strategy**

Knowledge and understanding [A1] are assessed through a number of written essays and research assignments for each module, and the final dissertation [A4].

Written assignments for Compulsory and Optional modules are designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore the theoretical and interpretive perspectives of historians [A2].

In the assessment of these modules, students will write formative essays on the history of the Americas, on which they will receive written and oral feedback. Marks will be awarded for evidence of knowledge attained, as well as evidence that the student has achieved an appropriate level of understanding of the methodologies and sources used by specialists in this field [A2-4].

The dissertation provides an extended opportunity for students to reveal their in-depth

knowledge and understanding of one particular aspect of the history of the Americas.

#### **Intellectual Skills**

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1 Critical reasoning
- B2 Gathering and using information
- B3 Applying concepts
- B4 Evaluation, analysis, and interpretation

#### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

Through seminar presentations and discussion, and lectures students will develop the ability to think critically and to apply advanced knowledge and methodological skills they have acquired through their studies in order to present balanced and coherent arguments [B1]. For example, students will develop the ability to apply their knowledge of theoretical and methodological issues in History to advanced research questions in different areas of the history of the Americas by critically selecting and using relevant techniques to present and analyse relevant information.

Students will have the opportunity to develop and practice advanced skills in information gathering and manipulation through seminars, and the ability to critically identify, select and apply relevant evidence and concepts to particular questions using relevant methodologies [B2, 3].

Seminar teaching through presentations and discussion will allow students to develop advanced critical skills in evaluating, analysing and interpreting data [B4].

#### **Assessment Strategy**

All written pieces of work in the taught modules require students formatively to gather, evaluate, analyse, and interpret evidence, using the skills identified as benchmark skills within the discipline of History [B1-4].

The dissertation represents the summative task in detailed practice of all of these cognitive skills.

#### **Practical Skills**

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1 developed an ability to record, evaluate, analyse and interpret different sources of historical evidence
- C2 developed the ability to undertake higher degree research through completion of short pieces of written work and a dissertation
- C3 practiced a wide range of subject-specific skills such as presenting a balanced written argument based on a range of evidence, and critical analysis of historical documents
- C4 developed an in-depth understanding of their dissertation topic
- C5 developed a variety of additional skills according to their individual needs, e.g. languages, database skills, archive use, and data management.

#### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

All taught modules include seminars and/or lectures delivered by professional historians who research and teach in the areas about which they lecture. These will provide an advanced survey of the state of knowledge and enable students to develop a comprehensive understanding and critical awareness of specific topics relating to current research and advanced scholarship. All contributors use a wide range of examples from their own fields of expertise in History. [C1-4]

Seminars provide students with the opportunity to develop and practice their subject specific and generic skills [C1-4] through, for example, preparation for and oral contribution to seminars, and the final dissertation.

The range of optional modules on offer is a great strength of this course. It will allow students with different backgrounds to develop advanced skills appropriate to their historical research interests.

The dissertation allows the student sufficient time to develop a level of understanding and analysis towards a specific project, while simultaneously deploying the skills acquired at earlier stages of the programme [C5].

Research training (at Faculty and School level), tutorials, guided reading, feedback on outline proposals, and continuous supervision provide the basis for students to complete their dissertations.

#### **Assessment Strategy**

All assignments include an element of assessment related to the understanding of subject-specific skills. In order to achieve a satisfactory classification, students will be expected to display in their written work, the range of analytical, critical, interpretive, skills that the modules are designed to provide. Furthermore, written assessment, both short and in the more lengthy form of a dissertation, are an ideal medium for assessing the student's skills of research, interpreting evidence, and deploying such evidence in a balanced manner. [C1-5].

Students are encouraged through the research logs compiled for Faculty and School training modules to reflect on their own research in relation to the attainment of transferable skills, in either the pursuit of further postgraduate research, in professional history, or in the wider workplace [C2].

#### **Transferable/Key Skills**

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- D1 Structure and communicate ideas effectively
- D2 Plan and complete essays and presentations
- D3 Write and speak to different audiences
- D4 Gather, evaluate and organize information
- D5 Work and negotiate with others
- D6 Use information technology
- D7 Work to deadlines or within specified time-limits
- D8 Work independently and as part of a team

**Teaching and Learning Methods**

Through lectures, seminars, and tutorials, students will acquire advanced skills in:

[a] how to plan and execute both short and extended pieces of written work [D1-4, 6-7].

[b] effective interpersonal/oral communication techniques, taught through the Faculty and School Research Training Modules. Students practise and develop these skills by contributing orally either as groups or individually in seminars for taught modules [D1-5, 8].

[c] teamworking is practised through contribution to group seminar work [D2, 5, 8].

[d] planning and organization. Students practice and develop these crucial skills through keeping to programme deadlines and by planning and organizing their written work, including the dissertation [D1, 2, 3, 7, 8].

[e] computer literacy. This is practiced and developed throughout the programme through submission of coursework and the dissertation [D4, 6].

**Assessment Strategy**

Written communication [D1] is assessed in each of the modules on this programme.

Assignments will be essay-based, reflecting the dominance of this form of writing within the discipline.

Interpersonal/oral communication, individually and as part of a team [D2-5, 8 ] is a critical part of the teaching and learning experience for this programme, for example, during individual feedback sessions, and group seminars.

Planning and organization is practised throughout the programme through the student's ability to meet deadlines and successfully complete the programme [D2, 7].

Basic computer literacy [D6] is assessed through all written assignments that are all required to be word-processed.

**12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features**

**Basic structure of the programme**

The programme may be taken on a full time or part time basis. A part-time route through the programme will be decided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Degree Programme Director.

All students take the following compulsory modules:

**Core modules:**

Title	Code	Year	Semester	Credit
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Advanced Themes in the History of the Americas	HIS8031	1	1	20
The Practice of History	HIS8024	1	1	30
Dissertation Training	HIS8098	1	1 & 2	20
Research Methods in History	HIS8000	1	2	10
Dissertation	HIS8023	1	3	60

In addition all students shall take *two* 20-credit modules in Semester Two, from a range of appropriate postgraduate taught modules, subject to the approval of the degree Programme Director. These may include the following:

Title	Code	Year	Semester	Credit
The South and slavery: Regional Challenges and American Nationalism	HIS8033	1	2	20
The Southern US civil rights movement	HIS8103	1	2	20
Other existing Americas-related MA modules within the HASS Faculty, subject to DPD approval		1	2	20

The list of optional modules offered could vary from year to year and modules will run subject to appropriate levels of enrolment, as specified on the individual module outline forms.

All students will receive a module handbook at the start of each module, which contain full details of lectures, lecturers, methods of assessment, seminar themes and set reading. The handbook will also contain a list of aims and learning outcomes for the module, and a bibliography. Extra teaching and learning support material will be provided, e.g. through Blackboard, Robinson Library Special Collections. Module outline forms will be provided for all modules.

The normal progression will be as follows:

In Semester 1, all students take:

[a] *Faculty Research Training* [10 credits]. This will provide skills training in key research skills.

[b] *The practice of History* [30 credits]

[c] *Advanced themes in the History of the Americas* [20 credits]

In Semester 2, all students take:

[d] *Research methods in History* [10 credits]

[e] *Dissertation preparation training* [10 credits]

[f] *Two optional modules* [20 credits each].

### *Statement on Progression*

Candidates are normally expected to pass the taught element of the programme before proceeding to the Dissertation.

In Semester 3, provided that they normally meet the progression criteria stated above, all students research and write up a History of the Americas *Dissertation* [60 credits]:

Students complete their dissertation after the taught modules have been completed. Dissertations are presented in the form of a 14,000 word piece of work (including any notes/appendices but excluding bibliography). Students are encouraged to think about potential topics as early as possible and discuss topics in detail with staff from the beginning of Semester 2 onwards. To be successful the dissertation requires careful planning and preparation, for which training is given in Semesters 1 and 2.

### **Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)**

The programme is distinct in adopting a comparative approach to the History of the Americas, including North and South America and the Caribbean. Other key features are described above in 'basic structure

### **Programme regulations (link to on-line version)**

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/>

## **13 Criteria for admission**

### *Entry qualifications*

Candidates should normally hold a first degree in History or a related subject, and shall normally hold at least a 2:1 (Upper Second Class) degree. Other degree qualifications may be considered where appropriate.

### *Admissions policy/selection tools*

Applications are dealt with through the E2R system, which makes offers on the basis of guidelines provided by staff. All applicants will be offered the chance to meet staff and view facilities.

### *Non-standard Entry Requirements*

Candidates who have followed a non-traditional route into Higher Education will be considered on their merits on a case-by-case basis..

### *Additional Requirements*

None.

### *Level of English Language capability*

We actively encourage applications from overseas and domestic students. All overseas students have to satisfy the University's language requirements and obtain a minimum of 6.5 IELTS or equivalent.

## **14 Support for Student Learning**

### *Induction*

During the first week of the first semester students attend an induction programme. New students will be given a general introduction to University life and the University's principle support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. New and continuing students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/practicals/labs/ tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students.

### *Study skills support*

Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid.

Help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre.

### *Academic support*

The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies.

### *Pastoral support*

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. In addition the University offers a range of support services, including one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions/workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues eg. Stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Union Society operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

### *Support for students with disabilities*

The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to Newcastle. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies.

### *Learning resources*

The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities.

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-session language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange.

## **15 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning**

### *Module reviews*

All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the School



Teaching and Learning Committee and at the Board of Studies. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

*Programme reviews*

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

*External Examiner reports*

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

*Student evaluations*

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee, and the Board of Studies. The National Student Survey is sent out every year to final-year undergraduate students, and consists of a set of questions seeking the students' views on the quality of the learning and teaching in their HEIs. With reference to the outcomes of the NSS and institutional student satisfaction surveys actions are taken at all appropriate levels by the institution.

*Mechanisms for gaining student feedback*

Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

*Faculty and University Review Mechanisms*

The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process. Every five years degree programmes in each subject area are subject to periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a two-day review visit by a review team which includes an external subject specialist in addition to University and Faculty representatives. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Teaching and Learning Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further five year period.

*Accreditation reports*

N/a

*Additional mechanisms*

**16 Regulation of assessment**

*Pass mark*

The pass mark is 50

*Course requirements*

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40 is possible and there are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

*Common Marking Scheme*

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

**Summary description applicable to**

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postgraduate Masters programmes		postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes	
<50	Fail	<50	Fail
50-59	Pass	50 or above	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit		
70 or above	Pass with Distinction		

*Role of the External Examiner*  
An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, after recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- See and approve examination papers
- Moderate examination and coursework marking
- Attend the Board of Examiners
- Report to the University on the standards of the programme

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/> or <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>)

The School Brochure (contact [enquiries@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ncl.ac.uk))

The University Regulations (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/>)

The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

## Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Intended Learning Outcome	Module codes (Compulsory in Bold)
A1	<b>HIS8031</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
A2	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
A3	<b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b>
A4	<b>HIS8031</b>
A5	<b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b>
B1	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
B2	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , <b>HASS8000</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
B3	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , <b>HASS8000</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
B4	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , <b>HASS8000</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
C1	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
C2	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
C3	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
C4	<b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b>
D1	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D2	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D3	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D4	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D5	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D6	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D7	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033
D8	<b>HIS8031</b> , <b>HIS8024</b> , <b>HIS8000</b> , <b>HIS8098</b> , <b>HIS8023</b> , HIS8103, HIS8033