

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Shakespeare**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2011**.

The aims of the programme are:

- to offer an opportunity to study the full range of Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic works more closely and comprehensively than is possible at undergraduate level;
- to achieve a more sharply focused, complex understanding of Shakespeare's changing cultural significance, not only in Britain but also around the world;
- to afford scope for advanced study of Shakespeare in the light of both performance history and screen adaptations;
- to provide an advanced introduction to the theoretical issues animating current critical debates in Shakespeare studies;
- to develop advanced skills in literary study;
- to provide training in research techniques in the field of study;
- to foster the capacity for independent learning;
- to develop key communications, IT and management skills relevant for postgraduate work.

The programme is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or two years of part-time study (104 weeks). On successful completion of the course a student should have an understanding of the area of the MA at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the programme provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to a PhD course in the same or a closely related field.

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by the active research of staff. In general terms, the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- a detailed critical understanding of a wide range of Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic works;

- an advanced understanding of the critical controversies produced by each play from the eighteenth century to the present day, and their creative afterlife in fiction, poetry, drama and film;
- the evaluation of relevant critical, theoretical and contextual research at the forefront of the specific field;
- independent literary research at an advanced level using traditional and electronic resources;
- confidence in deploying the appropriate critical and technological skills as required in the specific field of study;
- the acquisition of knowledge of advanced scholarship in the chosen area of the discipline to a level appropriate for an MA degree.

Skills and other attributes

- the ability to evaluate relevant critical, theoretical and contextual research at the forefront of the field;
- the ability to analyse and critically interpret text and data;*
- to further develop skills in information handling and retrieval;*
- the ability to conduct literary research independently at an advanced level using traditional and electronic resources;*
- to further develop skills of reflection on reading and learning;*
- the ability to articulate knowledge and the understanding of texts, concepts and theories
- the ability to present logical and coherent written and oral arguments of varying lengths;*
- the ability to comprehend and develop sophisticated concepts and original critical ideas;*
- to enhance interpersonal skills, involving recognising and respecting the viewpoints, and interacting constructively with other people;*
- to enhance time-management and organisational skills including working to deadlines, prioritising tasks, organising work-time;*
- to foster the development of a range of personal attributes that are important in the world of work, and that strengthen our postgraduates' abilities to engage in lifelong learning and contribute to the wider community; these include: personal motivation; the ability to work autonomously and with others; self-awareness and self-management; flexibility, adaptability and creativity.*

* transferable skills

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Teaching, learning and assessment

The Shakespeare MA programme consists of two taught courses plus a dissertation and lasts one year for full-time students and two years for part-time students. Each of the two courses is taught in 20 weekly two-hour seminars over two terms: 10 seminars in the Autumn Term and 10 seminars in the Spring Term. Seminars are timetabled for late afternoon or early evening to permit part-time students in employment to attend. The dissertation is researched and written after both courses have been completed. Full-time students take both courses concurrently; part-time students take one in their first year and the other in their second. The non-assessed *Methods & Materials of Research* course is taken by all MA students in the Department in the first term of study.

The seminars provide students with the means to focus in depth on the material being studied, by combining close textual analysis and interpretation with broader discussion of the theatrical, historical and theoretical issues raised by the texts. Preparation is assigned by the tutor and includes regular class presentations. These allow students to investigate topics, develop arguments and present conclusions or pose questions for further discussion in the seminar. They also provide an opportunity to explore and test ideas for the essays each student is required to write for each course.

The dissertation is designed to test the student's ability to handle a complex topic and to display research skills at greater length than the course essays allow. It may develop work done for any part of either course, or be on any topic approved by the student's dissertation supervisor.

Methods and Materials of Research is taught by a series of seminars in the Autumn Term: it is designed to inform students about Library and computing resources and to introduce some of the key skills required

Version 2.0

Dated 1.08.2011

for graduate work. The course is supplemented by Methods and Resources of Research, a series of seminars at the Institute for English Studies, Senate House. Attendance at this course is optional, but recommended for students who wish to proceed to a PhD. Students are also expected to attend the Department's Research Seminar, and are encouraged to attend other relevant seminars held at the IES, IUSS and elsewhere in central London.

Students receive *individual feedback* on the problems, strengths and scope for improvement of the essays they write for their courses and on the devising and drafting of their dissertation.

The work the courses entail is set out in *course books*, which specify the primary and secondary reading required for each week and suggest key topics for discussion as well as further reading. This enables students to plan their preparation and their acquisition of primary and secondary texts well in advance. The course books are supplemented by a more comprehensive Bibliography, which is tailored to the MA courses and includes an up-to-date list of Shakespeare resources available on the Internet. The *Shakespeare MA Handbook* provides students with all the information they need about the regulations and requirements of the programme, including assessment criteria and a guide to setting out quotations, footnotes and bibliographies.

Both courses use *DVDs and videos* throughout to illustrate and examine key scenes from screen versions of the plays. Students have excellent departmental and college collections of film, TV and audio productions of Shakespeare's plays at their disposal for short-term borrowing.

The Shakespeare MA also has its own *dedicated website* on which the handbook, course books and bibliography are posted together with links to Shakespeare resources on the Internet, a discussion forum and a message board.

Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

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Details of the programme structure

The programme lasts 52 weeks, beginning in September. All students take EN5731, EN5732 and EN5730 plus *Methods and Materials of Research*, which is not assessed. The two assessed courses and the dissertation are weighted as follows for the purposes of assessment:

- i. EN5731: The Works: Plays and Poetry (35%)
- ii. EN5732: *King Lear*: Critical Debate and Creative Response (35%)
- iii. EN5730: Dissertation (30%)
- iv. EN5001: Methods and Materials of Research (unweighted)

Courses (i) and (ii) are each taught in 20 weekly two-hour seminars running through the first two terms. EN5731 and EN5732 are designed to provide between them both breadth of coverage and depth of focus. *The Works: Plays & Poetry* spans Shakespeare's entire career as a dramatist and poet. It explores in detail, through close reading and class discussion, every kind of play he wrote and his greatest poetry, engaging throughout with the most important recent critical accounts of them. Term 1 focuses on the romantic comedies, the key history plays and the *Sonnets*, while Term 2 is devoted to the problem plays, the major tragedies and the romances Shakespeare wrote at the end of his career.

King Lear: Critical Debate & Creative Response entails an intensive study of Shakespeare's supreme tragic masterpiece, the controversies it has provoked, and the diverse ways in which it has been adapted and transformed since Shakespeare's time. Term 1 begins with detailed discussion of the play itself before turning first to the critical debate and then exploring the creative impact of *King Lear* on later poetry, drama and fiction. Term 2 is devoted to studying the creative response to *King Lear* in the theatre and the cinema, tracking its performance history on stage and screen through in-depth analysis of landmark productions and film adaptations.

Part-time Programme Structure

The programme lasts 104 weeks for part-time students. Part-time students take EN5731: *The Works: Plays & Poetry* plus EN5001: *Methods and Materials of Research* in their first year and EN5732: *King Lear: Critical Debate & Creative Response* plus EN5730: *Dissertation* in their second year.

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Progression and award requirements

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in oral presentations, contributions to seminar discussion and coursework. To pass the programme a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks between 40-49% can be condoned in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment, provided that the overall weighted average is at least 50.00%, but a failure mark (i.e. below 50%) in the dissertation cannot be condoned.

The **Masters** degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The **Masters** degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. In exceptional circumstances a viva may be held for a student at the request of the Examiners.

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Student support and guidance

- The Programme Director meets with the students on a regular basis to advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues.
- Course coordinators, tutors and dissertation supervisors provide a back-up system of academic, pastoral and welfare advice.
- Induction programmes for orientation and introduction to the Department and College by the Director of Graduate Studies.
- All staff available and accessible through an office-hour system.
- Detailed MA handbook and course booklets.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College and University libraries.
- Dedicated Departmental computing facilities and study room in Egham.
- College Careers Service and Departmental Careers Service liaison officer.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.
- Membership of the Institute of English Studies; access to further research training seminars and courses.
- Representation on the Student-Staff Committee.

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Admission requirements

Admission is normally based on at least an Upper Second in Single Honours English or a related degree. An equivalent level of achievement is expected in applications from overseas candidates. Non-standard applicants and applicants from disciplines other than English will be considered on their merits, but should bear in mind that an ability to meet the requirements of the programme demands some familiarity with the practices of literary study. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

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Further learning and career opportunities

Graduates from English MA programmes have successfully progressed into a wide range of professions, which include journalism, publishing and the media, advertising and marketing, the creative industry, the public sector, and teaching. For some graduates, completing an MA is the precursor to embarking on research, ultimately leading to a PhD. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

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Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. All staff in the English Department are highly regarded scholars, writers and critics and the quality of our research was recognised in the most recent Research Assessment Exercise, where ninety percent of our research was found to be of international quality. We also host the national English Subject centre, which drives innovation and improvement in teaching and learning across English studies.

The team that teaches the Shakespeare MA are internationally recognised, as a result of their path-breaking publications, their innovative, high-powered approach to teaching, and the distinguished awards they have won for both teaching and research, as world-leaders in the field of Shakespeare studies.

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List of programmes with details of awards, teaching arrangements and accreditation

All the programmes are taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and lead to awards of the University of London. Programmes in English are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The banner code is given in parentheses.

Master of Arts Programme in Shakespeare

MA in Shakespeare (1382)

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