

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Cultural Geography (Research)**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2013**.

The aims of this programme are:

- to develop advanced understanding of the state of knowledge and current research questions in contemporary Cultural Geography;
- to develop knowledge and expertise in appropriate humanities and social science research methodologies for tackling these questions;
- to provide experience of independent research in Cultural Geography.

This programme is delivered in a single stage, equating to either one year of full-time study or two years of part-time study and is specifically designed to provide research training and practice at Masters Level in Human Geography, with a particular emphasis on Cultural Geography. It prepares students for independent research at doctoral level and develops specialized knowledge and understanding of research, particularly involving cultural analysis, interpretation and explanation.

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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

The programme complies fully with Descriptors for a Masters level qualification set out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in England and Wales (QAA) as all of its learning outcomes are at Masters (M) level. In general terms the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge & Understanding

- advanced knowledge and expertise in the field of Cultural Geography and its current research questions;
- advanced knowledge in the ideas, approaches and substantive themes of contemporary Cultural Geographies;
- advanced knowledge of methods and techniques of Cultural Geography;
- knowledge of the culture of research.

Skills and other attributes

- advanced level critical reading;*
- advanced research writing skills;*
- advanced level proficiency in selected research techniques;
- extensive experience in drafting a research proposal;*
- advanced communication and research presentation skills;*

- generic quantitative data analysis skills, as expected of social science post-graduates;
- experience of social media development*
- effective teamwork and task management;*
- research network development;*
- enhanced research management and design skills;*
- ability to conduct a substantial piece of independent research.

**transferable skills*

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Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning is mainly by seminars, workshops, problem solving, group working, practical classes, completion of coursework and private study for the taught modules and departmental /college research training; and for the dissertation by independent research and private study, supported by research supervision. Assessment is by various forms of coursework for the taught modules, a range of tasks and a research proposal for the research training module and the dissertation.

Students receive regular, scheduled, feedback on: their performance in taught modules; their dissertation plan and draft proposal (spring term); their detailed research proposal and oral presentation (summer term); and part of the draft dissertation write up (summer term). Completion of tasks is monitored centrally to ensure students experiencing difficulty can be identified and provided with appropriate support. Full details of assessments for the individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

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Details of the programme structure(s)

The programme consists of four courses: two courses, each weighted 22%, a third course weighted 6% and a dissertation (course 4) weighted 50%.

Course 1: (GG5010) Contemporary Cultural Geographies (weighted 22%).
Assessed by two pieces of submitted written work (up to 5,000 words each).

Course 2: (GG5020) Methods and Techniques in Cultural Geography (weighted 22%).
Assessed by formal submission of two workshop reports (up to 5,000 words each).

Course 3: (GG5030) Research Training: Cultural Engagements (weighted 6%).
Satisfactory completion of designated training sessions and completion of any coursework relating to constituent modules, and submission of a satisfactory 5,000 word dissertation proposal.

Course 4: (GG5040) Dissertation (weighted 50%).
Assessed by production of a substantive written thesis (15-18,000 words) based upon individual research in Cultural Geography.

Part-time students are expected to attend and complete all the assessments relating to courses 1, 2 and 3 in their first year, and complete course 4, the dissertation in their second year.

Further details of individual courses are given in the Programme Handbook.

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Progression and award requirements

The pass mark for each assessed course is 50%. Courses 1 & 2 and 3 will together account for 50% of the overall assessment; while course 4 will account for the remaining 50% of the overall assessment. Students may not normally submit the dissertation before satisfactory completion of courses 1-3.

The requirements for the award of the MA are:

- **Distinction:** an overall weighted average of 70.00% or more, and normally provided that the mark for each of the courses is 60% or above
- **Merit:** an overall weighted average above 60.00%, provided that the mark for each of the courses is 50% or above.
- **Pass:** an overall weighted average above 50.00%, provided that the mark for each of the courses is 50% or above.
- **Fail:** an overall weighted average below 50.00%, or where the mark for any of the courses is below 50%.

Failure marks will only be condoned for marks between 40-49% in courses that constitute in total up to one quarter of the overall weighting of assessed work. Any resubmitted work can only get a maximum mark of 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if any course has been retaken by the student.

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Student support and guidance

- Personal Tutor: All students are allocated a tutor, with whom they meet regularly to discuss all matters relating to their programme and for pastoral support.
- Personal Supervisor: All students are allocated a supervisor, with whom they meet regularly to discuss all matters relating to their dissertation.
- Personal Adviser: Students also have an advisor, who deputises for the supervisor in his/her absence, and who can provide additional support and guidance. Students are free to meet their advisors as and when necessary.
- Induction sessions and termly meetings with the Programme Director.
- Membership of a research group.
- Representation on the Postgraduate Committee.
- All staff available and accessible through an open-door policy or by operating an office hours system.
- Programme handbook.
- Supporting materials and learning resources in the Department, College libraries and computer centre.
- Dedicated Departmental teaching rooms and computer suite.
- A Geography Special Needs Officer.
- College Careers Service and Geography Careers Service Liaison Officer.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Education Support Unit for students with special needs.

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Admission requirements

Students are eligible to apply if they have a good academic background (upper second class BSc or BA Honours) in a related field (environmental or social sciences or humanities) or the equivalent. Students with non-standard qualifications but considerable professional experience may also be considered and the department welcomes both full-time and part-time students. 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

The MA in Cultural Geography (Research) was specifically designed to allow students to progress to doctoral research in Human Geography. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) recognises the programme as a year one pathway in its 1+3 postgraduate research training programme. Approximately half of the graduates from the programme have progressed to doctoral research, many funded by AHRC and ESRC studentships. The programme also provides an advanced qualification suitable for a range of careers in which advanced skills in cultural and social scientific research are of

advantage. Graduates of the programme are employed in university and government research posts, in teaching, in major archives, in advertising, and in the museums sector. Course 3 includes a series of employability focused seminars and associated formative assessments. For further 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. The Geography Department was ranked joint 9th in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3* and 4* research, with 65% of the Department's research profile being rated as 3* or 4*.

In 2003, the Department of Geography was the subject of a QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) Development Engagement. Following which the panel of external assessors assessed their full confidence in the Department's academic standards and quality of learning opportunities, and described the educational experience of geography students at the College as 'excellent'. In the most recent Higher Education Funding Council Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which took place in December 2001, the quality of the Department's research was recognised by the award of a 5* grade. The RAE awards grades on a scale from 1 to 5*, with the highest grade of 5* indicating research of international excellence in more than half of a department's research activity and national excellence in the remainder.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) recognises the MA in Cultural Geography (Research) as a year one pathway in its 1+3 postgraduate research training programme and is periodically re-evaluated as part of the ESRC's regular post graduate training recognition exercises, most recently in 2005. The Department currently has 2 ESRC 1+3 quota awards and is eligible to submit applications for competition awards.

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

The programme is taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London and leads to an award of the University of London. Programmes in Cultural Geography are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme code is given in parentheses.

Master of Arts Programme in Cultural Geography

MA in Cultural Geography (Research) (1074)

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