

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Comparative Literatures and Cultures, French, German and Related Studies, Italian or Hispanic Studies (by Research)**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2012**.

The degree programme aims to:

- enable students to pursue an independent course of study in Comparative Literatures and Cultures, French, German, Italian or Hispanic Studies at Masters level;
- widen access to different kinds of students, offer students the chance to pursue a course of studies that fits in with the demands of their work, with their personal aspirations and with the rest of their lives;
- examine critically current knowledge, and the essential concepts and theories that inform the study of the chosen language;
- provide the opportunity for advanced study of specialised topics within the chosen language;
- examine critically current techniques of enquiry and research in the chosen language;
- provide the opportunity for students who may not have foreign language skills to pursue advanced studies in Comparative Literatures and Cultures by studying texts in translation;
- provide training in the methodologies and techniques needed for research leading to MPhil/PhD in one of the chosen languages and related fields;
- foster the ability to learn independently, whether for further research or for personal intellectual development;
- develop the written and oral presentation skills needed for effective communication of research findings at postgraduate level.

The programme is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or two years of part-time study (104 weeks).

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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 MA by Research are intended to be very closely related to the research interests of the staff in the chosen language. Upon successful completion of the programme, students should have an understanding of the field at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification.

### *Knowledge and Understanding*

The programme is designed to allow students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of aspects of the chosen language by independent research and by training in methodology: It is not possible to specify detailed learning outcomes because these will vary considerably, depending on the area of research. Outcomes can include:

- familiarity with major concepts and theories that inform language studies;
- knowledge of aspects of French, German, Italian or Hispanic culture and history relating to the topic of research;
- insight into the key issues raised by the topic of research;
- knowledge of the established principles and practice of research in French, German, Italian or Hispanic Studies.

### *Skills and other attributes*

- ability to conduct independent research;
- making productive use of research institutions: libraries, and other sources of information;\*
- the ability to evaluate critically primary and secondary sources of information;\*
- assimilating, interrogating and evaluating critically a wide range of textual material;\*
- synthesising complex material to create a coherent argument;\*
- evaluating critically scholarly controversies in a variety of areas and topics within French, German, Italian or Hispanic Studies;
- developing of independent judgement;\*
- independently planning and executing an original and extended piece of research;\*
- extending awareness of the relationship between the chosen culture and other cultures;
- the ability to convey the results of research clearly and systematically in a manner comprehensible to the non-specialist, both orally and in writing;\*
- engaging in critical discussion of research both orally and on paper;
- the ability to work, as appropriate, both autonomously and with others;
- self-awareness and self-management;\*
- intellectual integrity;\*
- flexibility, adaptability, and creativity.\*

\*transferable skills

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### **Teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching is provided through research seminars and individual supervision. See **Details of the programme structure** below for more details. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [School](#).

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### **Details of the programme structure(s)**

The full-time programme lasts 52 weeks, beginning in September. It has four elements and students are examined in all of these.

Students must take the following:

- i. A 5,000 word essay (5%)
- ii. An annotated bibliography of major sources for the research, and a list of research resources other than libraries (5%).
- iii. ML/FR/GM/IT/SN5901 A dissertation plan for formal approval (5%)
- iv. Dissertation (85%)

The programme starts with an induction period (week 1) and includes methodology seminars, and sessions with the individual supervisor to support the writing of the dissertation, as detailed below.

## 1. Research Methodology Training (series of seminars)

This strand will consist of the following sessions, which will generally be of two hours duration. Two of these may sometimes be carried out on the same day, given the aim of reducing need for student attendance at fixed times.

(1) Seminar at the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies (early in term 1). The IGRS runs special sessions conducted by their librarian, which are open to all Colleges of the University. These involve information on standard reference materials, literary/linguistic tools, both printed and electronic.

(2) Session at RH Library (early term 1 or Reading Week, depending on Library availability) on Bibliographic Services, Databases, etc.

(3) Seminar on the preparation and presentation of academic theses (term 2): bibliographic conventions (MLA, MHRA, Chicago, etc.), formal issues.

(4) Seminar on general methodological issues, concerning theories of language, evidence, 'literary theory', etc. This would cover some of the ground in a general way which is covered in the highly recommended HARC methodology seminars, but would be tailored to the needs of participants, requiring them to do more directed independent reading.

## 2. Individual supervision by specialist supervisor(s).

Full-time students normally meet with their supervisor(s) once every two weeks for 1-1.5 hours during the first two terms. Part-time students normally meet with their supervisor(s) for half this number of meetings over four terms. This strand will consist of up to 28 hours of individual supervision, to be carried out according to the needs of the candidate. Regular meetings will be arranged with the supervisor(s). These will be at least every two weeks during the first two terms for full-time students (for a maximum of 1-1.5 hours on each occasion), and every six weeks for part-time students. After the first two terms, phone and e-mail contact will form the supervision time. Subject to the agreement of the Programme Director, supervision may be conducted mainly by telephone or e-mail if students, notably from overseas, are unable to attend the college on a regular basis. The School will monitor and take action regarding students who fail to have regular contact with their supervisor, whatever their mode of communication.

As with PhD supervision, written work should be produced regularly to be discussed with the supervisor. A plan of the whole dissertation should be submitted after two terms full-time, four terms part-time study that will be formally approved by the supervisor and a further member of the School. Failure to gain this approval will require plans to be submitted until such time as the School is sure the project is viable.

### Part-time programme structure

The part-time programme lasts 104 weeks, beginning in September of year one. Part-time students normally attend the induction, the research methodology training and take elements (i), (ii) and (iii) and start on (iv) in their first year and complete (iv) 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.

A viva voce is also held following submission of the dissertation. The purpose of the viva is to ensure that the dissertation is the candidate's own work, and to allow a discussion of possible developments of the work for doctoral research. Performance in the viva will not normally affect the agreed mark for the dissertation. In cases where examiners wish to change their mark after the viva, they are required to justify their decision in writing to the Sub-Board of Examiners.

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### **Student support and guidance**

- Personal Advisers. All students are allocated to a Personal Adviser, whose role is to offer them advice on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. Personal Advisers see their students at regular intervals, typically once a term, throughout the programme. They are also available for consultation at advertised office hours.
- All tutors are available for consultation by their students at advertised office hours.
- Dissertation Supervisor. Each student is assigned a supervisor, who gives advice on the selection of the topic, supervises the research programme, and provides feedback on one draft of the dissertation.
- A full guide to the programme is sent to all students before their arrival.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources are available in the College libraries and in the Computer Centre. (The Departmental Graduate Committee allocation will cover additional costs (e.g. of Inter-Library loans) especially if there are several students on the programme.)
- Students enjoy access to the College Careers Service.
- Students enjoy access to all College and University support services, including the Student Counselling Service, the Health Centre, and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.
- Within the School a Staff-Student Committee meets once very term to discuss any issues and concerns. The minutes are sent to the Head of School and the School Research Committee where issues raised by the Staff-Student Committee can be dealt with if deemed appropriate. Students on the MA by Research elect a representative to serve on this committee, to express their views as necessary, and to report back to them on any action which is recommended.

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### **Admission requirements**

Admission to this programme normally requires at least an upper second class honours first degree from the UK or an equivalent qualification from overseas. (There is no general language requirement, although this may be required if the particular section of the School feels that the research to be undertaken requires an extensive knowledge of the specific language.) Applicants with non-standard qualifications will also be considered. Normally all applicants will attend an interview. Applications should be made after an informal discussion with either the Director of Graduate Studies in the relevant section of the School or the member of staff with whom you wish to study. The staff here will advise you on the compilation and outline of a research topic, which will have to be submitted with the application, and which will be considered by the School's postgraduate admissions team. If you have clear ideas on the area in which you propose to work, please submit these to the School at any point during the year.

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. Applications should be made after an informal discussion with either the Director of Graduate Studies in the relevant section of the School or the member of staff with whom you wish to study. The staff here will advise you on the compilation and outline of a research topic, which will have to be submitted with the application, and which will be considered by the School's postgraduate admissions team. If you have clear ideas on the area in which you propose to work, please submit these to the School at any point during the year.

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### **Further learning and career opportunities**

Graduates from Modern Languages Masters by Research programmes progress into a wide range of professions which include journalism, publishing, teaching, the media, advertising and marketing, and the public sector. For other graduates, completing a Masters by Research is an excellent precursor to further research leading to the degree of 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. German was ranked joint 5<sup>th</sup> in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3\* and 4\* research, with 55% of the School's German research profile of 3\* and 4\* standard. The 2008 RAE rated Hispanic Studies at Royal Holloway best department in the country for the quality of its 4\* 'world-leading' research. Approximately half of the School's French research profile is of 3\* and 4\* standard. 40% of the School's Italian research profile was rated of 3\* and 4\* standard.

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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 Modern Languages are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme code is given in parentheses.

### **Master of Arts Programmes in Comparative Literatures and Cultures, French, German and Related Studies, Italian or Hispanic Studies (by Research)**

MA Comparative Literatures and Cultures (by Research) (2554)

MA French (by Research) (2120)

MA German and Related Studies (by Research) (1174)

MA Hispanic Studies (by Research) (2121)

MA Italian (by Research) (2122)

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