

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR M.PHIL. IN CELTIC STUDIES

1. Awarding institution/body	University of Oxford
2. Teaching institution	University of Oxford
3. Programme accredited by	n/a
4. Final award	Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)
5. Programme	Celtic Studies
6. UCAS code	
7. Relevant subject benchmark statement	
8. Date of programme specification	October 2008

9. Educational aims of the programme

The M.Phil. is a two-year degree, assessed by written examination and thesis. It is more advanced and more independent than undergraduate study and more tightly structured and supervised than doctoral research. Candidates have a supervisor, normally the Professor of Celtic, who teaches them for the papers they choose, supervises the thesis, and also advises on relevant lectures and seminars. Candidates can shape the M.Phil. course to suit their own interests by selecting from the core papers: these offer them a more linguistic option and two literature papers, one medieval Irish, the other medieval Welsh. Since they only have to do one core paper but may do two, they can choose either Irish or Welsh or both. The literature papers require the candidate to be able to translate and comment upon a range of set texts extending across the entire Middle Ages. There are also Special Subjects from which they choose either one or two, so as to make, together with the core papers, a total of three. A Special Subject will often provide the background to the thesis. The course enables candidates to read widely within Celtic historical and comparative linguistics and within medieval Irish and Welsh literature, to acquire research skills, to develop their own research interest, and to pursue it in a thesis.

10. Programme outcomes

These will differ widely because the course is structured to allow for three broad types of student. Most wish to acquire a good introductory knowledge of the medieval literatures either of Ireland or Wales, or both, in the original languages; but there are also historians who use the course to enable them to read vernacular sources in the original language, and yet others whose primary interest is the linguistic study of one or more of the Celtic languages.

A. Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of:

The selection of options is tailored to individual needs, but every student should:

- 1) acquire a basic knowledge of one or more Celtic languages in their medieval phase;
- 2) practise writing essays and later a thesis (no more than 25,000 words) which put forward a complex argument and are presented according to academic standards;
- 3) acquire skills appropriate to their specialism whether in comparative and historical linguistics, palaeography, history or archaeology.

The majority (those who do at least one literature paper) should:

- 4) acquire the capacity to engage in close reading, in the original language, of central texts in one or more medieval Celtic literatures.

Related teaching/learning methods and strategies

Students for this degree are taught in three modes: in small classes for work on translating and commenting on texts; in tutorials for essays on literary and historical topics; and by participating in the Celtic Seminar, which runs for two terms in each academic year, together with a day-conference in the third term together with their opposite numbers from Cambridge; to this seminar they are expected to give at least one paper.

Assessment

The three examination papers are double-marked blind. All write a thesis of no more than 25,000 words. There is a short oral examination at which candidates can clarify their written work and often raise their overall mark. The small numbers mean that the external examiner is used as the second marker.

B. Skills and other attributes

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

I. Intellectual skills

We seek to teach people:

to think and write clearly, coherently, and precisely;

to argue critically and rigorously, to question received opinions, and to assess critically other people's arguments;

to acquire subtlety and sophistication in understanding and applying various theoretical positions on literature;

to acquire a range of scholarly methods appropriate to their particular interests;

to work independently, but also to sharpen one's ideas by constructive discussion with fellow-students and academic staff;

either to learn from scratch or to improve their knowledge of one of more Celtic languages;

to present material orally with clarity and concision, and to lead a discussion on it;

to produce written work that corresponds in substance and presentation to high academic standards.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

These skills are learnt through writing essays which are discussed in detail with supervisors; by oral presentations at seminars, followed by extensive discussion; and by writing, under the guidance of a supervisor, a thesis, in which a very high standard both of argument and presentation is expected. Attendance at graduate seminars is not restricted to the Celtic Seminar.

Assessment:

These skills are assessed informally by the supervisors who read and discuss the essays and monitor the candidates' progress, and formally by examiners who evaluate all submitted work by blind double marking.

II. Practical skills

Candidates are required to write clearly to a high standard of scholarly presentation. They are also expected to become proficient in using the Internet to gain access to bibliographies and other scholarly materials.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Assessment

III. Transferable skills

We aim to impart the ability:

- 1) to communicate effectively, both in speech and writing;
- 2) to manage time and work to both short and long deadlines;
- 3) to write clearly, coherently, and fluently, and to present an elaborate argument lucidly;
- 4) to work independently;
- 5) to be self-critical, as well as critical of received opinions;
- 6) to participate intelligently and constructively in discussion;
- 7) to give oral presentations, with visual aids as appropriate, and to lead discussions;
- 8) to deepen their knowledge of one or more Celtic languages.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Essays, oral presentations, seminar discussions, and the writing of a thesis are the means by which these skills are imparted and polished.

Assessment:

11. Programme Structures and Features

Learning

As a two-year course, the M.Phil. allows candidates to make considerable progress in learning two medieval Celtic languages, even starting from scratch. The candidates concentrate on close study of texts in the first term, beginning to write essays in the second half of the term and continuing with this pattern in the second and third terms. From the end of the third term a major part of their time is devoted to the independent planning and writing of a thesis (under the guidance of a supervisor). It is expected that there will be a more or less sharp learning curve together with a growth in intellectual independence and confidence.

All candidates prepare a **Thesis** of no more than 25,000 words (including footnotes, but excluding bibliography), which must be submitted at the end of the first week of the final term. The subject of the thesis will often be related to the Special Subject. It allows the candidate to use and extend the reading done for the Special Subject and to undertake a piece of research that may lead on to doctoral work.

Assessment. All submitted work is assessed by blind double marking.

Classes and Seminars

In addition to the Celtic Seminar which is an integral part of the M.Phil., there are other classes and seminars relevant to particular interests, such as Comparative Philology and Medieval Latin.

Learning Year 1

Subjects

Assessment

Year 2

Subjects

Assessment

Year 3

Subjects

Assessment

Year 4

Subject

Assessment

12. Support for Students and their learning

Supervisor. Each student is assigned a supervisor, normally the Professor of Celtic, before beginning the course, and is encouraged to contact the supervisor informally before the course begins in order to discuss options, funding possibilities, and other concerns. The supervisor does most of the teaching for the examination papers and supervises the thesis. The supervisor submits a written report on the student's progress each term.

Faculty Adviser. Each student is assigned a Faculty adviser who has related research interests. The student thus gets to know another member of staff with whom to discuss research and who can advise on academic or pastoral problems and mediate on the rare occasions when a conflict arises between student and supervisor.

College Adviser. The student's college appoints a College adviser, not necessarily in the same subject area, who primarily helps with non-academic and pastoral problems. In addition each college has a number of officers responsible for student welfare, notably the Tutor for Graduates and the Dean.

Director of Graduate Studies. The Director, who has overall responsibility for the M.St. and other taught graduate courses in the Modern Languages Faculty, meets all new graduates at the beginning of the academic year and is available thereafter to advise them on any difficulties or uncertainties that arise during their course.

Graduate Studies Administrator. This official has an office in the Faculty and is available to answer minor queries from graduates and to receive the written work that they have to submit. She/he can also provide information about scholarships, grants, prizes, and funding opportunities.

Course information. Written information about the course is provided in the *Examination Regulations*, and in the book *Notes for the Guidance of Graduate Students in Modern languages*. The latter is the most accessible and most often consulted. It is updated each year by the Graduate Studies Administrator. This document is also available on the Faculty website.

Libraries. Celtic Graduates have full access to the Taylorian Library, which is the most fully stocked Modern Languages library in this country apart from the British Library and includes a section devoted to Celtic. They can enter the stacks and borrow books for a limited period. They may also use all other Oxford libraries, including the Bodleian, as well as the library of their college (the Sackler and the English Faculty Library have significant Celtic material). Jesus College has a Celtic Library to which students from other colleges are also admitted on the recommendation of the Professor of Celtic.

Travel Grants. The Faculty has limited funds to provide travel grants for research purposes. These grants do not normally exceed £300.

Languages. Opportunities to learn additional languages are available at the University's Language Centre.

Computing. There is a small computer room for Modern Languages students in 47 Wellington Square. It contains 2 modern IBM-compatible PCs connected to a laser printer for high-quality printing. All the computers are connected to the University network for services such as e-mail. Each computer also has a flat bed scanner with Optical Character Recognition software for input of textual and graphic materials. OUCS run regular IT courses which students are encouraged to attend.

Electronic Resources. Oxford University subscribes to a large number of electronic databases which are available through OXLIP, the Oxford Libraries Information Platform.

13. Criteria for Admission

Candidates in Modern Languages are expected to have a first-class degree or a good upper-second-class degree (marks of about 65 upwards). When applying they are asked to submit one or more pieces of work demonstrating their potential for scholarship and independent thought. All candidates from the UK are asked to come for interview. Every effort is made to deal with applications promptly so that successful applications may be sent on to the candidates' colleges of first choice.

14. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning

Graduates fill in a termly report via GSS in which they describe their own progress, raise any difficulties they may have experienced, and also comment on teaching provision and library facilities. Issues arising from these reports are brought to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies.

The reports of external examiners are considered in the first instance by the Professor of Celtic and the Board of the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages. They are then passed to the Humanities Divisional Board, along with notes of action taken or proposed, and also to the University's Educational Policy and Standards Committee. The Educational Policy and Standards Committee is the ultimate authority, within the University, for overseeing matters of educational policy, for ensuring the maintenance of the highest standards, and for enforcing such as action as may be necessary to achieve these ends.

15. Regulation of assessment

Final Examination

[Most information relating to assessment is likely to be set out as examiners' conventions and is therefore likely to be included in student handbooks. As below mark scales could be included.]

Marking Scale

>70	Class I	A very good answer that is structured, innovative and comprehensive
60-69	Class II(i)	A good answer that includes major points and their significance
50-59	Class II(ii)	A less than satisfactory answer that includes some major points
40-49	Class III	A weak answer that omits several major points
30-39	Pass	A very poor answer that fails to address considerable areas of the question
<29	Fail	Totally inadequate

16. Indicators of quality and standards

[There are a variety of sources to which reference might be made:

comments from external examiners' reports
references to quality and standards in internal examiners' reports
reviews by internal or external bodies
RAE ratings
comments from external advisory committees
feedback from employers/former students]