PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR M.PHIL. IN SLAVONIC 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   **Slavonic Studies**

6. UCAS code

7. Relevant subject benchmark statement

8. Date of programme specification   **October 2014**

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9. Educational aims of the programme

The M.Phil. course is intended to assist students who have taken first degree courses in one Slavonic language (typically, though not always, Russian) to make the transition to graduate work in Slavonic studies by learning one or two more Slavonic languages, by studying at a relatively advanced and intensive level a selection of subjects which were not available in their first degree courses, and by writing a thesis of 20,000-25,000 words in length on a research topic in the area of Slavonic studies. The course offers, in addition to extra languages, training in various philological, literary and historical fields and in associated methodologies (comparative philological method, palaeography, textology, literary theory). The first year of the course is identical to the one-year M.St. in Slavonic Studies (q.v.). Whether candidates choose to take the M.St. or the M.Phil. course is determined by their previous experience and the character of the doctoral research to which they hope to proceed. The M.Phil. is particularly suitable where knowledge of several ancillary disciplines or Slavonic languages is required or where a candidate needs grounding in additional areas of Slavonic studies as a foundation for research. It also gives the opportunity to write a much more extended thesis than in the M.St., on the basis of several months of research.

The course combines flexibility with more tightly structured and supervised work than is usual for a doctorate. Each student takes a selection of options individually related to his or her requirements and educational background; the options are organized in a way which encourages study in depth while maintaining some degree of breadth. Each student has a supervisor who advises on and arranges teaching and normally teaches at least one of the options taken. The normal mode of teaching is the one-to-one tutorial, though students are also encouraged to go to lectures and seminars as appropriate, and are required to attend the annual seminars in 'Research Orientation and Methodology for Graduate Students in Russian Literature and Cultural History'.

10. Programme outcomes

A. Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of:

one or more Slavonic language(s) not previously studied to degree level; (if not previously acquired) a non-Slavonic European language other than English, for the purpose of reading secondary literature; specialized skills/bodies of knowledge/conceptual systems in areas of Slavonic studies not previously studied; how to develop and present complex academic argument and deploy evidence in technical areas

Related teaching/learning methods and strategies

weekly language classes are provided either by postholders or by experienced native speakers; candidates are also advised before they embark on their studies to attend a summer course in the Slavonic language(s) to be taken; instruction in various ancient and modern European languages for academic purposes is available in University classes for graduate students and at the University's Language Centre; preparation for weekly tutorials; lectures as appropriate; seminars specially designed for the course (e.g. in Cyrillic palaeography) or provided for all graduate students in this subject area, particularly the obligatory seminars in 'Research Orientation and Methodology for Graduate Students in Russian Literature and Cultural History'; weekly tutorials in which substantial pieces of written work are discussed; supervised work on the thesis in the second year of the course.

Assessment

Tutorial teaching during the course is very important in imparting awareness of the standards required and the difference between undergraduate and graduate work. Final assessment is by written examination, except for the M.Phil. dissertation and for the options in Methods of Criticism and Theory of Literature and in Russian literature (from the M.St. course in Medieval and Modern Languages), which are examined by submitted essays.

B. Skills and other attributes

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

I. Intellectual skills

- think and write clearly, coherently and creatively and with precision

- command a range of methodologies and see their application to the chosen research topic

- identify and understand the potential use of primary and secondary sources of information, such as bibliographies

- gather, memorize, organize and deploy complex bodies of evidence and information, appreciate the consequences of the unavailability of evidence and identify and solve associated problems using the most appropriate methodology

- engage in analytical thinking about texts and engage with a range of viewpoints on problems of argumentation, interpretation and evaluation

- argue critically and rigorously and use the same critical rigour in assessing the arguments of others and in questioning received opinion

- sustain a complex, scholarly and independent argument of considerable length

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

These skills are largely learnt through the discipline of writing advanced level essays and the thesis under expert academic guidance and scrutiny, i.e. the tutorial method, with the support where appropriate of specialized classes and graduate seminars. (Because the choice of subjects can differ significantly, the tutorial is the main teaching mode. There is limited scope for seminar teaching directed specifically to the M.Phil. course, though classes and seminars are arranged when appropriate and students are encouraged to attend seminars in related subject areas.)

Assessment:

These skills are assessed in the first instance by those giving tutorials, thesis supervision and classes, whose objective it is to develop them through direct and indirect feedback, normally tailoring their demands to suit the needs of the particular student. The examinations and the thesis are designed to test all the abilities listed.

II. *Practical skill*s

use at least two Slavonic languages for communicative and academic purposes; read secondary literature in a non-Slavonic European language other than English (if not previously acquired). See also below under 'transferable skills'

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

weekly language classes are provided either by postholders or by experienced native speakers; candidates are also advised before they embark on their studies to attend a summer course in the Slavonic language(s) to be taken; instruction in various ancient and modern European languages for academic purposes is available in University classes for graduate students and at the University's Language Centre; preparation for weekly tutorials; lectures as appropriate; seminars specially designed for the course (e.g. in Cyrillic palaeography) or provided for all graduate students in this subject area, particularly the seminars in 'Research Orientation and Methodology for Graduate Students in Russian Literature and Cultural History'; weekly tutorials in which substantial pieces of written work are discussed; supervised work on the thesis in the second year of the course.

Assessment

Weekly instruction, usually with a native speaker, provides continuous feedback on the Slavonic language taken as a course requirement. This is supplemented by tutorial work involving textual material and secondary reading, usually in this language and the one previously studied. Final assessment is by examination.

Instruction in various European languages for academic purposes is available in University classes for graduate students and at the University's Language Centre. Reading competence is checked by a language test in the second year of the course, if appropriate.

III. Transferable skills

write quickly, clearly and coherently; present difficult and detailed material effectively, both in speech and in writing, in a way that will engage persons unfamiliar with that material; participate constructively in discussion; manage time and work to deadlines in a sustained way; work independently; be self-critical and critical of received opinion; report at length in sophisticated and nuanced prose on complex issues

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

All these skills are essential to, and developed through, regular tutorial meetings. There are also opportunities for oral presentation and feedback in the graduate seminars organized by the graduate students in Russian and other Slavonic languages and by members of the sub-faculty.

Assessment:

As under A and B above.

11. Programme Structures and Features

The M.Phil. is an intensive two-year taught course which requires meetings with tutors or supervisors frequently, normally once a week, and weekly language classes.

The options available under the M.Phil. course are organized into ten schedules. Not all languages and subjects may be available in any given year. The choice of subjects, and the title of the thesis (and the essay, if taken), must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies of the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages. Candidates may take no more than two subjects from any one of schedules 2-10.

The first year of the course is identical to the M.St. course in Slavonic Studies (q.v.): all candidates offer unseen translation from a Slavonic language not previously studied to first degree level and either three other subjects or two other subjects and an essay of 5,000-7,000 words on a subject of their own choice; the material used for the essay may subsequently be incorporated in the M.Phil. thesis or a thesis presented for a higher degree (M.Litt. or D.Phil.).

In the second year of the course candidates take two further subjects. These may be chosen from any of the schedules, subject to the following restrictions:

(i) the essay on a topic of the candidate's choice (Schedule 2) is not available, as candidates offer a more substantial thesis;

(ii) candidates must take at least one of the methodological subjects from Schedule 2, if they have not already done so in the first year.

(iii) candidates may not repeat subjects which they have taken for the M.St. or for the Qualifying Examination, nor take subjects from Schedules from which they have already taken two subjects for the M.St. or for the Qualifying Examination.

In addition to the two further subjects, candidates write a thesis of 20,000-25,000 words in length on a subject of their own choice; the material used for the thesis may subsequently be incorporated in a thesis presented for a higher degree (M.Litt. or D.Phil.). They are also expected to be able to read secondary literature in at least one European language other than English and the Slavonic languages, and may be required to demonstrate this ability by means of a test in the language.

Schedule 1 consists of a range of Slavonic languages (Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Sorbian, Ukrainian), from which each candidate must choose one.

Schedule 2 covers training in various methodologies: Cyrillic Palaeography; Textual Criticism; Prague School of Linguistics; Methods of Criticism and Theory of Literature (from the M.St. course in Medieval and Modern Languages); the option of doing an essay on a subject of the candidate's choice also comes under this schedule as an introduction to research method.

Schedules 3-5 offer a wide range of philological options:

Schedule 3 consists of three subjects which occupy a fundamental position on the philological side of Slavonic Studies: Comparative Slavonic Philology; Old Church Slavonic; History of Church Slavonic.

Schedule 4 consists of nine linguistic subjects, the history of the following languages: Bulgarian and Macedonian; Croatian; Czech and Slovak; Polish; Russian; Serbian; Slovene; Sorbian; Ukrainian.

Schedule 5 consists of nine linguistic subjects, the structure and present state of the following languages: Bulgarian; Croatian; Czech; Polish; Russian; Serbian; Slovene; Sorbian; Ukrainian.

Schedules 6-7 give opportunities for studying topics and periods in Russian, Czech and Polish literature:

Schedule 6 consists of the Special Subjects in Russian literature from the M.St. course in Medieval and Modern Languages (q.v.)

Schedule 7 includes: Czech literature since 1774; Polish literature, 1798-1917; Slovak literature since 1783.

Schedules 8-10 range over the history of the East, West and South Slavs, drawing on subjects available under the M.Phil. course in Russian and East European Studies and supplementing them with some options

dealing with earlier periods of history:

Schedule 8 consists of three subjects in the history of Russia: Russian Social and Political Thought, 1825-1917; the History of Russia, 1861-1917; the Russian Revolution and the Civil War (the first two are from the M.Phil. course in Russian and East European Studies).

Schedule 9 consists of four subjects in the history of the South Slav lands: Byzantine Civilization and its Expansion, 913-1204; the History of the Balkans, 1774-1918; the History since 1918 of either Bulgaria or Yugoslavia and its successor states (the last two subjects are from the M.Phil. course in Russian and East European Studies)

Schedule 10 consists of five subjects in the history of the West Slav lands: Bohemia from the Hussite Wars to the Battle of the White Mountain (1415-1620); the History of Poland and Hungary, 1506-1795; the Habsburg Monarchy, 1790-1918; the History since 1918 or either Poland or Czechoslovakia and its successor states (the last four subjects are from the M.Phil. course in Russian and East European Studies).

Learning Year 1

Subjects

Assessment:

Each option is assessed by one three-hour examination, with the exception of the essay on a subject of the candidate's choice, which is submitted before the examinations, and the options in Methods of Criticism and Theory of Literature and in Russian literature taken from the M.St. course in Medieval and Modern Languages (q.v.), which are assessed by presubmitted essays.

The essay on a subject of the candidate's choice is expected to be clearly structured, to have a coherent argument which reaches some kind of conclusion and to show some independence of approach either in the choice or the use of material. The essay should demonstrate familiarity with relevant evidence, citing it accurately, and with relevant scholarly literature and the main trends, approaches and controversies in the general area within which the chosen subject falls. It should be presented professionally, with a bibliography and systematic treatment of abbreviations and references. The word limit is 7,000 words.

Year 2

Subjects

Assessment

Each option is assessed by one three-hour examination, with the exception of the options in Methods of Criticism and Theory of Literature and in Russian literature taken from the M.St. course in Medieval and Modern Languages (q.v.), which is assessed by presubmitted essays.

The obligatory thesis, on a subject of the candidate's choice, is expected to be clearly structured, to have a coherent argument which reaches some kind of conclusion, and to show some originality of approach either by drawing on new material or comparisons, or by asking new questions about the material used. The essay should demonstrate familiarity with relevant evidence, citing it accurately, and with relevant scholarly literature and the main trends, approaches and controversies in the general area within which the chosen subject falls. It should be presented professionally, with a bibliography and systematic treatment of abbreviations and references. The word limit is 25,000 words.

Year 3

Subjects

Assessment

Year 4

Subject

Assessment

12. Support for Students and their learning

Libraries

The Slavonic Annexe of the Taylorian Institute has outstanding library resources in the subject area. These are complemented by the holdings of the Bodleian Library and supplemented by college libraries. Books can be borrowed from the Taylorian and from college libraries.

Languages

Opportunities for self-instruction and independent study of the chosen Slavonic language and of additional languages are available through the University's Language Centre.

IT resources

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.

Advice concerning the Syllabus

Supervisor: Students' supervisors are appointed before the students embark on the course. The supervisor has overall direction of the student's course, normally teaches the student for at least one of the options taken, and arranges expert tuition for the others as needed.

Faculty Adviser: Each student is assigned a Faculty Adviser, whom they may approach for discussion and advice. The Adviser does not report on the student's work, but is available for consultation and to add to the range of advice available to the student.

College Adviser: The student's college appoints a College Adviser, whose function is primarily to help with non-academic problems and to provide pastoral care

13. Criteria for Admission

A first class or upper second class degree (or equivalent) in a course involving substantial study of at least one Slavonic language; submitted work showing the capacity for scholarship and independent thought.

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 sub-faculty of Russian and other Slavonic languages 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

Examinations
In the 1st-year qualifying examination the mark required for progression to the 2nd year is an average of 66. In the final examination the pass mark is an average of 60. Distinction in the M.Phil. is awarded to candidates with a mark of at least 70 in the thesis and an average mark of at least 70 in the examined papers. Distinction in the M.Phil. examination entitles candidates who have been provisionally accepted for further research to transfer directly to D.Phil. status, with exemption from Probationer Research status.

Distinction

80-85	Superb work showing fine command of language and/or intellectual debates and making a creative use of, or contribution to, them
75-79	Excellent work, intellectually stimulating
70-74	Fine work, showing powerful analysis or linguistic understanding, a distinctive argument or use of language, and full awareness of the secondary literature

Pass

68-69	Strong pass: strong and well-developed analysis or linguistic skill, with some indication of distinction potential
63-67	Good pass: sound analytical or linguistic standard, with most points developed rather than stated
60-62	Pass: basic analytical or linguistic skills apparent from identification of intellectual problem and some structured discussion or application of it

Fail

58-59	Marginal fail: inaccurate use of language or inadequate development of points made
0-57	Outright fail: wholly inaccurate use of language or inadequate coverage and analysis

16. Indicators of quality and standards

The external examiner for 2008 commented that 'philologically and historically oriented courses are now few and far between in our field, and in areas such as this Oxford has almost unique expertise and resources to draw students for such a course ... [the candidate's performance reflects] a considerable amount to master in the space of ten months and testifies to much structured and careful instruction. The programme leaders are to be commended.' The external examiner for 2013 commented that the 'teaching methods are devised to an exceptionally high standard. The students' performance, which is excellent, reflects that: it often exceeds

student performance at UK institutions I am familiar with.'

The sub-faculty of Russian and other Slavonic languages received a 5* rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise and ranked second in the country in the 2008 Exercise.