School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy
Department of Psychosocial Studies

MSc EDUCATION, POWER AND SOCIAL CHANGE
2016-2017

Programme Guide
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Introduction

Welcome to the MSc in Education, Power and Social Change! On this Master’s degree we explore the links between education and social and political movements, and develop understandings of how ‘education’ as a contested field should be viewed within a globalised and post-colonial context. By ‘education’, we mean all forms of informal and formal learning, across all the age ranges, including adult, higher and professional education. We ask the key question: is education a force for reproduction or transformation in the world? In other words, does education change the world or maintain the current system? For example, can it alleviate the effects of poverty or does it increase existing inequalities? Key debates on what is the role of education and how people learn are developed from a range of viewpoints, including critical theory. We take an inter-disciplinary approach to thinking about education, drawing on the arts and humanities as well as well as the more conventional representations of education in social science. The programme offers those with an interest in, or concern about, education the opportunity to explore relevant theories, to develop research skills in social science and to apply these to education practices.

The degree is intended to help you to develop and extend your knowledge and understanding of education and social change. In addition to the core modules, you can choose from a range of option modules in order to tailor a programme to suit your developing interests. You will also take a course on research methodology, which will provide you with the tools to undertake an original piece of research into an aspect of education that fascinates you.

The programme will hopefully deepen your awareness of how education shapes, and is shaped by, our understanding of the world and may contribute to your professional development. In previous years students have used the qualification to take their careers in new directions and others have used the programme to deepen their thinking about their current practice. It is flexibly designed with a range of option modules, and a Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate are also available.
Core Programme Team

Programme Director

Dr Elizabeth Hoult
e.hoult@bbk.ac.uk

Acting Programme Director and Module 2 Lead

Dr Sue Dunn
s.dunn@bbk.ac.uk

Module 1 Lead

Dr Jan Etienne
j.etienne@bbk.ac.uk

Lecturer (dissertations)

Dr Christina Howell-Richardson
c.howell-richardson@bbk.ac.uk

Independent Research Module Seminar Lead

Dr Denise Cormack

You will also benefit from specialist inputs from several colleagues at Birkbeck who have particular interests and expertise in education and learning throughout the programme.

Term dates 2016/2017

Autumn term – Monday, 3rd October to Friday 16th December 2016
Spring term - Monday 9th January to Friday, 24th March 2017
Summer term – Monday, 24th April to Friday, 7th July 2017

For module session dates, see individual module guides.
Staying in Touch

For all general and administrative enquiries, please contact the office of Department of Psychosocial Studies:

Department of Psychosocial Studies  
School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy  
London WC1B 5DT  
Office opening hours: Mondays to Fridays, 10am to 6pm (5pm on Fridays)  
Email: psychosocial-studies@bbk.ac.uk  
Phone: + 44 (0)20 7631 6281

Student email addresses

When you enrol you will be given your own student email address. It is important that you check this address regularly, especially on days when you have classes, as it is the address that we will use to email you information about class cancellations (due to lecturer illness, for example) and venue changes.

Moodle

Another way in which your lectures and seminar tutors may try to contact you is via Moodle. Please make sure you know your way around Moodle: have a look at the sites for your different modules, and regularly check the News Forum for any updates about last-minute announcements. Moodle will also be used as the primary place for the important documents and resources you will need during your degree, such as essay coversheets, essay deadlines and dissertation guidelines. When you log in to Moodle select ‘programme and related areas’ to find your degree/programme’s Moodle page for these resources.

Your Contact Details

It is important that we have the right contact information for you. Please let us know when you move house or change email address or telephone number! You can maintain your own details via your My Birkbeck Profile. Alternatively you can inform the Postgraduate Administrator of these changes.
How the programme works

Course aims

The Certificate, Diploma and MSc in Education, Power and Social Change aims to:

- enable students to develop well-grounded theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of education, power and social change
- provide students with the opportunity for a comprehensive and critical analysis of literature on education, lifelong learning and globalisation
- enables students develop critical and analytical skills and to engage in critical debate with theoretical perspectives in the interdisciplinary field of education
- offer an interdisciplinary learning environment, appropriate to the field, in which students are able to engage with tutors and material from the disciplines of education, psychosocial studies, sociology and social policy
- create a learning environment in which students are encouraged to make meaningful connections between wider theories and debates in the literature, and contexts and questions in which they are particularly interested
- equip students to develop critical and well-informed analyses of a range of intersections between education, globalisation and social change.

In addition the Diploma and MSc aims to:

- provide a core research training to enable students to develop research skills and skills of independent study

The MSc also aims to:

- enable students to engage in a research project which stimulates their interest and advances their knowledge and critical understanding of education, power and social change.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- assess the value of historical perspectives in explaining contemporary educational conditions
- critique the extent to which globalisation as an economic concept affects educational development
- outline the key arguments supporting education for skills and education for social purposes in selected national contexts
- distinguish between different social and political perspectives on the role of education
- discuss and evaluate discourses on ‘universal rights to education’
• critique how the power of dominant ideologies shape educational policies and practices, drawing on a range of global examples
• analyse the concept of social exclusion and discuss possible origins using a number of examples
• analyse the resistances arising from the educational development of socially excluded groups
• undertake independent research in a field of education
• demonstrate the relevance of the academic work within a field of education
• undertake independent research, distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and selecting appropriate research methods.
• apply theoretical insights to develop independent research
• explain competing theoretical perspectives and ethical issues
• apply theoretical perspectives to analyse a range of educational developments
• critically read and analyse key texts, make notes and structure written work appropriately.
• develop skills in summarising and distilling arguments, orally and in writing
• design and develop a research proposal
• develop strategies to plan and organise effectively
• use information retrieval and ICT skills to support research
• compare and contrast different approaches to research
• explore and hold refreshed personal political beliefs in relation to the connections between education, globalisation and social and political change
• distinguish between academic and political positionings in educational development and reflect on their personal values and beliefs.
• recognise the skills and abilities to become an independent researcher
• develop confidence in presenting information
• recognise the benefits of working with peers.

Programme of study

The **Postgraduate Certificate in Education, Power and Social Change** is for those who wish to develop their understandings of current issues and debates in education, and to critically inform their practice.
It awards 60 CATS points and consists of two modules of 30 CATS points each:
Module 1: Education, Globalisation and Change
Module 2: Education, Power and Resistances

The **Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Power and Social Change** is for those who want to develop their understandings of education with regard to their own professional practice and to explore other disciplines that relate to that practice.
It awards 120 CATS points and consists of four modules of 30 CATS points each:
Module 1: Education, Globalisation and Change
Module 2: Education, Power and Resistances
Modules 3 and 4: option modules
The **MSc in Education, Power and Social Change** is for those who want to further develop their theoretical and/or professional interests through exploring other disciplines and by researching a topic in depth by writing a dissertation. It awards 180 CATS points including a double module of research methods and a dissertation module worth 60 CATS points:

- **Module 1:** Education, Globalisation and Change
- **Module 2:** Education, Power and Resistances
- **Modules 3 and 4:** option modules
- **Module 5:** Researching Education (for part-time, second year students in 2015-2016) or Psychosocial Research Methods (for all new students in 2015-2016).

**Period of study**

- **MSc:** two years part-time or one academic year full-time
- **PgDip:** 4 modules, normally four terms part-time or two terms full-time
- **PgCert:** 2 modules, normally two terms part-time or one term full-time

**Learning and teaching**

The core modules are taught through seminar-style discussion classes, so as to give you full opportunity to develop your own ideas. The new course in *Psychosocial Research Methods* (which will be taken by new students, commencing their studies in 2015-2016, please see below) is taught through a combination of big lectures (which are shared by eight different MA programmes) and subject-specific seminars and workshops.

In seminars in general, although you will learn by listening, you will benefit much more if you have read enough to be able to contribute to the discussion. We know that some people find it easy to participate in this way and perhaps speak so much that others cannot easily get a word in. If you are finding it difficult to speak at seminars, a useful rule of thumb is to try to contribute to the discussion at least once in every class. Having broken the ice in this way, you will subsequently find it easier to participate. If you are confident in such discussions, remember to restrain yourself from time to time and encourage your colleagues instead. The tutor running the seminar will often have an agenda of issues which merit discussion, and she or he will sometimes intervene to move the discussion on, or to encourage the exploration of aspects that might otherwise be neglected. In addition, although we avoid the formality of a lecture, you will find that your tutor will often give a brief summary of the topic being discussed. However, to get the seminar started, the most common practice is to have a brief presentation, not by the member of staff in charge, but by a student on the course. At the start of each course, the presentations for successive weeks will be allocated and you will be expected to volunteer for one.

To prepare yourself for the presentation, bear in mind that its purpose is to stimulate discussion. Read more of the additional material on the reading list, rather than just concentrating on one or two of the essential items, which your colleagues should have
read. In fact, you will find that in order to speak with some authority on a topic for a few minutes, you will need to accumulate more knowledge than you can deploy in the presentation itself. You can draw on this when making further contributions to the discussion that ensues. For more advice on giving seminar presentations, a useful book is: Rebecca Stott, Speaking your Mind: Oral Presentation and Seminar Skills (Harlow, 2001). It is also possible to pursue issues raised in a seminar presentation by choosing a related essay topic.

Progression

Certificate students may progress onto the Diploma on successful completion of their course, and Diploma students may progress onto the MSc on successful completion of their course. MSc students may want to progress onto an MPhil or PhD. Students interested in undertaking a degree by research could look at the areas of expertise located in the Research Centre for Social Change and Transformation in Higher Education at Birkbeck (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/csthe/).

Fees

Full or part payment is due on acceptance to the course. Students who have not made full or part payment at the start of the course will not be allowed to begin or continue with their studies.

Accreditation for prior learning

Students with appropriate previous knowledge, experience and understanding of specific modules may apply for exemption from one or more modules. Contact the Programme Director for more information.

Reading

You will need to set aside time for reading. A general reading list is provided in this Guide: required and recommended reading for each module is provided in the Module Guides. You will also find relevant materials on the internet.

Preliminary reading lists are included with the course descriptions. These are intended to assist you in your course choices by supplementing the brief summaries and they also provide background reading to help you prepare for study. At the start of each course or option you will be given a more substantial bibliography or reading list, usually divided by theme or topic. This will serve as a guide to reading for classes, and for essay preparation. Some items may be prioritised as essential readings for each weekly class, and there will also be a selection of other articles and books on different facets of the topic. It is imperative that you read these essential items and adopt a disciplined approach to class preparation. Your reading for classes will often be reserved in the Short Loan Collection (SLC) of the College library, from which you may borrow two items for a maximum period of four hours.
We are well aware that it is often difficult to get hold of the recommended reading and that books in particular are frequently hard to find. However, there are various ways around this. First, we aim to make some of the key articles and chapters available via Moodle. Second, we arrange for copies of certain key texts to be reserved in the Short Loan Collection of the College Library or to be available for loan from the Postgraduate Office. Third, if you plan far enough in advance, you can request a library book on loan and gain access to it in time. It is also worth looking in libraries beyond Birkbeck to find other copies of books out on loan (see below). Fourth, it is worth remembering that journals cannot be borrowed from libraries so journal articles are always accessible for reading or photocopying. Remember also to consult the huge collection of ‘electronic journals’ available on the library website: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/ejournal.html. In addition, you will find reviews of most books in the key journals and these often also provide a useful (if sometimes partisan) evaluation of books and a summary of their content. Finally, you can buy your own copies of particular books: if necessary, ask your course lecturer for advice.

Libraries

Once enrolled, all students have access to the facilities and services of Birkbeck College Library. It is open seven days a week during term time, closing at 23:45 on weekday evenings and at 20.00 on weekends. An introduction to Birkbeck Library will be offered in the autumn term.

To join the library, sign your college membership card (sent to you by Registry), attach a photo and take it to the Issue Desk. The library collections are primarily aimed at supporting our undergraduate degrees, but they also contain much valuable material for taught MA and MSc courses. The library has a reasonable collection of books and journals, as well as a comprehensive range of electronic resources including bibliographic databases (which tell you what has been written on a topic), and thousands of electronic journals. Most of these resources can be accessed via the Internet from outside the College. It is worth spending some time on the library website to familiarise yourself with its collections: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib. To make full use of the library computing facilities you will need your Birkbeck ITS username and password. If you have not received this upon enrolment, you can get it from ITS reception.

To contact library-help@bbk.ac.uk, or tel: 020 7631 6063. For a direct subject guide link to education, see

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/subguides/socialscience/education

For essays and further reading, you will need to use other libraries in London. Birkbeck lies at the centre of London’s research library complex, and Birkbeck’s library’s website (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/other.html) gives you access to information and catalogues for many of them. The University of London Research Library Service includes the University of London Library in Senate House and the libraries of the Institute of Historical Research, the Warburg Institute and other institutes in the
School of Advanced Study. Other libraries with extensive collections in relevant areas include University College London, Institute of Education and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; the latter will be helpful to students interested in themes such as public health education, and imperial science and tropical medicine, as those topics relate to education in its widest sense.

You have full borrowing rights to the University of London Senate House Library: you need to take your College ID card to the library for access.  
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/otherlibs

Attendance

You are expected to attend regularly, and a poor level of attendance may seriously affect your academic progression on the course. Attendance, however, is not assessed.

Tutorials

Should you wish to arrange an individual tutorial, please contact your personal tutor  (new students will be told who this is in the first week of module 1). You can ask for a tutorial to discuss any aspect of your academic study, including guidance on assignments or with study skills, choice of seminar topics, progress on the course, or progression from Certificate to Diploma to Masters.

Course representatives and course evaluation

Course evaluations and staff/student exchanges take place at the end of each module and at the end of the year to ensure that you have the opportunity to give feedback on the programme. You are invited to elect two representatives to represent your views, including at Programme course committee meetings. Representatives are supported by the Birkbeck Student Union, including being offered appropriate training and supplied with a Representative pack. For full details about student representatives at Birkbeck see  http://www.bbk.ac.uk/su/classrep
Module descriptions

Module 1: Education, Globalisation and Change (core)

The module critically examines education and learning as a contested field within changing global economies and contexts. You will be encouraged to distinguish between different social and political perspectives on the role of education for change within contrasting national milieux, over time. The notions of resilience in individuals and communities who have been excluded from educational opportunities in different contexts will also be examined. The idea of transformational learning as a force for personal and social change will be explored. The intention is to enable you to be capable of demonstrating a breadth of interpretative skills applicable to varying social settings at differing times.

Module 2: Education, Power and Resistances (core)

The module critically examines tensions and power relations in educational change and strategies for resistances within a global context. It enables students to develop a critical understanding of the roles played by educational policies and practices in supporting and in challenging dominant ideologies. It explores the identities of excluded groups and how resistance may lead to movements for social and educational change. The module will challenge you to re-examine your personal values and ideologies and to explore political and academic positionings around education, power and social change.

Modules 3 and 4: Option modules

Options will be chosen from a list of relevant modules. An options booklet will be issued to you at the beginning of the autumn term.

Independent Research Module

All full-time students and Year 2 part-time students will study for the Psychosocial Research Methods course, also known as the independent research module. Please see details in separate booklet for further details. In term one lectures led by a team from the Department of Psychosocial Studies and the post-lecture seminars will be led by Dr Denise Cormack. In terms two and three: seminars and dissertation workshops led by Dr Denise Cormack.

Assessment

Please see individual module handbooks for the details of the assessment arrangements.
Marks and grades

These are given on all assignments and follow College criteria (see below). All assignments are double marked. We will aim to return assignments will usually be returned to you within four weeks. A sample of work is sent to an External Examiner each year.

The modules attract the following CATS points at level M:

Module 1: Education, Globalisation and Change 30 credits
Module 2: Education, Power and Resistances 30 credits
Module 5: Independent Research Methods 60 credits

Calculation of final classification for Certificate/Diploma/MSc Education, Power and Social Change

Postgraduate awards may be made with Pass, Merit or Distinction. Distinctions are normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 70% or more, including a mark of 70% or over in their dissertation, for all level 7 modules on their programme. A Merit is normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 60% or more for all level 7 modules. A Pass is normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 50% or more for all level 7 modules. Level 6 modules included as part of the programme are not included in the calculation for degree classification for postgraduate programmes.

Failure and Re-assessment of a Module

- The Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study outline how an examination board should treat a failed module when considering progression and awards. However, each examination board is responsible for judging, within these regulations, whether a fail can be “compensated” (i.e. whether you can be awarded credit for that module even if you have not actually passed), whether you will need to re-take the module or whether you will be able to attempt a re-assessment.

- For any module on a postgraduate programme, if your module result is less than 40% any subsequent attempt to pass the module will normally be a “re-take” – a re-take requires attendance at the module’s lectures and seminars as well as another attempt at the assessment.

- If you obtain a module result of between 40% and 49% for any module on a postgraduate programme then the Board of Examiners may offer “re-assessment” as an alternative to a “re-take”. Re-assessment is where a student will re-attempt a failed element of a failed module; it does not require
attendance at lectures and seminars. You will not normally be reassessed in elements that you have already passed.

- A Board of Examiners may offer an alternative form of assessment for failed elements as part of a re-assessment regime.

- The timing of any re-assessment will be at the discretion of the Board of Examiners; this will normally be either at the next normal assessment opportunity or in some instances before the beginning of the next academic year.

- You will normally be offered two attempts at passing a module (the original attempt plus one further attempt which will either be a re-assessment or a re-take). After this, if the module has not been passed it will be classed either as a “compensated fail” or a fail. In some cases this will mean that it will not be possible for you to gain the award that you have registered for; in such cases, your registration will normally be terminated.

- If your module result is between 40 and 49% your Board of Examiners may award a “compensated fail”. This will mean that you retain the module result, but are awarded credit for that module. An MA or MSc may be awarded to a student carrying no more than 30 credits as compensated fail. A core module may not be treated as a compensated fail; core modules must be passed in order to gain the award. The awards of MRes, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate do not normally permit the inclusion of compensated fail results in the calculation of classification.

Capping of Re-Assessment

A cap of 50% will be imposed on any reassessment of work, except where mitigating circumstances have been accepted on the failed assessment, and students will be permitted to re-submit without penalty.

Information is also provided on the Regulations webpage of the My Birkbeck website here: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/central-pages/mitigating-circumstances](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/central-pages/mitigating-circumstances)

Common Award Scheme Policies

As part of the introduction of the Common Awards Scheme, the College has implemented a number of College-wide policies. The full policies can be seen at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs)

Late Submission of work for assessment

- College policy which dictates how Schools will treat work that is due for assessment but is submitted after the published deadline. Any work that is
submitted for formal assessment after the published deadline is given two marks: a penalty mark of 50% for postgraduate students, assuming it is of a pass standard, and the ‘real’ mark that would have been awarded if the work had not been late. Both marks are given to the student on a cover sheet. If the work is not of a pass standard a single mark is given.

- If you submit late work that is to be considered for assessment then you should provide written documentation, medical or otherwise, to explain why the work was submitted late. You will need to complete a standard mitigating circumstances pro-forma (please see below) and submit it, with documentary evidence as appropriate, to your Tutor or Programme Director. The case will then be considered by the appropriate sub-board or delegated panel.

- If no case is made then the penalty mark will stand. If the case is made and accepted then the examination board may allow the ‘real” mark to stand.

**Assessment Offences**

**What is Plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is the publication of borrowed thoughts as original, and it is the most common form of examination offence encountered in universities. Some students plagiarise unintentionally, through ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism. Yet, even if unintentional, plagiarism will still be considered a serious examination offence. There are several common forms of plagiarism:

- copying the whole or substantial parts of an essay or dissertation from a source text (such as a book, journal article, web site, or encyclopaedia) without proper acknowledgement;

- paraphrasing another person’s work very closely, with minor changes but with the essential meaning, form and/or progression of ideas maintained;

- procuring the whole or parts of an essay or dissertation from a company or an essay bank (including websites);

- submitting another person’s work as one’s own, with or without that person’s knowledge;

- submitting an essay or dissertation written by someone else (such as a peer or relative) and passing it off as one’s own;

- re-submitting work that has been previously submitted for another course (i.e. self-plagiarism).

In short, in all written work, sources must be properly documented and referenced. Every quoted passage taken directly from the work of another has to be clearly marked as such by the use of quotation marks. The full reference, including page
number, should be given for each quotation. In addition, all paraphrased material should be appropriately used and cited. There are some common-sense exceptions, such as familiar proverbs, well-known quotations or common knowledge. If in doubt give the reference, in the appropriate form, or ask your tutor for advice.

Plagiarism policy

To ensure that students are aware of the seriousness of plagiarism, each piece of submitted work (that is, all essays and the dissertation) must be accompanied by a declaration signed by the student, which certifies that the student is familiar with the School policy on plagiarism and that the work being submitted is her or her own. In addition, each piece of submitted work must be submitted as an e-mail attachment. The electronic copy of the work may be fed into the JISC plagiarism detection service.

Penalties for plagiarism

Plagiarism undermines the entire basis for academic awards given to students. This is why the University, the College and the School take it extremely seriously: plagiarism will not be tolerated and is treated as a serious disciplinary matter. Action will be taken wherever plagiarism is suspected. In these cases, students will receive a formal letter from the department, outlining the internal disciplinary proceedings for dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism, as well as the possible penalties. If plagiarism is confirmed, harsh penalties will be imposed. In all cases, candidates will fail on the work concerned: no plagiarized work will count towards the completion of the course. Students may also be liable to further disciplinary action, including termination of the programme of study and permanent exclusion from study at Birkbeck College.

These penalties also apply to cases where plagiarism is only detected after a mark has been awarded. In such cases, the mark will be revoked. Indeed, an entire degree can be revoked retrospectively if there is evidence of plagiarism. For further details on the College’s procedures, please consult the College Policy on Assessment Offences which can be found on the Registry’s website at:

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs

- The College Policy on Assessment Offences incorporates the College policy on plagiarism.

- The policy describes three stages in the process for dealing with assessment offences (which include plagiarism, collusion, examination offences and other offences). The first stage allows for a very rapid and local determination for first or minor and uncontested offences. Stage 2 allows for a formal school investigation, where a student wishes to contest the allegation or penalty, where there is an allegation of a repeat offence or for more serious cases. Stage 3 involves a centrally convened panel for third and serious offences, dealt with under the Code of Student Discipline.
• The College treats all assessment offences seriously. It makes strenuous efforts to detect plagiarism, including using web-based software that can provide clear evidence. If you are in any doubt as to what constitutes acceptable conduct you should consult your personal tutor or another member of academic staff. The College has a wide range of sanctions that it may apply in cases of plagiarism, including the termination of a student’s registration in the most serious cases.

Mitigating Circumstances

• The College Policy on Mitigating Circumstances determines how boards of examiners will treat assessment that has been affected by adverse circumstances. Mitigating Circumstances are defined as unforeseen, unpreventable circumstances that significantly disrupt your performance in assessment. This should not be confused with long term issues such as medical conditions, for which the College can make adjustments before assessment (for guidance on how arrangements can be made in these cases please see the College’s Procedures for Dealing with Special Examination Arrangements).

• A Mitigating Circumstances claim should be submitted if valid detrimental circumstances result in:

  a) the late or non-submission of assessment;
  b) non-attendance at examination(s);
  c) poor performance in assessment.

• For a claim to be accepted you must produce independent documentary evidence to show that the circumstances:

  a) have detrimentally affected your performance or will do so, with respect to the above;
  b) were unforeseen;
  c) were out of your control and could not have been prevented;
  d) relate directly to the timing of the assessment affected.

• Documentation should be presented, wherever possible, on the official headed paper of the issuing body, and should normally include the dates of the period in which the circumstances applied. Copies of documentary evidence will not normally be accepted. If you need an original document for another purpose, you should bring the original into the School Office so that a copy can be made by a member of College staff. (Where a photocopy is made by a member of staff they should indicate on the copy that they have seen the original).

• Discussing your claim with a member of staff does not constitute a submission of a claim of mitigating circumstances.

• You are encouraged to submit your claim for mitigating circumstances in
advance and at the earliest opportunity. The final deadline for submission of a claim is normally 1 week after the final examination unless otherwise stated by your School. Where possible, claims should be submitted using the standard College Mitigating Circumstances claim form (available from your School office) which should be submitted in accordance with the procedure for submission published by your School. Claims should always be supported by appropriate documentary evidence.

- You should be aware that individual marks will almost never be changed in the light of mitigating circumstances. Assessment is designed to test your achievement rather than your potential; it is not normally possible to gauge what you would have achieved had mitigating circumstances not arisen. Where mitigating circumstances are accepted, and it is judged by an examination board that these circumstances were sufficiently severe to have affected your performance in assessment the usual response will be to offer you another opportunity for assessment without penalty, at the next available opportunity.

- Guidance on what may constitute acceptable mitigating circumstances is available as an appendix to the policy, available from http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs or your School office; you should note that this is not an exhaustive list, and that each case will be treated on its merits by the relevant sub-board or delegated body.
Writing your assignments

Some students are already very confident about writing assignments when they commence the MSc programme, many others are less so. We have put together some ideas about how to get started that you may find helpful if you consider yourself to be part of the latter group. Please see below.

First thoughts:

- Why has the question been set?
- What specific areas of the module or course does it relate to?
- What do you think the question is about?
- What are you being asked to demonstrate:-
  - specific subject knowledge?
  - personal experience?
  - understanding of theory and practice?
  - communication skills?
  …..?
- Have you checked the hand-in date and planned your timetable?

Time management and your assignment - a suggested timetable:

Work backwards from the deadline and plan your timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During module</th>
<th>Stage one</th>
<th>Stage two</th>
<th>Stage three</th>
<th>On return of assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note comments from previous assignment where applicable</td>
<td>Decide your focus and collect materials/information/evidence Plan – share with peers</td>
<td>First draft share with peers Second draft Check references and bibliography if used</td>
<td>Final draft Edit</td>
<td>Receive marked and graded work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log ideas and reflect on relevance for you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check and reflect on comments – similarities and differences with your self assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions to consider when planning:

- What are the main issues/ideas/debates?
- How will you cover the ideas? Consider the relationship between secondary sources, writers, practice, or personal experience?
- What will the main points be?
- What sources and evidence will you draw on? How much are you required to use your own experience – what other sources will be helpful?
- What examples, references, quotes will be useful?
- What conclusions will you reach?
- Are there any theoretical/practical implications in your conclusions?

Getting started:

- Make a list of issues / write down ideas and words on separate pieces of paper or on one piece of paper / draw a mind map.
- Discuss your thoughts with other class participants.

First draft

Establish arguments and key sequences as follows:

- make a claim
- define terms: put them in context
- introduce complicating factors: examples in context
- suggests possible outcomes to questions posed
- use specific information from other sources to support conclusions
- conclusion: take a position.

Support your argument by:

- using logical reasoning
- citing authorities
- drawing on findings of research/empirical evidence
- drawing reflectively on personal life experience
- being constructively critical of own and others work and ideas
- questioning ideas, information or research findings; reflect on underlying attitudes, approaches and assumptions, including your own and discuss them in your assignment.

Ask yourself:

- What are my own views?
- What would the opposite views be?
- Whose side (if any) am I on?
- Are any values or political issues involved?
- What assumptions underpin the argument in what I am hearing/reading?
Editing

Introduction

- Tell the reader what you are going to do and how you will approach the assignment task; explain what format you have used and why.

Main body of assignment

- includes argument, evidence and analysis, ideas in a logical sequence
- evaluate your argument - have you *signposted* your argument in the main body using paragraphing to help you move through your argument logically
- distinguish between your own and others evidence
- made sure that the information is relevant
- indicated what the implications of the argument are

Conclusion

- sum up ideas and highlight key points
- state conclusions relating them to the assignment task; made sure your conclusion is relevant, summarises your argument and follows logically
- implications for further explorations
- references

Proofing

- check spelling, grammar (beware, spellcheckers can you let down)
- punctuation
- presentation

Re-reading your assignment

- read it aloud - does it make sense?
- ask someone to read it - does it make sense to them?
- have you said all you wanted to - check back with notes etc
- are your ideas in logical order? edit, link etc
- is evidence correct - check details you are unsure of

Using feedback

- check you understand points being made; if not, ASK
- discuss areas to concentrate on in your next assignment
- categorise comments made
- compare feedback with your own assessment of your assignment
- re-read feedback, before completing next assignment
Harvard System: References and Bibliography

All written work should be presented according to the Harvard system, in which the author, date of publication, and page reference are placed in brackets in the text, thus (Butcher, 1975: 38). In the Harvard System, the reference comprises the author’s surname, date of publication and page number in the form: (Barnett 1972: 33). When reference is made to two or more works, they are separated by a semi-colon (Barnett 1972: 33; Davis 1957: 78-9). If an author has published more than one work in a given year the works are distinguished by letters (Sforza 1929a: 21; 1929b: 456-500). The citation is placed before the punctuation closing the sentence or clause. Every citation (first, second or subsequent) takes the same form.

In this system, the bibliography is formatted differently, with the author’s surname and initial followed immediately by the date of publication. The name of the publisher is also essential.

There are many freely available guides to the Harvard system online. You might want to turn to one of these useful resources to check the specific format for referencing different kinds of publications.
Grades and Marking Criteria

Grades

There are four classes of assessment for MA essays: Distinction (including High Distinction), Merit, Pass and Fail. The table below lists the qualities that are required in the different MA classifications and the factors that are taken into account when we mark MA work. Frequently, essays do not fall neatly into any one band. For example, an essay might have the ‘lucid and well-structured argument’ of a Merit while deploying the ‘fairly fluent prose style’ of a Pass. In such cases the marker has to weigh these qualities against each other and strike a balance in the final mark and classification.

Marking criteria

Each essay will be marked by a first maker and a second marker. In addition, our external examiners examine a wide range of pieces of coursework to ensure equal application of the marking criteria by different markers and across the MA programmes. These criteria will also be applied when assessing the work of disabled students (including those with dyslexia), on the assumption that they receive prior learning support. Students who think they might qualify for support should refer to the Disability Statement in this handbook for further information.

80-100% High Distinction

Intellectual independence, when grounded in a mature consideration of available evidence, will be awarded a high first class mark (80+), especially in cases where the answer develops ideas that are original and is structured in a way that enables the writer to develop independent lines of thought. In comparison to lower first-class examples, the structure and logical flow of the argument are exceptionally smooth. The candidate provides a profound engagement with the relevant historiography. A high first class essay possesses all the qualities of work of distinction level, but performed to an exceptional standard in most area, and demonstrates the potential for publication.

70-79% Distinction

The answer engages closely with the question set and shows a critical understanding of its wider implications. The structure of the answer facilitates a coherent and convincing argument. Descriptive material and factual evidence is used to support and develop the writer’s argument, and is deployed with attention to relevance and an appropriate economy of expression. The candidate demonstrates an advanced command of critical vocabulary and the rules of grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation. References (including quotations, footnotes and the bibliography) are immaculately presented.
The writing is clear, fluent, and accurate. The vocabulary and concepts used are appropriate to the case being developed. The answer does more than paraphrase other scholars’ ideas and demonstrates a conceptual understanding of the historical/cultural/literary (and, where appropriate, historiographical) issues at stake.

Relevant knowledge is both broad and deep. This includes knowledge of relevant contemporary sources and modern scholarship. The range of reading implied by the answer is extensive. The answer demonstrates a clear understanding of the relevant issues. The candidate shows an ability to move between generalization and detailed discussion, and can synthesize as well as particularize. The candidate is able to evaluate the nature and status of information at his or her disposal, and where necessary can identify contradiction and attempt a resolution. The answer demonstrates an informed and confident understanding of the historical period or periods/literary texts under discussion.

60-69% Merit

The answer displays an understanding of the question and makes a serious attempt to engage with it. The structure of the answer facilitates a clear development of the candidate’s argument; however, towards the lower end of the class candidates may not sustain an analytical approach throughout. Descriptive material and factual evidence are deployed as relevant. Lower level: answers are less effective at explaining the argumentative implications of evidence cited. The candidate demonstrates an accurate command of critical vocabulary and the rules of grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation. References (including quotations, footnotes and bibliography) are accurately presented. The writing is clear and generally accurate, and demonstrates an understanding of the concepts used by scholars. The answer deploys other scholars’ ideas and shows an appreciation of the extent to which historical/cultural/literary explanations are contested. Although the answer may not demonstrate real originality, the candidate presents ideas with a degree of intellectual independence, and demonstrates an ability to reflect on the relevant issues.

Knowledge is extensive and includes reference to appropriate contemporary sources and modern scholarship. The range of reading implied by the answer is considerable. The answer reveals a sense of the nature of relevant issues. The candidate shows an ability to move between generalization and detailed discussion, although there may be a tendency toward either an over-generalized or an over-particularized response. Candidates reflect on the nature and status of information at their disposal, and seek to use it critically. The answer demonstrates a secure understanding of the issues.

50-59% Pass

The answer displays some understanding of the question set, but may lack a sustained focus and may show only a modest understanding of the question’s wider implications. The structure of the answer may be heavily influenced by the material at the writer’s disposal rather than by the requirements of the question set. Ideas may be stated rather than developed. Descriptive material and factual evidence are deployed, but not necessarily with the kind of critical reflections characteristic of answers in
higher classes. Demonstrates an adequate command of critical vocabulary and the rules of grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation. References (including quotations, footnotes and bibliography) largely presented accurately, but may include some inconsistencies.

The writing is sufficiently accurate to convey the writer’s meaning clearly, but it may lack fluency and qualities of critical analysis. In places expression may be clumsy. The answer shows some understanding of scholars’ ideas, but may fail to reflect critically upon them. The problematic nature of historical/cultural/literary/sociological explanations may be imperfectly understood. The answer is unlikely to show originality in approach or argument, and may tend towards the assertion of essentially derivative ideas. Knowledge is significant, but may be limited and patchy. There may be some inaccuracy but basic knowledge is sound. The range of reading implied by the answer is limited. The answer shows some limited awareness of the relevant issues. The candidate may be prone to being drawn into excessive narrative or mere description, and may want to display knowledge without reference to the precise requirements of the question. Information may be used rather uncritically, without serious attempts to evaluate its status and significance. The answer demonstrates some appreciation of the nature of the historical period or periods/literary texts under discussion.

0-49% Fail

The answer displays little understanding of the question, and the candidate may tend to write indiscriminately around the question. The answer has a structure but this may be underdeveloped, and the argument may be incomplete and unfold in a haphazard or undisciplined manner. Some descriptive material and factual evidence is deployed, but without any critical reflection on its significance and relevance. References (including quotations, footnotes and bibliography) are poorly presented and lack important information. Quality of argument and expression: The writing is generally grammatically correct, but it lacks the analytical sophistication to construct an argument of any complexity. In places the writing may lack clarity of expression. There is little appreciation of the problematic or contested nature of the relevant issues. The answer shows no intentional originality of approach.

There is sufficient knowledge to frame a basic answer to the question, but it is limited and patchy. There is some inaccuracy, but adequate material is present to frame a rudimentary answer to the question. The answer implies relevant reading but that this is slight in range. There is an understanding of educational issues, where relevant, but it is underdeveloped, and the ideas of scholars may be muddled or misrepresented. There is an argument, but the candidate may be prone to excessive narrative, and the argument may be signposted by bald assertion rather than informed generalizations. There is sufficient information to launch an answer, but perhaps not to sustain a complete response. Information is used uncritically as if always self-explanatory. The answer will demonstrate appreciation of the nature of the historical period or periods/literary texts under discussion, but at rudimentary level.
30-39% Fail

The answer displays a lack of understanding of the question. The answer is very poorly structured and lacks a clear narrative. Some factual evidence is presented, but it is inaccurate and/or irrelevant. The writing is not coherent and may be in the form of disjointed sentences. The candidate appears insufficiently competent to develop an argument. There is no appreciation of the contested nature of the relevant issues. There is insufficient knowledge to frame an answer to the question.

0-29% Fail

No evidence of understanding or knowledge. A completely inadequate or incompetent response in all the above categories. Within this range it may be helpful to differentiate between answers that - show a minimal effort and may be of some length (20-29) - are very short and vague, involving guesswork rather than knowledge. At the lowest levels (0-19) the essay will constitute not more than a few words of dubious relevance.
General College Information and guidelines

These Guidelines, which should be used alongside the Module Guides, are designed to help you understand the course requirements. For any additional information that you might need, please do contact a member of the course team.

You may also find the following helpful:
- Student handbook
- Guide to Central Computing Services
- Disability Handbook

In addition to library and computing facilities (see below), Birkbeck students have access to a number of facilities, including:
- Birkbeck Students’ Union and ULU
- London University Careers Advice Service
- Counselling and study skills support
- Financial support
- Disability support
- Health care and counselling

Full details of these services can be found on the Birkbeck webpages – www.bbk.ac.uk.

Other useful Birkbeck websites include:
- Student Union: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/su
- Library: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib
- Computer services: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing
- Learning support: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support
- Disability office: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/disability
- Personal support: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/well-being-service/counselling-service
- Events including public lectures: www.bbk.ac.uk/news/listing.html

Electronic communication and Central Computing Services

All students are given a computer user ID and password upon enrolment and this enables you to use the Birkbeck Central Computing Services, which will provide you with general computing support. You do not need any previous computing experience to use the CCS facilities – there are leaflets, short courses and a Helpdesk available for you. We assume you will take advantage of this and we expect to have an email address for every student: this can be their College, work or home email address. Email will be our normal means of communicating with you. To contact Central Computing Services tel: 020 7631 6543 or email: its-helpdesk@bbk.ac.uk.
Support for students with Disabilities, Dyslexia and Mental Health Needs

At Birkbeck there are students with a wide range of disabilities, specific learning difficulties, medical conditions and mental health conditions (hereinafter referred to as disabled students). Many of them have benefited from the advice and support provided by the College’s Wellbeing Centre. The Wellbeing Centre is located in G26 on the Ground floor of the Malet Street building.

All enquiries should come to the Wellbeing Centre (tel. 0207 631 6316), who will determine the appropriate referral to specialists in the Disability and Dyslexia Service and Mental Health Service. They can provide advice and support on travel and parking, physical access, the Disabled Students’ Allowance, specialist equipment, personal support, examination arrangements, etc.

On enrolment you need to complete a Study Support Plan (SSP), which will set out the reasonable adjustments that we will make with physical access, lectures, seminars, assessments and exams. After you complete this and provide disability evidence, we confirm the adjustments you require and then your department, examinations office, etc. will be informed that your SSP is available and adjustments can be made. You should contact the Wellbeing Service if any of your adjustments are not in place.

Access at Birkbeck

Birkbeck’s main buildings have wheelchair access, accessible lifts and toilets, our reception desks and teaching venues have induction loops for people with hearing impairments, and we have large print and tactile signage. Accessible parking, lockers, specialist seating in lectures and seminars and portable induction loops can all be arranged by the Disability & Dyslexia Service.

The Disabled Students’ Allowance

UK and EU (with migrant worker status) disabled students on undergraduate and postgraduate courses are eligible to apply for the Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA). The DSA provides specialist equipment including computers with assistive technology and training, personal help (e.g., study skills tutors, mentors and BSL interpreters) and additional travel costs for students who have to use taxis. It provides thousands of pounds worth of support and all the evidence shows that students who receive it are more likely to complete their courses successfully. The Wellbeing Centre can provide further information on the DSA and can assist you in applying to Student Finance England for this support. From September 2016, new students will receive their note-taking support from the University rather than the DSA.
Support in your Department

Your Department is responsible for making reasonable adjustments in learning and teaching and assessment, including permission to record lectures, specialist seating, extensions on coursework, etc. Whilst we anticipate that this support will be provided by the Programme Director, tutors and Programme Administrator in the Department, they will also have a Disability Lead. If you experience any difficulties or require additional support from the Department then they may also be able to assist you. They may be contacted through the Programme Administrator.

Support in IT Services and Library Services

There is a comprehensive range of specialist equipment for students with disabilities in IT Services. This includes an Assistive Technology Room, which may be booked by disabled students. We have software packages for dyslexic students (e.g. Claroread and Mind view), screen reading and character enhancing software for students with visual impairments available in our computer laboratories, specialist scanning software, large monitors, ergonomic mice and keyboards, specialist orthopaedic chairs, etc. We have an Assistive Technology Officer, who can be contacted via IT Services.

The Library has an Assistive Technology Centre, where there is also a range of specialist equipment, including an electronic magnifier for visually impaired students, as well as specialist orthopaedic chairs and writing slopes. The Disability and Dyslexia Service Office refers all students with disabilities to the Library Access Support service, who provide a comprehensive range of services for students with disabilities and dyslexia.

Examinations and Assessments

Many disabled students can receive support in examinations, including additional time, use of a computer, etc. In exceptional circumstances, students may be offered an alternative form of assessment.

Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia)

Mature students who experienced problems at school are often unaware that these problems may result from their being dyslexic. Whilst dyslexia cannot be cured, you can learn strategies to make studying significantly easier. If you think you may be dyslexic you can take an online screening test in the computer laboratories – the instructions for the screening test are available on the Disability Office website. If appropriate, you will be referred to an Educational Psychologist for a dyslexia assessment. Some students can receive assistance in meeting the cost of this assessment, either from their employer or from Birkbeck.

Further information

For further information, please call the Wellbeing Centre on 020 7631 6316 or email disability@bbk.ac.uk.
**General Reading List**

For additional reading, see module guides.

Dwyer, P (204) *Understanding social citizenship: themes and perspectives for policy and practice*, Bristol: Policy Press
Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Neighbourhood Renewal Skills and Knowledge Programme, Dec. 2001 (www.neighbourhood.odpm.gov.uk/skills/0.1htm*
Together We Can Plan http://civilrenewal.communities.gov.uk/civil/together-we-can/
Diversity and Inclusive Education London: Routledge
Walzer, M (1983) Spheres of Justice: a defence of pluralism and equality, Oxford: Martin Robertson