

Programme Specification

1	Awarding body	University of London
2	Teaching Institution	Birkbeck College
3	Programme Title(s)	MA Medieval Literature and Culture
4	Programme Code(s)	TMAMLTCU_C
5	UCAS code (if applicable)	N/A
6	Home Department	English, Theatre and Creative Writing
7	Exit Award(s)	PG Dip; PG Cert
8	Duration of Study (number of years)	FT 1 year; PT 2 years
9	Mode of Study	FT/PT
10	Level of Award (FHEQ)	7
11	Other teaching depts or institution	Department of History, Classics and Archaeology Department of Art History
12	Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body(PSRB) details	N/A
13	QAA Benchmark Group	N/A

14	Programme Rationale & Aims
	This programme offers the opportunity to make a special study of the medieval period, considering the richness and diversity of its literature, art and history. It is possible to study in either an interdisciplinary or a more literary way.

15	Entry Criteria
	At least a second-class honours degree, and an interest in and aptitude for study of medieval culture at the MA level.

16	Learning Outcomes
	A combination of taught core and option modules with an independent research component enables you to tailor the programme to your personal interests. The programme allows you to engage with advanced work at Master's level and is also an excellent preparation for doctoral research. Students at Birkbeck have access to some of the best resources in the world for medieval research, being close to many renowned research libraries, galleries, museums and manuscript repositories. This programme teaches the skills which are needed to explore those riches in original and scholarly ways.

17	Learning, teaching and assessment methods
	Students take one of the following core modules (depending on year of entry): either 'Medieval Text and Intertext' or 'Medieval Material Texts'.

Medieval Text and Intertext (2014 and alternate years): This course uses English literary case studies to consider key issues within medieval literature. It will explore questions around genre, form and intertextuality to prise open the subject of medieval literary theory. What was an author in the Middle Ages? What is the relationship between translation and composition in this period? Why might writers choose to write in the vernacular, rather than a higher status and more universal language like Latin? How did medieval writers receive and engage with the work of others, perhaps from other cultures and languages? How did medieval writers understand and use the concept of genre?

This module will explore these topics (and others) whilst studying a selection from the most sparkling and extraordinary English writing of the Middle Ages: from Epic and Romance (such as Beowulf or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight), to Dream Vision and social satire (such as William Langland's Piers Plowman and Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales).

Medieval Material Texts (2015 and alternate years): This course will focus principally on medieval English material texts, thinking about writing in a manuscript culture. It will consider the question of books, parchment, documents of different kinds, considering the relationship between their contents and their physical form. Students will look at the practical topics of how books were made, bought, and consumed in different moments and places in the Middle Ages. It will ask about the relation in medieval manuscript culture between text, image and performance and explore the interrelationship between literature and other sorts of writing: legal and bureaucratic, ecclesiastical and devotional. Students will be encouraged to consider the intellectual questions which surround book production and consumption, issues such as: how reading and book production changes over time; what literacy means, perhaps particularly in relation to social status and gender; how book production might have been controlled and censored; what impact printing and other technological innovations (such as digitization) have had on the reception of medieval texts and images.

Option modules will reflect the research interests of Birkbeck staff from the [Department of English and Humanities](#), but also from the disciplines of history, archaeology and art history. Part time students in their second year may take the core module as an option. Other options will variously cover: Middle English and Anglo-Saxon literature and books; religious, cultural, political and gender history; visual and literary theory; the archaeology of a number of different parts of Europe; and European architecture and art.

This programme encourages students to develop key research skills in medieval research, while promoting the use of modern theoretical frameworks to structure a study of the literature, people, places, artistic productions and social patterns in the medieval past.

Students gain guided practice in essential research skills that may include paleography, transcription, manuscript provenance identification and dating, working with a variety of types of primary and secondary sources, and generating and developing scholarly projects. Where necessary, the program offers further training in languages, including Old English, Old Norse, and Middle English. Students write four essays grounded in primary research that allow them to begin situating themselves within and contributing to a given field within medieval studies. The culmination of the programme is the production of a piece of original, independent scholarly work in the form of the M.A. dissertation that will, in some cases, support the pursuit of the Ph.D. The dissertation module is supported by a core module on approaching research into medieval topics.

18	Programme Description
<p>All students are required to take the MA Core Module in their first term of study.</p> <p>Full Time students take an additional three option modules, one in their first term of study and two in their second.</p> <p>Part Time students take an additional three option modules in the three terms that follow their first.</p> <p>Students complete a dissertation in their final summer of study. The dissertation module is also supported by a module on approaching research into medieval culture which offers a series of workshops on different aspects of study and writing. Part time students will take this module in year one and year two.</p>	

19	Programme Structure			
Full Time programme				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	AREN190S7 or AREN189S7	Medieval Text and Intertext or Medieval Material Texts	30	Core
7		Option 1	30	Option
7		Option 2	30	Option
7		Option 3	30	Option
7	AREN196D7	Dissertation	60	Core
7	AREN049Z7	MA Medieval Literature and Culture: Approaching Research into Medieval Culture	0	Core
Part Time programme				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	AREN190S7 or AREN189S7	Medieval Text and Intertext or Medieval Material Texts	30	Core
7	Option	Option 1	30	Option
7	AREN049Z7	MA Medieval Literature and Culture: Approaching Research into Medieval Culture	0	Core
Year 2				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	Option	Option 2	30	Option
7	Option	Option 3	30	Option
7	AREN196D7	Dissertation	60	Core
7	AREN049Z7	MA Medieval Literature and Culture: Approaching Research into Medieval Culture	0	Core

Status*

CORE – Module must be taken and passed by student; COMPULSORY – Module must be taken, mark can be reviewed at sub-exam board; OPTIONAL – Student can choose to take this module

Year of entry: 2021/22



20	Programme Director	Isabel Davis
21	Start Date (<i>term/year</i>)	Prior to 2008/9
22	Date approved by TQEC	Prior to 2008/9
23	Date approved by Academic Board	Prior to 2008/9
24	Date(s) updated/amended	September 2014