

## **Why study History at Manchester.**

The Samuel Alexander Building which houses the Department of History

(Jpeg image)

Manchester is an historically iconic city which draws cultural energy from its past. Rich in the knowledge of its contribution to the development of the modern world, it is an exciting place in which to study History. Our educational vision is to build upon this sense of the vitality of the past to ask the big historical questions through which we can engage students and then train them to become fully-fledged historians capable of undertaking authentic research projects. These are skills that employers find particularly useful.

Manchester is well placed to realize that vision and the University has an extraordinary range of historical expertise. It offers over forty undergraduate History courses ranging in time from the Ancient World to Contemporary History. Areas of study include not just Britain and Europe, but also Asia and China and World History. Students are in addition encouraged to study history courses in other disciplinary areas, such as the History of Medicine. The course structure allows students to elect to study for a fourth year after which they receive the degree of MHist. This option has proved very attractive to students who feel that they want to continue to study in particular areas that have excited them.

There is an unrivalled wealth of resources on our doorstep, the result both of Manchester's pride in the past and of its cultural ambition today. The John Rylands Library at Deansgate houses one of the nation's major collections of manuscripts and early printed books, and Chetham's Library holdings constitute another nationally important collection of early-modern material. Together they form a unique cultural asset. Along with Manchester City Council's Archives Project, Imperial War Museum North (250,000 visitors in 2010), People's History Museum (totally refurbished in 2010), and the Working-Class Movement Library they give Manchester the richest archive of primary materials in Northern England. The use of such primary materials forms an important part of the BA degree work. Manchester was the first University to make research part of the undergraduate curriculum. The BA History Dissertation is a final year research project based on primary sources. History at Manchester thus gives the students the opportunity to choose from broadest range of courses possible, to specialize, and to be trained in research techniques in the use of different materials, and, importantly, the degree provides training in how to write History in a clear, cogent and attractive way.

## **Teaching**

The BA History Programme begins with core courses that cover the medieval through to modern periods and also British, European and non-European History, plus a course in the techniques of studying and writing History at University level. The second year offers a suite of more advanced core courses, leading towards specialization in the third year. The BA dissertation is done in a

conjunction with a third year course, which allows for a significant amount of specialization. There is then an option to continue studying for a fourth year leading to the degree of MHist. The fourth year courses are masters level courses.

Teaching is by lecture and seminar/workshop. Students receive three hours teaching per week on each course taken, and six courses are taken in each year. This gives an average contact time of nine hours per week. One of the courses in the first year is an extended essay relating to the training in the concepts and methods of historical work. A second year 'long essay' also forms one of the six courses, and in the third year the BA dissertation counts for two courses. The aim here is to build up skills in research and writing. The lecturer overseeing that writing acts as the student's Academic Advisor, who will help develop research topics, advise over course choice and monitor the student's overall progress. Academic Advisors also get the students to think about what next after the degree.

Electronic resources are used to the full in teaching, in particular to make sure that the materials needed for discussion are readily available. There is University system ('Backboard') which acts a noticeboard and discussion forum for each course. This allows online teaching tailored to each course. All courses are assessed by at least 50% coursework in the form of essays or presentations or source commentaries. All work is submitted and marked electronically, with feedback to the student guaranteed within a fortnight. Lecture rooms are equipped with electronic resources for online research demonstration and power point presentations.

The first year must be passed but does not count in the final degree classification. The second year average counts towards 25% of the final result, the third year 75%. For those going on to the MHist the second and third years count for 50%, and the fourth for 50%. Assessment must include at least 50% coursework. Written examinations never account for more than 50% of marks.

Programmes in History run by the University of Manchester include : History Honours; Politics and Modern History, History and Sociology; Modern History with Economics; Modern Languages and History.

### **Research**

The University of Manchester has one of finest research libraries in Britain, the John Rylands Library. The city also has Chetham's Library, a nationally important collection of early books. The University library itself is only yards from the History Department and has a large stock of lending books. Reading lists are designed so that each student is guaranteed access to the key works on each of their courses. The library has invested heavily in electronic resources, and students are now able to access most journals from their home computers.

The staff of the History Department are highly research active, engaged both in traditional scholarly work and in interdisciplinary research. Amongst the books published in the Department this year

alone are W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds.), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press), L. Jerram, *Streetlife: the Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press), P. Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees 1956-62* (Cambridge University Press), S. Mossman, *Marquard von Lindau and the Challenges of Religious Life I late Medieval Germany: the Passion, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary* (Oxford University Press). The department holds research grants from Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council, the Leverhulme Trust and the Wellcome Foundation. It is recognized as a 'doctoral college' by the Economic and Social Research Council. There are at any one time about one hundred and sixty masters and research students in the Department, making it one of the largest postgraduate research Departments in the UK. The postgraduates give the Department a research ethos that enhances the undergraduate experience. That a significant proportion of Manchester History graduates carry on to do masters and research work in the Department is a reflection of that ethos. There is a regular postgraduate research seminar as well as Departmental Research seminar. Doctoral students may lead undergraduate seminars.

### **Employability**

In the 'sixth-month' snapshot of graduate employment Manchester rates poorly, but for one year and after it does well (an unusual number of Manchester graduates, it seems, go travelling for the first six months!) Employers value the Manchester degree.

Some of the companies employing our graduates (image)

Most History graduates undertake further training or enter into postgraduate study. Further career paths followed by our graduates include Law, Education, Management, Insurance, Computing/IT, Marketing, Advertising, Retail Management, TV/Radio, Journalism, Chartered Accountancy, Public Relations, Social Work, Banking, Human Resources/Personnel, Management Consultancy.

Notable graduates have included Anna Ford (newsreader), David Aaronovitch (journalist and broadcaster) and the 'Chemical Brothers' (musicians)

### **Intake and number of full time staff**

There are currently 27 full time members of staff in the Department of History, although there are many other Historians in other Departments in the University who contribute to the History degree. The intake of History Honours student is roughly 140, with another 100 students taken onto joint degrees with History.

### **Links**

Our brochures are downloadable at

<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduatestudy/index.htm>

the History video is available at:

<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/subjectareas/history/>