



6th September 2013

Dear Student,

On behalf of the Department of History at UCL, I am writing to welcome you to the Department and to the MA in Ancient History, and to explain a few things about what awaits you when you arrive to begin your studies. This letter is rather long, but should help you find your bearings more quickly. Further information is provided in the two departmental handbooks which are both enclosed. Please read all these documents carefully. If you have questions to which you cannot find an answer, please bring them along to our first meeting (see below) and I shall do my best to answer them.

Enrolment and introductory meetings

Induction begins the week commencing 23rd September and you will find enclosed a schedule with a full list of times and locations for departmental induction events. The first meeting of induction week will be a general welcome to the Department of History on Tuesday 24th September, 10.00-11.00. We will have the chance to meet in person for the first time on 24th September 12.00-1.00. In this meeting I will provide you with an introduction to the Department and the degree. Later that day, at 5.00 pm will be the Departmental welcome party for all Postgraduates. You will be able to make an appointment to see me to discuss your course choices and ask any other questions you may have on 25th September, between 11.00 and 1.00. Another key event takes place on Tuesday 24th September at 14.00, when there is an induction session in Senate House in Malet Street. Here, you will find out more about courses available to you at other Colleges, and about the Institute of Classical Studies (ICS), located in Senate House, where some of the teaching will take place and where you will have access to one of the world's best research libraries in classics and ancient history.

Access to the ICS Library is free for graduate students at the University of London, but you are strongly advised to take out membership of the *Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies* (better known as the Hellenic Society) or the *Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies* (Roman Society), or both, at the cheap student rate, since this confers the valuable right to borrow books and journals, as well as the added benefit of receiving the journals *JHS*, *JRS* and/or *Britannia* (see <http://icls.sas.ac.uk/institute> for details).

Course structure and teaching

The MA provides a bridge between the largely teacher-led study of an undergraduate degree and the predominantly self-directed study of a research student. The MA Ancient History consists of 120 credits' worth of taught courses (including one compulsory), running from October to June, and a dissertation to be written over the summer. The taught courses allow you to study a specific theme in detail, through a close engagement with the source material, and/or offer the opportunity to develop skills (e.g. languages, palaeography, epigraphy, papyrology). While the taught courses are

structured by the course teacher, a major active contribution by the students is expected and necessary. Where the dissertation is concerned, students are expected to arrive at their own choice of topic; the supervisor's role is intended to be advisory. To be completed successfully, the MA programme accordingly requires a high degree of self-motivation and commitment.

All the taught courses that UCL Historians contribute to the MA in Ancient History are dedicated postgraduate courses, i.e. designed exclusively to meet the needs of Masters students. Teaching usually takes the form of small group seminars of about two hours led by the teacher but with a high degree of interaction between teacher and student and between fellow students. Besides the six or so hours per week of scheduled contact through classes, teachers will make time available for private discussion of essays, and of students' work in general. Although assessment is generally on the basis of the written work submitted, all students will also be required to give oral presentations based on reading or other research activity that has been assigned. These presentations are a vital element of any taught course. For guidelines on the preparation of presentations as well as on the writing of essays see the Handbook for Graduate Students' section on study skills.

Research training and research culture

Research training is an essential element of the taught MA and is catered for by the compulsory core course HISTGA01 *Sources and Methods in Ancient History*. This is taught by a series of seminars given by ancient historians in the University, and involves close discussion of problems and themes that may be encountered in advanced study of ancient history. This is an assessed course and attendance at all its sessions is required. In addition students are warmly encouraged to participate in any session of the equivalent core courses for the MAs in Classics, Classical Art and Archaeology, or Late Antique and Byzantine Studies (see the History Department website for details).

One of the principal differences between being an undergraduate and an MA student is that, where you were accustomed to respond to tasks and questions set by your teachers, you should now be seeking out your own questions and to some degree setting your own agenda. The core course will give you a foundation but to develop these skills fully you will need to share and discuss your ideas with others in regular seminars as well as less formal gatherings. In this respect, you are at a double advantage in doing your MA at UCL: Ancient History is not just part of one of the most wide-ranging History Departments in the country but also, when combined with classical languages, literature, and philosophy (in Greek & Latin) and classical art and archaeology (in the Institute of Archaeology), it is part of the largest agglomeration of expertise on the ancient world in London.

Take full advantage of your time at UCL to attend and participate in Departmental research seminars given by members of staff and fellow graduate students (see for details the History Department calendar), not to mention lectures and less formal events organised by the student-run Ancient History Society. As well as College-based activities there is a weekly rhythm of University seminars, generally hosted in term-time by the Institute of Classical Studies, according to the following pattern (see the on-line *Meetings List* for precise details of these and of other, one-off, events):

Greek/Latin Literature	5.00 p.m.	Mondays	ICS
Ancient Philosophy	5.00 p.m.	Mondays	ICS
Byzantine Studies	5.30 p.m.	Mondays	KCL
Mycenaean Studies	3.30 p.m.	Wednesdays	ICS
Classical Archaeology	5.00 p.m.	Wednesdays	ICS
Ancient History	4.30 p.m.	Thursdays	ICS
Graduate work-in-progress	4.30 p.m.	Fridays	ICS

Of these, the Ancient History and Graduate work-in-progress seminars are a must for students of the MA in Ancient History and you are strongly encouraged to structure your working week around attendance of several others on a regular basis. All but the Graduate work-in-progress seminar (to which teachers are admitted by special invitation only) are usually organised by members of teaching staff, often around a specific theme each term. Seminars feature visiting academics, as well as local staff and graduate students, and generally consist of a paper of about 1 hour followed by 30 minutes

of discussion. Although the presence of so many staff members may seem intimidating, we are always glad to hear new voices, so do not feel shy about asking questions. The experience of seeing how others go about their research and present their results will be invaluable in helping you to define the research methods and questions that you yourself will need to develop in order to write your dissertation in the later part of the course. By attending a range of seminar series you will also see how specifically *historical* approaches of inquiry differ from linguistic, literary, or archaeological ones.

Finally, I hope that you enjoy your degree and your time in the UCL History Department. Queries and problems should be directed in the first instance to me or, if of a more administrative nature, to Joanna Fryer (j.fryer@ucl.ac.uk). I should also be happy to discuss any plans you may have to continue your studies to MPhil/PhD level.

Yours sincerely,

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