

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE & CELTIC

Guide to the MPhil in Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic

Members of the ASNC Department.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The formal structure of the MPhil course.....	3
What does the ASNC MPhil course involve?.....	4
Taught courses available to MPhil students	5
The MPhil examination process	7
Life as a graduate in ASNC	7
MPhil Entry requirements and the application procedure	8
Affiliated BA degree.....	9

Members of the ASNC Department

The following members of staff teach the MPhil course in Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic:

Dr Alison Bonner (Queens' College): Brittonic and Gaelic history; also Insular Latin language and literature. acb64@cam.ac.uk [*on leave in Lent and Easter terms 2023*]

Professor Richard Dance (St. Catharine's College): Old English language and literature; Germanic philology. rwd21@cam.ac.uk

Professor Rosalind Love (Robinson College): Insular Latin language and literature; also Old English literature. rcl10@cam.ac.uk [**Director of Graduate Studies**]

Professor Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (St John's College): medieval Irish language and literature; medieval Welsh language and literature; Celtic philology. mnm21@cam.ac.uk

Professor Rory Naismith (Corpus Christi College): Anglo-Saxon history. rn242@cam.ac.uk [**MPhil Convenor**]

Dr Erik Niblaeus (Dept. of ASNC): Manuscript studies, cultural history, medieval Scandinavia. egn21@cam.ac.uk

Professor Judy Quinn (Newnham College): Old Norse language and literature; Old English literature. jeq20@cam.ac.uk

Professor Elizabeth Ashman Rowe (Clare Hall): Scandinavian history; palaeography and codicology. ea315@cam.ac.uk [**Head of Department**]

Professor Paul Russell (Dept. of ASNC): medieval Welsh language and literature; medieval Irish language and literature; Celtic philology. pr270@cam.ac.uk

The Departmental Secretary is Lauren Lalej, who can be contacted at office@asnc.cam.ac.uk.

The ASNC Departmental office is in the English Faculty, room FR26; telephone: 01223 335079.

The Secretary of the Faculty of English Degree Committee is Anna Fox, who can be contacted at af285@cam.ac.uk or degcomm@english.cam.ac.uk.

The Faculty Postgraduate Administrator is Suzanne Daley, who can be contacted at sd250@cam.ac.uk or degcomm@english.cam.ac.uk.

The Postgraduate Office is in the English Faculty, room FR24; email: degcomm@english.cam.ac.uk; telephone.: 01223 335076.

Introduction

The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (known as ASNC) is dedicated to the study of the history, languages, literatures and material culture of the different peoples of the British Isles, Brittany and Scandinavia in the earlier Middle Ages; the MPhil provides a one-year course of study in the scholarly methods and disciplines relevant to those subjects. The course allows candidates the possibility of achieving an understanding of early Insular culture as a whole, while at the same time specialising in aspects of particular interest, whether historical, palaeographical, literary or linguistic (including the languages Insular Latin, Old English, Old Norse, Medieval Welsh, Medieval Irish, Middle Breton and Middle Cornish).

Teaching for the course consists of individual supervision, seminars and classes. Each MPhil student has an allocated supervisor who is responsible for planning the research and courses to be followed during the year; other senior members of the Department are also available for consultation. Instruction is given in scholarly methods in general, as well as in the particular fields of the candidate's interests.

Flexibility, and the possibility of tailoring supervision and instruction to individual needs, are the Department's priorities. The University Library's extensive collections of manuscripts and printed books provide a rich background for research, augmented by the ASNC section of the English Faculty Library, and many special holdings in College libraries. In addition to following the seminars and classes specified for the course, MPhil candidates also have the opportunity of attending the Department's lectures, seminars and classes relevant to their individual interests.

In 2022-23 the Convenor of the MPhil in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is Professor Rory Naismith (rn242@cam.ac.uk).

The formal structure of the MPhil course

The assessment of the MPhil comprises the following elements:

Review of Scholarship Essay	10%	due end of Michaelmas term
Written Exercise 1	15%	examined end of Lent term
Written Exercise 2	15%	examined end of Lent term
Take-home Essay on seminar texts	10%	due beginning of Easter term
Dissertation	50%	due end of Easter term

All elements are submitted anonymously (a candidate number will be assigned to each MPhil at the start of the year) and assessed by two examiners; the whole course is moderated by an External Examiner. **Late submissions may incur a penalty.** In order to pass the MPhil, candidates must achieve an overall mark of 60; it is a pass/fail degree but a mark over 75 is considered as distinction-level. A candidate whose failure in one of the elements (review of scholarship, written exercises, or take-home essay) is marginal may be allowed to go on to submit a

dissertation if the Department's Graduate Sub-Committee considers it possible that that candidate will pass on aggregate. Such a candidate will be obliged to attend a *viva* at the end of the year. If failure in exercises or essays is more than marginal, or if there is failure in more than one element, candidates will not normally be allowed to continue with the course.

Those MPhil candidates who wish to continue on to a Cambridge PhD will normally be required to achieve an overall mark of 70 or more, including a mark of not less than 70 on the dissertation. Note, however, that the ASNC MPhil is not a prerequisite for studying towards a PhD within the Department; applicants who wish to begin a PhD in ASNC after a Masters or equivalent at another institution, and who can satisfy the requirements of the Board of Graduate Studies, are welcome to apply.

General information about the Department, with details of its courses and teaching staff, is available at www.asnc.cam.ac.uk. The University's *Postgraduate Studies Prospectus* can be found at www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk.

Applicants are encouraged to check the *List of Frequently Asked Questions* (<https://camadmissions.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb>) before calling the Postgraduate Admissions office with general enquiries.

Information about Graduate Studies in the Faculty of English can be found at: www.english.cam.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/.

Information about the University of Cambridge, including details about the individual colleges, is available at www.cam.ac.uk. If an applicant is not already affiliated to a Cambridge college (e.g., through having taken an undergraduate degree there), a choice of college may be put on the GRADSAF application form, though it is also possible to make an 'open' application (see www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges/choosing-college). Details of the separate colleges can be obtained by writing to them individually or by browsing their websites. Most colleges are helpful in providing accommodation for newly-arrived graduate students; they may also form a focus of social life, but for ASNaC graduate students the Department can also play an important role in this respect.

What does the ASNC MPhil course involve?

The main component of the MPhil is a dissertation of between 10,000 and 15,000 words in length (including tables, and footnotes, but excluding bibliography), written in accordance with an approved style-sheet on a subject within the field of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic. The dissertation accounts for 50% of the final mark for the course and candidates are expected to be working on it throughout the year, alongside the other elements in the course. During the Easter term, as they draw closer to the time when the dissertation must be submitted, all MPhils are expected to give a 20-minute presentation on their dissertation work to the weekly MPhil Research Forum.

The first assessed item of course-work, the Review of Scholarship essay, submitted at the end of the first term, is aimed at laying the groundwork for the dissertation. The essay should not exceed 5,000 words in length (including

footnotes but excluding bibliography) and will demonstrate candidates' familiarity with the scholarship in the area of their dissertation topic and will situate their own projected research in relation to existing knowledge and debates. This Michaelmas term exercise also serves to alert candidates to the Department's expectation of a high standard of accuracy in referencing and of clarity of expression in the work of its graduates, and essays are assessed on this as well as on their content and structure.

30% of the overall ASNC MPhil mark derives from assessment of the two core scholarly skills which candidates have chosen to pursue, tested by means of written exercises. These exercises take the form of three-hour examinations sat at the end of the Lent term (March). They are designed to broaden research skills and assess students' acquisition of or improvement in a language or other subject taught within the Department, after two terms' study, and can be beginner-, intermediate- or advanced-level, as appropriate. The teaching in languages, palaeography and historical subjects is provided through the classes and lectures provided for Parts I and II of the Undergraduate Tripos, listed on pp. 6–7 below (and see the 'current students: undergraduates' section of the ASNC website for more detailed descriptions of each course). All teaching commences at the start of full Michaelmas term, usually the first or second week in October, and MPhil students are expected to attend and prepare work for all classes in their chosen subjects for the sixteen weeks of both Michaelmas and Lent terms.

In addition to classes and lectures in the subjects which they have chosen for their written exercises, candidates are required to attend the weekly MPhil seminar in Michaelmas and Lent terms. Each week, students will be required to read (in translation) and discuss a sequence of prescribed texts, along with recommended secondary reading. These texts consist of a selection of key Latin and vernacular texts chosen from all the fields within ASNC, along with a group of earlier works which provide the intellectual background to the medieval world. These seminars are **compulsory** and students are expected to have read the assigned texts and to come prepared to participate in discussion. Assessment of this part of the course takes the form of a take-home essay not exceeding 3,000 words, on a topic chosen from a list made available from noon on the first Thursday of Easter full term, with essays then due for submission the following Monday. The topics are broad and intended to encourage comparative discussion, and candidates are required to write about at least three of the texts read during the year's seminars.

Taught courses available to MPhil students

MPhil students may attend all the Department's undergraduate lectures, classes and seminars. Since these include courses at first-, second-, and third-year levels, MPhils can either improve upon knowledge and skills already acquired during their undergraduate years or acquire a new area of expertise which will be useful to their future studies. The written exercise by which their attainment is formally assessed at the end of Lent Term will be calibrated according to the level at which each student started: beginner, intermediate or advanced.

ASNC Tripos Part I

The Department offers courses in the following areas each year:

1. England before the Conquest.
2. Scandinavian history of the Viking Age.
3. The Brittonic-speaking peoples from the fourth century to the twelfth.
4. The Gaelic-speaking peoples from the fourth century to the twelfth.
5. Old English language and literature.
6. Old Norse language and literature.
7. Medieval Welsh language and literature.
8. Medieval Irish language and literature.
9. Insular Latin language and literature.
10. Palaeography and codicology.

These courses are general introductions and assume no prior knowledge. All classes, and a few lectures, are specified as being for first- or second-year undergraduates, but most lectures run on a two-year cycle and are for both.¹ MPhil students wishing to take a beginner-level Written Exercise should go to the classes and/or lectures for the relevant course attended by first-year undergraduates (i.e. those undergraduates preparing for year 1 exams, a.k.a. Prelims); and those opting for an intermediate-level Written Exercise should go to the classes and/or lectures attended by second-year undergraduates (i.e. those preparing for year 2 exams, a.k.a. Part I).

For more detail on all these courses, go to

https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduates/tripos/prelim_and_partI.htm

Please note that it is **not** possible for MPhil students to take written exercises in the 'borrowed papers' taught by other departments and offered at undergraduate level only.

ASNC Tripos Part II

Part II is the third and final year of the undergraduate course and involves a range of papers which in some way or another take further the knowledge and skills acquired in the corresponding Part I courses. The teaching is generally by seminars, classes, and some lectures; in all cases the students will be expected to give brief oral presentations in class reporting on the results of their own reading.

1. A subject in Anglo-Saxon history (currently Saints and Farmers: Economy and Society c. 950-1050).
2. A subject in Scandinavian history of the Viking Age (currently Rethinking the Viking Age).
3. A subject in the history of the Celtic-speaking world (currently Sea-Kings and the Celtic-speaking world, c. 1014-1164).
4. A subject in ASNC History (currently Law and Lawlessness).

¹ Please note that a consequence of the two-year lecture cycle is that not all subjects relevant to the scope of each paper will be taught in lectures every year. If you are in any doubt as to the content of a particular year's lectures, and their relevance to your work, then please discuss this with the lecturer concerned.

5. A subject in Old English literature (currently Beowulf).
6. Advanced Medieval Scandinavian language and literature.
7. Advanced Medieval Welsh language and literature.
8. Advanced Medieval Irish language and literature.
9. A subject in Insular Latin literature (currently Writing Women).
10. Germanic philology.
11. Celtic philology.
12. Textual criticism.
13. Writing Rituals.

For more detail on the content of all these courses, go to <http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduates/tripos/partII.htm>.

The MPhil examination process

MPhils receive provisional marks for the various elements of the course as the year proceeds, and conclude the course by submitting their dissertation at the end of the Easter Term. As with the other course-work, the dissertation is assessed independently by two examiners, who discuss the final agreed mark for the dissertation with the External examiner. The examination of the MPhil may include a *viva voce* examination on the dissertation, which is compulsory for those who have been accepted to continue to PhD at Cambridge, and for any candidate with a marginal fail mark in one item of course-work; a viva for other candidates is at the discretion of the examiners. Students will be advised of timetabling for the vivas in the Easter term, but candidates should be ready to make themselves available up until the examination process has been completed.

The vivas are followed by a final examiners' meeting, after which the marks for the course will be accepted first by the ASNC Graduate Sub-committee, then the Degree Committee of the Faculty of the English, and finally by the Board of Graduate Studies, which will then issue formal written confirmation of the degree; the Degree Committee also sends out a breakdown of coursework marks and reports on the dissertation (usually in the second week of July).

Life as a graduate in ASNC

Undergraduate students

The Department normally has about 80 undergraduates at any one time, spread across the various colleges of the University; these provide the mainstay of the Department's lively social life, and there is frequent interaction between the undergraduates, graduates and senior members, on an informal as well as a formal basis. The students organise an email list for news and discussions of interest to ASNaCs, and there is a regular rendezvous at a local pub on Friday evenings. There is also a student-run ASNC Society which graduates are welcome to join, and which organises weekly lunches and other social events.

Graduate students in the Department

At any one time there may be up to 30 research students in the Department doing research for an MPhil or a PhD degree on a subject which falls within the scope of the Department's interests. PhD students are often involved in teaching,

whether lecturing, giving classes, or supervising. Research students contribute significantly to the intellectual and social life of the Department, and MPhil students are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in ASNC activities during their year of study at Cambridge. One MPhil student is elected each year to be a representative on the Department's Graduate Joint Academic Committee, which meets once a term.

Departmental Seminars

Students taking the MPhil course are expected to attend the Department's Graduate Seminar, which meets two or three times a term, and consists of a mix of guest lectures by distinguished scholars visiting Cambridge, and papers by ASNC's doctoral students. In Easter term, the Department holds a weekly Graduate Symposium at which all students are invited to give short presentations, grouped into panels which devise their own theme for the session, appoint a chair and respondents. MPhil students are expected to attend these as well, and may offer papers or act as respondents if they wish (but are not obliged to do so). The Department also holds three annual named guest-lectures, the Quiggin, H.M. Chadwick and Kathleen Hughes lectures, given by renowned scholars in the various fields encompassed by ASNC.

Other lecture courses

In addition to the courses which they have chosen for their written exercises, MPhil students are welcome at any other undergraduate lecture-courses within ASNC. All members of the University are also entitled to attend the extensive range of lectures available in Faculties other than their own, for example Classics, Archaeology & Anthropology, English, History, and Modern & Medieval Languages. For information about these, you are advised to consult the University lecture list available online (www.timetable.cam.ac.uk).

MPhil Entry requirements and application procedures

The entry requirement for UK students is normally a good Honours degree (a high 2.i or equivalent) in a relevant subject. Applicants from member-states of the EU and other overseas countries are welcomed. The entry requirement for students from North America will normally be a GPA of 3.7. Applicants should include **specific research proposals (of about 500 words)** to assist members of the Department in judging the merits of each application. A piece of written academic work, of not more than 5,000 words, should also accompany a formal application. Applications will be assessed on the basis of an equal mix of past academic record, written work, the research proposal, and the Department's ability to provide appropriately-qualified supervision for a given project. The Department may also require applicants to take part in an admissions and/or funding interview by telephone or video-conferencing (Zoom or similar).

Enquiries about applying should be addressed directly to the Convenor of the ASNC MPhil or can be sent via the Departmental Secretary (email: office@asnc.cam.ac.uk). Please note that while it is acceptable for prospective

applicants to approach members of the Department with enquiries about their planned MPhil research, the final decision to accept an applicant, and the appointment of a supervisor, rests with the ASNC Graduate Sub-committee alone, and can be dependent on patterns of staff research leave and numbers of current graduate students.

Information on how to apply online can be found on the Postgraduate Admissions Office website (<http://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk>).

Applicants are encouraged to check the *List of Frequently Asked Questions* (<https://camadmissions.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb>) before calling the admissions office with general enquiries.

The final deadline for all applications for **2023** entry is **16 May 2023**.

However, applications must be received by **5 January 2023** at the very latest if applicants wish to be considered for funding.

General information about the University of Cambridge, including details about the individual colleges, is available at <http://www.cam.ac.uk>. If an applicant is not already affiliated to a Cambridge college (e.g., through having taken an undergraduate degree there), a choice of colleges must be put on the application form. Details of the separate colleges can be obtained by writing to them individually or by browsing their websites. Most colleges are helpful in providing living accommodation for newly-arrived graduate students and some of them have limited graduate funding in the form of studentships. Colleges can provide a focus for sports activities and social life, but for ASNaC graduate students the Department can also play an important role in the latter too.

Affiliated BA degree

The MPhil in Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic is designed for students who have already done a first degree incorporating work in subjects encompassed by the Department. Students who wish to become competent to carry out scholarly work in one or more of the areas covered, but whose first degree is in a related subject not involving work in any of the central ASNC areas (e.g., in history but with no early medieval component, or in English but with little or no Old English, or in archaeology) might be better advised to consider taking the Affiliated BA degree instead. This is a two-year course, covering the same ground as the first and third years of the undergraduate course, at the end of which the student is entitled to receive a Cambridge BA degree. The course as a whole involves a greater quantity of intensive course-work than the MPhil course, and it has a smaller research component (a compulsory dissertation in the second year, of between 9,000 and 12,000 words). Further details of the papers included can be found on the Departmental website:

<http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduates/index.htm>.

Applications to read for this degree should be made not through the University's application portal but through the Admissions Office of the individual college to which the applicant wishes to belong (some colleges specialise in taking students aged 21 or above).