

## QUALIFICATIONS IN GENEALOGY

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Simon Hutchison

#### **– The University of Strathclyde Postgraduate Certificate in Genealogical Palaeographic and Heraldic Studies.**

Strathclyde offers a PG Cert, Diploma and Masters in this subject. The courses are delivered online and each can be completed in one year, or in modules spread across two or more years. It is as well to think about which format would be most appropriate for you before signing-up; I chose the one year version for the PG Cert which suggests a commitment of 20 hours a week and although I enjoyed the course greatly I found the workload was quite heavy when run alongside other work commitments.

The PG Cert can be studied over two years, requiring a commitment of 14 hours per week, and study can begin in October, January or April. This flexible approach may suit some people.

It is theoretically possible to complete the whole lot simultaneously in one year, but this full-time MSc option which includes PG Cert, Diploma and Masters studied together would need 40 hours a week study time.

On the PG Cert there are 6 classes running sequentially that cover various aspects of Genealogy, Palaeography and Heraldry. These are:

Professional Practice & Methodologies  
Archives & Libraries, History & Geography  
Censuses, Civil Registers & Church Records  
Family History Studies & Overseas Records  
Property & Law, Wills, Land & Inheritance  
Latin, Palaeography & Heraldry

As well as twelve smaller Assignments designed to test your understanding of the course content, there are six larger Assessments that must be completed along the way, along with a learning log. For the final Assessment, students can choose between a Client Study, an in-depth Palaeographic exercise and an Heraldic exercise. In the Client study a narrative report is generated in accordance with a summary of work to be done as agreed with a client (in this case a friend), and so provides a realistic simulation of professional genealogy work.

The information in the PG Cert is supplied by specialist tutors and although a wide range of material is covered on the subject of genealogy, I was impressed by the depth of information supplied in the PDF booklets that accompanied each module. This was especially appreciated when it came to the topics of Palaeography and the DNA section of the 'Family History Studies' module. Tutor feedback was helpful, and often added extra insights into the sources being studied.

As well as giving prospective genealogists a good grounding in the key subject areas mentioned above, the course helps refine their approach to producing client reports and making best use of genealogical software in this process. It also provides ideas for good practice in streamlining and

standardising source citation in reports. I found the forum-based tasks concerning professional methodology and real-life client situations particularly helpful, too.

While there was, of course, a wealth of information on Scottish records there was equally good coverage for England and other nations including Ireland and USA were given sufficient mention.

Although there is the potential to feel isolated while studying on an online course, I felt that the Strathclyde PG Cert avoided this through its use of interaction with tutors, facebook groups, group-work and forum-based assignments throughout the year. There were also optional Adobe Connect group chat-sessions scheduled with tutors throughout the course.

Students were of all ages and several different nationalities. There were several meet-up opportunities planned by the course-team throughout the year, which was a nice touch.

All in all I would recommend the course which I felt gave a very solid grounding in genealogy knowledge and the professional application of such. I can envisage myself studying further with Strathclyde in the future.

Some Scotlandspeople and Deceased online credits were supplied with the course along with a version of Family Tree Maker 2014. This was strongly recommended as the genealogical software to be used with the PG Cert, so if you decide to take this course it is advisable to get familiar with using this software beforehand if you are not already.