

QUALIFICATIONS IN GENEALOGY

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Sylvia Valentine

Part 4 – The University of Dundee Master of Letters Degree in Family and Local History

This degree is available by Distance Learning from The Centre for Archive and Information Studies (CAIS), which is part of the School of Humanities at the University of Dundee. Dundee offers the degree in modular format and it can be studied as a Post Graduate Certificate, worth 60 credits, a Post Graduate Diploma, worth 120 Credits and the Master's degree which requires 180 credits.

One of the criticisms often heard about the Dundee course is that it is specifically about Scottish records, which is incorrect, as modules cover both English and Scottish material. There are compulsory modules, but students can choose between: Skills and Sources for Family and Local History in Scotland; Skills and Sources for Family and Local History in England; Scottish Palaeography; and English Palaeography, each module being worth 20 credits. For the postgraduate certificate, any one of these modules must be studied, and for the PG Diploma, students must study one of the Skills and Sources modules and one of the palaeography modules. It is also possible to study the modules not used as a compulsory module, as one of the optional modules. I studied Skills and Sources for Family and Local History in England and English Palaeography as my two compulsory modules, and Skills and Sources for Family and Local History in Scotland as an optional module.

Students are then able to select from the other modules in order to accumulate the necessary credits (60 or 120). In order to complete the Master's degree, a dissertation of 18000 words has to be written, which is worth the final 60 credits necessary for the degree. As the degree is in modular format, the student can be flexible about their studies and can take time away from studying. Not every module is available each semester, and the modular format enables students to plan their studies around personal commitments. This means that it can take between 2 ½ and 5 years to complete the full master's degree. Students can expect to spend at least 15 hours a week in study, although some modules, particularly the palaeography modules, realistically might require additional time.

Each module is tutored by a recognised expert in their field. For each module, a specific discussion forum facilitates communication between students, and tutors are on hand to assist with any problems or difficulties the student might experience. This is very helpful as a student undertaking distance learning can feel isolated at times. There is also a Facebook closed group, exclusively for students, where questions about aspects of the course can be posed. Students have access to Dundee University library and its electronic resources, which is also a participant in

the SCONUL scheme, which enables students to borrow books from their local university.

Each module is worth either 20 or 10 credits, lasting 15 or 9 weeks respectively. During the module, students have to undertake a number of tasks, some solo and some in partnership with other students. At the end of the module, students submit two assignments, an essay and a report. These assignments are worth 70% of the overall mark for the module, the remaining 30% being the tasks.

More information, including how to apply and the fees, can be found on the University website:

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cais/programmes/familylocalhistory/postgraduatecoursesinfamilyandlocalhistory/#d.en.250125>

I commenced this course after having studied CAIS non-accredited courses, Beyond the Internet, now called Discover Your Family History, and Explore Your Family History. Each course lasted 6 weeks and they were a very helpful introduction to distance learning, helping me to decide whether or not I would enjoy studying in this way. Having completed the 120 credits in late summer 2015, I am now working on my dissertation, aiming to complete the Masters in summer 2016.