

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(Taught Postgraduate)**



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MA
4	Programme Title	Public History
5	Programme Code	4169 F/P
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	N/A
8	FHEQ Level	Level 7
9	Last updated	April 2026

10 Programme Aims

1. To enable students to develop their capacity to learn in preparation for, or as part of, continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning.
2. To provide students with the opportunity to gain the basic skills and knowledge required to continue with academic research in Public History at PhD level, or to enter the workplace in a public history role.
3. To expose students to cutting-edge research and practice in the sphere of Public History and encourage engagement by students with current staff research.
4. To meet the requirements of a level 7 qualification as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.
5. To offer a programme that conforms to University policies and to QAA codes of practice.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for History.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

- A1 Have an advanced level appreciation of the theoretical and analytical frameworks that historians bring to their subject.
- A2 Understand the varieties of approaches to understanding, constructing and interpreting the past in the present, and how wider publics engage with these processes.
- A3 Understand the methodologies and sources used by specialists in the field of public history, and the ethical, practical, and analytical choices that accompany historical study and interpretation.
- A4 Have an advanced level understanding of public history concepts and practices including shared authority, collaborative working environments, and reflexivity.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary methods of imparting knowledge and understanding [A1-A4] are group seminars, individual tutorials to prepare coursework, and self-directed learning. The final project will impart skills and knowledge through hands-on specialist research [A4].

Structured interactions (email, phone, online meetings) will be used to support students who will carry out their final project remotely.

The MA is structured so that all students undertake a number of core public history modules.

They will also undertake one core module with other History MA students ('Research Skills') introducing them to key theoretical and analytical frameworks and methodological approaches to the study of history [A1, A2].

Students will also be required to take at least one and will have the choice to take other modules shared with the regular history MA, which will enhance students' awareness appreciation of theoretical and analytical frameworks in the study of history as per A1. In particular, 'Practising History' will introduce students to a variety of different historiographical and methodological approaches. 'Conflict in European History' discusses how past conflicts have been 'remembered, represented and narrated' as per prompt A2.

The modules 'Dealing with Difficult Pasts' and 'Oral History and Public History' will introduce students to key public history ideas and methodologies [A3, A4]. 'Dealing with Difficult Pasts' introduces students to critical thinking and public history practice across a wide range of contexts, from the local to the global, with a focus on 'difficult' history and historical justice, whereas 'Oral History' will introduce students to a methodology that is at the core of Public History practice.

Students will also be required to take at least one optional module offered via the School of Arts and Cultures - either 'Heritage Processes' or 'Heritage Lives'. These modules will offer a particular window into public history practices and who governs heritage [A4]. Another optional module offered via Archaeology within HCA - 'archaeologies of European Expansion' - will look at the post-colonial dimension of heritage management.

Throughout the programme students are encouraged to read and research widely using a range of different kinds of texts and sources. Students are encouraged to use a wide range of learning resources, including books, journal articles, primary sources (e.g. Robinson Library Special Collections, North East Museums, Northumberland Archives, Newcastle City Library), audio-visual (e.g. Box of Broadcasts, North East Film Archive) and on-line resources and databases available at the Robinson Library (e.g. JSTOR, DNB).

Assessment Strategy

Assessment for all modules will include written outputs to evaluate the student's attainment of the knowledge outcomes expected at an advanced level [A1-4]. The final project will assess by portfolio (including reflective essay), to what extent students have gained a deep knowledge and understanding of the theory, practice and ethical considerations of public history.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1 Demonstrate subject-specific skills through training and research experience and have developed an ability to evaluate, analyse and interpret different sources of evidence relating to History.
- B2 Solve complex interpretive problems in which the needs of a range of partners, communities, and audiences must be considered.
- B3 Communicate ideas about the past and evaluate the most appropriate methods of communication, depending on audience and context.
- B4 Undertake higher degree research through skills developed in the completion of short pieces of written work and a final project.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The subject-specific skills [B1] will be imparted through in-School training in the methodological approaches of historians via lectures, supplemented by group seminars, individual tutorials for coursework preparation, and self-directed learning. A number of the modules require students to undertake group work. Using a flipped classroom pedagogy, students will be presented with a range of scenarios requiring problem-solving and communication skills [B2, B3].

The modules offered via the School of Arts and Cultures ('Heritage Lives' and 'Heritage Processes') will help students reflect on the needs of stakeholders in the Heritage Sector [B2]

Researching and designing a public history project will practice intellectual skills through hands-on specialist research [B4].

Assessment Strategy

Assessment for all modules and in particular the final presentation and portfolio will evaluate the student's attainment of the intellectual skills expected at an advanced level. [B1-4]

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1 Demonstrate a wide range of transferable skills such as marshalling evidence, presenting a balanced written argument, and critically analysing textual and bibliographic evidence.
- C2 Plan and manage a project, including balancing the needs of a range of stakeholders.
- C3 Have good digital literacy and a basic understanding of a range of digital skills used in online public history work.
- C4 Demonstrate a variety of additional skills according to their individual learning objectives including oral history interviewing, archival research, curation, and data management.

Teaching and Learning Methods

All taught modules include classes given by a number of professional historians who research and teach in the area about which they lecture. The majority of taught modules include input from public historians and others whose work connects with public history. All contributors use a wide range of examples from their own field of expertise in History. These case-studies span a range of international contexts. Group work provides students with the opportunity to develop and practice their practical skills [C1-4] through, for example, preparation for and oral contribution to seminars, shorter formative pieces of written work, and the final project. Research training (at School level), tutorials, guided reading, feedback on outline proposals, and continuous supervision provide the basis for students to develop the practical skills required as public historians [C4]. The 'Oral History' module will play a particularly significant role in equipping students with relevant skills for conducting oral history interviews and for interpreting and curating oral history testimonies in project work. In Semester 1, students will undertake a module specifically focussed on exploring the differences and similarities between public history projects, aimed at developing their project analysis and planning skills [C2]. Throughout the course, students will be taught and will practice planning and organisation through keeping to programme deadlines and by planning and organizing their written work, including the final project [C2]. Digital literacy is practiced and developed throughout the programme through submission of coursework [C3].

Assessment Strategy

Assessment for all modules will evaluate the student's attainment of the practical skills expected at an advanced level. [C1-4]. All written pieces of work in the taught modules require students formatively to gather, evaluate, analyse, and interpret evidence, using the skills identified in History as benchmark skills within the discipline [C1-4]. Basing assessments around project planning, including a grant proposal and project plan, will specifically focus the skills needed to develop their final project [C2]. The final project represents the summative task in detailed practice of all of these practical skills.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- D1 Demonstrate critical reasoning.
- D2 Demonstrate high level written, verbal and visual communication skills that take into account the needs of the audience.
- D3 Work collaboratively with people from a range of backgrounds and with different motivations and purposes for engaging with the past.
- D4 Gather, manage, and curate information sensitive to issues of context, ethics, and audience.

Teaching and Learning Methods

In specific research training modules, students will be introduced through lectures and seminars how to plan and execute a piece of extended historical research [D1-4]. Students will develop effective interpersonal/oral communication techniques, taught through the School Research Training Modules and specifically the 'Oral History and Public History' module. Students practice and develop these skills by contributing orally either as groups or individually in seminars for each taught module [D2, D3]. Team working is practiced throughout the programme through seminar work [D3].

Assessment Strategy

Critical reasoning [D1] is assessed in each of the modules on this programme. Assignments will cover a range of different forms of written working including essays, blogs, web pages, writing a research log, or compiling a database as part of a research assignment [D2]. The majority of taught modules will include at least one assessment designed for wider audiences, and students will be taught to consider how audience might inform their work [D2]. Gathering information and applying concepts [D4] are critical skills for this programme's teaching and learning experience, especially during individual feedback sessions and group seminars. Group work in seminars and assessed group assignments will develop students' skills in collaborative ways of working, which are core skills for public historians [D3]. Evaluating, analysing and interpreting evidence with empathy are assessed throughout the programme through the student's ability to meet deadlines and successfully complete the programme [D1-4].

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

One year full time or two years part time.
180 credits compulsory (120 coursework, 60 public history project)

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

The programme provides robust skills training at an advanced level appropriate to the methodologies and concepts required in the practice of historical research, through the modules that are taught in combination with Newcastle University's broader history MA programme.

The programme is attuned especially to how public history practitioners address and communicate contested pasts. The themes of difficult pasts, historical justice, and ethical curation – including complex debates around reparations, for example – are braided through the programme. The programme develops graduates who combine the core skills of historians with empathy, cultural competency, community working, and communication skills.

Other modules focus on the skills and practices required by public historians. In each module, students will complete at least one public-facing assignment, leading to a final portfolio that can be used for self-promotion to future employers or clients. The programme draws on Newcastle University's strengths in oral history and digital cultures to provide students with a range of skills to prepare them for work in a wide variety of history industries, ranging from community historical interpretation to video game production. Overall, the programme will produce critical thinkers capable of working across and beyond the galleries, libraries, archives and museums sector, equipping them with theories and creativity to engage in the production of popular history in a changing world.

The final independent project is developed in collaboration with, and supervised by a historical expert from within Newcastle University's extensive research expertise (in consultation with the Degree Programme Director). Students also have an opportunity to consult with an external industry mentor. This combination provides the flexibility for students to work with small independent community practitioners as well as large regional or national public history institutions, depending on their area of interest.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2026-27](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

14 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

Accreditation reports

N/A

Additional mechanisms

N/A

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/>

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/>

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided.