

## Research Methods and Writing Skills

| 7.1 Module Overview   |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|----|-------------|---|
| <b>Module Number</b>  |   | <b>Module Title</b>                   | Research Methods and Writing Skills |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| <b>Stage of Principal Programme</b>   |   |                                       | 2                                   | <b>Semester</b> | 2                                  | <b>Duration.</b><br><i>(Weeks F/T)</i>     | 12 | <b>ECTS</b> | 5 |
| <b>Mandatory / Elective (M/E)</b>   | M | <b>Hours of Learner Effort / Week</b> | 2                                   |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| Analysis of required hours of learning effort   |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| <b>Teaching and Learning Modalities</b>   |   |                                       |                                     |                 | <b>✓if relevant to this module</b> | <b>Approx. proportion of total (hours)</b> |    |             |   |
| <b>Contact Hours</b>  |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| In person face-to-face  |   |                                       |                                     |                 | ✓                                  | 24   |    |             |   |
| Synchronous   |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| <b>Indirect/Non-Contact Hours</b>   |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| Asynchronous  |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| Work Based  |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| Other:  |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    |  |    |             |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent reading, engagement with VLE, research and preparation of assessments</li> </ul> |   |                                       |                                     |                 | ✓                                  | 101  |    |             |   |
| <b>Total</b>  |   |                                       |                                     |                 |                                    | 125  |    |             |   |

| <b>Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title</b>  | N/A   |
|--|---|
| <b>Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Maximum number of learners per instance of the module</b>   | 45  |
| Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module. |   |
| <b>Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.</b>   | <b>Qualifications &amp; experience required</b>                               |
| Lecturer   | A minimum level 9 qualification in History or English or closely cognate area |
|  | <b>Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y</b>  |
|  | 1:45  |

| Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution |      |                                   |  |                               |
|---|------|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Continuous Assessment</b>                    | 100% | <b>Proctored Exam – in person</b> |  | <b>Practical Skills Based</b> |
| <b>Project</b>                                  |      | <b>Proctored Exam - online</b>    |  | <b>Work Based</b>             |
| <b>Capstone (Y/N)?</b>                          | N    | <b>If Yes, describe</b>           |  |                               |

| 7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| <b>MIMLO</b>  | <b>Related MIPLO #</b> |
| <b>On completion of this module a learner will be able to:</b>  |                        |
| 1. Understand a range of methodological and historiographic techniques employed by historians in local, regional and national contexts. | 1, 2, 3                |
| 2. Interpret the evolution of historical and literary writing across space and time   | 4, 5                   |

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 3. Engage critically with the merits and shortcomings of a variety of techniques and to identify practical applications for these techniques in their own research           | <b>1, 2, 4, 5</b> |
| 4. Identify an appropriate area of research suitable for a final dissertation and compile a thorough research proposal outlining the viability and necessity of the research | <b>5, 7, 8</b>    |

### 7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

This module will examine a range of methodological techniques that will aid the learner in their dissertation research. The principal aim of the module is to develop an awareness of the different methodological and historiographical approaches, and to explore the application of a range of these techniques in the research process. Learners will assess the usefulness of qualitative and quantitative methods, different modes of critical and cultural approach, varieties of literary theory, cartographic techniques, oral history methodologies, the case study method, and the evolution of historiographies in constructing a regional history narrative.

This module will equip learners with the appropriate skill set required to undertake a significant piece of independent, original, scholarly research. The module will provide learners with an opportunity to develop a research project by outlining the structures and mechanisms required to successfully embark on, and complete, dissertation research. Before beginning the dissertation writing process at stage3, learners will require a strong grounding in how to undertake primary research either in an archival setting or in an appropriate digital space, as well as the ability to expand and develop their knowledge of the literature pertaining to an area of research which interests them.

The practical aspects of dissertation writing, including how to identify a research question, how to develop an argument, how to structure a dissertation and how to adhere to the correct referencing styles will also be discussed and developed. The fundamental purpose is to ensure that learners have a comprehensive, practical grounding in the processes required to research, analyse, discuss and disseminate their work.

This module will provide learners with a strong methodological foundation upon which to develop their own research projects and also develop transferable skills such as critical analysis and project management skills.

This twelve-week module will be divided into six blocks incorporating a range of themes that relate entirely to producing a dissertation, and will include: key components of textual interpretation; analysing and presenting historical evidence; collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative evidence; the function of literary criticism and research; the purpose and practice of history and heritage; adopting an interdisciplinary approach to research. Examples of topics to be covered are Presentation Skills, the use of PowerPoint, responding to questions, how to structure and format their final document.

A lecturer with expertise in these areas will teach the module. Learners will be required to do some preparatory work in the form of reading or a practical exercise, such as researching how these methodologies have practical applications. Themes covered on the course will, at times, incorporate an exploration of the case study method thereby highlighting to learners the effectiveness of this methodology also. Learners will learn in a peer-led environment and gain a greater understanding of theoretical, historiographical, and methodological concepts through the discussion and debate emerging from these seminars.

### 7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement *(if applicable)*

N/A

### 7.5 Specific module resources required *(if applicable)*

N/A

## 7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

This is a preparatory module for the final capstone dissertation. The aims are to promote deep learning by hosting a series of lecturer-led lectures/seminars. Learners will engage in group work to discuss their dissertation ideas and sources to enable brainstorming and collaborative learning. The aim of the module is to develop and expand the broad range of skills that a learner will require to successfully execute the task of dissertation research and writing. The module will support learners as they identify and formulate their own individual research projects and encourage learners to reflect on the process of identifying a research topic, sourcing information, analysis, synthesis and dissemination. This module will allow learners a longer time frame to prepare for the capstone project and formulate a dissertation proposal under guidance to ensure learners have a relevant and sound project that can be supervised within Carlow College. The module was also recommended by the external examiner.

The module will be thematic in focus and will deal with a particular topic each week. These topics include:

1. Sourcing, analysing and synthesising secondary source material (1 week)
2. Sourcing, analysing and synthesising primary source material (1 week)
3. Writing a Literature Review/bibliographical essay (1 week)
4. Choosing a suitable methodology: e.g. the Historical Method, Biographical criticism+ (1 week)
5. Identifying a viable research topic (1 week)
6. Formulating a research question and dissertation statement (1 week)
7. Writing a Research Proposal (2 weeks)
8. How to structure a dissertation (1 week)
9. Presenting research findings (1 week)
10. Referencing and stylistic conventions (1 week)
11. Disseminating research (1 week)

The module will consist of both a structured presentation by the module co-ordinator and a learner-led discussion. Practical examples will be drawn upon as a way of identifying potential challenges. Secondary readings, interpreted by learners before the session, will also help to guide the seminar portion of the module. Throughout, extensive emphasis will be placed on the importance of dissertation writing and verbal presentations, with a view to identifying and overcoming potential challenges that learners may face during the process.

This approach optimises opportunities for formative feedback to learners, as with smaller group discussions during the seminars, learners will have the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, peer experiences as well as more seasoned researchers. This links directly with the [Carlow College Teaching and Learning Strategy](#) which promotes peer-to-peer learning, group work and learner-led discussion. Ultimately, this module will provide a forum for learners to acquire clarity on all aspects of the research and writing process.

The assessments will guide the learners towards formulating a definitive research topic.

### **Dissertation Outline Plan: 15%**

A structural outline of dissertation proposal to include research questions, proposed methodology and list of indicative primary and secondary sources. (1,000 words). (This will facilitate both formative and summative assessment, and an ability to guide the learner in terms of resources and the specific topic they have selected which may need more focus or a narrowing of content or timelines, prior to completing the final proposal).

Rubric/Form provided for learner to fill in details.

### **Dissertation Proposal: 85%**

A 2500-3000 word dissertation proposal in which the learner identifies their intended research project and provides a detailed explanation of what the study seeks to achieve, how it will be undertaken and what the primary purpose of the research is. It will include a detailed bibliography.

## 7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module

| MIMLOs | Technique(s) | Weighting |
|--------|--------------|-----------|
|--------|--------------|-----------|

|     |                       |     |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| 1-3 | Dissertation Outline  | 15% |
| 1-4 | Dissertation Proposal | 85% |

## 7.8 Sample Assessment Materials

### **Dissertation Outline Plan: 20% (750-1,000 words)**

Write a structural outline of dissertation proposal in the Dissertation Outline Plan Form to include research questions, proposed methodology and list of indicative primary and secondary sources. Include a bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

### **Dissertation Proposal: 80% (2,500 words)**

Write a research proposal identifying an area of research that would benefit from further study and compose a proposal for this project, including a dissertation statement, relevant research questions, a description of the intended methodology, a survey of the source material and a description of the potential dissertation structure. A detailed bibliography must be provided.

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

## 7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources

### **Indicative Core Reading:**

Lipkowitz, Elise, *From Concept to Completion: A Dissertation-Writing Guide for History Learners* (Washington D.C: American Historical Association, 2009).

McDowell, W.H, *Historical Research: A Guide for Writers of Dissertations, Theses and Articles* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

### **Indicative Other Resources:**

Machi, Lawrence and Brenda McEvoy, *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009).

Murray, Rowena, *How to Write a Thesis* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006).

Swales, John and Christine Feak, *Academic Writing for Graduate Learners: Essential Tasks and Skills* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

Turabian, Karl, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Walliman, Nicholas, *Your Research Project: A Step-by-step Guide for the First-time Researcher*, (London: Sage, 2005).

Watson, George, *Writing a Thesis: A Guide to Long Essays and Dissertations* (London: Longman, 1987).