

Quality Assurance

Masters, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in History

Programme Specification: Postgraduate

Information for students: the programme specification is the definitive document summarising the structure and content of your degree programme. It is reviewed and updated every year as part of Keele’s Curriculum Annual Review and Development process. The document aims to clarify to potential and current students what you can expect from the study of the subject over the course of your programme.

Names of programme(s) and award title(s)	- MA in History - Postgraduate Diploma in History - Postgraduate Certificate in History
Mode of study	Full time / part time
Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award	MA
Duration:	One year full time / two years part time

Details of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) (If appropriate):

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/professionalstatutoryregulatorybodies/>

External Examiner(s): Further information can be found at:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/externalexaminers/currentexternalexaminers/>

1. What is the philosophy of the Programme?

History is the study of the attempts of human beings in past societies, from the earliest times to the very recent past, to organise life materially and conceptually, individually and collectively. Studying the past widens our experience and develops qualities of perception and judgement. History can help understand the present, plan for the future, understand our selves, and our places within human history. We take it as self-evident that knowledge and understanding of the past are essential both to individuals and to wider society, and that an understanding of societies in the distant past is as relevant as that of more recent History. The MA in History at Keele is founded upon these core principles. The range of material covered in its programmes extends in chronological terms from the earlier middle ages to the present day, and offers a broad geographical coverage from England to Europe, Asia and Africa. We also place great emphasis upon exploring the insights offered by other disciplines, as well as on using up-to-date methods and techniques for studying historical, historiographical and methodological issues.

Broad educational aims of the programme

The Masters programme aims to enable students to:

- Understand historical change over time and the nature of human societies in the past.
- Develop the ability to construct an historical argument, and to present this coherently, economically and elegantly with the appropriate supporting evidence
- Deepen their historical knowledge of a variety of periods, places, topics and themes.
- Evaluate and critically assess a range of different kinds of primary sources and to use them appropriately in the development of historical analysis relevant at Masters Level.
- Evaluate and critically assess secondary sources and historiographical debates, and to use them appropriately in the development of historical analysis relevant at Masters Level.

- Develop the ability to research, plan and write a substantial independent project.
- Work both constructively and critically, by themselves and as part of a team, to deliver specific projects.
- Develop research skills commensurate with postgraduate study in the field of History.
- Reflect productively on their strengths, weaknesses, and methods of learning.

Intended learning outcomes of the programme.

Students who complete the MA in History will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the complexities of selected historical trends and issues from different historical periods.
- Explore and analyse a breadth of historical knowledge, spanning eras, continents, cultures and varieties of History (political, social, cultural, religious, gendered, etc).
- Critically evaluate different approaches to History and the range of skills and methods employed in its pursuit.
- Evaluate historical evidence, arguments and assumptions.
- Recognise some of the uses and abuses of History.
- Construct clear persuasive arguments using advanced literacy and communication skills, and be able to harness these skills in appropriate contexts, and for a range of audiences, through oral presentation and in writing.
- Manage time and resources effectively.

Principal purpose of the programme

The principal purpose of the MA History programme is to familiarise students with a variety of historical periods, historiographical perspectives and approaches. It will also equip students with the tools to undertake independent research in their chosen area. It offers students the opportunity to choose from a wide range of option modules whilst also maintaining a central coherence through dedicated core modules. These will equip students to excel in any career within which critical thinking, communications skills, and the gathering, assessment and analysis of data and evidence is important. This may include a wide range of careers in both the public and private sectors, for example (but not limited to) the law, teaching, libraries, archives, museums, the civil service, journalism, politics, research for charities, NGOs, government bodies, or think tanks, broadcasting, advertising or continued research at PhD-level.

Keele Graduate Attributes

Engagement with this programme will enable you to further develop your intellectual, personal and professional capabilities. At Keele, we call these our ten Graduate Attributes and they include independent thinking, synthesizing information, creative problem solving, communicating clearly, and appreciating the social, environmental and global implications of your studies and activities. Whilst you will undoubtedly have already developed these skills and abilities to varying degrees, such existing capabilities can always be deepened and enriched. Our educational programme and learning environment is designed to help you to develop further as a well-rounded postgraduate who is capable of making a positive and valued contribution in a complex and rapidly changing world, whichever spheres of life you engage in during and after your studies at Keele.

Please refer to the programme webpages for a statement of how you can achieve the Keele Graduate Attributes through full engagement in the programme and other educational opportunities at Keele. Further information about the Keele Graduate Attributes can be found here: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/journey/>

2. How is the Programme taught?

The taught element of the Masters programme comprises:

- (1) HIS-40002 Approaches to Historical Research (core, 30 Credits)
- (2) HIS-40017 Research Skills in the Humanities (core, 15 credits)
- (3) HIS-40016 Reflective Practice in the Humanities (core, 15 credits)
- (4-5) two option modules (each 30 credits)

Semester 1: Either HIS-40060 Constructing Nations, or HIS-40081 Subject Specialism I

Semester 2: Either ENG-40057 Work Placement, or HIS-40082 Subject Specialism II

- (6) HIS-40028 Dissertation (60 credits)

Course structure (full time)

SEMESTER 1 (credits)	SEMESTER 2 (credits)	SEMESTER 3 (credits)
HIS-40017 Research Skills in the Humanities (15)	HIS-40016, Reflective Practice in the Humanities (15)	HIS-40028 Dissertation (60)
HIS-40002 Approaches to Historical Research (30)	Option Module (30)	
Option Module (30)		

The course structure for part-time students is by negotiation with the Course Director, though usually part-time students are expected to take the two option modules in the first year and the four core modules in the second year.

All modules offered are taught by staff who are research active and experts in their fields with a commitment to lively and innovative teaching methods. The programme can be studied either full or part-time. As well as the Master of Arts award, Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma routes are also available.

Principal learning and teaching methods used in the programme, including the relevant mode of study and attendance.

Learning and teaching methods used on the Programme vary according to the subject matter and aims of the module. They include the following:

- Seminars, wherein key issues can be discussed in depth. Students are expected to play a full part, and occasionally to lead, these discussions. Some seminars may consist largely of student presentations, where they will be asked to reflect on how particular historiographical or methodological approaches illuminate a particular historical topic and how such approaches can be applied to a range of textual and non-textual primary sources.
- Workshops in research skills where students discuss and reflect on a range of research techniques, including archival work and utilising historical databases online, and how to apply for research-based jobs.
- One-on-one time with the MA director, their personal tutor and their dissertation supervisor, to discuss their specific research and writing plans.
- Focused group work and collective class discussions.
- Independent study based on directed reading from primary sources, methodological and

- historiographical texts, research monographs, academic journals, and historical databases online.
- Web-based learning using the Keele Learning Environment (KLE). The KLE is accessible to all students on and off campus and is used to give students easy access to a wide range of resources and research tools, and as a platform for online discussions and blogs. The KLE is an online learning environment that provides a range of tools to support students including access to documents and other resources, quizzes, discussion boards, assignments and announcements.
 - In the case of the dissertation module, the opportunity to undertake a piece of advanced, independent research supervised and supported by a member of staff with expertise in the area.
 - In addition to these formal activities, students are provided with regular opportunities to talk through particular areas of difficulty, and any particular learning needs they may have, with their personal tutor and their dissertation supervisors on a one-to-one basis.

These learning and teaching methods enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme in a variety of ways. For example:

- Independent learning is vital to the successful study of History, where of necessity considerable time is spent in archives (or in archival research via the Internet). It provides students with the requisite time and space in which to conduct research, to read critically and to develop critical analyses of historical change and continuity. Prior independent study is central to effective work in seminars and workshops.
- Seminars and workshops provide opportunities for students to ask questions about the interpretation and analysis of historical documents, their meaning and their historiographical interpretations, and to present their own ideas to members of staff and other students using an appropriate medium of communication. This also provides useful space to work as a group in a more collaborative setting.
- Undertaking an advanced research dissertation with the support of an experienced and active researcher allows students to formulate relevant research questions and devise a feasible strategy for answering them.
- Throughout, students will be developing their writing, researching, and wider communications skills, both through formal assessment, class discussion, personal contact with members of staff, and through utilising different forms of technology.

The permanent teaching staff on the History Programme can be found at

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/humanities/study/history/ourpeople/>. All members of staff have doctorates (PhDs or equivalent) in History or a related discipline. All are active researchers and experienced teachers whose work has been widely published in books and leading international journals. Several are Fellows or Associate Fellows of the Higher Education Academy.

In the most recent government-run assessment of research, the [REF 2014](#), 82% of our research was judged to be in the top two categories of 'World Leading' [3*] and 'Internationally Excellent' [4*]. Keele historians are enthusiastic, reflective and ambitious scholars whose expertise ranges in time from the eleventh century to the very recent past, and in place from the immediate environment of the north midlands to continental Europe, the United States, Asia and Africa. We support a long-standing, flourishing [Centre for Local History](#), and have further shared interests in the history of political violence, social movements, migration, gender, religion and print culture. Our members include American historians, whose work is supported by the successful [David Bruce Centre](#). The staff group has extensive experience of teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level in universities in the UK, continental Europe, and North America.

3. What is the Structure of the Programme?

All students take four core modules.

HIS-40002 Approaches to Historical Research (30 Credits)

This module introduces different approaches to the research and writing of history, engages with debates on the status of historical knowledge, and examines the sources and resources available. The course aims to broaden students' understanding of methodological debates within history and to provide conceptual and other tools for their own research work. The seminars are led by specialists within History. Throughout, students are encouraged to reflect on the relevance of the material under consideration for their own research topic.

HIS-40017 Research Skills in the Humanities (15 credits)

This is a practical guide to conducting research in the Humanities, largely in preparation for your dissertation.

HIS-40016 Reflective Practice in the Humanities (15 credits)

You will be introduced to a variety of key theoretical and methodological texts and encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary discussion. You will also be asked to reflect on the place of your own work within your discipline and the Humanities more broadly. Keele is proud of its reputation as an inter-disciplinary university, and this course seeks to explore the value of such approaches as we discuss what methods and assumptions our various disciplines share, and how they differ.

HIS-40028 Dissertation (60 credits)

The dissertation module allows students to produce their own piece of independent historical research, guided by a supervisor who will be a world-leading expert in the field. Students taking this module will be offered up to 10 hours of one-to-one supervision, in order to undertake a piece of advanced, independent historical research supervised and supported by a member of staff with expertise in the area.

HIS-4XXXX Option modules (30 credits each)

In both semester 1 and 2, students choose one of a number of **optional modules**, each of which is worth 30 credits. In these optional modules, Master's students are expected to read and reflect independently on additional sources/historiographical debates as set by the module tutor. Masters students can choose from MA-only modules which focus on particular themes, theories or approaches, a Work Placement module, or they may take an enhanced-level 6 module, allowing them to learn about the historiography surrounding the time period of their dissertation. If students choose to take the enhanced level-6 modules, they will also have at least four hours of special tutorials or workshops for Masters' students. These will intensively focus on the discussion of critical materials, and the understanding of the research field in which the critical literature is situated. All optional modules:

- (1) Reflect the variety in cross-period and thematic spread of History as a subject
- (2) Are embedded in research-led teaching, given that History involves sources-based study of a particular, focussed period or theme
- (3) Have a diet of assessment appropriate for Masters level.

Former undergraduates at Keele may not take a module which overlaps with their previous third year modules.

Approaches – HIS-40002, Approaches to Historical Research
Research - HIS-40017, Research Skills in the Humanities
Reflective - HIS-40016, Reflective Practice in the Humanities
D - HIS-40028 Dissertation
O - Optional module

Learning Outcome	Module in which this is delivered	Principal forms of assessment (of the Learning Outcome) used
Critically evaluate the themes and historiographical background of a detailed theme or focussed period of History in a highly reflective manner, demonstrating verbal, organizational, intellectual, and reflective skills	Approaches Research D O Reflective	Essay Annotated Bibliography Dissertation Essay Reflective Diary
Critically evaluate a range of historiographical and methodological perspectives affecting History	Approaches D O Reflective	Essay Dissertation Essay Reflective Diary
Critically consider the ways historiography has developed over time, within their historical contexts and in relation to each other, as well as insight into their critical claims and priorities.	Approaches	Essay
Plan and construct a substantial independent research project in History	Research D	Project outline Dissertation
Undertake extensive research	D	Dissertation
Read critically and assess primary materials and to judge their historical significance in a highly reflective manner, demonstrating a deep understanding of the historical and intellectual context	Approaches Research D O	Essay Annotated Bibliography Dissertation Essay
Locate and critically assess the relevance and usefulness of primary and secondary sources	Approaches Research D O	Essay Annotated Bibliography Dissertation Essay
Formulate a question or series of questions to answer an historical problem	Research D	Project outline Dissertation
Demonstrate the ability to make innovative findings and connections in research	D O Reflective	Dissertation Essay Reflective Diary
Reflect critically on the place of a specific research topic within wider debates in the discipline	Approaches D Reflective	Essay Dissertation Reflective Diary
Engage in a research culture commensurate with postgraduate study	D Reflective	Dissertation Reflective Diary
Evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the field of History	Approaches, O D	Essay Dissertation
Communicate the research process	Approaches, O	Essay

and research findings to diverse audiences using a variety of written, oral and visual means	Approaches Dissertation Reflective	Oral presentation Dissertation Reflective Diary
Work productively to an advanced level in a largely unstructured context exercising initiative and personal responsibility	D Approaches, O	Dissertation Essay
Make decisions and plan activity in response to developing contexts	Research D Reflective	Project outline Dissertation Reflective Diary
Undertake appropriate further training of an academic, professional, or practical nature (for example school teachers)	Research D Reflective	Project Outline Dissertation Reflective Practice
Design and complete a research project and demonstrate a knowledge of the importance of the research process	D Research Approaches, O	Dissertation Project Outline Essays
Demonstrate a knowledge of literature collection and analysis	Research	Annotated Bibliography
Reflect critically on their own mode of study and learning, and the development of research topics	O, Reflective	Reflective Diary
(where applicable) Critically consider the application of context in the teaching of History.	O	Reflective Diary

Students may leave the History Programme with one of three final awards.

Master of Arts Honours Degree (180 credits). To be awarded a Masters Honours Degree in History, a student normally requires a total of at least 180 credits. This will be made up of 60 credits for the core modules; 60 credits for the option modules; and 60 credits for the dissertation.

Full time: Students take four core modules (120 credits total) and two optional modules (60 credits total) throughout three semesters.

Part time: Students usually take the two optional modules (60 credits) in year 1, and the four core modules (120 credits) in year two, although this can be reversed if there is a particular reason to take the core modules first. The current arrangement is designed to give students more guidance on how to do History at a Masters level and on their general area of interest, before focusing on a specific dissertation topic in the second year. Dissertation supervision availability should be considered when deciding which order to complete the MA modules.

Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits). To be awarded a Diploma in Higher Education, a student normally requires a total of at least 120 credits. This will be made up of 60 credits for the core modules; and 60 credits for the option modules.

Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits). To be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate a student requires a total of at least 60 credits.

4. How is the Programme assessed?

The function of the assessments listed in the table above is to test students' achievement of the learning outcomes of the History Programme. For example:

- **Essays** test the quality and application of subject knowledge. They allow students to demonstrate their ability to carry out bibliographic research and to communicate their ideas effectively in writing in an appropriate scholarly style using appropriate systems of referencing.
- **Critical Analyses** of other scholars' work test students' ability to identify and summarise the key points of a text and to evaluate the quality of arguments and the evidence used to support them. Critical analyses also assess students' knowledge of research methodologies and their ability to make critical judgements about the appropriateness of different approaches.
- **Annotated Bibliographies** test students' ability to analyse and evaluate critically a range of secondary literature and primary source materials with a view towards specific areas of research.
- **Project Outlines** test students' ability to plan, prepare, and structure a viable research project. They also test the students' knowledge of relevant and important areas of research within History, and assess the originality and impact of certain areas of research to the field.
- **Reflective Study Diaries** test students' ability to engage self-reflexively with their study and practice within their field. They encourage students to develop a critical engagement with their modes and practices of study, learning and development of research topics.
- **Research design projects and short research papers** test student's knowledge of different research methodologies, the limits of historical knowledge, and their ability to assess and analyse sources. They also enable students to demonstrate their ability to formulate research questions and to answer them using an appropriate strategy and sources.
- **Oral presentations, either by individual students or in groups**, assess students' subject knowledge and understanding. Where applicable, they also test their ability to work effectively as members of a team, to communicate what they know orally and visually, and to reflect on these processes as part of their own personal development.
- **Dissertations** test students' ability to carry out independent research and communicate findings in an extended piece of written work following recognised academic standards of presentation.

Students are also assessed formatively to enable them to monitor their own progress and to assist staff in identifying and addressing any specific learning needs. Formative assessment is not formally marked. The exact form varies between modules, but can include preparing presentations or short pieces of written analysis for class discussion or even writing a CV for future job applications. Feedback, including guidance on how students can improve the quality of their work, is also provided on all summative assessments and more informally in the course of tutorial and seminar discussions.

5. What are the typical admission requirements for the programme?

Students are accepted onto the Programme on the basis of an honours degree at upper Second class (2i) or higher (or international equivalent) in History or other relevant humanities subject. Applicants with other qualifications and appropriate experience are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Students registered at overseas institutions which are ERASMUS partners or have existing exchange agreements with Keele and who wish to take parts of this Programme as an exchange student will be

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required to satisfy the criteria for qualification for such an exchange agreed by their home institution in consultation with CIED.

Students for whom English is a second language will be required to satisfy the criteria outlined in the first paragraph of this section, however we will also require English language proficiency of at least 6.5 in IELTS test scores (or equivalent).

6. How are students supported on the programme?

Each student is normally allocated the MA Programme Director as their Personal Tutor. Meetings are arranged to meet with their tutor at the start of their programme and then periodically to review overall progress. Module and tutorial group leaders are responsible for providing support for learning on the modules and in the tutorial groups for which they are responsible. They also give individual feedback on in-course assessments. Students can also consult their personal tutor, module tutors, or dissertation supervisor about any feedback or any academic issue about which they require further clarification. Additional help with University level study skills is available from the Student Learning (<https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentlearning/>). All members of teaching staff on the History MA Programme are available to see students during advertised weekly office hours and at other times by appointment.

7. Learning Resources

History is taught in modern teaching rooms across the University, equipped with computers, internet access and electronic whiteboards or projection equipment. Rooms may be arranged either in traditional lecture format or more informally to allow students to work together in small groups. One-on-one sessions will normally be held in the staff member's office.

Self-study materials, which comprise mainly primary and secondary sources available in the university library and online. Keele University Library has many resources for your subject, both on campus and online. Some inter-library loans are also possible, although you may need to travel elsewhere in the UK to access rare primary sources. This can be discussed with your dissertation supervisor to ensure the feasibility of any research plans.

Further information about the library can be found at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/library>. To access online library services off campus you will need an Athens username and password. IT Services is located in the library building, providing technical support, and there is a large number of open access PCs available for students. All student PCs use a standard platform, which includes software such as Microsoft Office, web browsers, and other standard applications you may need. Printing facilities are available in the library building.

The Keele Learning Environment (KLE) provides easy access to a wide range of learning resources including lecture notes, electronic materials available in a repository maintained by the University Library and other resources – video, audio and text-based – accessible from external providers via the internet.

Special support is available if material is needed in braille, large print, or some other format, or if extra support is needed in relation to conditions such as dyslexia or Asperger's. It is a good idea to discuss any special requirements with your personal tutor at the start of the year, which can be kept confidential.

8. Other learning opportunities

Students will be encouraged to engage in the postgraduate research culture promoted at Keele. They will be invited to Postgraduate meetings hosted within the Faculty and School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and offered the opportunity to contribute to the annual Postgraduate Symposium at Keele (<https://www.keele.ac.uk/humssr/newsandevents/humanitiespgrsymposium/>). They will also be invited to

the Modern History Seminars, The Keele Interdisciplinary Early Modern Seminars, David Bruce Centre Visiting Speaker series, the Keele Writing series of events and any other singular events in the School of the Humanities or in the University generally that is of relevance. The Keele Postgraduate Association (<http://kpa.org.uk/>) often hosts events, and provides some hardship funding. Students will be notified of relevant events by email and on KLE and occasionally also via Twitter. A calendar of events can be found at: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/humssr/newsandevents/calendarofevents/>.

Anyone can enrol on any individual modules without registering for the MA. They can choose to use these credits to complete the MA later on. This is part of the continuing professional development (CPD) route.

If your programme of study is interrupted, or you opt to take modules individually as part of CPD, you can be awarded the Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits) or the Postgraduate Certificate in History (60 credits).

9. Quality management and enhancement

The History Programme Director and the MA History Director are responsible for the overall direction of learning and teaching on the Programme supported by the History Programme's Board and utilising History external examiners. The Programme's Board consists of student representatives plus all members of staff teaching on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in History. All Humanities programmes are overseen by the Director of Postgraduate Taught Courses.

The quality and standards of learning in History at both undergraduate and postgraduate level are subject to a continuous process of monitoring, review and enhancement.

- Students have the opportunity to evaluate each module and the programme. Data from the evaluations is reported at regular programme board meetings.
- Peer observation of teaching: The academic staff responsible for delivering the programme undertake regular peer observation of teaching that is used to identify teaching strengths and areas of development.
- All MA work is second marked, to ensure that standards are maintained both between students and across modules. Unless specified elsewhere, this is done anonymously.
- External examination is done by a qualified academic from another institution. They are responsible for: approving examination questions, confirming all marks which contribute to a student's degree, reviewing and giving advice on the structure and content of the Programme and assessment procedures. External examiners see all work marked internally as a 'fail' or 'distinction' standard or on the borderline between two classes.
- Postgraduate Staff Student Liaison Committee; providing both a regular review and feedback on the programme.
- The Postgraduate Director for the Humanities writes a Curriculum Annual Review and Development (CARD), reflecting on the entire MA programme's strengths and weaknesses at the end of each academic year.
- Annual Programme Review Humanities meeting: a range of data is used to inform the annual programme review; it comprises student evaluations, PTES, external examiners reports, academic and pastoral tutor reports and internal programme review and monitoring data.

Student evaluation of, and feedback on, the quality of learning on the History Programme takes place in several ways:

- the results of student evaluations of all modules are reported to module leaders and reviewed by the Programme's Director and the School Board as part of the CARD process referred to earlier

- findings related to History from the PTES and regular surveys of the student experience conducted by the University, are subjected to careful analysis and a planned response at Programme and School level
- feedback received from representatives of students on the History MA programme is considered and acted on at regular meetings of the History Student Staff Voice Committee.

10. The principles of programme design

The History MA Programme described in this document has been drawn up with reference to, and in accordance with the guidance set out in, the following documents:

Guidelines for preparing programme specifications, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2006.

Frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008.

College Higher Education Toolkit: Engaging with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2015.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2011.

Subject Benchmark Statement: History, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2007.

Creating a New Historical Perspective: EU and the Wider World, The CLIOHWORLD Guide I & II, The Tuning History Subject Area Group, 2011.

Learning and Teaching Strategy to 2020, Keele University, 2015.

Strategic Plan, 2015-2020, Keele University, 2015.

Generic Assessment Criteria, Keele University, 2014.

Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees, Keele University, 2014.

Programme Specification Template: Undergraduate, Keele University, 2009.

11. Programme Version History

Version History	Date	CHANGES / NOTES
Date first created	May 2011	Dr. Kate Cushing
Revision history	April 2017	Dr. Rachel Bright. Keele's new format. New modules. Clarification of course content and structure.
	April 2019	Dr. Rachel Bright. Modification of optional modules, updating university changes, and correcting some grammatical issues.
Date approved	FLTC May 2019	