

History MA Information Form

Doing an MA (by thesis) in History

An MA in History requires completion of a thesis of *c.*30,000-40,000 words based on a programme of independent research. The work for the thesis requires twelve months of fulltime work. The thesis is normally completed in 12 months for full-time students, or pro rata for part-time students. For more information about the MA degree (including the MA Policy) see the [Postgraduate](#) page on the Faculty website.

The MA degree is awarded with Distinction if the thesis is judged to be of A+ or A standard, or with Merit if is judged to be of A- or B+ standard.

Preliminary Enquiries and Expressions of Interest

For all preliminary enquiries and expressions of interest concerning the MA by thesis in History please contact the [History Postgraduate Coordinators](#).

The History Programme provides a list of [suggested topics for MA and PhD theses](#) in History.

Prospective MA students should also consult the research profiles of staff in the [History Programme](#) and in the [Stout Research Centre](#). For information about current PhD and MA students and their research see our [Research Student Profiles](#).

Postgraduate study in History at Victoria

The advantages of doing postgraduate History research in Wellington

The History Programme at Victoria has a vibrant postgraduate community of about thirty students enrolled for either the MA by thesis or the PhD.

MA and PhD supervision in History is provided by Historians based in both the [History Programme](#) and the [Stout Research Centre](#). We offer research supervision in the broad areas of American, Australian, Asian, European, New Zealand and Pacific history. For details about our more specialist research areas see our staff profiles on the website.

Wellington has some of the best research archives and resources in the country for New Zealand and Pacific history, as well as good early-modern material. Increasingly, online databases and electronic resources (e.g., Empire Online and Early English Books Online) make it possible for students to undertake historical research in a wide range of areas.

Expectations for an MA Thesis in History

An MA thesis in History will demonstrate the acquisition of skills in the following areas:

- The definition of a significant question or questions about an historical topic, historiographical debate or area of research;
- The analysis of the historiography relating to the question(s) and a critical awareness of its development and relevance to the topic;
- The analysis of research material to produce an answer or answers to the research question(s);

- The use of appropriate methodologies to collect and analyse the evidence;
- The ability to develop an argument which supports conclusions validating, challenging or in other ways contributing to the historiography about the topic;
- A scholarly level of written expression, referencing and presentation.

Entry Requirements for an MA in History

Students seeking admission to the MA in History are expected to have a BA (Hons) degree in History or an equivalent four-year undergraduate degree. Those with an Honours degree in a cognate discipline, but with at least one paper in History, are also eligible to apply for admission. University regulations allow for this qualification to be waived, but only in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Academic Committee.

Students who have gained First Class Honours or Second Class Honours (upper division) are well placed to consider doing an MA degree. Those with Second Class Honours (lower division) may find the demands of writing an MA thesis very challenging and should seek advice from the Postgraduate Coordinator. A student with Third Class Honours is required under University Regulations to demonstrate to the Head of Programme's satisfaction that he/she has the capacity and background to complete an MA successfully.

International students with a strong four-year undergraduate or equivalent degree are encouraged to apply and should contact the Postgraduate Coordinator about their qualifications.

Application procedure

After consultation with the Postgraduate Coordinator and an advisor (an appropriate member of academic staff in the History Programme or Stout Research Centre), the applicant prepares and submits to the History Research Committee:

1. a research proposal of approximately 3,000-5000 words detailing the research question, the justification, a brief bibliography outlining the major works in the field and, if applicable, requisite primary source material, and a discussion of resource requirements;
2. two academic references;
3. an academic transcript;
4. a substantial sample of written work, preferably a research-based Honours essay, senior thesis or equivalent substantial undergraduate research paper.

This proposal should follow the guidelines set out below.

The Research Committee will assess the proposal, the availability of a supervisor and the candidate's capacity to complete an MA thesis, and decide whether to recommend the candidate for enrolment to the Deputy Dean of FHSS.

Enrolment Procedure

Enrolment is authorised once History's Research Committee has approved a candidate's thesis proposal. Enrolment for an MA can be made as soon as the thesis proposal is approved and at any time of the year; the enrolment form is available from [Admissions and Enrolment](#).

When the initial thesis proposal is approved, the Research Committee will formally appoint a main supervisor and, sometimes, a second supervisor. The candidate will then meet with the Postgraduate Coordinator and supervisor(s), sign a Memorandum of Agreement, and complete the enrolment form.

Guidelines for the History MA thesis proposal

The MA thesis proposal should include the following:

Statement of Topic

Tell your reader your general subject area and specify your topic. Briefly point out why it is a significant topic, that it is carefully and concisely defined and feasible for a MA thesis at Victoria.

Aims

State your specific objectives and research questions. What do you want to find out? What contribution will your thesis make to the scholarship in your field? Will it usefully contribute to an ongoing debate?

Review of Historiography

Illustrate that you have some preliminary knowledge of the existing literature on your topic. Identify authors whose work is directly relevant to your topic and offer brief evaluations of their work. By means of a review of what has already been written, you place your research topic in its relevant research context and establish what your contribution will be.

Don't go overboard. There is space in the proposal for mention of just the major writings on, or close to, your topic, and so your discussion of the literature needs to be open-ended at this point. Your finished thesis will include a much more developed discussion of the relevant literature.

Outline of Theoretical Issues

Specify the theoretical writings that are relevant to your topic, and indicate which ones you expect to draw on as you define your questions and build a conceptual framework for your thesis. Do you expect to produce findings that will challenge existing theoretical paradigms?

Description of Methodology/Approach

Here you might indicate whether you plan, for example, to use one or more of the following techniques:

rely mainly on "traditional" sources found in libraries and archives;

- take an ethnographic approach;
- produce a discourse analysis;

- make a quantitative analysis that entails data processing;
- make substantial use of biographies or fiction;
- make use of visual materials such as film, photographs, building plans;
- use oral histories.

Statement on Ethics and Impediments

Show you have given consideration to ethical issues. Discuss whether ethical approval will be required? If so, then when will it be obtained?

Are there any foreseeable cultural, social or legal impediments to the successful completion of the research?

Tentative Chapter Outline

Indicate how many chapters you expect to write and give a tentative title to each chapter. Brief annotations on each chapter topic would be useful. You may find it helpful to look at completed History MA theses (ask the Programme administrator, for access to them) to see how they have been organized.

Timetable

Draw up a timetable that shows your thesis can be completed within one year and within the 30,000-40,000 (including notes and bibliography) word limit which specifies:

- a chapter timetable (allowing six to eight weeks per chapter);
- any plans for research outside of Wellington;
- when you next expect to deliver a work-in-progress presentation at a Postgraduate Seminar (or similar forum);
- planned completion date.

Resource Requirements

State that the Programme can provide adequate supervision on your topic. Discuss your resource requirements for the successful completion of your thesis, including travel costs, software, photocopying or other necessary research resources with the Postgraduate Coordinator and include a brief statement of those needs in the full proposal.

NB. Enrolled MA students are eligible to apply for some financial assistance towards the costs of research from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The maximum amount that can be applied for in the course of an MA is currently \$2,000. These funds can be used for such things as photocopying, interloan costs, conference attendance, travel to repositories, but they cannot be used for costs of thesis production or purchase of equipment. Further information about these funds can be accessed from the [Faculty Research Committee](#) page.

Preliminary Bibliography

Indicate that you will be able to access the necessary library and archival resources. List (a) all the sources you used when preparing your proposal, and (b) the sources that you know that you must use when researching your topic.

Your bibliography will, of course, grow as your project develops. You are not expected to produce a close-to-final list at this stage.

Divide your bibliography into primary and secondary sources. You can use other sub-headings if you so choose.

Submitting your MA Proposal

The proposal should be submitted to the Postgraduate Coordinator who will forward it to the History Postgraduate Research Committee members for consideration.

The Postgraduate Coordinator will advise the applicant of the Committee's decision and will pass on any feedback received on the proposal.

Further Information

Postgraduate Supervision and Six-Monthly Reports

All thesis students and their supervisors are required to write a report on their progress at six-monthly intervals in May and November of each year. Further information is available from the Faculty of Graduate Research [Six-monthly Progress Reports](#) page.

The History Postgraduate Seminar

The Postgraduate Seminar is a programme of weekly meetings held through the teaching semesters for MA and PhD students.

Details of the Postgraduate Seminar programme are decided between students attending the initial meeting in early March and the conveners. The first and third meetings of each month usually consist of presentations designed to help students with their professional development, covering topics such as thesis completion, finding jobs or fellowships, and scholarly publication. In the second and fourth meetings of each month, students present their work-in-progress to the seminar, in a similar format to conference presentations. Presentations will assist students in public speaking and presentation, and provide regular peer feedback on research and writing. All MA and PhD students are expected to participate regularly in seminars. Participants are encouraged to propose ideas to the conveners: the purpose of the seminar is to assist postgraduate students. The Postgraduate Seminar is usually followed by a social hour.

'New Historians' Postgraduate History Conference

'New Historians' is a Postgraduate History conference organised by the Postgraduate students in the History programme. The conference is attended by History students from around New Zealand and often further afield. It has been held annually (in August or September) since 2006. Involvement in the organising committee is voluntary. The Committee is usually formed during the first meeting of the Postgraduate Seminar in early March.

MA Work-in-Progress Presentations

MA students are expected to make at least one presentation on their work-in-progress in either the Postgraduate Seminar or at the 'New Historians' Postgraduate conference (if one is organised).

The History Programme also actively encourages postgraduate students to present their research at academic conferences and financial support can be provided from the FHSS Research grant (see below) or other funding which may become available.

Financial Assistance

MA and PhD students are entitled to some financial assistance towards the costs of research during their enrolment from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS). For MA students this is currently set at \$2,000. These funds must be applied for using the Oracle system. They can be used for such things as photocopying, interloan costs, conference attendance, travel to repositories, but cannot be used for costs of thesis production or purchase of equipment. The guidelines concerning the funds that MA students can apply for from FHSS can be accessed from the [Faculty Research Committee](#) page. See the [Faculty Research Committee Research Fellow and Postgraduate Student Policy](#).

Information and advice on other funding opportunities within the School and University (including tutoring work) will be issued by the Postgraduate Coordinator throughout the year.

Financial assistance also may be available from external sources depending on the topic of research. It is worth checking the research and scholarships section of the University website (and other noticeboards) for funds related to your subject as well as your degree and qualifications. For further information see the scholarships section of the University website.

The University's [Research Office](#) also provides information about research funding which can be accessed on the intranet.

The [Postgraduate Students Association](#) has information on StudyLink funding.

Scholarships for MA study

The following scholarships are available for History MA students (check the websites for closing dates):

- [Victoria University MA scholarships](#);
- [James E Worsfold Scholarship for MA or PhD](#);
- [Jack Pearce Research scholarship in English or NZ History](#).

Prospective students should also check both the [Scholarships Database](#) and the [Scholarships Noticeboard](#).