

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



Application of penalties for late submission: College Green, March 1858

GUIDE TO DISSERTATIONS

2012–13

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE FOR DISSERTATORS, 2012–13

Hilary term, 2012

Week 3: Monday, 30 January, 5 p.m. (Room 3074)

First of two introductory meetings for rising senior sophisters proposing to take history alone in their final year. A panel of supervisors will introduce their fields.

Week 4: Monday, 6 February, 5 p.m. (Room 3074)

Second introductory meeting and panel discussion.

Week 6: Monday, 20 February, 11 a.m.

Deadline for submission of **two** proposed topics to the History Office, in fields designated by **different potential supervisors**, using the forms appearing at the end of this Guide. A notice allocating students to supervisors will be posted within a fortnight.

Weeks 8 to 12: Watch office doors for times

Meetings will be arranged between supervisors and students with approved topics, at which guidance will be offered in preparing a bibliography, and the initial stages of research.

Trinity term, 2012

Week 1: Wednesday, 11 April, 11 a.m.

Deadline for submission to the History Office of a **review essay** of about 2,000 words, offering a critique of secondary studies relevant to your topic, accompanied by a detailed **outline** and a working **bibliography** of major primary and secondary sources. You should expect to make radical amendments to both bibliography and outline as your work develops.

This exercise, though not contributing to your Moderatorship mark, is an essential element in the preparation of a successful dissertation.

Michaelmas term, 2012

During this term, you should arrange at least three meetings with your supervisor, undertake most of your research, and prepare your draft chapter.

Week 10: Monday, 26 November, 11 a.m.

Deadline for submission to the History Office of a **draft chapter** of up to 2,500 words, with a table of contents and bibliography for the entire dissertation. The draft should be typed or word-processed, in accordance with the conventions for the dissertation itself.

This exercise, though not contributing to your Moderatorship mark, is an essential element in the preparation of a successful dissertation.

Hilary term, 2013

During this term, you should again arrange at least three meetings with your supervisor, complete your research, and prepare your final draft.

Week 6: Monday, 18 February, 11 a.m.

Deadline for **submission** of dissertation, in form prescribed.

WILL SOMEBODY TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?

Please?

All senior sophisters taking history alone are required to write a dissertation, carrying the weight of two papers in the Moderatorship examination. This enables you to experience the excitements, and frustrations, associated with original research. In order to diminish the frustration without spoiling the excitement, the Department of History will offer general guidance and preparatory classes as well as providing individual supervision. This guide is intended to anticipate some of your questions, and to set out what we expect in a sophister dissertation.

What is a dissertation?

It is an extended essay based on independent research, involving critical study of primary sources. It allows you to apply the techniques taught in special subjects to sustained investigation of a topic of your choosing, free from the constraints imposed by your normal class schedule. The dissertation must be **your own work**, in that you must do your own research, construct your own argument, and write it yourself.

What is an editorial project?

In certain fields, you may be invited to undertake an editorial project, involving the transcription and annotation of an original document, and preparation of an extended introduction placing the document in historical context.

Am I expected to make an original contribution to historical thought?

No – although it is quite possible that you will. In many cases, presumably, your conclusions will coincide with those of other scholars who have tackled similar evidence. We do expect you to show your capacity for independent **critical analysis**. This involves formulating clear hypotheses, applying these systematically to a body of relevant evidence, and justifying your conclusions by reference to that evidence.

How should I choose my topic?

Your teachers have specified the fields in which they are prepared to supervise dissertations. Early in Hilary term, supervisors will hold panel sessions in which they suggest potential topics, and indicate the availability of primary sources. If a prospective supervisor is absent or on leave, you should pursue that person by e-mail or otherwise. You will be asked to propose **two** alternative topics involving fields designated by **different supervisors**, by the sixth Monday of term. Each proposal should include a list of the major **primary sources** that you expect to study.

Who will supervise my dissertation?

No topic will be accepted by the co-ordinator without approval from a potential supervisor. Since the distribution of supervision must be equitable, you cannot be guaranteed your first preference, though you may be permitted to pursue the topic with an alternative supervisor who has not designated the relevant field, yet is qualified to take on that topic. If you wish to work in a field not appearing in the attached list, you should discuss your proposal with the least inappropriate member of staff.

May I choose a topic related to one of my special subjects?

Yes. We anticipate that many topics will emerge from projects undertaken in Junior Sophister courses. You may however prefer to co-ordinate your dissertation with a fourth-year special subject, or to undertake research in a field unrelated to your class work. Obviously, it would be inadvisable for you to answer examination questions on topics central to your dissertation.

What kinds of documents will I be expected to analyse?

That depends on the period and location of your topic. For modern Irish and British topics, you will be expected to examine a substantial body of primary sources, such as documents in public and private archives, newspapers, official publications, or contemporary books, pamphlets and articles. Those studying topics further afield will be directed by supervisors towards the narrower but rapidly expanding range of primary sources available in Dublin, often in the original language. Use may also be made of documents in digital form.

Must primary sources take the form of the written word?

No – ‘evidence’ in forms such as visual images, artefacts and oral interviews may also be analysed as primary sources. But remember that these sources involve special problems of interpretation and presentation, requiring you to undertake preliminary training.

Must I be fluent in a foreign language in order to undertake a topic in European history?

Not yet. If you have a basic grasp of the required language (usually French or German), your supervisor will suggest ways of improving your reading skills to the required level before you embark on serious research. The same applies to topics requiring knowledge of the Irish language. In certain fields, especially in medieval and early modern history, you may be able to concentrate on documents already in translation.

What supervision will be offered?

In Hilary term, your supervisor will make time available for meetings with every student whose topic has been accepted. Guidance will be offered in preparing your bibliography, and for the initial stages of research. This will help you to prepare a **review essay** of secondary sources for submission by the beginning of Trinity term.

Will the supervisor correct my drafts?

Since this is a piece of independent research, no detailed critique will be offered of the final draft of your entire dissertation. However, you will be given detailed comments on the draft chapter due by the tenth Monday of Michaelmas term. Your supervisor may also agree to offer general comments on the quality of other sections that you wish to submit for scrutiny.

How much time should I devote to my dissertation, by comparison with my special subjects?

During term, you should allow roughly the same number of hours as you devote to reading and attending classes for your **List I** subject. In addition, you should allow some time for research during the summer vacation, and for writing during the Christmas break.

Must I follow a particular ‘house style’ in my notes and bibliography?

Yes, arbitrary though this requirement might seem to a free spirit. The Department of History has devised its own idiosyncratic but mandatory set of rules and conventions, set out in its Handbook, which you will ignore at your peril.

How will my dissertation be assessed?

It will be examined by **three** people: your supervisor, another member of staff, and an external examiner. This should ensure that dissertations are assessed consistently, whatever your chosen field.

What happens if I feel unable to complete my dissertation?

Don’t hesitate to let your supervisor know if you panic, or succumb temporarily to Writer’s Block – we are familiar with these sensations, and will suggest remedies. But watch out – dissertations deemed to be late by your head of department will receive a mark of 40% or less!

PRESENTATION

(1) The **length** of the text should be 7,000–10,000 words, supported by a table of contents, classified bibliography, and systematic references to sources in the form of footnotes or endnotes. In place of a dissertation, students may be permitted to undertake an **editorial project**, comprising a transcribed text of up to 10,000 words, fully annotated, and an introduction of 3,000–5,000 words.

(2) Unless taking the form of an editorial project, your dissertation should be divided into an introduction and three or four **chapters**.

(3) Before embarking on research, work out a strategy for taking **notes** accurately, methodically, and retrievably (whether on disk, cards, or paper). Remember that your dissertation will require far more notes than a term essay. **Double check** the accuracy of transcription as you go, clearly distinguishing between quotations and summaries, and marking the precise page or folio number of every entry. The use of keyword headings will aid filing and retrieval.

(4) **Quotations** from secondary sources, whether direct or indirect, should be brief and wholly relevant (use . . . to indicate omitted passages). To avoid the suspicion of **plagiarism** you must not only use your own words, but also refrain from paraphrasing extended passages from any single work. In the case of primary sources which are not readily available, longer extracts may be included in support of a detailed textual commentary. You may reproduce entire documents or extended extracts in an appendix, with appropriate references in the text. All quotations must follow the original precisely, in wording, spelling, and capitalisation.

(5) Precise **page references** must be given for all direct quotations, and also for closely paraphrased passages. When a passage is **requoted** from a secondary text, that text must be cited in addition to the original source. References may be given in notes at the foot of the page, or at the end of the dissertation. Please do **not** follow the common but distracting practice of interpolating references in the text, unless your supervisor has approved this system. Footnote citations may use abbreviated titles, but must indicate the precise location of every primary source cited (such as folio number within MSS, or page and column number in a newspaper). In short, give enough information to allow the reader to trace the passage cited.

(6) Provide a **bibliography** listing all the sources used, and separating primary from secondary sources. For books give complete title, author's full name, place and date of publication. For articles, add the title and issue of the journal, together with the page numbers. In the case of **primary sources** such as manuscripts, newspapers or rare publications, you must supply the name of the relevant library or archive, and where appropriate the MSS or call number.

(7) If citing documents viewed on the **internet**, always give the **full provenance** of the document, as if read in a library or archive, as well as the internet address.

(8) *The footnotes and the bibliography must conform to the style prescribed in Section 7 of the History Department Course Handbook. Students presenting a dissertation in archaeology may use the Harvard System of annotation.*

(9) **Rewrite** your first version before submitting the draft chapter or final dissertation. This should help you not only to achieve greater accuracy and fluency, but also to delete passages superfluous to the questions raised in your outline. Avoid padding and repetition, and check doubtful spellings before submission. Paragraphs should occupy less than a page and be devoted to a single major theme.

(10) Dissertations must be submitted in **typescript** or **print-out**, double-spaced, preferably without any handwritten amendments. Use one side only of each A4 sheet, number the pages, and provide a generous left-hand margin. Start each chapter, and the bibliography and appendices, on a new page. Supply a table of contents, an introductory note specifying the source of your conventions and declaring that 'this dissertation is entirely my own work', and a cover sheet giving the title, your name, and your supervisor's name. Please submit **two identical copies**, which must be securely bound.

SUPERVISORS AND FIELDS

This list is unavoidably provisional. During periods when staff are on leave, it may be possible to arrange for joint supervision of students in their fields.

Robert Armstrong: 17C & 18C British & British imperial history

Terry Barry: Medieval archaeology; Medieval rural settlement

Medieval castles and warfare

The Vikings

Ciaran Brady: 16C English and Irish history

American history to 1861

History of the writing of history

Joseph Clarke: Eighteenth and nineteenth-century French political and cultural history

French Revolution

David Dickson: 18C Irish history

Dublin, 1800–1950; Ireland & Africa

David Ditchburn: Europe (inc. England, Scotland), c. 1215–1517:

politics, religion, society, gender, economy

Anne Dolan: 20C Irish history, especially 1920s and 1930s

Sean Duffy: Irish relations with medieval Scotland and Wales

Medieval Dublin; The English in medieval Ireland

David Fitzpatrick: Ireland in the period of the Union; Irish diaspora

Daniel Geary: American history

Patrick Geoghegan: Ireland in the eighteenth & nineteenth centuries

USA since 1861

John Horne [*knowledge of the French language required where relevant*]:

20C France: political, social & cultural history; WWI: France, Britain, comparative

Cultural history: WWI, 20C France

Labour history: Britain, France, international

Alan Kramer [*knowledge of the German language required where relevant*]:

History of Germany, 1890–1933; 1945–55; Italy & WWI

British policy towards Germany, 1900–33, 1942–55

Second South African War, 1899–1902; Balkan wars (1912–13) & Britain, Germany

Graeme Murdock: 16C & 17C European social & cultural history

European Reformation

Eunan O'Halpin: Twentieth-century Irish history and Anglo-Irish relations

Britain in the Second World War: issues in strategy and foreign policy

Contemporary Ireland

Jane Ohlmeyer: 17C Irish history; Comparative history of early modern Ireland and Scotland

Early modern Ireland and the wider world:

expansionism, colonisation, migration, relations with the continent

Ciaran O'Neill: Nineteenth-century Ireland

Micheal O Siochru: Seventeenth-century Ireland

'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland, 1968–98

Mridu Rai: South Asian history

British Empire in India

Post-colonial South Asia

Ian Robinson: Western Europe, 750–1200

The Crusades

PROPOSED TOPICS

Please **detach** this sheet from the guide, specify your **two** proposed topics involving fields designated by two different supervisors, and submit the completed form to the History Office before 11 a.m. on **Monday, 20 February 2012**. Please type or write legibly.

FIRST PREFERENCE

NAME OF STUDENT

CATEGORY [SH, TSM, or HPS]

POTENTIAL SUPERVISOR

FIELD

PROVISIONAL TITLE OF DISSERTATION

MAJOR PRIMARY SOURCES

N.B.

HAVE YOU DISCUSSED THIS TOPIC WITH THE POTENTIAL SUPERVISOR?

YES ____ NO ____ IF NOT, WHY NOT? _____



DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

YES: if you are a Junior Sophister expecting to take history **alone** in your final year – including TSM and HPS students taking history for Mod. Part II, and students currently absent on exchange schemes.

NO: if you are here as a visiting or exchange student, or if you intend to take history in combination with politics or geography in your final year.

P.T.O.

