PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY
KOLKATA

Department of History
Guidelines for the BA Dissertation

All BA students in the Department of History are required to write a dissertation in their final year. The work, including research and writing, will extend over the seventh and eighth semesters. The dissertation must be a student's own independent work and must be based on a critical reading of primary and secondary sources. A successful dissertation is one that is primarily driven by primary sources. The purpose of the dissertation is for students to demonstrate the skills they have acquired through their courses and apply them to produce original research of their own.

All students are mandated to take serious note of the following points concerning their absolute commitment to engaging in honest academic practice:

- The Department of History follows a zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism.
- If any student is in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, they may must consult with his/her assigned supervisor.
- Broadly put, plagiarism consists of any practice that involves passing off someone else's words or ideas as one's own.
- **The penalties for plagiarism in the submission of all components of the dissertation,** as the departmental policy applicable from 02.03.2020 onwards outlines, are as follows:
    - If any member of the department detects a case of plagiarism in any document, he or she shall apply the penalties delineated below:
        i. **Level 0**: Similarities upto 10%: 10 percent of marks awarded will be deducted.
        ii. **Level 1**: Similarities above 10% to 25%: 25 percent of marks awarded will be deducted.
        iii. **Level 2**: Similarities above 25% will get 'zero' marks.
    - There will be no option for review.

<u>Word limit and format for the dissertation</u>

- This year-long exercise has two written components:
    1. HIST441C19 (UG-IV, Sem. 7): Submission of an essay that critically surveys the secondary and primary literature on the subject of research. This essay will form the basis of the assessment for the third semester. The word limits for the essay are a minimum of 4000 and a maximum of 5000 words.
    2. HIST491C23 (UG-IV, Sem. 8): Submission of a dissertation the length of which must be a minimum of 12,000 and a maximum of 15,000 words, NOT including footnotes, the bibliography, the glossary, a list of abbreviations used, and all appendices.
- Students must note the precise word count at the end of each document submitted.
- The dissertation should comprise at least two chapters, not including the Introduction and Conclusion.

- All citations should be included as footnotes, not as in-text or endnote citations.
- The footnotes and bibliography should follow the rules of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
- A list of abbreviations used in the dissertation, the glossary and list of maps/images/tables (if any) must be provided at the beginning with page breaks between each of these.
- The main body of the dissertation (and all previous written assignments) must be type-written, double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12 point size font, with appropriate margins (usually the default in most word processing programmes) and with page numbers included.
- The footnotes must be single-spaced in Times New Roman 10 point size font, with appropriate margins (usually the default in most word processing programmes) and with page numbers included.
- Please note that the dissertation must be submitted **in TWO separate formats**:
    - First, each student must hand in **three printed and bound copies (recommended: spiral)**. No handwritten copy of the dissertation will be accepted during the final submission.
    - Second, in addition to the printed copies, each student must also present **an electronic copy** to the Secretary, Department of History (sec.his@presiuniv.ac.in) sent as an emailed attachment. The deadline for submission of both formats is the same and is indicated below.
- Images, if used in the dissertation, may be inserted either in the body of the text or as plates in the appendix. All images must be numbered and the corresponding number must be entered in the main body of the text. All images should be captioned clearly, indicating their source.
- Videos/moving images, if used, should be submitted on a CD. Students must ensure that this CD carries their name, title of dissertation, registration number and roll number.
- The order of the various sections of the dissertation is as follows:

    (A) Title/ cover Page
    (B) Certificate Pages
    (C) Abstract of the dissertation in not more than 600 words
    (D) Content Page
    (E) List of Abbreviations
    (F) Glossary
    (G) List of Maps/ Images/ Tables (if any)
    (H) Acknowledgement
    (I) Introduction
    (J) Chapters
    (K) Conclusion/ Postscript
    (L) Images/ Maps/ Tables (if used and not inserted in the main body of text)
    (M) Bibliography (Primary materials, Secondary Readings, English and Vernacular sources have to be listed separately)
- Sample cover pages of the dissertation and of certificates will be emailed to students before the deadline for final submission.
- **Abstract for the BA dissertation**: The abstract should state the historical problem the dissertation explores, describe the methods and procedures used to investigate this problem, and elaborate the main results or conclusions reached. The abstract must not exceed six hundred (600) words in length and should be typed and 1.5 spaced. The heading of the abstract is the word "ABSTRACT" in all capital letters, centred within the margins at the top of the page. Do not number the page on which the abstract appears, and do not include the abstract in the word limit for the main dissertation.

Choosing topics and the process of supervisor assignment

- Early in the seventh semester, students will be asked to submit two (2) proposed subjects of research, listed in order of preference.
- In proposing their topics, students MUST bear in mind the following:
  1. The topics proposed must be on two separate subjects of examination sufficiently differentiated from each other. While every effort will be made to accommodate your first choice, this cannot be guaranteed, as the department is guided by the need to distribute supervision evenly among members of faculty.
  2. Ensure that the proposed topics are feasible (given the time and sources available) and have the potential to contribute original knowledge on the subject.
  3. The dissertation topic must be a student's own proposal and must be based on a critical reading of primary and secondary sources.
  4. The words used in the proposed topics (as well as in the title of the final dissertation) should be selected carefully to represent as accurately as possible the subject content.
  5. The proposed topics must be accompanied by a narrative in which the dissertation topic is clearly defined. The latter must include an explanation of the significance of the proposed work, the methodology to be employed, and the substantially unique historical or historiographical argument that will be explored.
  6. A preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary works must be included.
  7. Vague and plagiarised proposal(s) will be returned to the student for revision and this revision process will continue until the department is satisfied that its objections have been satisfactorily addressed.
- **Please note that students are to indicate preferred topics of research, NOT to choose supervisors.**
- As soon as possible after the submission of the choices of research topics, the department will announce a list of the supervisors assigned to each student.
- In some cases, if deemed either appropriate or necessary, student projects may be assigned joint supervisors.
- No switching of supervisors will be permitted barring exceptional circumstances and then only with the express permission of the department's BA Dissertation Co-ordinator.
- Please note that the supervisor's role is to serve as a guide; the dissertation is a student's own independent project. This means that it is the student who must frame her/his own hypotheses, research the subject accordingly, craft their own argument, and posit it in writing.
- Students must, however, consult their respective dissertation supervisors regularly.
- Please note that, while the supervisor will be reading drafts of submissions regularly, there will be only one reading of each of these. It is the student's responsibility to incorporate the suggestions made by the supervisor. There will be no second reading of drafts.

Marking the dissertation

- As this is a year-long undertaking, there will be a final mark at the end of the seventh semester (HIST441C19) and another at the end of the eighth semester (HIST491C23). Both these marks will be out of a total of 50 each.
- All written assignments (typed) submitted for evaluation will be subjected to a plagiarism check either through a standard plagiarism software or through other means and the

standard plagiarism policy of the department will apply (as stated in the Minutes of the Departmental Meeting dated 02.03.2020 & 16.03.2021).

- After the final submission of each component of the dissertation (HIST441C19 & HIST491C23) to the Secretary, Department of History, on the scheduled date, the department will **generate an Urkund/TurnItIn report on similarities/plagiarism.** This report will be forwarded to the concerned Supervisor(s), the Dissertation Coordinator and the Dissertation Committee.
- Plagiarism detected, beyond this report, by the Supervisor or the Dissertation Committee through means other than the above-mentioned plagiarism software programmes will be subjected to the same penalties as prescribed by the department's policy.
- With regard to the assignments for both HIST441C19 (7th semester) and HIST491C23 (8th semester), **the supervisor will be responsible for awarding 50% of the total marks for each submitted written assignment** (i.e. she/he will provide a mark out of a total of 25 marks).
- **The remaining 50% of the marks** (i.e. a mark out of the remaining total of 25 marks) **will be awarded by the Dissertation Committee following an oral examination of the student's work**.
- Therefore, in addition to submitting their written work, **each student will be required to participate in an oral examination of each component of his/her BA Dissertation (HIST441C19 & HIST491C23) by the department's Dissertation Committee at a time scheduled by the latter.** The dissertation abstract will be made available to the Dissertation Committee before the scheduled date for the oral examination.
- The duration of the oral examination of the dissertation will be approximately 20 minutes. The purpose of this exercise is to train students to present lucidly the main findings of their research, defend their thesis, and to hone their skills of oral argumentation. These form an important objective of the Department of History's pedagogical programme. As part of the presentation, the student may use audio-visual aids (such as PowerPoint or other applications).
- In the course of the oral examination, the Dissertation Committee members may require revisions to the dissertation; these must be made by the student within the time indicated by the Committee.
- The Dissertation Committee will consist of two faculty members of the Department of History, one faculty member from another department nominated by the Head of Department, and the Department of History's Dissertation Coordinator. To prevent any conflict of interest, the Head of Department will substitute for any one of the three members of the Committee from the Department of History whose supervisees may be appearing for the oral examination.

Timetable for dissertation for UG IV, Sem-7

- **Friday, 6 November 2026 (by 3 pm):** Submission of the final **printed and soft copies** of the dissertation **to the Secretary, Department of History** (sec.his@presiuniv.ac.in), with the assigned supervisor in the cc-line.
- **Tuesday 17 & Wednesday 18 November 2026 (9 am onwards) tentatively:** Oral Presentations//Viva Voce

Timetable for dissertation for UG IV, Sem-8

- Submission of the final printed and soft copies: TBA
- Oral Presentations//Viva Voce: TBA

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- The department reiterates that any dissertation with plagiarized content will be penalized as stated above without any option of a review.
- The format outlined above—such as footnoting conventions, font, margins etc. — must be adhered to.
- Every dissertation must adhere to the word limit.
- The Head of Department will not countersign the dissertation certificate for final submission of dissertations without the prior signature of the respective supervisor.
- No dissertation will be accepted in the office of the department without the signature of both the supervisor and the Head of Department.
- As the announced departmental policy states, the last date for submission must be adhered to strictly. If any student fails to submit his/her sessional papers(s) within the due date, his/her papers will be marked as "NOT SUBMITTED". In such a situation the student may appeal to the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, who may, at her/his discretion, allow the student to complete such sessional papers as a backlog.