PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY
KOLKATA

Department of History
Guidelines for the MA Dissertation

All MA students in the Department of History are required to write a dissertation in their final year. This work includes research and writing, and will extend over the third and fourth semesters. The dissertation must be a student's own independent and original 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 % of marks awarded will be deducted.
ii. **Level 1**: Similarities above 10% to 25%: 25 % 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. **HIST0991** (PG-II, Sem. 3): 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. **HIST1091** (PG-II, Sem. 4): 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 three 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 must be type-written in Times New Roman 12 point size font, with a 2.0 line spacing with appropriate margins, justified, and with page numbers included.

- The footnotes must be in Times New Roman 10 point size font, with a 1.0 line spacing, justified, and with appropriate margins.
- Please note that the dissertation must be submitted in TWO separate formats:
  a. Each student must hand in **three printed copies with spiral binding**. No handwritten copy of the dissertation will be accepted during the final submission.
  b. In addition to the printed copies, each student must also present **a soft (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, 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 in which the **final** dissertation is to be organised is as follows:
  a) Title Page/Cover Page
  b) Certificate Pages
  c) Abstract of the dissertation (500-600 words)
  d) Table of Contents
  e) List of Abbreviations
  f) Glossary
  g) List of Maps/ Images/ Tables (if any)
  h) Acknowledgements
  i) Introduction
  j) Chapters
  k) Conclusion/ Postscript
  l) Images/ Maps/ Tables (if not inserted in the main body of text)
  m) Bibliography (Primary sources, secondary texts, English and Vernacular publications have to be listed separately)
- The cover page of the dissertation and of certificates will be emailed to students before the deadline for final submission. Please **donot use** any logo.
- Abstract for the MA 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. 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 third semester of the MA, 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 MA 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 in the fourth semester, while the supervisor will be reading drafts of chapters 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 third semester (HIST0991) and another at the end of the fourth semester (HIST1091). 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 (HIST0991 & HIST1091) 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 HIST0991 (3rd semester) and HIST1091 (4th 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 MA Dissertation (HIST0991 & HIST1091) 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 15-20 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.
- In the course of the oral examination, the Dissertation Committee members may provide feedback which must be taken into consideration by the student within the time indicated by the Committee.
- The Dissertation Committee will consist of all faculty members of the Department Aacdemic Committee, Dept. of History including the PG Dissertation Coordinator, and one external faculty member from another department as decided earlier during the formation of the Dissertation Committee. To prevent any conflict of interest, members of the Committee from the Department of History whose supervisees may be appearing for the oral examination, will refrain from evaluating the oral examination component for those candidates.

Timetable for dissertation

Third semester

19 June 2026 (Friday, by 5 pm)
Students must submit two proposed topics of research via email to the Secretary.

22 July 2026 (Wednesday)
List of supervisors will be assigned, after a meeting of the DAC, Department of History.

06 November 2026 (Monday, latest by 3 pm)
Submission of an essay that critically surveys the secondary and primary literature on the subject of research. This essay will form the basis of assessment for the third semester. The word limits for the essay are a minimum of 4000 and a maximum of 5000 words. **This is to be submitted to the Department of History's office (sec.his@presiuniv.ac.in), with the individual supervisor kept in the cc-line.**

19-20 November 2026 (Thursday-Friday, 10 am onwards)
Oral examination of the dissertation literature review essay by the Dissertation Committee.

Note: During the gap between the third and fourth semesters, students are supposed to utilize their time productively to do primary research since the latter semester will be devoted to crafting draft chapters.

Fourth semester

***Note:** The following dates are *tentative*. They may be changed should circumstances require.

……16 February 2026

Students must submit a hypothesis, a working bibliography of sources (primary and secondary) consulted so far and a detailed chapter outline. They should anticipate having to modify both the bibliography and the outline as they continue to progress through research and writing.

……28 March 2026

Submission of a first full draft of the PG dissertaion.

……23 April 2026

Submission of a final copy of the PG dissertation in printed format, as well as in soft copy to the Secretary with the individual supervisor in the cc-line.

……25 April 2026

Viva Voce/Oral Examination.

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; the word limit must be adhered to
- The Head of Department will not countersign the dissertation certificate for final submission of dissertations *without* the prior signature of the respective supervisor. No submissions will be accepted 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 his discretion, allow the student to complete such sessional papers as a backlog.