

Choosing your papers for the History Degrees: a guide for incoming students

This guide is aimed at students who will be starting their degree in History, History and Politics or History and Modern Languages in October 2022. Its purpose is to guide students in choosing their first year History papers and is not meant as a general guide to the degree. For full information, please consult the course Handbooks.

Welcome to History at Cambridge!

We are delighted that you will be coming up to study History, History and Modern Languages or History and Politics at Cambridge and look forward to meeting you in person.

In the meantime, your College Director of Studies will have been in touch about preparations for the start of the degree.

As you will know, one of the things you need to do before arriving in Cambridge is to indicate your paper preferences (papers are what Cambridge calls courses or units within a degree) for the first year.

This document introduces you to the structure of the first year and how to indicate those choices in our online system in September. It is accompanied by two longer documents which provide further details on Outline and Sources papers so you can decide which you would like to indicate as your preferences.

As a summary, here is what you need to do:

- Carefully read the paper summaries in the accompanying documents on Outlines and Sources.
- Make sure you activate your Cambridge email and id when invited to do so by the University Information Services (UIS)
- **Between 5 September and 9 September**, log on to the paper preference system (a link will be sent to you) and indicate your paper preferences for the first year, according to your degree:
 - BA in History:
 - indicate 1-3 preferences for 'early' Outline
 - indicate 1-3 preferences for 'late' Outline
 - BA in History & Modern Languages:
 - Indicate 1-3 preferences for any Outline
 - BA in History & Politics:

- Indicate 1-3 preferences for any Outline

Outline of Year 1 / Part IA

BA in History

The History degrees are divided into two 'parts': Part I covers years 1 and 2 and is divided into Part IA and Part IB. Part II covers year 3 (or 4 in the case of History and Modern Languages).

Part IA is 'formative'—i.e. passing is required, but your first-year exam results will not count towards your final degree mark. This allows you to develop your skills as an undergraduate historian with less pressure, while taking advantage of the feedback given.

The History Degree is organised around three groups of papers:

- **Historical Knowledge:** these papers focus on introducing students to different periods and regions of history
- **Craft of History:** these papers focus on how research and write about the past
- **Historical Thinking:** these papers explore how historians see the past and the concepts they use.

To complete Part IA, students on the History BA will need to complete:

- **2 Outline Papers** (one in 'early' History and another in 'late' History). Outline Papers offer an introduction to periods and places, combining economic, social, political, cultural, and intellectual history. They are taught by a mixture of lectures and supervisions. Students will choose one 'early' Outline (ranging from antiquity to the eighteenth century) and one 'late' Outline (from the 18th Century to the present day).
- **Introduction to Historical Thinking.** In this paper you will engage in depth with the work of a historian to explore nature of historical writing and the range of approaches, concepts and methodologies used by historians. This paper is taught in your college, in small groups.
- **1 Sources Paper:** these are papers based on dealing directly with the evidence of the past – texts, images, objects, sounds and others – related to a particular topic. They serve as an introduction to the kind of in-depth, independent research you will undertake in the Part IB Research Project and the optional final year dissertation.
- **The Skills Paper:** fundamental practical skills necessary for historical research, analysis, and writing. It includes lectures and workshops on essay writing and study techniques, as well basic numeracy skills.

These papers will be taught and examined across the year in the following way:

Part IA	Michaelmas Term	Lent Term	Easter Term
<i>Historical Knowledge</i>	2 OUTLINE PAPERS (12 supervisions, 24 lectures per Outline)		2 x exams (week 0)
<i>Craft of History</i>	SKILLS (6 lectures; 1.5h Workshop; Online module and test on good academic practice: pass/fail)	SKILLS (2 lectures and 1.5h workshop on study and revision skills; 4 lectures on Quantitative Skills) Online test on numerical skills: pass/fail	SOURCES (8 hours of classes, weeks 1-4; 1,500-2,000-word coursework essay due week 6) SKILLS (1.5h workshop)
<i>Historical Thinking</i>	HISTORICAL THINKING 1A (6 hours of college classes: 1.5hrs x 2 per term)		HISTORICAL THINKING 1A (1.5-hour college class; 1 supervision; 2,000 word book report due week 4)

In the first two terms (Michaelmas and Lent), you will work on the 2 Outlines at the same time. You will be attending lectures for both Outlines, and you will have a supervision for each Outline every week. Work for those supervisions will alternate between writing an essay or preparing work for other activities, so that you will write only one essay every week. At the same time, you will be following lectures and workshops on the Skills strand. In weeks 3 and 6 of your first two terms you will focus on the work for Historical Thinking.

In the third term (Easter), you will take exams for each of the two Outlines just before the start of term. All of the teaching for the Sources paper will take place in Easter, and you will submit your assessed coursework essay for Sources towards the end of the term. You will also have teaching and deadlines for assessed work in Historical Thinking, as well as Skills classes.

Students on the BA in History will have to make the following choices:

- Choose 1 Outline from the 'early' list;
- Choose 1 Outline from the 'late' list;
- Choose 1 Source paper
 - Any source papers can be chosen, but note that some have language requirements (e.g., German or French).

For each choice, there should be a 1st, 2nd and 3rd preference.

The joint degrees: History and Politics and History and Modern Languages.

Students on the joint degrees take combinations of papers from their two degrees. When it comes to History, these breakdown as follows:

- BA in History and Politics Part IA:
 - Choose 1 Outline from either list.
- BA in History and Modern Languages Part IA:
 - Choose 1 Outline from either list
 - Take Introduction to Historical Thinking (no choice necessary)

Indicating Paper Preferences

The Preference allocation system

There are 11 Outlines and 16 Sources Papers on offer in 2022-23. Cambridge's unique system of teaching – the supervision – requires a huge input of time for supervisors. To ensure parity of experience, and so that all students can access supervisions, the number of students who can take each paper is capped according to teaching capacity. The Faculty organises a system of allocation according to preference.

In early September, students indicate their 1st, 2nd and 3rd preference for each paper type.

On the basis of these preferences, the Faculty runs a structured lottery system, which compensates students by giving their preference precedence in one paper type if they did not receive their first preference in another paper category.

In the rare cases where students were not allocated any of their first choices at Part IA, students will have a guaranteed first choice in Part IB. Students who have not expressed any preferences will be randomly allocated.

Choosing and indicating paper preferences

Read the paper summaries in the documents on Outlines and Sources to choose your papers. Do discuss these choices with your college Director of Studies who will be able to answer questions and advise you.

Make sure you activate your CRSid (which means your Cambridge digital id, email, and password) when prompted by UIS (the University Information Services). **You cannot indicate your preferences without it.**

The Faculty of History course preference website will be available for filling in **between 9am on 5 September and 12 noon on 9 September (UK times)**. During that period, you will need to log into the website (a link will be sent to you in advance) and indicate your preferences. The choices will be available according to your degree.

- You can indicate a 1st, 2nd and 3rd preference for each paper.
- If you do not indicate any preference, you will be randomly allocated a paper (if you only indicate 1 or 2 preferences that will be the case if these are necessary)
- If you change your mind between 5 and 9 September, you can just enter your preferences again – the old ones will be overwritten.
- If for some reason (travel, IT failure, etc.) you are unable to log on between 5-9 September, please let your Director of Studies know your preferences via email. Do not email these to the Faculty, as they will not be picked up.

In the week starting 12 September, the Faculty will let your Director of Studies know the result of the paper allocation. Your Director of Studies will then begin the process of organising your supervisions for the various papers.

- After 9 September, changes between papers *may* be possible, but are not guaranteed and depend on availability of supervisors. Please discuss any potential changes with your Director of Studies, who will try to establish if a supervisor can be found.