

**Department of History**  
**Statement on Assessment for MA Students**

On 4 January the government announced that all university teaching should move online until at least mid-February, and that students should remain where they are currently residing. The Department of History understands that this will limit student access to libraries and other resources, and so will have a significant impact on student learning, and in particular, on assessment. Our approach is designed to ensure that you are able, as far as possible, to complete your assessment to deadlines which have been carefully designed to prevent bunching and to enable you to receive feedback on one assignment before submitting the next. We are therefore introducing the following measures for assessments for the remainder of the year.

**Sources**

We encourage students to take advantage of the services offered by the University Library. The main Library is current closed but offers a click and collect system for those on campus plus [scan and deliver service](#) plus [free postal loans](#) for those unable to visit in person. The key electronic sources for History may be found [here](#). There are [online resources](#) collected by the Royal Historical Society. The Institute of Historical Research has written a [guide to using online sources](#) for dissertation work. And the British Library offers a range of [online sources](#). In 2020, a number of academic publishers extended free access to electronic resources (including books) and we will use the student Teams channels to let you know if this policy is reintroduced.

**Deadlines, Self-certification, Extensions and Mitigation**

The University has introduced a 1 week blanket extension for all assignments due in before 1 February. There is also A [COVID support package](#) for PGT students.

The Department continues to offer students the ability to self-certify on two separate occasions in this academic year to obtain an extension of five working days. Further extensions are also offered for students with particular health or personal issues. Information on how to apply for self-certifications and extensions is in the student handbook.

[The mitigating circumstances portal](#) (found on Tabula in the personal circumstances tab), allows submission of general mitigation and COVID-19 specific mitigation claims with an explanation of [evidence requirements](#) where it is possible for this to be provided. For 2020/21 the Department will continue to be sympathetic to claims where it has not been possible to obtain evidence and sufficient explanation has been provided.

**COVID coversheet**

The COVID-19 coversheet gives you an opportunity to explain how your assignment was affected by library closures and other academic factors. If your assignment(s) have been impacted by COVID-19 because you have lost access to relevant resources (for example, because of the closure of library and archive or because you lack suitable internet access

while working from home), then please complete the [COVID-19 coversheet](#) and submit this with each affected assignment.

*If you feel that your assignment has been impacted by illness, self-isolation, caring, bereavement, mental health, or any other non-academic factors relating to COVID-19, these will also be taken into account. To tell us about these experiences, please use the [Mitigating Circumstances process](#), rather than the COVID-19 coversheet.*

### **Amended marking criteria**

If you include the [COVID-19 Coversheet](#) with your submission, markers will take any academic issues you include on the coversheet into account. The marking criteria has been amended to take the impact of COVID-19 into account (see below).

As is always the case with mitigating circumstances, individual markers do not take non-academic factors into account when marking. These will be addressed through the [Mitigating Circumstances process](#).

The COVID coversheet and the amended marking criteria were used by the Department in the summer of 2020 and received very positive feedback from students and our external examiners.

### **Flexibility with word counts**

If you were not able to access key resources, and therefore cannot analyse them in your assignment, it is acceptable to submit a shorter piece of work. If this is the case, use the [COVID-19 Coversheet](#) to indicate which sections you were unable to complete. Be as detailed as possible. In the assignment itself, it will be acceptable to explain what you had expected to find, and why the archival or other material would have been interesting or relevant to your overall project. This flexibility may be particularly relevant to pieces of work such as the **dissertation** but applies to all types of written assessment.

### **Dissertation**

You should proceed on the assumption that archives and specialist libraries are unlikely to re-open in time for you to use them for dissertation research. Dissertation supervisors will help you modify the project accordingly. You are encouraged to use the COVID cover sheet to explain the impact of any difficulty in accessing materials.

### **Modifications to other assignments**

If you have particular concerns about a specific assignment, please discuss these with your seminar tutors. Tutors will work with you to modify the assignments in line with the resources available. You may for be able to agree a more limited set of readings, or to change the title or scope of the assignment.

## COVID-19 Amended History Marking Criteria

*Highlighted elements will be relaxed to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic where a completed **COVID-19 Coversheet** is submitted. Words in **BLOCK CAPITALS** are additions to the usual marking criteria.*

### History Department Additional Assessment Criteria

80+ (Distinction)

**Knowledge and Understanding: Exceptional and/or outstanding** comprehension of the implications of the question and sophisticated, creative and original, nuanced and critical understanding of the theoretical & methodological issues not only pertaining to the subject, but to the field as a whole. Technical vocabulary, where appropriate: accurate and exceptionally sophisticated usage. According to the judgement of the examiners may be of publishable standard in a peer-reviewed journal

**Argument:** A critical, analytical and sophisticated argument that is logically structured and extremely well-supported with elements of originality. **Outstanding evidence** throughout of independent thought and ability to 'see beyond the question', suggesting a thorough grasp of the broader field and wider concepts. **Evidence of reading exceptionally widely beyond the prescribed reading list** and creative use of evidence to enhance the overall argument; demonstrates the ability to synthesise appropriate principles by reference, where appropriate, to **primary sources and knowledge at the forefront of the discipline.**

**Presentation:** Exceptionally well presented: no grammatical or spelling errors; written in a fluent and engaging style; exemplary referencing and bibliographic formatting. **Very extensive and detailed** knowledge with impressive conceptual understanding and analytical skills. **Extensive** evidence of coherence, creativity, originality, autonomy, imagination and the ability to deal with complexity, contradictions or gaps in the knowledge base and ability to synthesise appropriate principles by reference to primary sources and knowledge at the forefront of the discipline.

70-79 (Distinction)

**Knowledge and Understanding:** Excellent comprehension of the implications of the question and critical understanding of the theoretical & methodological issues. Technical vocabulary, where appropriate: accurate and sophisticated usage.

**Argument:** A critical, analytical and sophisticated argument that is logically structured and well-supported. Evidence of independent thought and ability to 'see beyond the immediate question', suggesting a burgeoning grasp of the broader field and wider concepts. **Evidence of reading widely beyond the prescribed reading list** and creative use of evidence to enhance the overall argument; demonstrates the ability to synthesise appropriate principles by reference, where appropriate, to primary sources and **perhaps some knowledge at the forefront of the discipline**

**Presentation: Extremely** well presented: minimal grammatical or spelling errors if any; written in a fluent and engaging style; exemplary referencing and bibliographic formatting.

#### 60-69 (Merit)

**Knowledge and Understanding:** Generally well written, with a clear sequence of arguments, and satisfactory referencing and bibliography. **Very good** comprehension of the implications of the question and **fairly extensive** and accurate knowledge and understanding, showing a sound grasp of the critical/historiographical/theoretical field, well organised and effectively argued, analytical in approach. Technical vocabulary, where appropriate: used with reasonable ease and success.

**Argument:** Demonstrates an ability to draw upon a **fairly substantial** body of primary material, and to relate this in an illuminating way to the issues under discussion. Very good awareness of underlying theoretical and methodological issues, though not always displaying an understanding of how they link to the question. A generally critical, analytical argument, which shows attempts at independent thinking and is sensibly structured and generally well-supported. Clear and generally critical knowledge of relevant literature; **use of works beyond the prescribed reading list**; demonstrating the ability to be selective in the range of material used, and the capacity to synthesise rather than describe

**Presentation: Very well presented:** no significant grammatical or spelling errors; written clearly and concisely; fairly consistent and satisfactory referencing and bibliographic formatting

#### 50-59 (Pass)

**Knowledge and Understanding:** Generally clear and accurate knowledge, though there may be some errors and/or gaps and some awareness of underlying theoretical/methodological issues with limited understanding of how they relate to the question. Technical vocabulary, where appropriate: attempted use, but not always successful, not always a full understanding of concepts/theory/method used.

**Argument:** Demonstrates an ability to draw upon a **reasonable range** of primary material, and relate it accurately to the issues under discussion. Some attempt at analysis but a tendency to be descriptive rather than critical and analytical. Tendency to assert/state opinion, view or 'feeling' rather than argue on the basis of reasoned arguments and evidence; arguments not sustained by choice of evidence; structure may not be entirely clear or logical. **Some attempt** to go beyond or criticise the 'essential reading' for the unit; but displaying limited capacity to discern between relevant and non-relevant material.

**Presentation:** Adequately presented: writing style conveys meaning but is sometimes awkward; some significant grammatical and spelling errors; inconsistent referencing, but generally accurate bibliography; bibliography may be too short.

#### 40-49 (Fail/Diploma)

**Knowledge and Understanding:** Work inadequate for an MA or PG Diploma award. Limited knowledge and understanding with significant errors and omissions and generally ignorant or confused awareness of key theoretical/ methodological issues. Technical vocabulary, where appropriate: attempts use, but only with partial understanding and/or success.

**Argument:** Largely misses the point of the question, asserts rather than argues a case; underdeveloped or chaotic structure; evidence mentioned but used inappropriately or incorrectly. Relevant, but not extensive deployment of primary material in relation to the issues under discussion. Very little attempt at analysis or synthesis, tending towards excessive description. Limited, uncritical and generally confused account of a narrow range of sources

**Presentation:** Poorly presented: not always easy to follow; frequent grammatical and spelling errors; limited attempt at providing references (e.g. only referencing direct quotations) and containing bibliographic omissions.

39- (Fail)

**Knowledge and Understanding:** Work inadequate for an MA or PG Diploma award. Unsatisfactory level of knowledge and understanding of subject; limited or no understanding of the theoretical/methodological issues. Technical vocabulary, where appropriate: little and/or inaccurate usage

**Argument:** Very little comprehension of the implications of the question and lacking a coherent structure. Lacking any attempt at analysis and critical engagement with issues, based on description or opinion. Little use of sources and what is used reflects a very narrow range or is irrelevant and/or misunderstood

**Presentation:** Unsatisfactory presentation: difficult to follow; very limited attempt at providing references (e.g. only referencing direct quotations) and containing bibliographic omissions.