



Securing Your University Offer for History

Essay Competition Award Ceremony: July 23rd, 2022

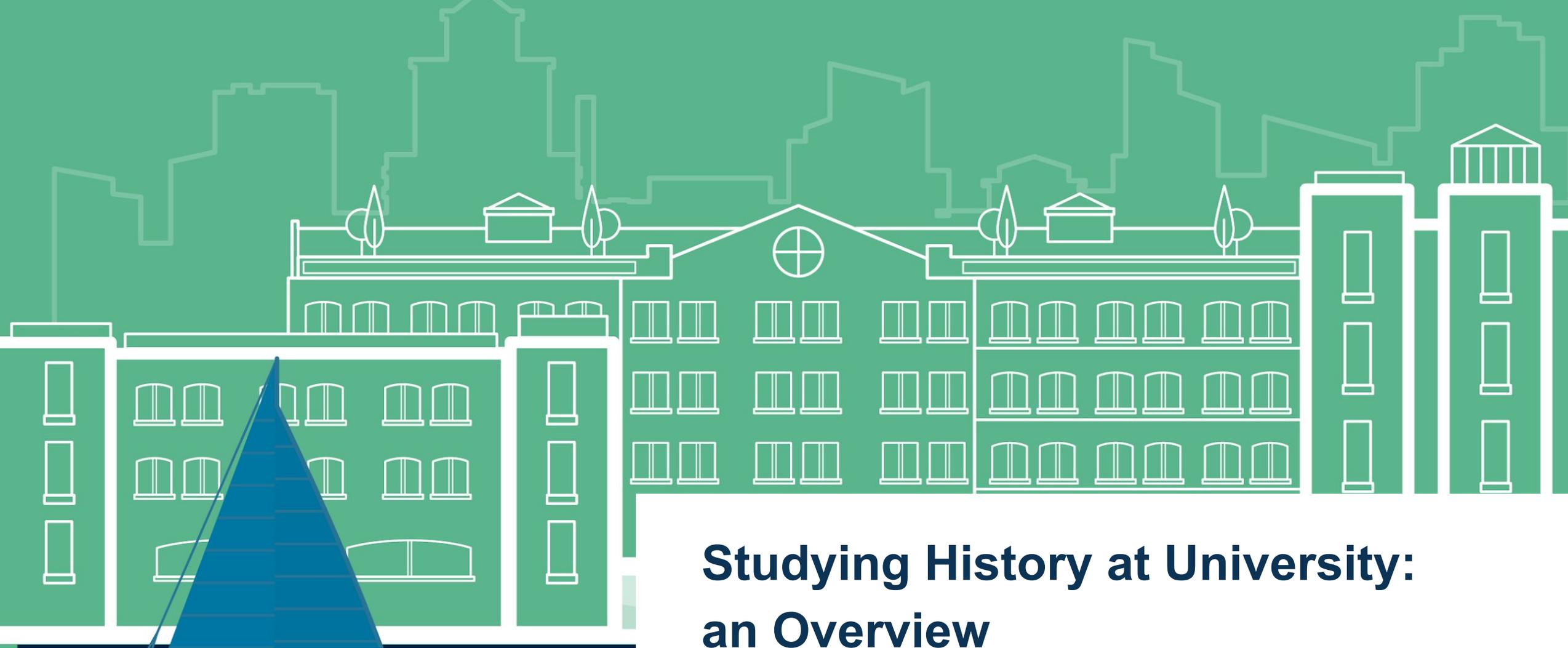
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the Humanities**





Agenda

- Welcome
- Studying History at University: an Overview
- Submitting a Competitive Application
- NCH Insights
- Q&A



Studying History at University: an Overview

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What is the study of History?

- Exciting opportunity to learn about events and cultures globally, as well as research many fascinating areas of historical thought
- Courses vary widely - some take a chronological approach; others thematic or regional
- You can study history by period, area or topic - e.g.: Medieval History, Middle Eastern History, or Culture & Heritage
- May include discussions of historiography and public history
- Typically offers more flexibility for independent study and personal choice than at A Level
- Develop your writing skills and critical thinking to create detailed analysis on a wide variety of subjects



Where and how can you study History?

- Campus vs City universities
- Single Honours BA History, Modern History, Political History
- Many joint and combined honours options, e.g.: History and Economics, History and Social Policy, History with Archaeology (*note that the study balance is likely to be other than 50/50 if it's History *with* rather than History *and*)
- Could study PPH (Philosophy, Politics and History)
- Different degree spans (standard English 3 years, standard Scottish 4 years, fast-track 2 years etc)
- Degree apprenticeships take a more practical approach (potentially useful to fast track toward particular careers)
- Full-time/part-time; online/in-person; study abroad (especially interesting when studied alongside global historical modules)

How is History taught?

- **Reading:** Set readings are vital for History, as you will be looking in detail at the content of several important sources, both primary (e.g.: contemporary documents and artefacts) and secondary (historians' books, articles, and other analysis)
- **Lectures:** Lecturers can discuss the set reading and analyse various texts, primary sources, and key events, as well as further contextualise key topics
- **Seminars:** Seminars allow for a more in-depth discussion of a topic and a chance to ask any questions to your lecturer/seminar supervisor. It's probably even more important that you are well prepared for the seminar as you will need to participate
- **Essays:** Formative and summative, to test your analysis of a subject
- **Presentations:** Occasionally presentations are used to assess how well you understand a topic - these may be individual or group presentations



What skills do you develop?

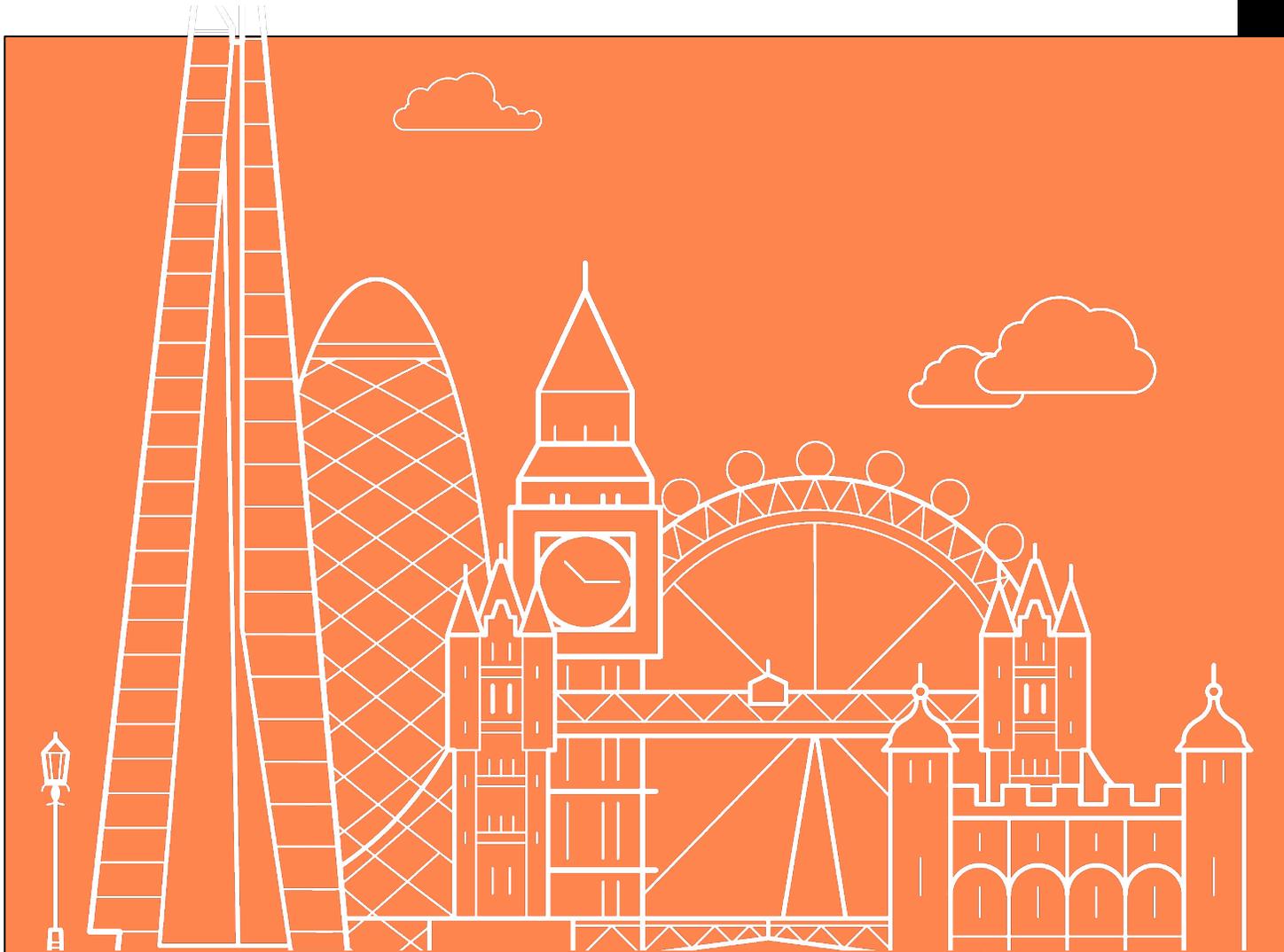
- Essay writing
- Analysis
- Research
- Critical thinking
- Interdisciplinary skills
- Referencing skills
- Time management

The skills you will acquire as a History graduate will allow you to pivot flexibly into a variety of industries, when you enter the working world.

What can you do after your degree?

As a History graduate your transferable skills can take you into ANY industry. Some of the top graduate destinations are:

- Local and central government
- Social and education services
- Leisure and tourism
- Publishing and journalism
- Voluntary/charitable organisations
- Gallery/museum management
- Curation
- Historical/social research
- Archaeology
- Higher education research (e.g.: academia)



Submitting a Competitive Application for History

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What are the entry requirements?

UCAS

Information provided by ucas.com

A levels:

- Usually need a minimum of two A levels, with three A levels and A-B grades required for the most popular courses
- Entry requirements range from BCC to AAB
- History A level may be required
- Other useful subjects to hold for History degrees include any other humanities subject

International Baccalaureate Diploma:

- From 30-39 overall in the IB Diploma

Scottish Highers:

- From BBBB to AABBB (most frequently AABBB)

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What are admissions tutors looking for?

- Enthusiasm and motivation to study History
- Credible evidence that supports your subject passion
- Proactive subject exploration and engagement - e.g.: wider reading beyond the set texts
- Relevant extra-curricular/super-curricular activities
- Interests outside of school, relating to History
- Relevant and transferable work experience
- Aims and goals; career plans if known
- Understanding of the demands of studying at university, and how this is different from school

What super-curricular activities would support my application?

Super-curricular activities take the subjects you study further, beyond what you have learnt at school or college. Some examples for History may include:

- Wider reading beyond the set texts
- Reading specialist magazines and journals
- Attending university taster lectures or taster days
- Listening to podcasts, TED talks or online lectures
- Attending a History Summer School
- Taking an online (MOOC) History course
- Visiting museums and galleries
- Visiting sites of historical interest
- Taking part in university essay competitions!



Why is the personal statement so important?

- Often your only chance to 'sell yourself' to the university and impress the admissions tutor
- Helps to differentiate between equally excellent candidates with similar or identical grade profiles, especially for competitive courses
- Helps if you are a borderline candidate
- Demonstrates your reasons for applying for a course
- May form basis of an interview - tutors may ask questions arising from the statement
- May help if on results day you don't quite make your grades

How can I write a compelling personal statement?

- Invest plenty of time in the brainstorming/thinking stage, before starting to write your statement
- Structure your personal statement
- Use positive and enthusiastic language
- Make every sentence count - word count is tight!
- Ensure it reflects your 'voice', and your 'journey'
- Use evidence to support claims/statements
- Be prepared to draft and redraft
- Be honest - don't exaggerate and don't plagiarise
- Double check grammar and spelling for errors
- Ask for support, especially with proofreading and checking - it's easy for mistakes to slip through!



What might an admissions interview look like?



- Unique opportunity to discuss a subject you are passionate about with an academic tutor
- Opportunity for tutor to get to know you and your motivation for applying - you can also ask questions!
- May take the form of a 'taster' tutorial
- Unlikely to be a test of knowledge - tutor will be more interested in how you think, rather than what you know
- Discussion-based; questions will probe your subject interest, enthusiasm and aptitude
- Questions may build on your personal statement
- Questions will be challenging - don't panic if you don't immediately have an answer; take your time to think
- Some interviews may include a task, or pre-reading



How can I prepare for my admissions interview?

- Carefully reread your personal statement, and be prepared to expand upon any of the points you have included
- Re-read or re-familiarise yourself with any texts you referenced, so these are fresh in your mind
- Undertake any reading or pre-interview tasks in good time
- Practice talking about the points in your statement
- Research who will be interviewing you
- Make sure you are clear regarding interview logistics
- If you will be undertaking a virtual interview, make sure you have somewhere suitable for this task, with good wifi
- Prepare questions you would like to ask in the interview



NCH Insights

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Faculty insights

- A passion for History will take you far: a deep-seated interest in the past lies behind all that we do as historians
- We look for students who are deeply curious and have enquiring minds, and who are prepared to go the extra mile, reading and learning about unfamiliar and new topics
- Thinking about wider reading, the magazine 'History Today' is a good place to start, blending popular and academic history in an accessible way
- Read a history book and think deeply about how the author arrives at the information they present, and what sources they use - do you agree with their conclusions?
- Check out the seminars, lectures, events and podcasts on history.ac.uk - this site will give you a good flavour of what degree-level history is about
- Estelle Paraque who teaches the Tudors has been on <https://talkingtudors.podbean.com>
- Go and visit the places you find interesting if you can, taking in exhibitions and public events
- When writing your personal statement, don't be afraid to make it personal - we'd much rather read something about you and your interests than a 'deep' quotation about studying the past

Student tips and hints

- Studying history allows you to appreciate the complex web of people, events and forces that have made the world we live in today
- In your personal statement, write about subjects you are genuinely interested in and want to talk about. Let your enthusiasm shine through!
- Use the 'Show' not 'Tell' approach - show what you have learned, and why it's made you want to study History at university
- Investigate your area's local history - you don't have to travel to find exciting historical places, and this will make you stand out
- Think about the content of what you want to study but also where you want to study it



Suggestions for wider reading

- Ambler, S T (2019), ***The Song of Simon de Montfort: England's First Revolutionary***. London: Picador
- Brigden, S (2000), ***New Worlds: Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors***. London: Penguin
- Carr, H and Lipscomb, S (2021), ***What is History, Now?*** London: Orion Publishing Co
- Harari, Y N (2014), ***A Brief History of Humankind***. London: Harvill Secker
- Wickham, C (2016), ***Medieval Europe***. Oxford: Oxford University Press



Q&A



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