University of Essex

Department of History

BA Research Project Handbook

February 2017

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The Research Project is a substantial piece of independent historical research, submitted as a piece of written work of between 10,000 and 12,000 words. We are in the process of introducing an alternative track, consisting of a 5,000-6,000-word piece plus an alternative public history output, such as museum exhibition boards, a podcast, web resources or film script. Students taking this route will be supported to develop an appropriate structure and approach for their text and their public history output. If you think you may be interested in this option, please speak to Dr Alix Green. Almost all History students complete a Research Project, with work on the project taking place over the course of roughly a year, beginning in the Spring Term of their second year and completing in their final year. It is the longest single piece of work you will work on at Essex and plays an important part in the assessment of history degree schemes, forming one-eighth of your final mark. In many ways it is also the intellectual culmination of your history degree study, giving you the opportunity to use the skills you have developed during your course to create what is, in effect, a new piece of history.

How is the Research Project different to an essay?

The Research Project is of course much longer than an essay, and you work on it for a much longer period. However, more than this, the Research Project is a different kind of work. The Research Project gives you the opportunity to decide for yourself what topic you will examine, and to explore it in much more detail. It also gives you the opportunity to go through the process whereby historians reconstruct the past. As historians, we recognise that history exists only in the present and in our heads; it is **actively constructed** and not simply rediscovered in the records of the past. Historical research involves a process of selection and interpretation, whereby historians examine the records of the past in order to construct an interpretation which they believe to represent the past in a meaningful way. In this process there is an active exchange between theory and evidence, whereby the historian develops theories about the past and tests them using the evidence available.

Therefore, like all true historical research, the process of writing a Research Project is **dialectical**. Typically, it is only at the point of writing a first draft of the project that the researcher realises the need for further research or the significance of evidence or readings previously skimmed. It is therefore vitally important that you make an early start on the research in order to allow adequate time for writing up **and** further research (as well as unanticipated problems). The role of your supervisor in giving regular advice and feedback on early ideas, plans and drafts works in a similar way.

The Research Project is therefore designed to give students a unique opportunity to explore for themselves the construction or making of history, through a piece of detailed,

critical and possibly original historical research. Those following the alternative route also have the chance to translate their research into outputs that can be shared with wider audiences.

Do I have to use primary, unpublished sources?

No, for two reasons. Firstly, it is quite possible to do a good Research Project using only secondary sources, if, for example, you wish to study different ways historians have approached a particular topic. This would be referred to as a historiographical study. Projects such as this are especially common if you wish to study the history of a country whose language you cannot read.

Most students do use primary sources, however. These can be unpublished or in manuscript, if you can gain access to such sources, but there is also a vast amount of material available in printed form or online. Your supervisor will be able to advise you on this point. Ideally, a project would involve reading a significant amount of source material or other data and constructing an interpretation of the topic in question on the basis of these sources. Therefore, in consultation with your supervisor, you should try to identify a body of relevant sources.

Your Research Project may also be partly based on non-printed sources such as film or music. But in such cases, you will also need to consult secondary works in print

Whether you use primary sources or not, it is crucial that the project should incorporate a **critical perspective** – that is, you need to demonstrate that you have thought carefully and critically about the topic yourself. Projects based on primary sources which do little more than paraphrase those records are not acceptable; nor are projects based on secondary subjects which do little more than repeat interpretations to be found in that secondary literature. Whatever kind of Research Project you write, it is crucial to show that you have worked out your conclusions for yourself.

What makes a good Research Project topic?

To a large extent you can select whatever topic you wish, provided a member of staff in the department believes your project is feasible. It is very important, however, to choose a project which interests you – remember that you will be working on this for over a year.

It is also important to develop a Research Project which is based not so much on a topic but on **a specific problem or question**, one which you will try to answer through the use your sources. A good Research Project will also be developed with reference to existing secondary literature on the topic in question. Ideally it should deal with an issue that has been neglected or not answered by existing literature.

It is important to make sure your project does not have too wide a scope. It should be tightly focused on a well-defined problem; in that respect it is likely to resemble a journal article rather than a textbook. In the first instance you may identify a broad field that interests you, but in discussion with members of staff you should identify a specific question or problem to research.

Does my Research Project have to be original?

No. It is very hard to find a research question that is completely 'original'. It is quite possible that you will use new sources to ask the same questions as previous historians, or ask new questions of the same sources. But do not panic if you find it difficult to be entirely original. What is important is that you carry out the work yourself: if you have read the sources yourself, carried out your own analysis and written up your own project, then it does not matter if you come to the same conclusions as previous historians. As ever, contact your supervisor if you are uncertain.

How do I go about selecting a topic?

It is important to start working out your Research Project as early as possible, beginning in Research Project Week in the spring term of your second year. **Make good use of Research Project Week.** After the initial meeting, you should use Research Project Week to meet with staff members to discuss possible research questions. All members of staff will make themselves available in Research Project week for this purpose.

If you have a good idea of what you want to do, and a staff member is happy to approve this, then you have no problem. If you want to follow the alternative route through the Research Project, this should ideally be agreed at this stage, although transferring between routes may be possble at a later point on consultation with your supervisor. If you are not yet sure about what to do, then think carefully about what topics, periods, places or people have most interested you during your time at Essex or previously, and whether you might be able to pursue them in your Research Project. If you are unsure, it is a very good idea to talk to multiple staff members, to follow up more than one possibility.

Information about the topics staff members are prepared to supervise are posted on their office doors, the student noticeboard and the Departmental Website at:
www.essex.ac.uk/history/current/ug.aspx?tab=3.

What if my topic changes?

It is to be expected that your exact topic or research question will change and develop as your work goes on – this is a natural part of open-ended historical research. The main thing to remember here is to **keep your supervisor informed.** It is a good idea to ask their advice before making significant changes. This would include switching between the standard and alternative routes.

Some students come to feel that they wish to abandon their original project altogether. This is possible but it is usually inadvisable. You should think very carefully and ask advice from your supervisor and/or the Research Project Director before making such a change.

What if I'm studying for a Joint Degree?

If you are on a joint degree programme you have slightly more decisions to make, as you may be able to do a Research Project/dissertation in either of your disciplines. You should consult the degree structures online at www.essex.ac.uk/programmespecs/ to work out what your options are. You should also be aware of the requirements for a Research Project/dissertation in **both** of your departments.

Joint degree students may wish their project to combine the two disciplines (although supervision and assessment will be based in one or other of the departments) or you may choose to undertake a project that falls entirely within one or other discipline. If you need any advice about this, please see the Research Project Director.

If you choose to do a project (or Independent Study) in the other department you should seek advice in the appropriate Department. Please make sure you note the dates and times of the other departmental project/independent study meetings.

What if I'm spending a term or year abroad?

If you are spending your whole third year abroad, you should begin the Research Project process as normal in your second year; your project should thus be agreed before you leave and you should work on your project where possible during the vacations and while overseas. You will then resume work when you return at the start of your 4th and final year.

If you are spending the autumn term abroad your final submission deadline will be the first day of the summer term. Contact your supervisor on your return to discuss the topics covered in the workshops and arrangements for submission of your 2,500-word draft.

What is my supervisor for?

One of the unique aspects of the Research Project is that you will have a member of staff assigned to supervise your work on a one-to-one basis. This is a very important relationship and you should make the most of it. Your supervisor can advise you on all aspects of developing a project, locating primary and secondary sources, researching, writing and presenting your work.

Many students do not make as much use of their supervisor as they should. Their Research Projects are almost invariably the worse for it, and this is reflected in their final mark. **Remember: you do not know how to write a Research Project, but your supervisor does.** This kind of work is new to you, and you have no experience of it. But your supervisor does: they have written projects like this before – undergraduate dissertations, doctoral theses, articles, books and so on. Make use of their advice. You should meet with your supervisor regularly throughout the process. You can also contact them by e-mail.

Your supervisor cannot, of course, write your Research Project for you. Ultimately the work is your responsibility. But supervisors can help in the following ways:

- Advise on the initial choice of topic and whether it is feasible.
- Advise on useful primary and secondary sources.
- Comment on your topic form and your 1,500-word proposal.
- Advise on progress.
- Comment on plans.
- Comment on your 2,500-word draft (see below). Supervisors will not read further drafts, but you must continue to meet with them to discuss your work.

Your supervisor can therefore be extremely helpful to you, and you should make the most of their advice. You should also try to work with them in a professional manner. If you wish to meet with them, email for an appointment. If you make an appointment, keep it, and arrive on time. Make sure you know what questions you want to ask, and pay attention to the answers. All of these will contribute to a good working relationship and, ultimately, a better finished product.

A further source of help and advice is the Research Project Director. Your first port of call should be your supervisor, but you can also contact the Research Project Director for advice if you wish.

How is my Research Project assessed?

The Research Project comprises one-eighth of your degree work and assessment and is very thoroughly evaluated. All projects are marked separately by two members of staff within the Department. Some are also seen by the external examiners who monitor the

standard attained by students.

The overall mark for your Research Project will be based on the following criteria:
- The design of the project and its research questions
- The argument presented in response
- The use of existing historiography
- The sources used
- The writing and presentation of the project. For students following the alternative route, we will also take into consideration the presentation of your research to your intended audiences.

The marking criteria for Research Projects are printed in full at the end of this booklet.

You will get your mark for your Research Project when you receive your examination results, as this is a component of your final year and the mark is subject to ratification by the Board of Examiners. The Research Project is assessed **only** on the final document; the 1,500 word outline submitted in the summer term of your second year will be assessed as part of your HR211 assessment, and will not form part of the final Research Project mark; your oral presentation in the HR831 workshops and your 2,500 word draft do not form part of the final assessment.

Alternative Outputs

The History Department is introducing an alternative type of Research Project. Students will be able to opt to submit a shorter research report and critical commentary (5,000-6,000 words) PLUS some other type of output relating to their research. Possible outputs could include: exhibition panels, podcasts, web-based resources, educational materials, and any other appropriate output agreed with your supervisor and the research project Director. If you are interested in such an option, please speak to Dr Alix Green in the first instance.

When are the deadlines?

WHEN?	*WHAT?*	*WHO?*
Friday 3 March 2017	Research Project Topic Form (hard copy submission to History Office).	All students taking module HR211 *Making Histories: Concepts, Themes and Sources*
Thursday 27 April 2017	Research Project Proposal (submitted as part of the HR211 assessment).	All students taking module HR211 *Making Histories: Concepts, Themes and Sources*
31 October 2017	Following your return after the summer vacation, you should speak to your Research Project supervisor by the end of October to discuss your research.	All students doing a History Research Project (HR831-6-FY)
Friday 2 February 2018	2,500-word draft for supervisor's comments (submitted through FASER with paper copy to History Office)	All students doing a History Research Project (HR831-6-FY)
Wednesday 21 March 2018	**Submission date for final Research Project**	**ALL students taking HR831-6-FY***

*Students spending the **autumn term** of their final year on a Study Abroad Exchange Programme submit their Research Projects on the first day of the summer term, Monday 23 April 2018.

The important stages are as follows:

Research Project WEEK (20-24 February) 2017:
Choosing a topic and submitting a Research Topic Form

The first Research Project meeting will be held in Research Project Week. During this week you will begin the process of selecting your topic. You should NOT do this on your own, but by consultation with members of staff, who will be able to tell you whether the project you are interested in is feasible. Once you have agreed a project with a member of staff, you should submit a Topic Form (forms will be provided at the initial meeting on 23 February). This should state

- Your title
- A brief description of the intended project
- Your specific research question/s
- Sources to be used
- The name(s) of the member(s) of staff with whom you have discussed it.
- **The form should be countersigned by a member of staff to confirm that the project is feasible.** Their signature is not a guarantee that they will be your supervisor. Supervisors will be allocated by the Research Project Director after the submission deadline.

This form must be submitted to the History Department Office by **Friday 3 March 2017**. An appropriate supervisor will then be appointed, with whom you should consult as soon as possible.

SPRING 2017: Developing your project and submitting a longer outline

Your Research Project **Proposal** of 1,500 words (worth 25% of the overall mark for HR211) is to be submitted by 5:00 pm on Thursday 28 April 2017. This proposal must contain an annotated bibliography consisting of at least five books, five research articles, and three primary sources. You will therefore need to find and read relevant sources of all three types before writing your proposal. The proposal must also contain a clear statement about what your project aims to achieve, and an explanation of your methodology--how you are using your sources to argue your thesis. This proposal should be submitted through FASER and **two** paper copies should be submitted, one for your HR211 seminar teacher to mark, and one for your Research Project supervisor. **You should consult with your supervisor whilst writing this outline.**

This proposal will form the basis for your final-year Research Project. It expands upon the topic form that you submitted in March. It will demonstrate the progress that you have

made in adding detail to the original idea and should include:
- the title of your Research Project
- the topic, aims and objectives of the research: what questions do you intend to answer and why might this be a useful and interesting area of enquiry? For those students following the alternative route, please indicate briefly why this work will be of public interest
- the content and methodology of your research: how will you go about researching your chosen topic? What primary sources will you be using? How will you employ these sources to argue your thesis?
- a consideration of the existing secondary sources and where your research will fit in to this historiography
- an **annotated** bibliography of books (5 or more), articles (5 or more) and primary sources (3 or more).

Please note that you will be assessed not only on the strength of your idea but also on the progress that you have made in developing your research project. It is not expected that you have a high level of detail at this stage, but it is essential to demonstrate that you have taken practical steps towards focusing your research question and identifying relevant sources.

The title page of the Research Proposal should be in the format shown in Appendix B of the HR211 module outline.

SUMMER 2017: Research

You should use the Easter vacation, Summer Term and summer vacation to carry out in-depth research on your project; this is the only period in which you have sufficient free time to do this. **Again, consult your supervisor for advice on this.** Make sure that you meet your supervisor before the end of the Summer Term to discuss exactly which primary and secondary sources you are using. It will help you enormously if you read some examples of your actual primary sources before this meeting, so that you can have an informed discussion about your vacation research strategy with your supervisor.

Ideally you should complete the bulk of your reading in both primary and secondary sources during the vacation so that you can begin writing during the Autumn Term. Remember that your timetable will be very full once lectures and seminars begin again in October.

There is a small fund for students to support their IRP research; students can apply for a maximum of £30. If you wish to apply, please download and complete the form available online at www.essex.ac.uk/history/current/ug.aspx?tab=3.

AUTUMN 2017: Writing up

By the Autumn Term of your final year you should have begun to write up your Research Project, which will now appear on your student record as module HR831-6-FY. There will be meetings and workshops to help you, which will appear on your timetable:

Research Project (HR831) Meeting
There will be a further Research Project meeting at the start of the Autumn Term.

Research Project (HR831) Workshop Classes
During the Autumn Term there will be fortnightly HR831 workshop classes. These will be led by a member of staff, normally your own supervisor. You will be able to discuss your progress and exchange ideas about methods, approaches, sources and other issues with other Research Project students. You will also be required to give an oral presentation to this class on your work, and you must submit a **2,500-word** draft of your work to your supervisor in the Spring Term. This should be a coherent section of the Research Project (normally a chapter), with footnotes. Students should make clear, briefly, where it fits in to the Research Project as a whole.

Meeting with your supervisor
It is also important to discuss specific aspects of your own Research Project individually with your supervisor. You should meet regularly by arrangement.

SPRING 2018: Final writing, completion and submission

During the Christmas vacation and the early part of the Spring Term of 2018 you should complete your research and writing up. You should continue to meet and keep in touch with your supervisor. Further HR831 meetings will be held by the Research Project director to give general advice on making progress.

The final deadline for submission of your Research Project is Wednesday 21 March 2018.
(Students spending the Autumn Term of their third year abroad, have a later submission date: Monday 23 April 2018).

RESEARCHING AND WRITING YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT

The Research Project is the most substantial piece of work that you will do during your degree. It is therefore crucial that you think carefully about organising your research, and also presenting the final project. The following sections should be of help and you should also refer to the 'Guide to Writing Coursework' in the Undergraduate Handbook.

Organising Your Research

The two important facts to remember about doing a research project are:

❖ You start working on it during the Spring Term of your second year, and do not submit it until the following year. It is important that you use the vacations to establish that you have access to relevant sources and libraries.

❖ You will read more for this than any other single piece of work.

This has some important implications.

1   When you research and write an essay over, say, two weeks or so, you will retain a lot of factual information in your short-term memory. This will not work in the case of the project. You may spend a couple of weeks working intensively on it in July, and not return to that particular aspect until November. You must therefore take, and keep, careful notes.

2   You will accumulate a lot of information. When writing an essay, the volume of notes is likely to be sufficiently small that you will be able to locate a piece of information fairly quickly. In a large pile of notes, accumulated over nine months, how will you find the information you want? Organise the material you collect. It does not matter how, as long as **you** know the system. For example, you may divide the notes by topic (sub-sets of the project); or by type of source (newspapers, private letters, secondary sources, etc.); or by period, etc. You may wish to file the notes in alphabetical or date order, with brief summaries on record cards. It really doesn't matter how you do this as long as you devise and work to a system.

3   Remember that you will need to compile a detailed bibliography. Keep a careful record of all the sources that you use - either on a database or in the form of individual record cards, which can then be arranged alphabetically at the typing up stage. Do not forget to include all the necessary information - author, title, place and date of publication, or, if a journal, date of volume and also serial number. **The History Department has chosen to follow the style of the Modern Humanities Research Association, so when in doubt about how to cite any type of source, all you need to do is consult the MHRA handbook.**

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4   You may need to take fuller notes than for an essay when reading a source (particularly if it is not in the Essex library). Make sure that you have all the necessary information – not just about the book/article/source itself, but page references etc. (but also remember that some missing details can be supplied by searching the internet). Do make sure that you clearly indicate in your notes when you are taking down the words and phrases of the source you are consulting – see the section below on plagiarism.

5   You will be working on the project off and on over twelve months. At points during that time you will work on it intensively - at others, you will just want to spend odd moments. How will you keep a note of the various aspects of the project which you will need to follow through - books to order through the library, factual information to check or find out, ideas for analysis or points for consideration? **Do not** just write them down on scraps of paper (too easy to lose). Have a notebook, into which you write all these things (and which you have with you always). In a spare moment in the Library, check that source, find out about that individual, sort out the statistic - and write down those inspired thoughts (they never return). Make sure that your notebook is with you always - you may be in a lecture, or reading for an essay, when an important thought will strike!

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

By way of illustration, here are some examples of projects completed in previous years:

(a) *The 'Stereotyped Conchie': A Study of Conscientious Objection in the Second World War.*
This project, based on recordings of oral interviews, mass-observation reports, newspaper articles and secondary works, examines and challenges some stereotypes about British conscientious objectors.

(b) *Kennedy's Use of Presidential Power, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War.*
Presidential decision-making in foreign policy is examined in this project, which uses published collections of government documents and memoirs to focus on Cuba and Vietnam.

(c) *The Representation of Colonial Peoples: A Comparative Study of British Exhibitions and the Publications of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1851-1911*
Our university library's microfilm collection of materials about world's fairs is used together with anthropological literature to examine the changes in the representation of non-European peoples in the half century before the First World War.

(d) *Women and Sexual Violence in Eighteenth-Century Britain*
A project that makes use of court records together with secondary sources to determine whether the treatment of female victims of sexual crimes changed in the course of the 19th century.

(e) *Social Change and the Early German Reformation*
The main aim here was 'historiographical', i.e. it attempted to survey the historical literature on the impact of the Lutherian reformation on German towns, 1520s-1540

(f) *Missing the Boat? British Attitudes and Initiatives Towards European Integration, 1945-51*
This project examines and reassesses Britain's European policy towards early efforts at European co-operation, and is based on unpublished sources at the Public Record Office at Kew, London (Foreign Office, Cabinet, and ministerial papers), a published collection entitled *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, memoirs and secondary sources.

(g) *Rudyard Kipling - Was he Responsible for Creating an India of the Imagination?*
This project brings together the disciplines of history, and literary analysis. Its sources included Kipling's short stories, his private letters, contemporary reviews of his fiction as well as works of history and literary criticism.

(h) *The Nation, the King, his Wife and her Lover: the Construction of National Identity in the Queen Caroline Affair*.
This project examined the interplay of gender and conceptions of national identity through the analysis of contemporary pamphlets and the *Times*.

(i) *Viva Che! The Ever Evolving Legend of Che Guevara*.
This piece examined first Che as an emblem of revolution during the 1960s. The second part looks at the construction of the legend and how Che's image was used by commercial interests to sell everything from T-shirts to watches.

(j) *Domestic Violence and Gender Play: a Study of Plebeian Marital Discord in England, 1650-1800*.
This well-written piece of work brought together primary sources - mainly the Colchester Petty Sessions, 1749–89 - with secondary literature to examine the topic of domestic violence in eighteenth-century Britain.

NB: The Department Office keeps a selection of projects that have achieved a 1st class grade. These can be consulted for inspiration, and to provide guidance on correct formatting of the final product.

Presenting your work effectively is an important aspect of the Research Project and should not be regarded as merely superficial. **Your Research Project should conform to the following standards:**

1. The text of the final Research Project should not exceed 12,000 words (or 6,000 words for alternative outputs). This does not include appendices, bibliographies, etc, or footnotes (provided that all footnotes are simply notes and do not form an intrinsic part of the argument of the project). Overlong Research Projects may be penalised.

2. The Research Project must be word-processed and printed. Give yourself plenty of time to write up your work. Computing or printing problems are not legitimate extenuating circumstances for late submission. Also, given the size of the project compared to an ordinary essay, it will be much harder to rewrite should a computer be damaged or stolen: **back up your work regularly**.

3. The main text (but not footnotes) should be **double-spaced,** following the conventions set out in the 'Guide to Writing Coursework' in the Undergraduate Handbook.

4. Quotations of more than four typed lines should be indented, to set them off from the text, and single-spaced.

5. It should include a table of contents, chapter headings, list of acknowledgements and bibliography (see below).

6. Leave margins of approximately 3 cm at the top of the page and 2 cm at the bottom. Leave 3 cm on the left side of the page and 2 cm margin on the right side.

7. The Research Project must be fully footnoted. See the Footnotes section within the History Department Undergraduate Handbook. Do not use endnotes unless you have a compelling reason to do so. Referencing your sources is a fundamental element of professional historical writing, so avoid errors or omissions; again, they will cost you marks.

8. While no piece of writing is perfect, errors in typing, spelling and punctuation demonstrate carelessness, annoy readers and may adversely affect the mark given to a project. Therefore, when in doubt, use a dictionary or a guide to English usage.

Plagiarism

There are serious consequences for committing plagiarism in a Research Project. Plagiarism means using the words of another person without duly acknowledging this through quotation marks or, if you are summarizing someone else's ideas, through a footnote referring to the specific work(s). If plagiarism is proven, a mark of zero will be recorded for your project. This will have the effect of bringing your degree down by **one whole class**, because the project is a whole component of the degree. You should list primary sources only where they have actually been consulted, **not** where secondary sources have been

used which cite them (this is also regarded as cheating and therefore carries the same risk of bringing down the degree class).

Style

The following are some of the rules George Orwell recommended in his 'Politics and the English Language' (1946):

(1) Never use a long word where a short one will do.
(2) If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
(3) Never use the passive where you can use the active.
(4) Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
(5) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Sections of the Research Project

Sections of the project should appear in the following order:

❖ **Title page**, which includes, in addition to the title, your name, the year of submission and the name of the project supervisor.

❖ **Contents** page, listing chapters, appendices, and bibliography.

❖ **Lists of maps, tables etc**, if any.

❖ **Acknowledgements**, if any.

❖ **Text** (beginning with page 1). This should include
  ▶ An **Introduction**, which should:
    ‣ Discuss previous work on the topic (i.e. a literature review).
    ‣ Consider where the present study stands in relation to that literature (this may well indicate how or why your work is different to existing literature).
    ‣ Outline the main themes/research questions.
    ‣ Discuss your sources and any particular problems/issues with them.
  ▶ A number of **chapters**. Exactly how many will depend on the project, but 3-4 is usual.
  ▶ A **Conclusion**. This should be fully thought through, and not just a single-paragraph summary. It should refer back to the introduction, and seek to resolve the questions that were laid out there.
  ▶ With the exception of the title page, all pages must be numbered. It is customary to number preliminary pages with roman numerals and begin normal numbering at the first page of the introduction

❖ **Appendices**, if any; these can be used to include data/sources you have used.

❖ **Bibliography**, correctly formatted.

For those following the alternative route, the appropriate formatting for your public history output/s will be determined in consultation with your supervisor, drawing on advice from Dr Alix Green or other colleagues with relevant skills, and then agreed by the Research Project Director.

Submission and Coursework Deadline Policy

- **Two** copies of the Research Project are to be submitted to the Department Office, **not** online. The copies therefore need to be submitted on the day of the deadline, not within 24 hours, as is the case with coursework submitted online. You can of course submit early if you wish.

- Students must sign a declaration and submit it with the completed project. A copy of the declaration form can be obtained from the Department Office shortly before the deadline.

- Each copy must be bound (heat or spiral bound): binding is available at the University Copy Shop. The front page should show your name, title of project, year of submission and name of your Research Project supervisor.

When all examination marking is completed, one copy will be returned to the author and one will be retained by the Department. Unless it is specifically requested by the author, this second copy will remain in the Department archives.

There is a single policy at the University of Essex for the late submission of coursework. No extensions to deadlines will be granted. All coursework submitted after the deadline will receive a mark of zero, which will stand unless satisfactory evidence of extenuating circumstances is submitted. More detail about extenuating circumstances is available here: www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/ug/crswk_pol.htm

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RESEARCH PROJECT MARKING GUIDELINES

Notes:
1. These guidelines deal with five key elements of any Research Project: the design of the project and its research questions; the argument presented in response; the use of existing historiography; the sources used; the writing and presentation of the project.
2. Although most Research Projects make use of primary sources, they are not required to do so. A detailed study of a historical or historiographical problem is deemed to be an equally valid topic for a Research Project. However, it is expected that a Research Project not making use of primary sources will demonstrate a high level of research as well as a critical approach to the topic at hand.

3. History grade descriptions are, at best suggestive; it may be that a Project does not precisely conform to all of the descriptions for any given grade band; markers' judgement must include a subjective element that cannot be quantified.

Exceptional first (80+)

- The Research Project is very well designed, engages intelligently with a significant historical problem, and answers well-defined research questions.
- The Research Project presents a strong, coherent and persuasive argument in response to the research questions set, and may make an original contribution to knowledge.
- The Research Project demonstrates excellent knowledge of and engagement with the secondary literature and engages in an excellent critical engagement with it.
- The Research Project is based on mastery of a substantial body of appropriate primary sources (where used), or demonstrates extremely strong and intelligent critical engagement with historical or historiographical debates and problems.
- A mature, fluent and cogent style of writing, possibly of publishable or near-publishable quality; complete accuracy of presentation and scholarly apparatus.

First (70-79)

- The Research Project is well designed, engages intelligently with a significant historical problem, and answers well-defined research questions.
- The Research Project presents a coherent and persuasive argument in response to the research questions set.
- Evidence of wide, critical reading, and demonstrating an excellent knowledge of and engagement with the literature and historiography of the topic.
- Careful use of a substantial body of appropriate primary sources (where used), or very strong critical engagement with historical or historiographical debates and problems.
- Fluency and cogency of expression, maturity of style; excellent level of presentation and scholarly apparatus.
- For alternative outputs, also: thoughtful, highly engaging and well-designed presentation to identified audiences; sophisticated critical attention to issues involved in public history

Upper Second (60-69)

- The Research Project is well designed and engages with an appropriate historical problem, although some conceptual weaknesses may exist with the project or the research questions defined.
- The Research Project presents a mostly coherent and persuasive argument in response to the research questions set, but there may be some flaws or weaknesses of interpretation.
- The Research Project demonstrates sound knowledge of and engagement with the literature and historiography of the topic.
- The Research Project is based on careful use of a good range of primary sources (where used), or demonstrates good critical engagement with historical or historiographical debates and problems.

- A confident, lucid (and often concise and focused) style, with a very good level of presentation and scholarly apparatus.
- For alternative outputs, also: clear and engaging presentation to identified audiences; good critical attention to issues involved in public history

Lower Second (50-59)

- The Research Project deals with an appropriate historical problem, but there are weaknesses in the conception of the project, and the research questions defined may not be well-conceived.
- The Research Project presents a competent argument in response to the research questions set, but there may be significant flaws or weaknesses of interpretation.
- The Research Project makes use of relevant secondary literature, but shows weaknesses in breadth of reading, knowledge and understanding.
- Engages with a reasonable body of primary sources (where used), or shows a limited degree of critical engagement with historical or historiographical debates.
- Writing may lack clarity in places or contain errors; presentation and scholarly apparatus contains errors or omissions.
- For alternative outputs, also: fair attempt to present research to audiences, but may be shortcomings in content or design; limited critical engagement with issues involved in public history

Third (40-49)

- The Research Project is poorly designed and engages only weakly with a historical problem, with inadequate or non-existent definition of research questions.
- The argument presented lacks coherence and contains serious flaws or weaknesses of interpretation.
- Engagement with secondary sources is minimal or superficial, with major weaknesses in knowledge and understanding.
- Engagement with primary sources or historical or historiographical debates is minimal and may be derived purely from secondary sources; use of primary sources is merely illustrative rather than analytical.
- Writing often lacks clarity or contains errors; presentation and scholarly apparatus have significant shortcomings.
- For alternative outputs, also: presentation contains substantial flaws in content or design, or shows little evidence that the audience has been considered; very little critical engagement with issues involved in public history

Fail (39 and below)

- The Research Project is poorly designed and does not engage with a historical debate; research questions are not defined.
- The Research Project does not present a historical argument.
- The Research Project shows little or no engagement with relevant secondary sources.

- No meaningful engagement with primary sources or historical/historiographical debates.
- Writing frequently lacks clarity and contains errors; presentation and scholarly apparatus have very significant shortcomings.
- For alternative outputs, also: little or no attention to the needs of the audience and/or serious flaws in content or design; no critical attention to issues involved in public history

RESEARCH PROJECT PRIZES

Each year the *Research Project Prize* is awarded to the Research Project judged to be the best of its year by the Department and the External Examiners. *The Pop Ronson Memorial Prize for Local History* is awarded to the student deemed by the Board of Examiners in History to have written the best project on local history. The History Department will nominate one of the prizewinning projects for a national project prize funded by the Royal Historical Society. A version of the RHS winning project will appear in the magazine *History Today.*

THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND SKILLS

Remember that a good project is something that you can boast about: it is a project that you have designed, managed and brought to completion, and will demonstrate to potential employers the following skills, amongst others:

1. Initiative, in devising a research topic and carrying out that research.
2. Project management, in balancing research and writing as well as other responsibilities in order to bring in the completed project in time.
3. Data analysis, in collecting and making use of the research materials.
4. Communication, of a complex topic in an effective way within a limited number of words.

Many people who go on to higher degrees also find that the experience of project research is of great use in preparing them for the work involved in putting together MA and PhD theses.