The Historical Tripos is taught over 3 years, in Parts I (years 1 and 2) and II (year 3).

Entry requirements:
Admission is through the Colleges and is based on a pre-interview written assessment, the written application, the reference, achievement at GCSE or in equivalent examinations, and achievement at A-level or in equivalent examinations, and one or more interviews. A typical A-level offer is A*AA. Normally about 200 students are admitted each year. Students transferring into History from another Cambridge Tripos may either take Part II in their third year, or take the Preliminary Examination to Part II in their third year, prior to taking Part II in their fourth and final year.

Teaching staff:
58 University Teaching Officers and approximately 30 College Teaching Officers. Some teaching is also done by post-doctoral research fellows and advanced PhD students.

Physical resource:
The Faculty of History is located within a single, dedicated building on the Sidgwick Site, West Road, where nearly all lecturing and much seminar teaching takes place. However, most staff have offices in the Colleges, where most individual and small group ‘supervisions’ (tutorials) take place. The Faculty building contains the Seeley Historical Library, which houses a comprehensive collection of nearly 100,000 books, journals, pamphlets, and audio-visual material. In addition, College libraries and provide many textbooks and some journals, and the University Library provides physical or electronic access to thousands of journals: electronic access can be gained from the 30 computer terminals in the Seeley Library or from other sites.

Educational aims of the programme
(i) To provide scope for the systematic study of history around the word, including political, social, economic, religious, cultural, and intellectual history, from antiquity to the present day.

(ii) To train students in methods of critical enquiry as applied to historical materials,
within which students learn to collate disparate information, evaluate ideas in the light of data, and present literate analyses in written work.

(iii) To provide a coherent and supportive structure for learning, teaching, and intellectual progression, in which students work closely alongside teachers whose instruction is informed by their research.

(iv) To equip students with knowledge acquisition and analytical skills which will enable them to pursue postgraduate historical study, or to apply these skills in a wide range of careers, including the managerial, creative, and communicative professions.

Skills and qualities of mind

The course and its teaching programme aim to develop in students the skills and qualities of mind recognised in the History Benchmark Statement. Many of these skills are generic to all disciplined enquiry, but historians in this programme should in particular achieve a capacity to:

- grasp the otherness of the past and the foreignness of past societies and mentalities
- understand, interpret, and evaluate textual and non-textual primary source materials
- assess the utilities and limitations of different types of historical evidence
- use bibliographical resources efficiently and refer with precision to primary and secondary materials
- grasp and engage with debates, arguments, and concepts used by professional historians
- absorb historical knowledge and make appropriate judgements about relevance, selectivity, and significance in deploying empirical data

Programme structure

Part I
Students are required to take six papers. They must include the following papers:

- Themes and Sources (choosing from among 10-15 options)
- At least one period in British Political History (from among 5)
- At least one period in British Economic and Social History (from among 5)
- At least one paper from among 7 periods in European History, or the History of Political Thought, or World History, or North American History (it is a requirement of Tripos to take one paper in European History and one paper designated as pre-1750, but this need not be in Part I).

In all, Part I contains up to 38 papers and options. In the case of British History, the papers extend from 380 CE to the present; in European History from 776 BCE to the present. The World history papers include the study of all Continents, from the fifteenth century to the present day. The Themes and Sources options include a diversity of thematic and disciplinary approaches. Current papers are listed on the Faculty’s website. One of the Themes and Sources options is based on French sources and is taught with additional support from language teachers and the University Language Centre, so that students with an AS or A2 qualification in French will acquire the skill of using historical documents in that language for study and research. Statistical and quantitative skills are taught especially through the papers in Economic and Social History.

Part II
Students are required to take four papers, including

* One Special Subject (involving a Long Essay and an examination paper)
* One paper called Historical Argument and Practice
Two papers from among a list of ‘Specified Subjects’ and papers in Political Thought; or one such paper and a Dissertation.

The Special Subject devotes attention to the study of primary source materials and the examination paper requires commentary upon source ‘gobbets’. The Dissertation is required to be up to 15,000 words in length and to be an apprenticeship exercise in professional historical research and therefore based upon primary sources. Approximately half of final year students opt for the Dissertation. Historical Argument and Practice is a paper requiring reflection on conceptual, historiographical, and methodological issues in the study of history, and is assessed via a three-hour examination. The Specified Subject options cover a diverse spread of comparative, area, and thematic studies and are assessed by examination.

The Special Subject has 11-16 options available each year. The Specified Subjects normally include 18-24 options each year. Thus in total there are typically between 30 and 40 papers and options available. Each of the eight Subject Groups in the Faculty is expected to provide at least one Specified or Special Subject (most provide at least one of each), so that a wide diversity of eras and areas of world history are covered.

**Modes of teaching**

The Faculty has a ‘mixed economy’ of teaching methods, including individual and small group supervisions (tutorials), which are largely College-based; lectures, which are Faculty-based; and classes and seminars, which occur in both College and Faculty settings. Accordingly, there are opportunities for students to learn by listening, by discussing, and by orally presenting.

Most papers are taught through supervisions and have a substantial emphasis on essay-writing, a student typically writing 7-8 essays per paper. Essays are discussed in supervisions, having been marked and given written comments in advance. Supervisions are most often on a one-to-one basis, but it is increasingly common to combine one-to-one essay feedback with discussion in small groups. Accordingly, students are exposed to, and challenged by, individual engagement with experienced professionals, and have an unusually ample opportunity to develop writing skills, and the clarity, cogency, fluency, and elegance required to persuade a reader.

Some papers are taught in different ways:

- The Part I Themes and Sources options are taught only in Faculty seminars, which are capped at 15-20 students each.
- The Part II Special Subject options are taught only in Faculty lectures and classes, and are each capped at 16-20 students.
- The Prelim and Part II Historical Argument and Practice paper is taught through a combination of Faculty teaching (lectures and supplementary classes) and College classes and supervision.

All papers are provided with extensive bibliographies and statements of their aims and scope. The majority of papers make extensive use of Moodle and other web-based resources.

In addition, the Faculty has a programme of general lectures and classes, some of them directed towards the development of study skills, or in preparation for researching and writing
dissertations.

**Modes of Assessment**

Formative assessment is provided through the supervision system where feedback is provided in oral and written form.

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the second and third years (with a formative ‘preliminary’ examination towards the end of the first year). The modes of assessment are:

- Part I: five three-hour examination papers and one Long Essay.
- Part II: four three-hour examination papers and one Long Essay, or three three-hour examination papers, one Long Essay, and one Dissertation.

There is a separate statement of marking and classing criteria.

**Progression requirements**

Performance in the Preliminary examination at the end of the first year of Part I is indicative and not a formal progression requirement. In Part I a student is required to obtain a pass at Honours level in order to progress to Part II. A student who has not met certain Tripos requirements in Part I must do so in Part II. These requirements are designed to ensure that students achieve a sufficient breadth of study. The requirements are: to take at least one paper or option which falls mainly in the period before 1750; and one paper on a subject in European history. A student may exit the Historical Tripos after Part I (i.e. after 2 years) and may enter the Tripos from a different subject and take Part II in either one year or two. Students in the latter category are exempt from the specific Tripos requirements listed above.

**Evaluating the quality of provision**

Systems for evaluating quality are recorded in the Statement of Quality Assurance. These may be summarised as follows:

- Student lecture evaluation pro formas for every lecture series.
- Annual student email questionnaire concerning general teaching quality and resources.
- Student representation on the Faculty Board and the Teaching, Learning, and Quality Committee.
- Appraisal and mentoring of staff.
- Scrutiny of proposals for new papers by the Faculty’s Subject Groups, the Teaching, Learning and Quality Committee, and the Faculty Board.
- Scrutiny and response to annual reports by internal and external examiners.
- College Directors of Studies monitoring of the quality of supervision through student feedback.

**Indications of quality**

- History at Cambridge has been at the top of the UK table in the Guardian University Guide for the last three years, with 100% score for the overall programme, and consistently within the top three in the QS and THE World University Rankings.
- 96% of Part II students achieved Firsts or Upper Seconds in 2019.
- Six staff have been awarded University Pilkington Prizes for teaching.
- In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), the Faculty submitted the work of 115 historians. 44% of their publications were judged 4* (‘world leading’) and 37% as 3* (‘internationally excellent’). Times Higher Education (1 January 2015) ranked
Cambridge first out of 83 history departments in the UK on its Research Intensity index - a measure of both quality and depth.

**Web-based information available to students**

The Faculty’s website includes: a list of Tripos papers; all bibliographies for Part I and Part II papers; the Lecture List; the Examiners’ Reports; statements on the nature of the course and library facilities; and gateways to a large array of online historical resources. Individual Papers are supported by dedicated websites on Moodle. These are used to provide access to primary sources, lecture materials, web-links and much else.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: [https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/](https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/)