

HISTORY

History is as essential to human society as memory is to an individual. The past shapes the present and the present, the future. History is more than a knowledge of historical facts – it helps us to better understand the essence of how people and societies behave. It provides a framework within which complex issues of identity, morality and reality can be argued out. It also offers reference points for speculation about what might be possible. History is an intellectual discipline which requires the rigour of a scientist, the persistence of a detective and the imagination of a novelist.

WHY STUDY HISTORY?

The study of History involves in-depth analysis of particular historical periods or themes. This builds specific bodies of knowledge which may, in themselves, be necessary for a particular job, but studying history also develops more generic skills which are considered essential for maintaining employability in the job market both now and in the future. In times of increasingly rapid technological and social change, History becomes increasingly popular and applicable. The history of our own country helps us understand ourselves, and histories of other places helps us understand others. Historical source material is now so readily available to an increasingly sophisticated general public and the demand for historical accuracy extends to all forms of media.

WHAT SKILLS DOES THE STUDY OF HISTORY DEVELOP?

In so many workplaces and roles the potential to manage oneself and others is key. Success in the contemporary job market is all about understanding complex systems and human relationships, strategic plans, pragmatic outcomes, the dilemma of the right decision, the enlightenment of past experience and how that applies now. History students understand these things well. They develop along with highly usable 'habits of mind' and transferable skills, including:



Critical thinking. History students learn to evaluate and question shared perceptions and beliefs, then be creative enough to challenge these to come up with fresh thinking. This asks for an ability to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information and to seek alternative explanations. A particular skill is the ability to evaluate the quality of information provided for the public record.

Logic and quantitative skills such as being able to construct a logical argument based on facts, and to source and interpret data. When asking questions, gathering information (facts and concepts) and evaluating material, a History student learns practical **research methods**. The ability to carry out a literature search, using correct referencing and presentation devices is a skill that is useful beyond academia as many professional groups conduct research.

Problem solving by quickly identifying patterns, logical rules and trends in new data, integrating this information and applying it to solve current problems. History students develop the objectivity to evaluate diverse and sometimes conflicting interpretations of past events and come up with insights to

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help understand and solve current political or social issues or dilemmas.

Analytical ability means being able to systematically analyse a complex situation. When information is ambiguous, **attention to detail** is needed to see where there are pieces missing. **Creativity and flexibility** are used to make connections between apparently unrelated events and appraise prevailing social, political and economic belief systems very different from their own.

Persistence and intellectual curiosity. History students have a good deal of enthusiasm for their subject and employers value applicants who are passionate and articulate about their interests. The way they convey the excitement of discovery and the reward of solving real-world problems can make History graduates interesting to employers. Knowing where to look for information, how to access it, and having the patience to analyse and interpret large bodies of information are important skills. The study of History also develops strong oral and written **communication skills** from clearly constructing arguments to engage and convince a range of audiences.

WHERE DO HISTORY GRADUATES WORK?

History graduates are found wherever there is a need for their unique thinking, analytical and communication skills, particularly in analysis,

advisory or research roles across the private and public sectors. Employers can include government departments and ministries such as Ministry of Justice, Department of Corrections, Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, local authorities, banks, insurance companies and educational institutions.

A postgraduate History degree, along with research experience, is normally preferred for policy or research roles. However research assistant, advisory, communications and media roles may be suitable for graduates with undergraduate qualifications. Useful skills and experience can be gained from part-time work and a number of employers offer summer internships in these areas. Having a second major or conjoint degree can also add complementary skills.

Work that involves the communication of information is also suited to the skills of History graduates, particularly **journalism, content development, communications or public relations**, although an additional relevant qualification is usually required for these jobs. Submitting freelance articles for publication, online content or broadcast, engagement in relevant social media or blogging can help build up professional credibility.

In New Zealand, an important aspect of any work with a historical component is the Treaty of Waitangi and partnership between the Crown and iwi Māori. The number of large iwi organisations have grown and partnership with iwi is a key part of the work of many organisations, therefore a knowledge of tikanga and te reo Māori (Māori language and culture), Te Ao Māori (the Māori world view) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) research skills are an advantage, especially in the public sector.

Historical consultants sell specialised historical knowledge and research skills, typically on a contract or project basis. Historians can be contracted to research histories of towns, business enterprises, public institutions and even grave sites. Their clients could include government departments, museums or property developers.

The interpretation of heritage stories is a key part of New Zealand's tourism growth strategy. Local historical societies are also active and growing in response to the growth in tourism and increased interest in local history. Volunteering to help with such organisations can offer excellent opportunities for learning how history translates from an academic discipline to a community resource, and a marketable product. Local historical places or heritage trusts and societies can have administration or programme management positions that can be a good stepping stone

into heritage management or curator roles.

Manatū Taonga/Ministry for Culture and Heritage provides advice to the Government on culture and heritage matters and undertakes activities that support and promote the history and heritage of New Zealand. It is responsible for producing a range of websites and publications including New Zealand History, Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand and the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography and sites with a special focus on New Zealand's involvement in military conflicts, including Anzac Day, 28th Māori Battalion, the Vietnam War Oral History Project and the WW1 centenary.

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga is an agency funded by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. Their work revolves around the Register of Historic Places, which also includes historic areas. The regional offices are staffed by people with a range of technical skills such as historians, architects, archaeologists and Māori heritage advisers, who work closely with their local communities and local authorities.

The **Department of Conservation** is responsible for the management or promotion of recreation and heritage destinations, including historic buildings and sites. The study of History and a strong interest and commitment to conservation can provide a useful background for policy advice, communications and business management roles that support this work. Some relevant experience as a volunteer or as an intern in visitor services or outreach and education may also be helpful.

The **Waitangi Tribunal** is a permanent commission of inquiry whose role is to make recommendations on claims brought by Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi. The Ministry of Justice, through the Waitangi Tribunal Business Unit, provides administrative, research and support services. Within the Unit, the Research and Inquiry Facilitation and Report Writing teams are involved with primary historical research. At least a Master's degree in History or Māori Studies is required for both sections. Law is a useful complementary subject.

The **Office of Treaty Settlements** is part of the Ministry of Justice and negotiates, on behalf of the Crown, settlement of historical Treaty of Waitangi claims with Māori claimant groups. Historian roles require a Master's degree with an emphasis on New Zealand history. A Law and History combination is ideal for a policy analyst role within the Office of Treaty Settlements but most important is a strong interest in working the Treaty sector.

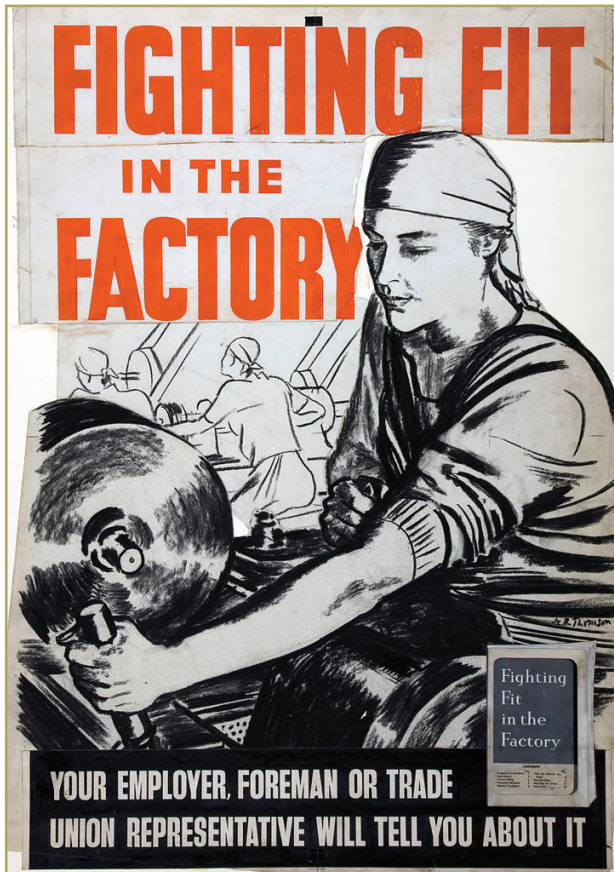
Museums

Museums vary considerably in their size and methods of operating. Most museums maintain a roster of volunteers and this can provide useful experience for potential applicants in the event of a paid position being advertised. Enthusiasm and communication skills are very important as museums move away from the static display of labelled artefacts towards a 'story-telling' approach.

Te Papa, the National Museum of New Zealand. A History degree, ideally with some Anthropology, is relevant for collections, learning and research, business development, marketing, Mātauranga Māori, repatriation and community engagement aspects of the work of Te Papa. As well as cataloguing, evaluating and researching acquisitions, and researching for exhibitions, curators may also undertake active research in the community. Due to competitive pressure, a relevant postgraduate qualification is normally essential. Opportunities for voluntary work are largely taken up by such students doing a practical placement at Te Papa. Previous experience working at a smaller museum is highly desirable, partly because it teaches people how to handle objects and prepare them for exhibition.

Regional museums generally have a local focus and may employ only a single collections manager, if that. Most rely on volunteers to carry out day to day activities, such as assisting with requests for information on family histories or maintaining archival material on databases. Increasingly regional museums, particularly those with larger operations, are developing a more entrepreneurial emphasis and both employees and volunteers need good communications and customer service skills in addition to knowledge about the collections. Volunteering can demonstrate these, as can private or student research projects. Casual, part-time and full-time communicators are employed to engage with the





public and 'add value' to the exhibits.

Archives

Archives exist to preserve and manage records of permanent value. Such records are usually unique, with their own provenance and particular place in the historical record. Many different organisations maintain archives, including libraries and local authorities. Specialised archives tend to require knowledge or experience relevant to the objects in the collection. For example, [Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision](#), the New Zealand audiovisual archive, employs people with a range of different experience, skills and knowledge in filmmaking, television and radio broadcasting, New Zealand history, research, cataloguing, client services and te reo Māori.

[Archives New Zealand](#) gather, store and protect an extremely wide range of material including the originals of the Treaty of Waitangi, the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition, government documents, maps, paintings, photographs and film. Archives New Zealand works with government agencies to promote effective recordkeeping practices. Roles include professional archival staff, advisors and support staff.

A postgraduate archives and records management qualification is normally required for archival and advisory positions.

Libraries

Libraries vary considerably in the amount of historical material they hold in their collections. Although a few libraries may have specialist librarian roles with an historical focus, History graduates who are skilled in using information systems and reference resources typically function well in general library environments. Libraries prefer their staff to have, or be studying towards, a professional postgraduate library and information studies, archives, information management or heritage studies qualification.

[National Library of New Zealand](#) houses the [Alexander Turnbull Library](#), whose team develops and maintains a comprehensive collection of published and unpublished documents, provides access and research advice and produces an annual research publication.

University collections, such as the [Hocken Collections](#) at the University of Otago Library, have a preference for History graduates with Master's degree by thesis, particularly with an emphasis on New Zealand or Pacific history.

Teaching and Lecturing

Education. History teachers in [secondary schools](#) are required to have a teaching qualification in addition to a relevant undergraduate degree and may also be required to teach subjects other than History.

In [universities](#), a PhD together with a significant record of publication is a minimum requirement for a lecturer position. Some postgraduate History students are employed as tutors which is valuable experience for an aspiring academic. Tutoring experience also transfers well to the wider job market in the form of presentation skills, while experience in marking assignments develops judgement, the ability to critically evaluate written information and give feedback on performance.

JOB TITLES

The following is a sample of job titles taken from our graduate destination surveys. Some roles may require postgraduate qualifications and training.

Account manager • acquisitions manager • administrator • adviser • analyst • archives assistant • archivist • assistant curator • communications adviser • consultant (historical, management, research) • content developer • contract historian • copywriter • curator • customer experience adviser • customer service • event co-ordinator • foreign policy officer

GRADUATE PROFILES

• gallery assistant • heritage researcher • historian • honours adviser • information manager • intelligence analyst • investigator • knowledge manager • librarian • library assistant • market adviser • market researcher • media planner • oral historian • policy adviser • primary teacher • production assistant • publishing assistant • records adviser • research assistant • researcher • sales representative • secondary teacher • social media co-ordinator • technical writer • tutor • university lecturer • writer

Rachel Nowicki

Global Billing Manager, Customer Experience
Xero

I always knew I wanted to go to university and I had loved History at school and wanted to continue to expand on my knowledge. Although understanding historical facts and events still has relevance in day to day life, you learn so much more than just that. You may be asked to evaluate an historical event but then you must determine your own thoughts about it. My learning has had positive impacts on my work and even personal life.

For me there are two stand out skills that I take with me everywhere and are important to my work at Xero: the ability to think outside the box and to create a new solution out of an existing problem. At Xero, flexibility and the ability to innovate are critical. This may mean challenging decisions



made previously and seeking new opportunities.

A lot of people might be surprised to hear I'm a Global Billing Manager for Xero, an accounting software company. I now lead a global team of Billing Specialists managing customer subscription accounts, invoicing and payment. They resolve queries while educating and building strong relationships with customers.



While I was studying I worked part-time with BNZ, first as a Collections Customer Service Associate, moving into project management. This then lead me to becoming a full time team leader and when I finished my studies, I moved to Xero as Customer Experience Team Leader. While in this role, I was fortunate enough to win the National Contact Centre Team Leader of the year, organised through CCINZ (the Contact Centre Institute of New Zealand). We had to present both a written application and an hour presentation to the judges demonstrating evidence of people skills, being able to envisage and present plans I had for the team, key relationships and system improvements. Being able to motivate others, analyse data and find solutions in a fast, tech-savvy environment has really helped me reach my goals.

Griffen Ritchie

Advisor
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

I have always had an interest in storytelling and the stories of the past and had enjoyed taking History and Classics in high school, which led me to continue this focus at university. I majored in Film and History for my Bachelor of Arts (BA) and did an Honours year in History. I enjoyed the range of papers available in the History programme and chose not to focus on any one period of history too closely.

I am now working as an Advisor in the Honours Unit of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. It is a small team which runs all of the behind-the-scenes processes for the recognition of those who have served their communities or demonstrated merit in their field through the New Zealand Royal Honours system. I initially applied for a contract role processing nominations for the Queen's Birthday Honours list. Hundreds of nominations are received every year from the public recommending people for an

honour and each nomination must be summarised for consideration.

Being able to write clearly and succinctly to convey a point is crucial to representing the history of a nominee, their lifetime of service or achievement. I use research and analytical skills and constantly focus on fine details to ensure our business processes run smoothly. My role has been fascinating and has allowed me to immerse myself in the personal histories of thousands of New Zealanders, as well as coming to understand the rich history and often quirky traditions of Royal Honours systems.



For those interested in studying History I would definitely recommend undertaking Honours. The focus on methodology and theory at that level is extremely helpful in honing practical skills and a self-directed work ethic. My Honours year threw me in with a great group of people with a similar passion for history. The support of like-minded students is a great boon and overcoming the challenges together made the year entertaining and rewarding.

Sarah Habershon

Raconteur
OptimalBI

I didn't so much decide on History as a major so much as helplessly succumb to it. When I began studying it was in pursuit of a Religious Studies major, with a strong focus on Middle Eastern society and politics. As I devoured every course on the development of religions, I came to realise that what was really fascinating me about religion was the way in which it shapes people's identities. This led to a burning curiosity about my own identity, and I was dismayed to discover how little I knew about the history of New Zealand. I found myself craving more information, so I began a second major in History and got stuck in.

Studying the history of New Zealand I found it immensely satisfying and rewarding to confront my history – the assumptions and values I didn't even know I carried around. History helped me to develop critical thinking, excellent reading, writing and research skills, and the ability to make and support a sophisticated and coherent argument. I learned to examine where my values and assumptions came from and what they're based on. It taught me to look past

the normative narratives of our society, to be suspicious, to look for other, less comfortable stories. I sometimes had to examine unsettling material, learn and derive a sense of identity from it.

After I graduated, I was at a bit of a loss in terms of a career path, until I was hired to support an analytics project at the Ministry of Education. The contract was ostensibly a communications role, but I was told I had been selected because I could think critically, understand the significance of the project in the context of New Zealand's sociology, and express complex concepts well in writing.

I now work as a consultant for a business intelligence company, using my analytical and narrative skills to pull simple, engaging stories out of complex datasets, and turning them into data visualisations and infographics. Between clients, OptimalBI gives me time to spend honing my data-wrangling skills by playing with open public data, which I turn into infographics that I hope will challenge people to also think critically about our society. The combination of academic and technical skills I use every day makes for rewarding, creative work that I really enjoy.



Daniel Cruden

Analyst
The Treasury

When I started studying, I pretty much decided to study the subjects that I thought would interest me. This led me to major in History and Political Science. When I decided to stay on for Honours, I chose History because it's such a broad subject – it covers everything and explains so much about today's world. Studying a BA encourages you to take a really broad perspective, and you get to look at a range of issues from all sorts of different angles.

The skills you learn in most Arts subjects, such as History, are important to all sorts of employment situations. The ability to undertake research, think critically and write clearly are sought after by a range of employers. The Treasury, for instance, makes a deliberate effort to hire graduates from a diverse range of backgrounds including the Arts.

My History thesis taught me how to undertake an extensive research project, and keep a clear argument. You also learn quite a lot about managing yourself – at Honours and Master's levels it's a good idea to treat your studies as a proper job – working regular hours and giving yourself time off. Those kinds of self-management skills give you a real advantage once you're in work because you know more about how you like to work and what makes you most productive. It's often said that Arts graduates lack a

clear pathway for a future career, but that can be an advantage as you have the chance to use your degree for a range of different purposes.

After completing my Master's, I spent some time doing administrative support at the Ministry of Justice before getting a permanent job at the Treasury. The thing I really like about working here is that there are so many issues that you get exposed to – from social inclusion, to state sector management, to our macroeconomic frameworks.

My advice to students thinking about what to major in would be to keep your options open early on, and try what you think you'll be interested in. It's cool to have a plan from Day One, but that isn't how everyone works, and they can still be successful.



Erin Keenan

Senior Policy Analyst
Te Puni Kōkiri

When I started university, I simply wanted to learn about the world. I initially delved into sciences and languages but was increasingly fascinated by stories about people; who we are and why. I gravitated towards History because it allows a student access to a broad range of times, kaupapa, people and places. History is not stories of old that are lost in the past. It also helps us understand what needs to happen today.

Wellington is a fantastic place to study History because of the great resources in the city. It was great to be able to search Government records at Archives, check out photograph collections at the Turnbull Library and then stop into Parliament when the House was sitting. You should not underestimate how important simply reading and writing are as skills for a range of careers. I learned a lot during my time about communicating effectively to different types of audiences and participated in many types of presentations and conferences, learning to articulate myself and present information clearly.

I also learned about politics, culture and identity, economics, gender, Crown-Māori relationships and the values attributed to natural resources. When studying towards a PhD, I refined important employment skills in project and time management, critical thinking and negotiation, patience, persistence and having an eye for detail. I learned that I enjoy work that is challenging, interesting and that has real-world

impacts.

When I was finishing my studies, I really wanted to get involved in work that had tangible outputs and real-time benefits for people, especially Māori, iwi, hapū and whānau. I was drawn to work in the public sector because it plays an important role in people's wellbeing, spanning from strategic decisions with long term impacts to engagement with people who are directly affected. There is a long history of Māori working in Government, and it's great to be able to help influence the direction of decisions from the inside. I am still required on a daily basis to gather and use evidence to make a robust case or argument. But now this work has the possibility to result in policy development and positive change.

