

# Diploma in Family Historical Studies

## Society of Australian Genealogists

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In 1974 the Society of Australian Genealogists instituted a Diploma in Family Historical Studies (Dip. F.H.S.). The Diploma is administered by a Committee appointed by the Council and the current Convenor is Dr K.W. Knight, AM, M.Ec, Ph.D., ALAA, FRAIPA (Fellow). The Diploma is awarded to candidates who show a high degree of proficiency in the study of family history based on a thesis, essay, case study and examination.

Many candidates who attain the Diploma go on to work in the field of professional genealogy and undertaking the Diploma course will provide a strong grounding in research skills.

### **WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE COURSE?**

The Diploma is undertaken over 2-3 years with a minimum study time of 2 years and a maximum of 3. There are no structured lessons, regular assignments to complete or lectures to attend (other than the elective Archives Option which is only open to Sydney-based candidates). Candidates can live anywhere in Australia (or overseas).

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

The Diploma course is not designed to 'teach' people how to trace their family history. It is intended for individuals who have undertaken a substantial amount of research work to date and who now wish to formally prepare and submit that work for examination. Potential candidates must have sufficient access to resources to enable them to undertake suitable research. The course requires a high degree of self-motivation and discipline and candidates are expected to possess good literacy and writing skills. At the discretion of the Examining Committee applicants may be asked to undertake a short entrance examination.

### **APPLYING FOR ADMISSION**

Applications for admission to the Diploma course are accepted from 1 January - 31 March each year. All applications must be accompanied by the prescribed fee (currently \$275 including GST) and provide a synopsis of the proposed thesis and essay topic to be studied. A short explanation of the reasons an applicant wishes to undertake the course must also be provided. Applicants will be notified of their successful admission to the course by 30 May.

Candidates must be financial members of the Society of Australian Genealogists and they must remain members for the period of their candidature.

### **Stage I - The Essay**

The first stage of the course requires the submission of an essay of approximately 4,000 words on an issue connected with the theory or practice of family history, genealogy or heraldry. This must be in continuous prose and be fully documented and include a synopsis and bibliography. While it may be necessary to include itemised lists, these should not form the staple of the essay.

The subject of the essay must be Australasian. The essay will normally involve a study of a particular type of record (such as shipping lists or newspapers), a repository (such as a local church archive or specific institution) or a particular method of undertaking genealogical research (such as oral or pictorial history). The essay cannot be a biographical work, a local history or be based on a computer subject. The essay must be submitted by 30 June of the year following admission to the Diploma course. If a candidate successfully completes Stage I of the course they may proceed to Stage II.

### **Stage II - The Thesis**

The second stage of the Diploma course requires the preparation and submission of a thesis of approximately 20,000 words. It must be based on original research in primary sources, be on an approved topic and be properly documented.

The subject must be an Australasian family of at least 3-4 generations. The thesis must include a comprehensive genealogical chart detailing through to the present day at least two lines of the family being studied. The thesis must include a synopsis and bibliography and be fully footnoted. Work previously published, presented, or in preparation for publication or for presentation for any other award or qualification will not be considered and all submissions must be the original work of the candidate.

Candidates can choose to submit the thesis within either one or two years of submission of the essay. The deadline for submission is 30 June.

### **Stage III - The Case Study**

Following successful completion of the thesis, a case study will be set for each candidate. Research in original material will be necessary to complete the exercise which will be similar in content to a genealogical contract set by a client for a professional researcher, or to a research enquiry received by the Society's Research Officers. The scope of research undertaken, the results obtained and the presentation of the final report will be taken into account. Research may be required at any repository geographically convenient for the candidate and candidates are not required to purchase certificates or outlay funds to complete the Case Study.

The case study will be undertaken between July and September following submission of the thesis.

### **Stage IV - The Examination**

The final component of the course involves a 3-hour examination and this is undertaken in the October following submission of the Case Study. The examination consists of two sections, the first comprising questions on research methods in family historical studies appropriate to Australia and/or New Zealand and the second requiring candidates to answer one question on either heraldic theory and practice; the use of official archives in family history; or the practice of local history.

The examination requires essay-length answers and candidates have a choice of questions. The second section of the examination is only undertaken by candidates who have not undertaken the Official Archives Option.

It is not necessary to travel to Sydney for the examination and arrangements can be made for the examination to be taken in a candidate's local area.

### **OFFICIAL ARCHIVES OPTION**

Candidates who are based in Sydney and who are able to attend a lecture series held at State Records of NSW (at the Western Sydney Record Centre located at Kingswood) and to undertake approximately 20 hours of research at that repository are eligible to undertake the Official Archives Option in place of Part B of the examination.

The Option involves attendance at lectures (usually for one day) and the completion of a research assignment. The Option is administered and assessed by staff of State Records. A separate fee is levied by the SRNSW on all candidates who undertake this option. It is offered at the discretion of SRNSW and may not be held annually.

### **SUPERVISORS**

Each candidate is appointed a supervisor to act as a point of contact between the examining committee and the candidate. Their role is to ensure that work is submitted in the layout detailed in the Style Manual but they are not expected to teach candidates how to undertake research and to write, or to substantially edit a candidate's work.

Supervisors may be members of the examining committee or may be individuals within close geographical proximity of candidates. It is not always possible for candidates to be provided with a supervisor in their local area and they may be expected to liaise with a Sydney-based Supervisor.

It is the responsibility of candidates to remain in contact with their supervisor and to ensure that a copy of the final draft of their work is submitted to the supervisor in time for it to be scrutinized and commented upon before submission.

The supervisor will provide a certificate stating that the work is in the proper form for submission but this in no way implies that the work is of a suitable standard to receive a pass grade.

### **REGULATIONS**

Copies of the Regulations pertaining to the course are available from the Society on receipt of a large self-addressed envelope or by email. The Regulations are set by the Council of the Society and may be altered at any time.

### **FEES**

An initial application fee of \$275.00 (including GST) must accompany all applications.

An annual fee of \$275 (including GST) is currently payable, and invoices will be issued to candidates at 30 June each year. Candidates who complete the course in 2 years can therefore expect to pay \$825. Candidates who take an additional year to complete their thesis will pay \$1,100. All fees are non-refundable.

### **TIMETABLE**

A candidate who applies for admission in 2007 will submit the essay by 30 June 2008. If successful they will then submit the thesis by either 30 June 2009 or 30 June 2010. The case study and exam will be taken in the months following submission of the thesis.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information or advice, intending candidates should consult the Executive Officer (Miss H.E. Garnsey) of the Society of Australian Genealogists, Richmond Villa, 120 Kent Street Sydney NSW 2000.