



**Requirements for
program**

Duration

Delivery

Fees

Diploma in Family Historical Studies

(Advanced Program in Family History)

20,000-word thesis + 3-hour exam in hometown

18-months

Online for the thesis

**Candidates are required to arrange local rooms
for their examination**

\$975 for 2024 intake

How to Apply

To receive an application pack, please register an obligation free expression of interest at:

<https://www.sag.org.au/StudyOnlineWithUs>

Once a Society member has completed the Certificate in Genealogical Research, they have the option to take their studies further by enrolling in the **Diploma in Family Historical Studies**. The Diploma has been running since 1974 and enrolment is open to any member who completes the Certificate course at a credit level of 75% or higher. Requirements for the Diploma are the completion of a thesis (20,000 words) and a written examination. For any student that does not meet the pre-requisite 75% grade in the Certificate Course, they should contact the Society's office.

Candidates are required to submit for the approval of the Diploma and Certificate Committee, a proposed topic for a thesis. The topic for the thesis shall be either:

- ii. a family history and shall trace at least three successive generations of the nominated family, or
- ii. be on a subject relevant to genealogical research.

Content in the thesis should not include personal information about living people (or those who conceivably could be living given their date/approximate date of birth).

Candidates form part of a yearly cohort who meet regularly to discuss issues of thesis development and hear updates on progress from the group. Cohort meetings will be held approximately once a month initially and will be based on issues raised by candidates. All candidates are assigned a supervisor. The role of the supervisor will be outlined later in this document.

Aims of the Diploma

The aim of the Diploma of Family Historical Studies is for the candidate to be able to provide a written academic project demonstrating an advanced level of family history research skills.

What is a thesis?

A thesis is a comprehensive piece of academic writing that represents original research or investigation. A typical thesis presents a hypothesis or a research question and aims to answer it through rigorous methodology, analysis, and synthesis of information. The content is organised systematically, starting with an introduction, results (incorporating literature/sources review and methodology), analysis, and conclusion. Throughout the document, the author showcases critical thinking, deep understanding, and contribution to the existing body of knowledge of family history – either compiled family histories or subject guides.

How it works: Independent writing supported by Supervisor & Cohort

Once in the program, candidates will work largely independently on their thesis development. Every candidate is assigned a supervisor to whom they should be in regular contact with to review drafts of the thesis and to talk through issues of research. At the start of the program, the year's cohort of candidates will meet, initially monthly and then generally every 2 months, to check in on progress, talk through common/individual issues, and provide general peer support - these meetings are online, optional, and recorded to allow for those that miss the meeting to catch up. All candidates and supervisors are invited to these cohort meetings alongside the Society's Diploma and Certificate Committee who are also program supervisors though (not every year).

Applications

Applications are taken annually at this time with a deadline of 28 February each year. All candidates must remain financial members of the SAG throughout their candidature. The application to the program consists of two documents: the **Application Form + Diploma Thesis Synopsis and the Outline & Literature/Sources Review**.

What are the costs?

There is a once-off non-refundable fee of \$975 (including GST) for the 2024 intake. Please see the FAQ on costs for additional information.

Timetable of activities

Below is an indication of the key milestones for the Diploma. Candidates should determine staged deadlines for chapters or drafts of their full thesis with their supervisor.

Year 1	Year 2
(Cohort & Supervisor meetings scheduled)	(Cohort & Supervisor meetings scheduled)
March: Confirmation emails & invoicing	30 April: Deadline for 'final' draft to Supervisor
Early April: Cohort induction	30 June: Thesis deadline (electronic copy)
15 May: Deadline first draft to Supervisor	8 or 9 November: Examination (with invigilation)
31 October: Synopsis confirmation/adjustment	Mid-December: Result

Mini deadlines: it is expected that the candidate and supervisor will negotiate deadlines for writing submissions throughout the period of enrolment.

These would generally be updates to the outline document alongside chapter drafts.

Regulations – key extract, section 3.7 of Diploma Regulations (2020)

To be considered to meet the criteria for the award of the Diploma the candidate will be expected to:

a. Demonstrate through their submitted thesis, as will be determined by the Committee:

- i. extensive genealogical research skills and knowledge of relevant sources.
- ii. ability to analyse sources and present a considered argument.
- iii. ability to include contextual knowledge relevant to the thesis topic.
- iv. ability to present work which is within the required word count and logically organised, with between three and six chapters.
- v. ability to present work, which is literate, using good grammar and spelling.
- vi. ability to adequately reference sources in the manner outlined in the current Style Manual.
- vii. ability to present an adequately and properly presented bibliography in the manner outlined in the current Style Manual.

viii. ability to create family tree charts which conform to the Society's practice as outlined in the current Style Manual.

ix. ability to present work in a clear and readable manner as outlined in the current Style Manual; and

b. Attain a satisfactory standard of achievement in the examination, as will be determined by the Committee.

All candidates should be familiar with the complete regulations, requirements for the program, which are available from [this link](#) and <https://www.sag.org.au/StudyOnlineWithUs>.

Copyright and permissions

If candidates are going to reproduce illustrations, maps, photographs and any published or unpublished works they may need to obtain copyright permissions from the owner of the copyright. This may not be the same as the present owner (say of an object or a letter). There may also be the requirement for permission to publish from a library or archive, especially for unpublished works. Further information is available from the Australian Copyright Council <http://www.copyright.org.au>.

All copyright clearances and permissions are the sole responsibility of the candidate. Copyright of the final thesis will be subject to current Australian copyright legislation.

Demands on the Candidate

Both the thesis and examination require writing to an academic standard and style. Those with limited experience in formal or academic writing and adhering to citation style guides should outline their writing proficiency as part of the application process. Although the Diploma does not include any taught courses in academic writing, materials and resources are available that will support those seeking some instruction.

Support crafting the Synopsis (Overview of the Thesis)

The synopsis should be a summary of content that the thesis will cover, the key themes and the research questions to be answered. The synopsis is to guide the thesis and can be amended as the research/writing progresses. Examples of thesis synopsis are available as part of the A6 collection in the SAG Library.

The submitted thesis synopsis should include:

- Outline of narrative/argument presented: main hypothesis/research questions
- Context of the thesis
- Gaps in the existing knowledge/research
- Why this project is important to write & share with the family history community

Below are some prompt questions which may be applied to develop the synopsis:

- What happened?
- What are the features of your family's experiences, or the topic presented?
- How/Why are they interesting or relevant to you/family members/family historians?
- Are you able to compile a detailed family tree or are there significant gaps?
- What don't you know that you would like to find out and how could you explore this line of inquiry?
- Do you have current information/data to analyse?
- Do you have access to information to provide the historical context? (What is it?)
- What sort of legacy does this all leave?
- Why is that important? Why should we care? (Motivation for researching and writing)

Candidates will need to provide an update of the synopsis around 31 October of the first year of the program. This is an opportunity to review the original synopsis and assess changes that need to be made to its aim or scope based on the progress of research and writing.

Source citations/references

References are required in the thesis to provide evidence which will help others to check whether they agree with the conclusions and to acknowledge the work of others. Not to acknowledge the work of others is plagiarism (whether deliberately or unintentionally) and this is not acceptable. Theses submitted for the Diploma in Family Historical Studies must adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition). Note that the Chicago style allows for two different types of references – the Diploma requires the thesis to follow Chicago 17th Style A – Notes-Bibliography. Please also note that while the Notes-Bibliography style allows for either footnotes or endnotes, footnotes are required for the Diploma thesis. The most recent Guide and Style Manual for candidates is available from [this link](#), noting it is updated annually for each new cohort.

Suggested reading

- Carol Baxter, *Writing Interesting Family Histories*. revised ed. (St Ives, NSW: The Author, 2016).
- Board for the Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*. 50th Anniversary Ed. (Washington: The Board, 2014). [This book explains the genealogical proof standard.]
- Ann Curthoys & Ann McGrath, *How to Write History That People Want to Read* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).
- Hazel Edwards, *Writing a Non-Boring Family History*. Rev. ed. (Alexandria, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 2003). Also available as an e-book.
- *Family Histories and Copyright*. G042v12. (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Australian Copyright Council, 2012) <https://www.copyright.org.au/browse/book/ACC-Family-Histories-&-Copyright-INFO042>.
- Noeline Kyle, *Finding Florence, Maude, Matilda, Rose: Researching and Writing Women into Family History* (St Agnes, SA: Unlock the Past, 2013).
- Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing. Revised Third Edition, 2017).

Supervisors

The role of the supervisor is set out in the Diploma Guide, and in summary is “to provide general guidance throughout the period of the candidature, to assist the candidate in the final preparation of written work and to ensure that it meets the requirements of this Guide, the current Diploma regulations and the Chicago style of referencing.” Candidates are charged with initiating contact with their supervisor.

All Supervisors are volunteers of the Society and are usually alumni of the Diploma program or with considerable experience from the education sector.

It is expected that all candidates will have an adequate command of the English language and will not require guidance with grammar, spelling, and sentence construction. It is the candidate’s responsibility to remain in contact with the Supervisor, and it is not the role of the Supervisor to ensure that deadlines are met by the candidate.

Supervisors are required to issue a statement certifying the thesis is in the proper form for submission and, to do this, they must be given ample opportunity to read the draft of a candidates’ work. Each Supervisor may be responsible for one or more candidates each year, creating a tight schedule for the reading of all draft material. Interaction with the Supervisor will no doubt vary from candidate to candidate, but desirably drafts of chapters or sections should be seen and commented on by the Supervisor as the writing of the

thesis proceeds, with the final draft being put before the Supervisor at least two months prior to the due date. Supervisors are not responsible for the overall outcome of each candidate's work. A Supervisor's Certificate does not imply that work submitted is of a standard suitable for the award of a pass grade.

Marking assessments & the role of the Committee

The thesis and examination are marked by at least two markers and the Diploma and Certificate Committee reviews results and any related issues. The markers are drawn from the pool of Supervisors/Committee members and if required, consultation with subject-matter experts. Being a small education charity, the Society does not have extensive policies and procedures that would be available at a university, however, we encourage all candidates to talk through any issues that will impact on their ability to meet the program requirements in a timely manner. The Board of the Society confers the award following Committee recommendation.

Examination

Candidates will normally sit for an examination in October or November following submission of their thesis, or at another time determined by the Committee. Sample examination papers are issued to candidates when they reach this stage of the course and may be a useful guide to the general scope of the written examination. Choices are offered on the paper and there are no compulsory questions. Answers must be written in narrative form and should not consist of a series of summarized points. Each answer should include an introduction and a conclusion. No texts or aids of any kind are permitted to be used while the written examination is undertaken.

The exam format is in-person and can be the candidate's hometown, current location, or within the Society's premises in Sydney. Candidates will need to arrange a venue, e.g., local library/school/family history society and an invigilator – the Society can help as well. The Society will provide a payment for the exam to be supervised in a quiet room within a facility if required.

Candidates will be asked to write 4 essay responses from a choice of 10 questions across 3 hours. Generally, this will translate to 1-2 pages of text per essay with most providing 1 page of text for an essay response. The questions prompt candidates to provide reflections on issues in family history research and methodologies. Formal citations or referencing are not required though candidates may want to refer to websites, record sets or published works in some way if relevant. The questions mainly ask for reflection on an issue rather than specific facts or details on, for instance, a process or record set. Computers or laptops are permitted for use in the examination without online functionality.

More information on the examination and workshops supporting exam preparation are available in Year 2.

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to write about my own family history?

No – the Diploma can be about any family though we have expectations that whether it is a family or subject-based thesis, that you undertake the completion of relevant pedigree charts.

Do I have to write about families in Australia?

No – the Diploma can be about any family though we have expectations that whether it is a family or subject-based thesis, that you undertake the completion of pedigree charts.

Can I view examples of synopsis or thesis already completed?

Yes – these are available in the Society’s Library (catalogue entries A6) and electronic versions are available – contact us via diploma@sag.org.au

I haven’t done much academic writing, where can I get support?

You will be provided with some written materials and webinars and through your Supervisor. If the candidate considers they need significant help writing, they may want to take on dedicated study prior to the Diploma.

How are Supervisors assigned?

Supervisors are generally matched with Candidates based on both their knowledge areas and experience.

Do I have to live in Sydney?

No – the Diploma can be undertaken from anywhere in the world. There will be no necessity to visit Sydney or to use the facilities at the SAG; however, candidates should be aware of local support resources such as access to a good local family history collection or public library as they may be beneficial. Good internet access will be essential.

What kind of commitment/hours per week does this program require?

Time allocated depends on writing capability alongside existing research and databases available for analysis into the written piece – at least ½ a day a week for the thesis development with a recommendation that block time periods – several days can be set aside for intensive writing.

Are there any additional costs?

Candidates will have costs associated with binding their final thesis document and potentially for their examination if travel is required. Prospective Diploma candidates may want to consider potential costs for their research, depending on the information that they have already obtained or wish to obtain in support of their thesis. This may include research trips or document/book costs from institutional repositories or subscription sites. Candidates should also confirm availability of resources at both their local, State/National, and the Society’s Library. **These costs are the responsibility of the candidate.**

Does this program have any support for those with learning needs?

The Society is a small education charity with limited specialist resources, but we would look to support where possible – please outline any issues as part of your application.

Does this program provide me with the tools to be a professional genealogist?

This program does not support any formal certification as a genealogist, but would evidence skills in research, referencing and reporting writing that would aid any professional.

Does the program articulate into any university courses?

Not at this time although the completion of a research-based thesis under supervision could form part of an application to study in higher education. Currently, the Society is not an accredited higher education provider, and this program is not accredited against the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Where can I get more information?

The Society regularly runs courses, information sessions and workshops supporting the development of the synopsis for submission. Recordings are available and next sessions are listed at www.sag.org.au/events

Testimonials

Here is just some of the feedback from those that have completed the Diploma in Family Historical Studies from prior years:

"It was one of the most worthwhile things I've ever done, and I consider it a great achievement."
Liane Thomson

"The writing skills learned from this process are invaluable and are applied in my work as a professional genealogist." Carolyn Morrow

"I gained a greater insight into my strengths as a researcher which has given me more confidence in helping others." Liesl Harrold

Award & Postnominals

When both assessment pieces are passed to the satisfaction of the Diploma & Certificate Committee, the candidates are presented with a certificate, usually at the Society's Annual General Meeting, following the confirmation of results. Diplomates, are then permitted to use the postnominals: DipFHS (SocAustGen). The Diplomates should ensure that both a hard bound copy and electronic copy (PDF) of their thesis is available as part of the Society's collection.



Contacts for administration and support

The program is lead by the Convenor for the Diploma and Certificate Committee and supported by the Society's staff, generally the Chief Executive Officer and Education Manager. The Diploma in Family Historical Studies regulations must be read in conjunction with this document prior to applying - they are available at: <https://www.sag.org.au/StudyOnlineWithUs>.

In the first instance with administration issues, Applicants or Candidates should contact staff via diploma@sag.org.au or by telephoning the office on +61 (0)2 9247 3953.