

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

HSS Student Bursary Project Application (Staff) 2023/24

Project title:

From Archive to Classroom: Building Student Skills in Accessing and Analysing Historical Sources in the School of English and Drama

Summary/explanation of the project:

A scholarship project which draws on best practice pedagogy to develop learning activities to advance final year students' skills in accessing, navigating and critically analysing historical sources in preparation for final year dissertations.

Your details:

Dr Angela Dunstan
School of English and Drama
a.dunstan@qmul.ac.uk

Relationship between this project and your research or scholarship:

This scholarship-based bursary project aims to address a skills deficit in finalist students aiming to undertake BA Dissertation research projects using historical primary texts. Over the past two and a half years co-convening the finalist module ESH6000 English Research Dissertation and from my own experience supervising BA dissertations since 2019, I have noted an increasing number of students whose dissertation projects aim to draw on historical primary sources yet who lack the requisite skills in primary research. Having spoken with and supervised students in this situation, the issues generally relate to a lack of awareness of how to access and then incorporate historical sources into their research and writing. Given the importance of historical sources to a vast number of finalist dissertation projects in English, this proposed Student Bursary Project aims to design a programme of learning activities to embed student skills in primary source research in modules they encounter earlier in their degrees so that they are better equipped to integrate those research methodologies into their final year essays and dissertation writing. It will do so drawing on findings from my own

experience co-convening the Dissertation module, and supervising a large number of historically-informed dissertations since 2019, as well as drawing on best practice scholarship in pedagogical journals and books. Using these findings, I will also design a series of learning activities aimed to scaffold skills in using periodical press materials in the classroom which can then be drawn upon to support students who choose to undertake final year dissertation projects which benefit from more advanced skills in using historical materials.

This scholarship project interacts with another I have underway in the form a contracted 4 volume edition of primary materials for Routledge (contracted 2023 for publication in 2025) titled *Art and Literature in Nineteenth Century Britain*. As part of this project, I am including a section on pedagogical strategies for including primary sources in undergraduate classroom teaching and the proposed Bursary Project will inform some of this section of the collection. From findings drawn from this research bursary project, I would also aim to produce an article for publication in a pedagogical journal such as *English in Education*. The student researcher would be acknowledged in any resulting publications that draw on their research.

Project work and outcomes:

During the proposed bursary project, the student researcher would be involved with three main tasks:

1. Undertaking primary research in pedagogical journals and books on the topic of undergraduate work with archival and historical primary sources in the university classroom;
2. Assisting with sourcing and evaluating appropriate primary materials for students to work with in class via undertaking targeted literary searches of databases eg. Nineteenth Century Periodicals Online, and;
3. Compiling careful bibliographies of the above material.

Student skills and knowledge required

For this proposed bursary project, the student researcher will require:

- Some knowledge of and experience with using research databases, both bibliographical and full-text
- An ability to conduct methodical research including maintaining brief records of search terms
- Good communication and organisational skills
- An ability to take initiative and work independently (with appropriate support)

It would be beneficial if the student researcher has:

- An interest in teaching and learning

Start date and work pattern:

Start date: Ideally the student researcher will start as soon as possible, with a final end date of 19th April.

Work pattern: The student researcher would work remotely and flexibly for approximately 6 hours a week for twelve weeks, or equivalent, so that all the hours are exhausted by the 19th of April; I am more than happy to be flexible to accommodate the student researcher's work and study patterns.

Briefing and monitoring: To brief and support the student researcher, I would set up regular meetings including:

- An initial meeting to brief the student researcher on the aims and parameters of the project and to map out their research methodology;
- Weekly meetings to review student researcher's progress, answer any questions arising from that week's work and to discuss next steps.

I would also ensure I am available via email and Teams to provide guidance, support and research mentorship throughout the project, and to encourage the student researcher's own development.

Students must submit applications to Alicia Barnes, Research Officer (a.barnes@qmul.ac.uk) by **12 noon on 1 December 2023**. Each School will make its own arrangements for selecting student applicants; these may include interviews if considered appropriate.

We anticipate that funding will be disbursed in two instalments, both subject to confirmation by the academic project lead that the student has been working appropriately. (Project leads may wish to take this into account in scheduling their monitoring meetings.)

The first instalment (40% of the award) will be paid no earlier than the end of February 2024; the second (60% of the award) will be paid upon overall completion.