Careers in History: Pathways, Challenges and Success

With a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in History you not only develop knowledge of the past, but also a broader understanding of the human condition and human nature. It is a discipline that requires the precision of a scientist, the persistence of a detective and the imagination of a novelist.

As a graduate in History, you will possess a number of useful employability/transferrable skills including the ability to:

- systematically analyse complex situations and past events for problem solving in the present;
- think critically and evaluate the quality of information;
- communicate convincingly and construct a logical argument based on fact;
- research and interpret events from various points of view, offering alternative explanations and;
- understand the basis of prevailing social, political and economic belief systems.

These generic communication, problem-solving, analytical and research skills are relevant in many different fields, particularly media, public policy, business, social research, politics and education.

Careers in History

Museums, galleries, libraries and other historical archives all offer opportunities to pursue typical History careers. Some roles will be administrative and curatorial and others will be in research or education based, adding to or imparting the body of knowledge about cultural heritage and history.

Engage in your career before you graduate

Engaging in your career as a student is a good way to develop your industry networks, explore areas of interest and set yourself apart.

Ways you can show future employers your strengths and active contributions as a student include:

- taking on a Committee member role in a relevant Murdoch student club or society (e.g. Student Society for History, anthropology and Culture (SSHAC));
- undertaking Work Integrated Learning Opportunities (WIL) as part of your degree and / or apply for Internships offered by industry e.g. Aurora Social Science Internships;
- engaging in co-curricular opportunities at university (e.g. Peer Mentoring or Leadership Programmes e.g. Murdoch Student Emerging Leaders (MSEL));
- joining professional associations and industry groups of interest e.g. Australian Historical Association (AHA);
- entering student team competitions that focus on demonstrating your analytical, problem solving and team skills (e.g. the Big Issue, Big Idea inter-university team competition);
- seeking complementary part-time/casual work or volunteering in museums and other historical/cultural heritage organisations or departments. The Murdoch Volunteering Hub (situated next to the Guild Shop on Bush Court) is a useful resource for ideas on where to gain experience. Email: volunteering@the-guild.com.au or phone: 08 9360 6307.
Adaptability of your History degree and alternative careers:

Careers with a History major are often not planned and can be very varied. Recognising your transferrable skills, being curious and open to opportunity, accepting an element of risk as well as remaining both positive and persistent in your job search can open doors. Completing an Honours year and/or other postgraduate study is yet another means of setting yourself apart.

Below is a list of fields that History graduates, including those from Murdoch have secured or progressed onto (some of which have required additional study/skill sets):

Careers in Media/Communications:
- Writing, editing and broadcasting/presenting can be popular career options for History graduates with strengths or additional skill sets in media or communications. Knowledge of history in these roles increases your awareness of social issues and provides additional cultural sensitivity when disseminating information and news to large audiences.

Careers in Business/Commerce:
- Business Consultancy firms like to employ those who can communicate articulately and make a good argument (as well as having a working knowledge of the business). Your ability to analyse information, make quick decisions and use the right language to convince others of a point of view can be useful in winning a contract or securing a deal. Other business roles that History graduates have progressed onto include: Business Development Assistant/Manager, Contracts Advisor, Procurement Officer and Business Support Manager.

Careers in Politics:
- For those with an interest in political events in history, government and leadership, an alternative career pathway in politics may appeal. This may range from speech writing to campaign management.

Careers in Marketing/Advertising:
- Having an understanding how past events and trends have shaped modern society and culture is useful in analysing and predicting consumer behaviour and future markets.

Careers in Education:
- Imparting knowledge as a Teacher or Academic is another popular option for History graduates, requiring training in education or further postgraduate study. Graduates have also moved into curriculum development roles.

Lastly, if you have limited industry experience and lack professional networks as a student, you might also consider applying for multi-discipline Graduate Programs. Employers offering formal Graduate Programs for History graduates (especially those within the government/public sector) are often looking for evidence of your general employability skills over specific experience, typically for policy or project based work. Therefore detailing the skills you have developed throughout your university experience is an important feature on your resume.

Employers of History graduates have included:
- Business consultancy firms and communications teams within larger organisations
- Federal, state and local government
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Political parties
- Print and electronic media organisations
- Professional associations and peak bodies
- Public/private schools and universities
- Radio and television corporations
- Unions

Remember that careers are dynamic – they evolve along with your life experiences. This can include purposeful industry-based experience, networking initiatives and stepping up to opportunity. A History degree is just the beginning.

Further information:
Australian Historical Association
theaha.org.au
History Council of WA
historycouncilwa.org.au
W.A. Public Service - Graduate Programs
jobs.wa.gov.au/university-graduates

Reference:
Top Universities:
What Can You Do With a History Degree?
topuniversities.com/student-info/careers-advice/what-can-you-do-history-degree

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