

Ever wanted to know more about your past?

The University of Tasmania's new course – Introduction to Family History – is designed for people interested in their own family histories or genealogy in general. Participants in the course will learn how to research family history accurately and efficiently using the growing range of online family history resources.

Taught 100 per cent online, Introduction to Family History is part of an online suite of units that enables flexible study. It is one of five foundation-level units available in the Diploma of Family History. Students must complete four foundation-level units and four 100-level units to complete the diploma.

Course teacher Associate Professor Penny Edmonds says she has a fascination with where she comes from, who her ancestors were and the varied lives they led, noting that studying family history provides greater understanding about ourselves.

Edmonds has a museum and public history background, is a trained historian in Australian history, and Australian settler and Indigenous relations. We asked Edmonds for a little more information about studying family history at the University of Tasmania.

Who is this course best suited to?

The Diploma of Family History is best suited to people with an interest in their own family histories or genealogy in general. Students will learn how to research family history accurately and efficiently using the growing range of online family history resources. They will be able to build a range of skills and knowledge in finding and interpreting information about their

ancestors. It is often surprising what people discover, and they can share this with family and friends. The courses are relatively short and the engaging online format allows for flexible study for those with busy lives.

On successful completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and an understanding of family history principles and planning
- locate and use major family history repositories and records
- critically evaluate sources for accuracy and reliability
- identify and discuss genealogical problems, and develop plans for solving them
- present genealogical work in a manner that is ethical, clearly written and referenced according to the unit guidelines.

Where can the Introduction to Family History course lead for graduates?

By the end of the unit, students will have gained a range of important and foundational skills, and the confidence to research their family history. For example, if they pursue the full diploma, it can also lead to work as a consultant family historian. The diploma is also a good pathway to further study of history at the degree level at the University of Tasmania, where we have a very strong history and classics program with diverse offerings.

What are you most excited about in teaching this course?

The personal narrative and 'life path' is always compelling, and this type of biographical and family history approach opens vistas into many histories that are often charged, political, curious, sometimes unsettling, and often astounding. As a passionate historian of Australia, I am constantly fascinated by how rich and complex history is, especially if we take a wider transnational perspective, seeing our histories within the bigger story of empire, exploration, migration, war and cross-cultural contact. Family history really does help us to understand who we are at a deeper level, and I also think it helps to develop empathic imagination – that is, by relating to distant family members and finding emotional connection and meaning with and through their experiences, we enrich ourselves. ◦

