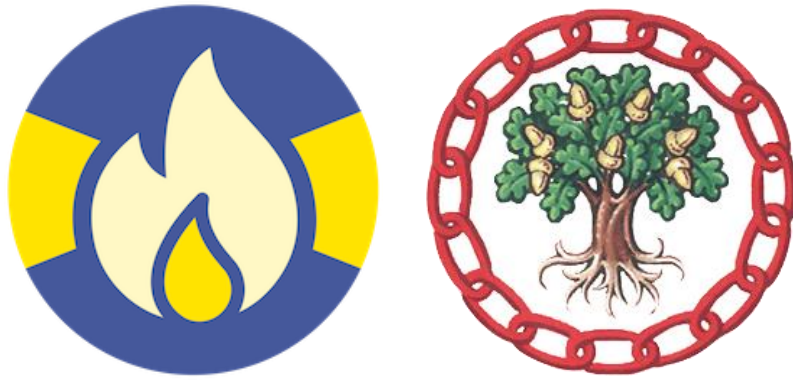




Family History Skills and Strategies

**Advanced Certificate**

**Programme Overview**

Last updated: June 2026

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## Introduction

The Family History Skills and Strategies (FHSS) Advanced Certificate programme was developed and is taught jointly by Pharos Tutors and the Society of Genealogists. It is recognised by AGRA (the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives) as a significant part of their membership application processes.

The programme is studied over two years, commencing in September each year. It consists of nine online genealogy courses, presented in a similar way to the Intermediate Certificate courses. In addition to the nine courses, there is a separate end of year one assessment module and a year two research project.

To enrol on the Advanced Certificate programme you must have completed the Intermediate Certificate with an average mark of 70% or more. The process to the Advanced Certificate is illustrated below:



This document will walk you through the various components to the Advanced Certificate in Genealogy programme, where you can expect differences to the Intermediate Certificate and give some background on what it is hoped you will achieve during the two-year programme. Also attached is a proposed timetable (current at the time of writing), a reading list and some information about pass marks.

## Differences to the Intermediate Certificate

There are some differences between the Advanced programme and the Intermediate programme. For the Advanced Certificate:

- There is set reading for most courses
- There are no compulsory forum exercises in the modules, and only one assignment at the end of each module
- Each year includes an end of year assessment

Both your course assignments and your end of year assessment assignment contribute to your overall mark for Year One. The end of Year One assessment consists of transcription, document analysis and research planning using documents taken from the 17th and 18th centuries.

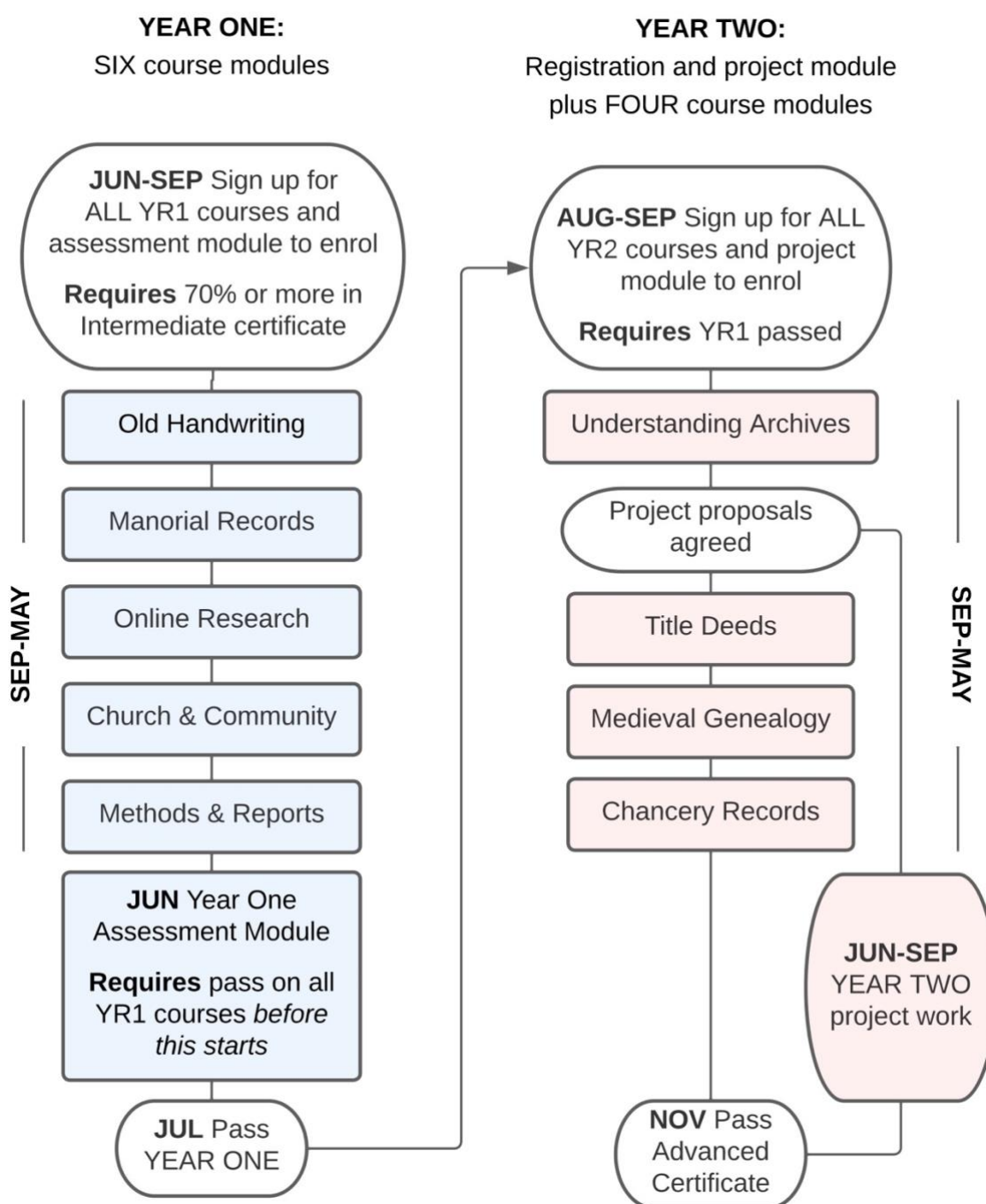
You must pass Year One before moving onto Year Two. The marks you achieve for Year One *are not carried forward* to Year Two.

The final mark for Year Two (and for your certificate) includes your year two course assignments and your Year Two Project. The Year Two Project involves research in original documents in the period 1540-1837. Research proposals are submitted in the November of year two and students then spend 20 hours of research and reporting time to conduct their chosen project, throughout the year.

The course is not meant to be full-time, so you should find that there is time to get on with other things. Whilst there is less assessment than with the Intermediate Certificate course modules this is an advanced programme, so you should expect the difficulty to be greater and to be conducting more background reading.

## Programme of Activities

The Advanced Programme structure is illustrated by the schematic below, followed by a timetable for years one and two. Course order and dates subject to change.



## Timetable: Year One

### **(1) Old Handwriting for Family Historians**

Tutor: Joe Saunders

Starts: **7<sup>th</sup> September 2026**

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: None

### **(2) Manorial Records for Family and Local Historians**

Tutor: Joe Saunders

Starts: **19<sup>th</sup> October 2026**

Length: 5 weeks; Assignments: One

### **(3) Digging Deeper: Mastering Online Genealogy Research**

Tutor: Kelly Cornwell

Starts: **4<sup>th</sup> January 2027**

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

### **(4) Church & Community – Select Records**

Tutor: Emma Jolly

Starts: **22<sup>nd</sup> February 2027**

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

### **(5) Advanced Methods and Reports**

Tutor: Karen Cummings

Starts: **12<sup>th</sup> April 2027**

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

### **(6) Year One Assessment Module**

Tutor: Kelly Cornwell

Starts: **1<sup>st</sup> June 2027**

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

## Timetable: Year Two

Activities outside the course 'boxes' below are run by the Advanced Programme mentors, Kelly Cornwell and Karen Cummings using the separate 'Advanced Programme Year Two Project Module' course area. Dates will be confirmed closer to the time.

### **(1) Understanding Archives - Getting the Most From Your Research**

Tutor: Else Churchill (TBC)

Starts: September 2027

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

**November 2027:** [ZOOM: Your project proposals](#)

**November - December 2027:** [Project proposals submitted and agreed](#)

### **(2) Understanding Title Deeds**

Tutor: Joe Saunders

Starts: January 2028

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

### **(3) Introduction to Medieval Genealogy**

Tutor: Rhiannon Lloyd

Starts: March 2028

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

### **(4) Chancery Court Records for Family and Local History**

Tutor: Joe Saunders

Starts: May 2028

Length: 4 weeks; Assignments: One

**June 2028:** [Coursework completed, can now focus on project](#)

[ZOOM: Getting started with your project](#)

**August & September 2028:** [Extra tutorials to discuss project progress](#)

- August - September 2028:** [Opportunity for review of draft project by an Advanced Certificate Mentor](#)
- End September 2028:** [Year Two Project Deadline](#)
- November 2028:** [Project marks and feedback issued](#)

## Marking and Pass Marks

There are two elements to the assessment of the Advanced Programme: your marks on the end of **course assignments** and the **end of year assessment** (year one) / **project** (year two). You are encouraged to work through the forum exercises and attend chat sessions to get the most out of the individual courses as usual, but these components do not contribute to your marks for the courses in the Advanced Programme.

### YEAR ONE

**The overall pass mark for year one is 60%\*.**

**Students must pass year one to be able to progress to year two.**

The final mark for the year is composed of:

- 50% from the average mark for the course assignments
- 50% from the end of year assessment

An example:

*If the average mark for the courses is 60%, that would be converted to 30 marks towards the final mark:  $60 \times 50/100 = 30$ . If the Year End Assessment mark is 70% that would be converted to 35 marks:  $70 \times 50/100 = 35$*

*Therefore, the mark for the year is  $30 + 35 = 65$  which is a comfortable pass.*

To achieve a Distinction in year one, students must achieve an end of year one mark of 80% or more.

\* In order to pass year one you must achieve an overall mark for the year of 60%, as described above. Within that mark, you must attain an average of 60% or above for the assessed courses for the year, with a grade of at least 60% in 4 courses and no less than 50% in the other course. You must also attain at least 50% in the end of year assessment.

**Note: the marks you attain for year one are not carried forward to year two.**

## YEAR TWO

The overall pass mark for year two is 60%\*\*.

The final mark for the year is composed of:

- 30% from the average mark for the year two course assignments
- 70% from the final project work

An example:

*If the average mark for the modules is 70%, that would be converted to 21 marks towards the final mark:  $70 \times 30/100 = 21$ . If the project mark is 75% that would be converted to 52.5 marks:  $75 \times 70/100 = 52.5$ .*

*Therefore, the final mark for the Advanced Certificate is  $21 + 52.5 = 73.5\%$*

**Remember:** Only year two work counts towards the certificate: **if you pass year one but fail year two you do not qualify for the certificate.** See our [Resit Policy](#) in the Student Area for further information.

To achieve a Distinction in the Advanced Certificate, students must achieve an overall end of year two mark of 80% or more.

**\*\* You must attain an average of 60% or above for the courses for the year, with a grade of at least 60% in 3 courses and no less than 50% in the other course AND pass the year two project with a mark of 60% or higher.**

## Learning Outcomes

On completion of the programme, a successful candidate will be able to:

- 1) Transcribe English handwriting from the 17th century.
- 2) Write a comprehensive genealogical research plan, showing knowledge of sources and records for the period 1540 - 1837.
- 3) Put a research plan into action, for research in the period 1540-1837.
- 4) Provide an in-depth critical analysis of document(s), clearly laying out research options for a researcher to follow up.
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of the historical and jurisdictional context of both record creation and record keeping.
- 6) Correlate research findings from multiple sources, showing appropriate interpretation of evidence and resolution of any areas of conflict.
- 7) Compile a 'hand drawn' family tree on a computer using computer software such as MS PowerPoint (not family tree software).
- 8) Prepare appropriate source citations and references for written work.
- 9) Use knowledge of sources and records to evaluate whether a search has been reasonably exhaustive.
- 10) Demonstrate knowledge of and confidence in using archives' websites, catalogues and search rooms.
- 11) Comment on the reliability and the type of evidence provided by different types and formats of sources.

## Reading List and Set Books

**Most of the Advanced Programme courses have set reading books** and you should endeavour to purchase these (or obtain them from your local library) in advance of the relevant course. Most are readily available, e.g. from Amazon, eBay, AbeBooks.co.uk or your local bookshop. Weblinks are given where useful:

### Year ONE

#### **Old Handwriting for Family Historians (417)**

- Ison, Alf. *A Secretary ABC Handbook*. Berkshire FHS, 1982 e.g.  
<https://berksfhs.org/product/a-secretary-hand-an-abc-book-bfhs/>

#### **Manorial Records for Family and Local Historians (401)**

- Hone, Nathaniel J. *The Manor and Manorial Records*. First published 1906, Methuen.  
Free PDF download, e.g. <https://archive.org/details/manorandmanoria00honegoog>

#### **Digging Deeper: Mastering Online Genealogy Research (480)**

- Christian, Peter. *The Genealogist's Internet*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., The National Archives, 2012  
Free PDF download from: <https://archive.org/details/the-genealogists-internet>

#### **Church & Community; Selected Records 1540-1800 (485)**

- Oates, Jonathan. *Tracing Your Ancestors Through Local History Records: A Guide for Family Historians*. Pen & Sword, 2016.

#### **Advanced Methods & Reports (482)**

- Cummings, Karen. *Genealogy Methods and Techniques: A Practical Guide to Research*. The Crowood Press, 2026.
- Osborn, Helen. *Genealogy, Essential Research Methods*. Robert Hale, London, 2012.

### **Year One Assessment Module (421)**

- Cummings, Karen. *Genealogy Methods and Techniques: A Practical Guide to Research*. The Crowood Press, 2026.

### **Year TWO**

#### **Understanding Archives - Getting the Most From Your Research (481)**

No one set book, suggested additional reading given during course.

#### **Title Deeds (503)**

- Alcock, N W. *Tracing History Through Title Deeds*, Pen & Sword, 2017

#### **Introduction to Medieval Genealogy (501)**

- Chambers, Paul. *Early Modern Genealogy, Researching Your Family History 1600 – 1838*. Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2006

#### **Chancery Records (504)**

- Moore, Susan T. *Tracing Your Ancestors through the Equity Courts*. Pen & Sword, 2017

### **General Reading**

- Arkell, Evans & Goose (eds). *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England*. Leopard's Head Press, 2000
- Bevan, Amanda. *Tracing Your Ancestors in the National Archives, The Website and Beyond*. 7th ed., The National Archives, 2006
- Cheney, C R (ed.). *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History*. Cambridge University Press, 1995
- Herber, Mark D. *Ancestral Trails*. 2nd ed., The History Press Ltd, 2004
- Hey, David (ed). *The Oxford Companion to Family and Local History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, 2010

- \* Dymond, David. *Researching and Writing History: A Guide for Local Historians*. British Association for Local History, 2016
- Humphery-Smith, Cecil R. (ed). *The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Phillimore & Co, 2002
- \* Laslett, Peter. *The World we have Lost. England Before the Industrial Age*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1984
- Palgrave-Moore, Patrick. *How to Record Your Family Tree*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Elvery Dowers Publications, 1994
- Raymond, Stuart A. *Tracing Your Ancestors' Parish Records*. Pen & Sword, 2015
- Sharpe, Michael. *Family Matters, A History of Genealogy*. Pen & Sword, 2011
- Tate, W E . *The Parish Chest*. Phillimore, 1983
- \* Tiller, Kate. *English Local History, An Introduction*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Boydell Press, 2020
- Todd, Andrew. *Family History Nuts and Bolts: Problem Solving through Family Reconstitution Techniques*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Allen & Todd, Lancashire, 2015
- \* Wrightson, Keith. *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain 1470 – 1750*. Penguin, 2002

\* These books will help to add historical context to your work. Laslett and Wrightson are two historians who write well for a general audience and provide much insightful information. Tiller is a good textbook for local history which overlaps in so many ways with genealogy and the Dymond book is excellent for preparing you to write any kind of history whether that is local or family.

## Others

These books are useful, but not vital:

- Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards*. 2nd revised ed. Ancestry, 2021
- Buck, W S B. *Examples of Handwriting*. Society of Genealogists, 2008
- Forrest, Mark. *Reading Early Handwriting 1500 – 1700 by Mark Forrest*. British Association for Local History, 2019
- Marshall, Hilary. *Palaeography for Family and Local Historians*. Phillimore, 2004
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian*. Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, 2011
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, 2009
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown (ed). *Professional Genealogy: Preparation, Practice & Standards*. Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, 2018
- Rogers, Colin D. *The Family Tree Detective*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Manchester University Press, 2008
- Wagner, Anthony. *English Ancestry*. Oxford University Press, 1961

## Useful Journals

*British Agricultural History Review* – Back issues free online up to 2009

<https://bahs.org.uk/AGHR/articles.html>

*The Local Historian* – Back issues currently free online

<https://www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian>

*Local Population Studies* - The first 80 back issues are online and browsable interest

<http://www.localpopulationstudies.org.uk/backissues.htm>