

Dissertation Prize Guidelines 2026

There are two competitions each year for the Association for Art History Dissertation Prize: one for undergraduate dissertations and one for postgraduate (Master's-level) dissertations.

Prizes

The authors of the winning entry in each competition will receive:

Book tokens to the value of £50

Association for Art History membership for one year

Complimentary ticket to the Annual Conference

Publication of a 300-word abstract of the winning entry on the Association for Art History website and/or newsletter

Your prize will be formally awarded at the Annual Conference.

Regulations

Entries are invited from students enrolled in (or recently graduated from) courses in the history of art and visual culture or courses in fine arts at UK institutions. The history of art and visual culture is to be understood in its broadest sense; for example, past winning entries have included studies of trade union imagery, tomb sculpture and media coverage of the first Gulf War.

Dissertations must have been submitted in fulfilment of coursework requirements (long essay/dissertation) within the past academic year (2025-26).

Dissertations entered for the Undergraduate Dissertation Prize must have been submitted as part of the entrant's first undergraduate degree in the arts and humanities.

Dissertations must not have been previously published.

Entries must be endorsed by an academic nominator (the student's supervisor or another representative from their university/college) via the nomination form (see 'Submission' section below).

Essays can be submitted by either the academic nominator or the student entrant. All documentation – dissertation, abstract, entry form and nomination form (see 'Submission' section below) – must be attached to the same email.

The dissertation and abstract documents must be **entirely anonymous**. There must be absolutely no trace of your name, institution, or any other identifying information. This includes, but is not limited to, omitting any supervisor names and any other named acknowledgements. The file name of the dissertation document must be the title only (e.g. a dissertation entitled 'Picasso and Modernism' must be submitted as 'PicassoandModernism.pdf' and its abstract as 'PicassoandModernismAbstract'); do not

include your name, or any other information. Also, any identifying information in the files' metadata should be removed where possible. **Any dissertations or abstracts arriving with any identifying information in them will automatically be declared invalid.**

Apart from anonymisation, the dissertation should be entered as it was originally submitted, without further edits.

To maintain consistency through the assessment process, submissions must adhere to the following word limits: up to 15,000 for undergraduate dissertations, up to 20,000 for postgraduate dissertations (excluding bibliography, illustrations and appendices). These word count limits are aligned with regulations from most UK universities. Entries that exceed the word count guidelines will not be considered in the shortlisting process.

Dissertations which are not submitted according to these regulations will not be accepted.

Submission

To enter the prize the following must be submitted by either the student or their academic nominator, as separate documents attached to the same email:

- a complete electronic copy of the dissertation in PDF or Microsoft Word format.
- a 300-word abstract in PDF or Word format.
- a completed entry form in PDF or Word format.
- a scanned image or PDF of the completed nomination form, signed by the applicant's academic nominator.

The total size of attachments must not exceed 10MB. You may need to down-res any images or compress PDFs in order to meet this limit.

Please also refer to the Regulations listed above (especially with regards to anonymity) when preparing your submission.

Submissions must be sent to: info@forarthistory.org.uk

Timeframe

Undergraduate entries must be received by the Association for Art History by **Sunday 13 September 2026, 5pm**

Postgraduate entries must be received by the Association for Art History by **Monday 4 January 2027, 5pm**

The assessment process can take several weeks but we aim to announce the winners of both prizes in early 2027.

Prizes will be awarded at the Association for Art History's 2027 Annual Conference but may be announced sooner online.

Assessment

The dissertations will be double-marked by the Association's Doctoral and Early Career Research Network Project Board and seconded by a Trustee. The decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into with regard to the judging.

Dissertations will be assessed on the following criteria:

Originality: The dissertation should demonstrate a mature and original approach to issues and themes of current concern to the discipline in its broadest interpretation.

Research & method: The dissertation should demonstrate evidence of broad and thorough research, combining primary and secondary sources as appropriate. It should show a clear awareness of appropriate methodological approaches.

Content & form: The dissertation should be clearly structured and adhere to correct spelling and grammar conventions. All source material should be soundly evaluated and referenced, the argument or line of enquiry should be balanced and the conclusion well grounded.

The decision of the Association for Art History is final. By submitting the application you agree to the conditions of this prize. The Association for Art History reserves the right to periodically revise the conditions of this prize and to publish the names of the prize winners.

Please direct any queries to the Association for Art History on +44 (0) 207 490 3211 or info@forarthistory.org.uk