

QUALIFICATIONS IN GENEALOGY

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Part 2 – Family History Skills and Strategies (Intermediate) with Certificate Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd/Society of Genealogists

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I completed the Family History Skills and Strategies (Intermediate) with Certificate earlier this year. This is an assessed programme consisting of the ten modules, each comprising of an online course, ranging from 3 – 5 weeks. It is run by Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd jointly with the Society of Genealogists.

The course is not a “qualification” in genealogy, and it is not recognised by AGRA as a route to membership. For me, it formed an important element of my continuing professional development as an Associate on the path to full membership. It also covers some of the less well-known records that may be of use in future research, and provides useful alternatives when more familiar resources have not survived.

The modules are:

- The Poor, The Parish and The Workhouse - Records in the 18th and 19th Centuries
- Searching for Wills and Administrations in England and Wales
- Your Military Ancestors
- Nonconformity - Its Records and History 1600 - 1950
- Apprenticeship Records
- Victorian Crime and Punishment - Courts, police and prisons
- Migration in the British Isles
- Employment Records
- Before the Modern Census - name-rich sources from 1690 to 1837
- 17th Century Sources

Before embarking on the course, students are expected to know, and have used, the basic sources for 19th century research, ie census, civil registration and parish registers.

For each module, students are issued with a lesson per week. These are generally of a high standard; indeed some are very good and I still use them as reference materials. Students are required to complete a minimum of two short exercises per week – there are other exercises that are unmarked – and to participate actively in at least one chat room discussion a week and to complete two assignments for each module.

Being remote, the course relies on online forums and chat rooms – like all online courses these can take some getting used to initially but one soon gets into the flow.

The approach is very practical; there is a lot of emphasis on online sources and catalogues, and search techniques for the latter are particularly useful. The course also "re-connected" me with the SoG library, a sometimes overlooked or under-used resource, which many of the tutors referenced.

Inevitably, one big attraction is cost. The average cost of each assessed module is £60, so the total cost comes in at £600. Payment is effectively spread, almost "pay as you go", because payment is only made when an individual module is booked.

Students have 36 months to complete the ten modules. Here we go with "do as I say, not as I do". The courses can be demanding as each module has strict start dates and deadlines. Pharos is very clear in advising against doing more than one module at a time. I didn't quite do that but I came close! Beware, the certificate courses are quick to fill and then it can take some time for a particular course to become available again. The best advice is to book ahead as far as possible, but this invariably means paying for several courses upfront, so this needs to be planned for. Another point to note is that the structure of each module, eg deadlines and the marking schedule, vary greatly from tutor to tutor, so familiarity with the advice issued by tutors at the start of each module is essential.

Overall, the course provides a good grounding in becoming a competent researcher and I note, with interest, that Pharos and the SoG are now offering an Advanced Certificate, with the first intake of students starting in October. I wish all those involved, students and tutors, every success.