

M.A./Ph.D. in History, 2022 Assessment Report:

Learning Outcomes & Assessment Techniques: M.A. in History

A. Learning Outcomes: M.A. in History

- Mastery over one field in History and training in at least one other field
- Reading proficiency in the languages required to write the M.A. thesis
- Capacity for original research as evidenced by the writing of a M.A. thesis
- Ability to communicate effectively as a participant in a graduate seminar
- Ability to write analytically at a level commensurate with graduate work in History
- Professionalization in the academy (presenting research at regional conferences, applying for University-wide or regional grants, and publishing articles)
- Participation in the academic life of the Department (seminars and public lectures)

B. Assessment Techniques: M.A. in History

- Review of initial application to M.A. program by Graduate Studies Committee
- Successful completion of course of study approved by the Director of Graduate Studies
- Successful completion of the Department's required M.A. seminar on the methodology of conducting research (HIST 7023)
- Successful defense of M.A. thesis in front of at least three experts in the field
- Director of Graduate Studies will have graduating M.A. students complete a questionnaire about the strengths and weakness of the program in History and hold focus groups for students in their second year to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program

C. Assessment Results (Department assessed three outcomes this year)

- **Learning Outcome Assessed:** Ability to write analytically at a level commensurate with graduate work in History
 - The Graduate Studies Committee unanimously agreed to begin requiring a writing sample with the MA application (starting for admissions for Fall 2018) in the 2016-2017 academic year. The committee felt that this would better help them assess the applicants before an admission decision to the program and assess the ability of students to succeed at the graduate level. In the February 2018 and 2019 application cycles, this helped the department make better informed choices about admissions
 - In 2019, the Graduate Studies proposed and the faculty voted to accept a requirement that MA students complete a research seminar as part of their coursework. This endeavor will enhance their writing skills and help them build a foundation for their thesis, while potentially also producing a publishable article or book chapter.
- **Learning Outcome Assessed:** Mastery over one field in History and training in at least one other field

- As a result of focus groups with MA students and resulting discussions with the Graduate Studies Committee, in August 2017, the department changed the distribution requirement for the MA degree from requiring three graduate seminars to four graduate seminars. This will allow the department greater clientele to offer more graduate reading seminars where students will be grouped with their peers and challenged at a higher level versus the split-level courses with undergraduates.
- This also will improve mastery of students in the major field and training in at least one additional field as students will be exposed to more historiography in this new distribution
- Learning Outcome Assessed: Professionalization in the academy (presenting research at regional conferences, applying for University-wide or regional grants, and publishing articles)
 - Feedback from students indicated a strong interest in the Brownbag Lunch Series of professionalization, teaching, and research related topics. The department strengthened this program in the past two years, now with three seminars per semester, including graduate student presenters. Topics have been on grant applications, publishing articles, conference presentations, innovative teaching techniques, non-academic job market skills. This past year (during Fall semester), we had a Digital History workshop for our graduate students.

Learning Outcomes & Assessment: Ph.D. in History

A. Learning Outcomes:

- Mastery over three fields of History at the graduate level
- Reading proficiency in one language relevant to fields of research
- Capacity for original research as evidenced by the writing of a Ph.D. dissertation
- Ability to communicate effectively both as participants in graduate seminars and as classroom teachers
- Demonstrated excellence in the classroom at the survey level (G.A.s only)
- Professionalization in the academy (presenting research at national conferences, applying for and winning nationally competitive grants, and publishing articles and books)
- Participation in the academic life of the Department (seminars, brown bags, and public lectures)

B. Assessment Techniques: Ph.D. in History

- Review of initial application to Ph.D. program by Graduate Studies Committee
- Successful completion of course of study approved by student's advisory committee
- Successful completion of a language exam in a language relevant to the student's field of study (in certain instances, the advisor of the student may recommend additional language work or a course in statistics)
- Successful completion of comprehensive exams in three fields of study

- Writing and defending a dissertation prospectus in front of a committee
- Monitoring the degree to which Ph.D. candidates present their research at national and international conferences
- Evaluating the degree to which Ph.D. candidates actively pursue internal and external sources of funding for their research
- Successful defense of dissertation in front of at least three experts in the field (and, at times, in front of an invited professor from another institution)
- Participation in Graduate Student Brownbags hosted by History faculty and held throughout the year on teaching and professionalization topics
- Director of Graduate Studies will also have graduating Ph.D.s complete a questionnaire about the strengths and weakness of the program in History and focus groups with current and former students
- Chair and Director of Graduate Studies will track the progress of Ph.D. graduates both when they are on the job-market and during their tenure bid
- For G.A.s: Gas will serve as a grader for two semesters in large survey courses before teaching their first course as instructor of record. To better prepare students for teaching on their own, the department has initiated a “pedagogical boot camp” every August during the week preceding the start of Fall semester. Ph.D. students entering their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th years are required to participate.

C. Assessment Results (department assessed three outcomes this year)

- Learning Outcome Assessed: Capacity for original research as evidenced by the writing of a Ph.D. dissertation
 - Graduate Studies Committee monitored increase in time to degree over last ten years, specifically to evaluate how effectively students were able to write their PhD dissertation. As a result, the department instituted changes to PhD student teaching load and mentorship program to support students as they move toward their degree. This program will allow students to not teach until their fourth years and achieve a semester of research/writing leave at an advanced stage of their career
- Learning Outcome Assessed: Professionalization in the academy (presenting research at national conferences, applying for and winning nationally competitive grants, and publishing articles and books)
 - Graduate Students continue to participate at conferences, though the majority do not attend national and international conferences. Encouraged national and international conference participation through funding formula within the department (only providing funding for national conferences in years 5 and 6) and through brownbag lunch series on the topic.
 - Graduate Students continue to win national grants, usually small research based grants at various archives and libraries. Encouraged students to continue to engage in grant writing and supported with additional brownbag seminars
- Learning Outcome Assessed: Mastery over three fields of History at the graduate level

- Graduate Studies Committee found requirements for degree confusing, especially the policies related to continuous enrollment and dissertation hours required by the Graduate School. Added language and information to the initial Program of Study form to clarify expectations from the beginning for new doctoral students.

Discussion on strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate students

The department has advertised in various academic venues (H-Net, *Journal of Southern History*, and other online publications) as well as distributed email newsletters and flyers to various departments across the country. Further, our faculty, when visiting other campuses, have held information sessions and shared information about the department's program with students in attempts to recruit. However, the economy seems to have lowered admissions. In 2011, while the economy was still recovering from the Great Recession, there was a record number of applicants. In 2017, with economic recovery completed, we witnessed the lowest pool of applicants. 2018 and 2019 have roughly remained at 2017 levels. The department will continue to nurture interest in our MA and PhD program both in our region and nationally through the DDF and DAF funds.

In February 2019, the Director of Graduate Studies and an M.A. student traveled to Utah on a recruiting trip funded by a grant from the Graduate School and supplemental funds from the History Department. The Director of Graduate Studies held a series of focused recruitment and information sessions at various institutions of higher education in Utah and both the DGS and graduate student manned a booth at RootsTech, in Salt Lake City, a four-day event that attracts tens of thousands of individuals interested in genealogy and family history. The DGS made important contacts with faculty at BYU, as they don't have a graduate program in History, but they do generate many students interested in pursuing graduate History degrees.

The Department has seen its attempts to recruit students hampered by our *significantly* lower base stipend and/or other benefits offered by other universities. The University of Missouri, for example, guarantees doctoral students one year off from teaching to research their dissertations. Though the Department has recently begun a lecturer leave program in order to provide needed time off from teaching and additional programs to provide more opportunities to work for student's on campus, the Department's budget is limited in what it can do alone. The Department supports the efforts of the Graduate School to advocate for additional funding for graduate research, travel, and stipends from central administration.

The Department has deployed a number of strategies in order to retain and graduate students. For the past several years, the Department has planned and hosted graduate student brownbag lunches several times each semester. These sessions have focused on important topics in teaching, research, and professionalization. These brownbags provide opportunities to mentor and engage graduate students outside of the classroom on topics of importance to them. At its core though, the ability to retain and graduate students rests within the interactions between the individual students and their respective committees. These personal interactions and support have helped a number of our students complete their degrees since they knew a faculty member supported and encouraged them.

Additionally, the department supports interactions among graduate students and collegiality between them by sponsoring a Registered Student Organization (HOGS—History Organization of Graduate Students) and our chapter of Phi Alpha Theta to give them social outlets to learn from each other and interact together. Finally, starting in Fall 2016, all graduate students, funded and unfunded, received access to office space at the University. These shared spaces create the connections and peer mentoring that can support long-term success in the program.

At the departmental level, HIST has implemented several strategies designed to encourage students to complete their degrees. The department's time to degree has increased significantly since the last time it was measured (2004-2006). In that period, median time to degree was 6.1 years whereas in 2014-2016 it increased 1.65 years to 7.75 years. The Graduate Studies Committee believes that increased teaching demands on graduate students, especially multiple upper-division courses and teaching more than two courses during the enrollment spike at the University, has contributed to these longer degree times as each additional course preparation delays writing the dissertation. Starting in 2016-2017, the Associate Chair/Director of Graduate Studies has been using Karen Kelsky's *The Professor Is In* as a template in working with students to determine their best options for the job market and to complete their degrees. According to Kelsky, producing a solid research record and a strong publication before graduation is essential. Though the department has always advocated for students to publish before they enter the job market, the majority of students in the last three years have not done this. Instead, they have successfully sold their strong teaching background—indeed, some of PhD students have taught upwards of 1,000 undergraduates in five or six different preparations by the time they leave Arkansas—to secure positions at teaching colleges. As the job market tightens and students have trouble securing those types of positions, a research record is increasingly becoming important. The department has hosted several brownbag sessions surrounding Kelsky's work, including a webinar that she conducted. To this end, the department is reviving the research seminar and will be strongly encouraging existing and incoming students to take at least one of these seminars with the aim of producing a publishable article.

In addition to talking about a research focus, the department has set six years as the guideline by which PhD students should complete their degrees. Providing this expectation has encouraged several students to recraft their path towards the degree to meet that deadline. To support this research focus and to improve our time to degree, the Graduate Studies Committee created a lecturer leave program in Spring 2017 to enable students to have a semester away from teaching to work on their research and complete the degree within the six year period. The committee hopes this will improve the department's time to degree and encourage more research.

To support students as they complete their coursework and provide a roadmap to their future as an instructor, the department has created an enhanced Graduate Assistant Mentoring Program. Starting in Fall 2016, graduate students in their second year of study served as graders and teaching assistants in two large (120 person) lecture courses under the direction of award winning faculty. These graduate students learned the art of classroom management, syllabus creation, and grading under the direct supervision of a master teacher. This delayed students entering their own classroom (previously they had begun teaching in the fall of their second year), helping them complete their coursework faster, and made them more comfortable entering the classroom for the first time since they had a year as an apprentice behind them. This

program was expanded in Fall 2019 so that incoming students have at least four semesters of TA experience in these large lecture sections before beginning to teach their own courses.

Most recently, in Fall 2021, the department implemented a “4+1” program at the M.A. level in which high-performing undergraduate students are able to start graduate level coursework during their senior year and, if they stay on schedule, earn their M.A. at the conclusion of the subsequent year. As part of this program, these “4+1” students can choose either a thesis or non-thesis track, which should align with their post-M.A. career/educational ambitions.

Finally, the department instituted the aforementioned non-thesis track for M.A. students. In order to complete a degree in this manner, students will be required to take additional coursework in lieu of the thesis, but will have to defend a major research paper as an exercise in orally demonstrating their understanding of historical developments, methods, and practices.

Job placement information for graduates

Number of graduates in jobs related to history

- The University of Arkansas Department of History produced 87 doctoral graduates from 2005-2022 of whom 66 (75.8%) have found full-time employment.
 - Of these:
 - 48 - Tenure track/permanent posts
 - 12 - Visiting academic posts/Post-Docs
 - 6 - Non-academic employment
 - 21 - Still seeking permanent employment
 - In the last five years, students have secured TT positions at:
 - Carson-Newman University
 - Lone Star College
 - Flathead Valley Community College
 - Austin Peay University
 - Missouri State University-West Plains
 - University of South Carolina—Sumter
 - Georgia Southern University
 - Middle Georgia State College
 - Carl Albert State College
 - University of Central Arkansas
 - Longwood University
 - Angelo State University
 - Centenary College
 - Peru State College
 - UNC-Pembroke
 - Barry University (Miami, FL)

Number and types of graduate/professional schools where graduates enroll

- MA Students who have completed the degree at the University of Arkansas in the last three years have gone onto a PhD Program at:
 - University of Washington
 - University of Arkansas

- Emory University
- Ohio University
- University of Oklahoma
- Texas A&M

Changes to degree planned or made based on the outside assessment of M.A./Ph.D. in History as required by ADHE

Changes as a result of the Department's last outside assessment

1. Outside Review Recommendation: The salaries of GAs should be raised as soon as possible to the level of regional peer institutions. For example, at the University of Missouri, the 2018 salary was \$18,025, at the University of Oklahoma it was \$17,595 the same year, and so on, while ours, in 2022, is an uncompetitive \$13,500, some 2/3's of a regionally competitive rate.
 - Department Response/Strategy (2011): No faculty member in History would disagree with this recommendation. Of course, such a change would have to come from the Graduate School and be across the board in all disciplines. History is happy to work in any way necessary to implement a raise for all G.A.s in the Humanities.
 - Changes since 2011:
 - The stipend has increased from to \$10,500 to \$13,500 since 2011. This remains below our benchmark and aspirational institutions (see above). The Department is participating with the Graduate School to advocate for more funding from Central Administration.
 - The Department has taken the following steps to increase financial support for doctoral students:
 - Starting in 2016, the department began employing students as hourly research assistants over the winter break. This allows them to make additional money (up to \$1,300) and supports the research of faculty in the department
 - Starting in Summer 2017, the department began employing students as hourly research assistants over the summer break. This allows them to make additional money (up to \$1,800) and supports the research of faculty in the department
 - During the University's strong enrollment growth from 2010-2015, the Department moved students out of GA lines after year three and into non-tenure track lecturer or instructor positions. These positions offered a higher salary (\$16,000) but with no tuition benefits. Subtracting tuition from the higher salary roughly equated the funding of these positions, but over the last several years the benefits of the lecturer position have degraded university-wide, leaving these students with far less value. Therefore, the department will retain students on GA lines until at least the end of year four and year five if open lines exist, thereby better increasing the value of the total funding package.

2. Outside Review Recommendation: Because preparation to teach is a key component of the PhD program, *all* students should receive GA funding. The only exceptions should be students who are already ensconced in professions (such as the military or archive management) and who are pursuing the PhD in order to advance in those professions.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): History agrees with recommendation #13 of the ADHE evaluators, especially as funded students tend to be the ones who see the Ph.D. through to completion. The Chair and Associate Chair will work closely with the Deans of the Graduate School and Fulbright College to fund all doctoral students in History save those who have other sources of income (government or military).
- Changes since 2011:
 - The Department continues to place value on full-time funded students and now only admits as many Ph.D. students as it is able to fund.

3. Outside Review Recommendation: The number of years of GA funding and the number of years typically in time-to-degree should be brought into alignment. To accomplish this, GA eligibility should be increased to 5 years, with a 6th year permitted when circumstances warrant.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): While in theory the leadership of History concurs with this recommendation, the number of assistantships would have to be significantly expanded before such a change could be made. Currently, History uses its eleven instructorship slots to extend funding for doctoral students beyond their fourth year. We have been successful at keeping A.B.D. students and recent Ph.D.s employed until they matriculate and/or find tenure-track positions. To date, we have placed almost all of our Ph.D. graduates in visiting or tenure-track positions, even in this increasingly tight job market. In a way, instructorships have filled the void in GA funding beyond the fourth year. Arkansas's benchmark History programs give assistantships for longer periods of time (five to six years vs. four years), however, and the external reviewers underscore that it is important to bring History at the University of Arkansas into the best practice of the profession. Therefore, the Chair and Associate Chair will work with the Dean of the Graduate School and the Dean of the Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences to augment the number of assistantships and to increase the years of funding for each student.
- Changes since 2011:
 - The Department believes in the importance of funding graduate students until the completion of their doctoral degrees. The majority of this funding should come at the GA level. Although the University has a four year limit on GA funding, the Department has secured the promise of a blanket extension from the Graduate School of up to six years based on HIST's national average of time to degree. The Department has used this to extend some GAs into the fifth year if funding permits
 - If funding does not permit extending into a fifth year, the students retain funding options through the lecturer positions for up to six years

of their degree. This is very important since the department's time to degree has increased significantly since the last time it was measured (2004-2006). In that period, median time to degree was 6.1 years whereas in 2014-2016 it increased 1.65 years to 7.75 years. The Department believes that a steady funding source is important to improve time to degree and that even a seventh year is warranted in some cases.

4. Outside Review Recommendation GAs and ABD instructors should always teach two sections of the same course in a given semester, and never more than two sections—even if they ask to do more.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): This recommendation, too, is very sound. Yet, our advanced G.A.s and instructors often pick up additional survey sections, while we're often unable to schedule two sections of the same course given staffing limitations/requirements. An increase in the number of G.A. slots in History would alleviate the stress on the advanced doctoral students and give them more time to research and write their dissertations. In order to achieve this goal of reducing the workload of doctoral students, the Chair and Associate Chair will work closely with the Deans of the Graduate School and the Fulbright College to expand the number of assistantships as well as the length of time students may occupy them.
- Changes since 2011:
 - Starting in Spring 2016, the Department instituted this recommendation as a rule when scheduling survey courses. Students may teach two different courses if one is an upper-level course, for example, teaching 20th Century European History (upper-level) and a section of World Civilization II. However, since demand and supply of faculty changes each semester, there may be times when students might need to teach two different upper-level courses, though this will be in extreme circumstances only. In almost all cases, the department cannot support two sections of the same upper-level course.
 - Starting in Fall 2017, the Department began to prohibit students from teaching more than two sections of any class. This is in an effort to support faster time to degrees as teaching has been a major reason why students indicate that they are spending more time completing their dissertation. Further, the department instituted a Lecturer Leave Program in Spring 2017 which provides one semester of teaching leave to a senior graduate student in order to help them complete their dissertations.

5. Outside Review Recommendation: The department should consider whether it truly is advantageous for PhD students to prepare two major and two minor fields. As an alternative, the department might consider a major, a strong minor, and a teaching field; and consider the production of a detailed, annotated syllabus as the means of examining fields other than the major. The department should monitor whether such reforms suffice to allow all but the rare exceptional student to complete exams by the end of the third

year. If problems persist, as well as for pedagogical reasons, the department might want to consider moving to a portfolio system.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): The Graduate Studies Committee [GSC] of the Department of History is in the process of revising the system for comprehensive exams at the doctoral level. To date, the GSC has overhauled the system of comprehensive exams for doctoral candidates, moving away from a format in which students take four, four-hour exams throughout the course of one academic semester to a more intense process of take-home exams in four fields with a 48-hour time-limit. Those who pass their written exams will then be subjected to an oral defense of their work. Additionally, the GSC has increased the number of 6000-level research and graduate colloquia taken in each field of training. The goal is to take doctoral students out of combined undergraduate and graduate courses at the 5000-level and place them into more intensive and more focused graduate seminars. Language preparation at the graduate level is also under discussion in the GSC. Importantly, History's success in placing its Ph.D. students in tenure-track positions in a tough job market has reinvigorated the graduate faculty who are committed to upping the standards of both the Ph.D. and the M.A. programs. The GSC and the faculty in History agree that although the Department has made progress in bringing its doctoral program into line with benchmark institutions, there is still work to be done. We are open to the "portfolio" method of testing as done at the University of Kansas and are debating streamlining the fields of examination in accordance with the external reviewers' suggestions. Finally, in 2019, the department voted to reduce the number of fields in which a student is tested from four to three, which will reduce the time it takes students to graduate by reducing the period of coursework (see below).
- Changes since 2011:
 - The Department's comprehensive exam model allows individual faculty to interact with their graduate students in multiple different ways and test in the comprehensive exams in different formats at the discretion of the faculty member. Several faculty members who train students in minor fields have adopted a portfolio system with annotated syllabi and those students have successfully taught upper-division courses in their minor fields while they are still at the University to prepare for the job market.
 - Starting in Fall 2020, the department newly required examinations in three fields, instead of four. This reduction will enable students to focus on their core areas of intellectual inquiry which, in many cases, will result in a (slight) reduction in coursework and, therefore, additional time to generate their dissertations. This change aligns the department with best practices in the field.

6. Outside Review Recommendation: The current foreign language requirement for PhD students needlessly wastes their time and energy, without providing them with the level of knowledge necessary to expand their research opportunities. It should be replaced with a requirement appropriate to students' primary research field. If materials in that field are in English, then students should be required to show only that they have fulfilled (usually, at some time in the past) the equivalent of the department's undergraduate

foreign language requirement. If materials in that field are in foreign languages, then students should be required to demonstrate the level of competence necessary to accomplish research, which may include not only reading, but also speaking, listening, and writing.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): In a faculty meeting held on May 6, 2011, the Department of History voted unanimously to bring its graduate language requirements into line with those of its benchmark competitors. The new policy for Ph.D. students is as follows:
 - “A student must demonstrate, at a minimum, reading competency in one language other than English before taking comprehensive exams. The student's choice of language is subject to the approval of the student's doctoral advisory committee. However, a student may be required to demonstrate a reading competency in as many languages as is necessary for research and study as determined by the student's major professor and advisory committee.”
 - Therefore, the Department of History has already implemented the change to the doctoral language exam recommended by the ADHE evaluators and has done so after careful study of the requirements of benchmark graduate programs. This change to the doctoral program will go into effect as of August 2012.
- Changes since 2011:
 - The language requirement remains the same as voted on May 6, 2011. Several doctoral committees require additional languages beyond the one required for their candidates in non-American history fields

7. Outside Review Recommendation: To make up for the limited holdings in the University of Arkansas Library, each doctoral student should be given a summer research grant of \$1000-\$1500 in two years (perhaps the first and third summers of the program) to explore the holdings of the best collection in the region. When library holdings are brought up to par, this funding can be converted to pre-dissertation research grants, which help students to compete for major national fellowships.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): No one in History would disagree with the idea of summer research grants for our best doctoral students. Currently, the College gives dissertation fellowship research grants, but these are few in number (one for the Humanities) and typically go to very advanced doctoral students who are finishing dissertations. The external reviewers clearly have an alternative model in mind here—funding research at the beginning stages of a graduate career. The Chair and Director of Graduate Studies will work closely with the Dean of the Graduate School and the Vice Provost for Research to implement this significant recommendation. If the spending balances in departmental accounts permit, History will offer matching funds to the amounts offered by the Graduate School.
- Changes since 2011:
 - Funding for Graduate Student research remains a concern in the department. The majority of funding for graduate research comes from the department's endowed scholarship accounts. Students have

the option to apply each year and the department has spent over \$50,000 in the past year on scholarships, the majority to graduate students. Just as with faculty research stipends, with existing departmental resources, no additional funds can be expended to support doctoral research

8. Outside Review Recommendation: To encourage quicker completion of MA theses and PhD dissertations, students should be encouraged to devise potential topics during their first year in the program, and try them out in their research seminars. The MA thesis should typically be shorter, with a range of 80 to 100 pages, so that students can complete it more expeditiously.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): Because History's GSC has already revised the curriculum to place more emphasis on graduate readings and research seminars recommendation #19 is a timely one. The fact that doctoral students will be taking more seminars, coupled with the revision of the comprehensive exam system, render this recommendation currently feasible in a way that it would not have been five years ago. Careful mentoring in graduate research seminars will go a long way toward implementing recommendation #19.

With regards to the second suggestion about the M.A. program, there really is no explicit length for the thesis nor has the GSC tackled (yet) the Masters' degree in the way it has the Ph.D. program. While most of History's M.A. students are terminal degree candidates, in certain fields, such as medieval history, writing a significant research piece, indeed one incorporating primary and secondary work in more than one language, is a must for future doctoral work. Therefore, it may be difficult to agree on "one model" for the M.A. thesis. The GSC is committed to continuing its revision of both the M.A. and Ph.D. curriculum in the immediate future in order to address the concerns raised in recommendation #19.

- Changes since 2011:
 - Prior to Fall 2020 (see below), the Department had only been rarely offering research seminars, while focusing more on reading seminars. In August 2017, the department changed the distribution requirement for the MA degree from three graduate seminars to four graduate seminars. This was the result of focus groups with MA students and discussion among the Graduate Studies Committee. This allows the department greater clientele to offer more graduate reading seminars where students might have the opportunity (depending on the faculty member) to engage in original research projects
 - The Department's Historical Methods Course, required of all MA students, has been revamped to be a place where students not only learn the art of being a historian but create a viable path towards identifying a MA thesis topic and beginning preliminary work on it.
 - Starting in Fall 2020, all MA students are required to complete a Research Seminar, while Ph.D. students will be strongly encouraged to enroll.

9. Outside Review Recommendation: The department should gradually work to increase the pool of applicants to its MA and PhD programs, in keeping with the university's new Research I status, and then become more selective in its admission. It should retain the current policy of transferring talented, PhD-bound MA students directly into the PhD program. In this way, the department can grow more of its own PhD students.

- Department Response/Strategy (2011): We are committed to accepted talented students at both the M.A. and Ph.D. levels while remaining mindful that, especially for the latter program, we only admit the number of students we are confident we can place in Tenure-track positions, which are becoming increasingly rare in History. The Chair and Associate Chair should discuss with the Graduate School other publications or internet sites in which to recruit high ability graduate students or effective strategies for expanding our pool of applicants in terms of number and quality.

With regards to the “straight to Ph.D.” program, the Historians currently are split on this issue. Some see the M.A. thesis as a critical piece of the graduate school experience. Others find the M.A. to be atavistic, a throwback to an earlier period of graduate training (the ADHE evaluators appear to share the sentiment of the latter group!). The departmental response to recommendation #20 then is to continue the debate over the requirements for or the necessity of the M.A. thesis in History as well as the feasibility of opening up a “direct to Ph.D.” graduate program as is done at the University of Kansas and the University of Georgia.

- Changes since 2011:
 - The department continued to advertise in various venues, yet the economy seems to have lowered admissions. In 2011, while the economy was still recovering from the Great Recession, there was a record number of applicants. In 2017, with economic recovery completed, we witnessed the lowest pool of applicants. The department continues to nurture interest in our MA and PhD program both in our region and nationally through the DDF and DAF funds.
 - The department remains split on this issue of direct to PhD admissions—the Graduate Studies Committee will continue to debate this issues. Since our faculty has changed significantly since 2011, perhaps these new voices will change the conversation.