

M.A./Ph.D. in History, 2024 Assessment Report:

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

A. Learning Outcomes: M.A. in History.

- Mastery over one field in History and engagement in other fields.
- Reading proficiency in the language(s) 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 (GSC).
- Successful completion of course of study approved by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).
- Successful completion of the Department's required M.A. seminar on the methodology of conducting research, Historical Methods (HIST 7023) and the Department's Research Seminar (HIST 7123).
- Successful defense of M.A. thesis in front of at least three experts in the field.

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 GSC unanimously agreed to begin requiring a writing sample with the MA application (starting with 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 GSC proposed and the faculty voted to accept a requirement that MA students complete a Research Seminar as part of their coursework, bring the number of required graduate seminars to five. 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 engagement with at least one other field.

- As a result of focus groups with MA students and resulting discussions with the GSC, 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, and 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 instructors.
- 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 GSC.
- Successful completion of course of study approved by student's Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC).
- 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.
- The Chair and DGS 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 T.A. for up to six semesters before teaching their first course as instructor of record. To better prepare students for teaching on their own and for T.A.s to hone their skills, the department has initiated a “pedagogical boot camp” every August during the week preceding the start of Fall semester. All funded M.A. and Ph.D. students are required to participate.

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

- Learning Outcome Assessed: Capacity for original research as evinced by the writing of a Ph.D. dissertation.
 - GSC monitored time-to-degree over the last ten years, specifically to evaluate how efficiently 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 adjustment will enable students to wait until their 4th year to begin teaching.
- 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 present at conferences, though the majority do not attend national and international conferences. The department has encouraged national and international conference participation through a funding formula within the department (only providing funding for national conferences in years 5 and 6) and through brownbag lunch series.
 - Graduate Students continue to win national grants, usually small research grants, at various archives and libraries. The department has encouraged students to continue to engage in grant writing workshops and has provided further opportunities by adding additional brownbag sessions.
- Learning Outcome Assessed: Mastery over three fields of History at the graduate level.
 - GSC found requirements for doctoral degree to be 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

In 2017, with economic recovery completed, we witnessed the lowest pool of applicants. 2018 and 2019 have roughly remained at 2017 levels. Since 2019, interest in our PhD program has diminished, reflecting natural trends and, relatedly, the significant decline in the number of tenure-track positions available. However, the MA program is flourishing, with steady enrollment and an ability to provide funding for the majority of these students. The department will continue to nurture interest in our MA and PhD programs, 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 students 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. It is currently just over 7 years (7.075 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, so teaching loads have been reduced accordingly, while doctoral students no longer serve as instructor of record until their fourth year in the program. .

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 for students to present their work in progress. Moreover, the department has revived the research seminar and will be newly requiring 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.

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.

In Fall 2022, the Department met with representatives from Global Campus regarding the possibility of generating an on-line M.A. program. The employee conducting the feasibility study ultimately left the U of A and their replacement is now completing that process. The department would welcome an on-line M.A. owing to the number of inquires we receive regarding on-line coursework at the graduate level (we currently don't have any).

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 2005-2023 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
 - 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 University
 - University of Wisconsin

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 2023-24, is an uncompetitive \$16,500, 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 \$16,500 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 (\$16,500) 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): Although, 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. It is now at 7.075 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.