MA Degree Departmental Requirements

Degree requirements are set in part by the Graduate School and in part by the History Department. The MA student must satisfy the degree requirements that are in force at the time the MA is awarded. MA students should read all relevant information on the History Department's website and the Graduate School's website.

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Courses, Credits and Grades

- A student must earn a grade of at least 3.5 in each numerically graded course and HSTRY 600 credits must receive CR in order for their credits to be applicable to degree requirements.
- In assessing credits applicable to the degree, the History Department includes History courses numbered 400 and above (with the exception of courses numbered 491-499), and courses numbered 400 and above offered by other departments with content relevant to the student's program of study in History. Credits from language training courses (at any level) are not counted toward degree credits.
- Credits taken in professionalization courses (HSTRY 570, HSTRY 571, GRDSCH 615, GRDSCH 616) do count toward the 10 credits of graduate-level coursework needed for fulltime registration. They are not counted toward degree credits.
- Completion of HSTRY 500: Historical Perspectives required for all first-year graduate students. HSTRY 500 counts toward graduate degree credits.
- MA students specializing in US History are required to take HSTAA 521: US History to 1877 and HSTAA 522: US History since 1877 in their first year in the graduate program.
- All History graduate students must take HSTRY 571: Academic Career Preparation in their second year in the graduate program.

Satisfactory Progress

Satisfactory progress and performance in the masters program.

Creating a Committee

Establishment of the MA Committee and two fields

- Graduate admissions decisions are based on the faculty field specialists' evaluation of the applicant's previous coursework, research experience, language training, etc. as preparation for graduate work in the applicant's proposed fields of study.
Therefore, once admitted to the graduate program, a student cannot significantly change the geographical, chronological or substantive focus of his/her primary area of study. For example, a student admitted to study Japanese history within the Asia division cannot switch to studying Korean history within the Asia division after admission to the graduate program; or a student admitted to study Twentieth Century US history in the US division cannot switch to Early America in the US division after admission to the graduate program. With the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee it may be possible for a student to change the faculty member supervising the primary field (as specified in the graduate application) to another if more than one History faculty member supervises that graduate field.

- MA students must officially set up their MA Committee and two fields no later than the end of their second quarter in the graduate program. The Request for Establishing a Masters Supervisory Committee forms (which officially establishes both the MA Committee and the MA fields) must be submitted to the History Graduate Office. The History Department’s deadlines for establishing the MA Committee and fields are earlier and supersede the Graduate School’s requirements to establish the committee at least four months before the exam quarter: the committee must be officially established no later than the end of Spring Quarter for a student to take the MA Exam in Autumn Quarter; no later than the end of Summer Quarter for a student to take the MA Exam in Winter Quarter; and no later than the end of Autumn Quarter for a student to take the MA Exam in Spring Quarter. Under no circumstances will a student be allowed to take the MA Exam if the student’s committee and fields were not officially established with both the History Graduate Office and the Graduate School at least four months before the exam.

- Students construct their fields of study in consultation with their supervising faculty.

- The MA fields must each be different in scope and content, and each must be supervised by a different faculty member (one faculty member cannot supervise both fields).

- Both MA fields must be History fields and each must be supervised by a UW History Department faculty member. Both field supervisors must be members of the History graduate faculty. Faculty who are adjunct with the History Department do not Chair a MA Committee and do not supervise a first (primary) MA field.

- As the MA is the student’s first professional degree in History, MA fields should be broadly defined (e.g. Modern Russia, Early Imperial China, Twentieth Century U.S.). These typically are fields that will be further defined, refined and supplemented in the student’s work at the PhD level.

- The supervisor of the first (primary) MA field serves as Chair of the MA Committee.

- A field in the Comparative History division (Comparative Gender, Comparative Ethnicity and Nationalism, Historiography, Comparative Colonialisms) cannot be a student’s first (primary) MA field.

- The faculty supervisor determines the required and recommended preparation needed for the field and the faculty supervisor (not the student) completes those portions of the field form.

- Establishment of the MA Committee and fields also requires the submission of the Graduate School’s Human Subjects form. This is a Graduate School requirement.

- You are no longer required to take a course with each of your MA committee members. You still must work with them in some substantive way via development of the seminar paper, a 600 class, or other requirement determined by that committee member.

Seminar Paper

Completion of the MA seminar paper

- The MA seminar paper must be completed before the end of the quarter prior to the MA Examination.

- The seminar paper must be completed in a two-quarter research seminar. The research seminar can be a research seminar that is focused on a particular chronological, thematic or geographic area (such as HSTAA 532/533: Research Seminar in American History or HSTCMP 512/513: Research Seminar in the History of Science), or HSTRY 596/597: Research Seminar in History, which is offered regularly and is open to students in all fields of history.

- The seminar paper should be the length and format of a journal article (10,000 to 15,000 words including footnotes). One of the student’s MA Committee members must be substantively involved in the supervision of the seminar paper.

- The seminar paper must be read and approved by both MA Committee members before a student can schedule the MA Examination. The student must provide the History Graduate Office with a copy of the MA seminar paper for inclusion in the student’s file as a prerequisite for taking the MA Examination.

- The UW History Department does not offer the MA thesis option; all MA students must complete a seminar paper as part of their degree requirements.
Language Requirement

A reading proficiency in specific, appropriate language(s) is essential for those graduate fields in which the primary documents are not in English. Faculty field supervisors are responsible for specifying any foreign language proficiency requirements for the MA fields they supervise; the language requirement(s) must be included in the “foreign language preparation” section of the MA field form that creates and describes the student's graduate field supervised by that faculty member. The field supervisor must specify on the field form what level of language mastery will be expected, and also specify the manner in which the proficiency will be assessed.

The student can fulfill the field supervisor's foreign language proficiency requirement in the following ways:

1. By successfully passing a language translation examination
2. By the demonstrated use of the language in the student's research and writing, usually in the student's MA seminar paper. In this case, the faculty member who requires the language as part of his/her field preparation must verify in writing to the History Graduate Office that the student has fulfilled the standards of proficiency by means of research and writing.
3. By completing a specified number of years and a specified level of formal foreign language training. In this case, the faculty member who requires the language as part of his/her field preparation must verify in writing to the History Graduate Office that the student has fulfilled the standards of proficiency by means of formal language coursework.

A foreign language requirement for the MA must be fulfilled before the end of the quarter preceding the MA Examination.

In cases where there is no field-specific language requirement(s) for the MA fields, the student's MA Chair must verify in writing to the History Graduate Office that the student's prior foreign language training and preparation are adequate for scholarly research and teaching in the student's MA fields, without a formal demonstration of language proficiency. This evaluation will be based on the student providing the Chair with a written description of the student's current language proficiency and a description of any anticipated need for language skills in research and teaching for the MA. The student's statement must accompany the Chair's verification statement when it is submitted to the History Graduate Office.

Incompletes, X Grades and N Grades

Incompletes, X grades and N grades must be removed from the student's transcript by the end of the following quarter. (Students intending to take the MA Exam must remove all Xs, Is and Ns from the transcript before the beginning of the quarter in which the MA Exam will be taken.) “Removed from the transcript” means not only that the work has been completed by the student, but also that the faculty supervisor has submitted an online change-of-grade and the X, N or I grade has been replaced with a numerical grade or CR.

MA Exam

Demonstrate a mastery of a substantial body of historical knowledge by an oral MA Examination, a 60-90 minute oral examination that covers the student's two MA fields and the seminar paper and is graded pass/fail. Where circumstances warrant, the committee members may choose to have students read a moderate number of additional books to ensure that they are properly prepared.

- It is the MA field supervisors' responsibility to determine whether a student has completed the necessary field preparation to proceed to the MA Examination.
- Students should take the oral MA Exam and complete the MA degree no later than the Autumn Quarter or Winter Quarter of the student's second year in the graduate program. Extending the time to completion of the degree beyond these limits can be cause for concern about the student's progress in the masters program and, consequently an extension will be granted only in cases of...
extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control such as the faculty’s requirements for field or language preparation. A student who must postpone the completion of the MA beyond the expected norm must submit an explanatory petition, supported by a letter from the Chair of the MA Committee, for the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

- Each quarter the History Graduate Office posts a message on the gradhist electronic list setting a deadline for students to sign up to take the MA Exam in the next quarter. After the sign-up deadline has passed, the Graduate Office checks the file of each student who signed up for the MA Exam, and informs the student of any outstanding requirements and the deadline by which the requirements must be fulfilled in order to be eligible to take the MA Exam the following quarter (seminar paper and foreign language by the end of the quarter preceding the MA Exam quarter, removal of Is, Xs and Ns from the transcript before the beginning of the MA Exam quarter, etc.). Students who fulfill all the requirements to take the MA Exam in the following quarter are sent via email further instructions and the MA Examination Scheduling Form for scheduling the day and time for the MA Exam. The student is also reminded to apply for the MA degree through the Graduate School’s website, which produces the Warrant for the MA Degree.

- The student must provide both members of the MA Committee with a copy of the MA seminar paper no later than the end of the first week of the MA Exam quarter. Committee members have two weeks to read and review the seminar paper once they receive it. In cases where the paper was written for a third faculty member not on the student’s MA Committee, the MA field supervisors must inform the student if the seminar paper supervisor will be asked to attend the MA Exam.

- Once the MA field supervisors have read and reviewed the seminar paper, they and the student must then find a day with a 90 minute time slot for the oral MA Exam that is conducive to all participants. The MA Exam may be scheduled for any time up to the end of the seventh week of the quarter (the MA Exam can be held later than the seventh week of the quarter only in extenuating circumstances). The student must submit the completed MA Exam Scheduling Form form (with original signatures) to the History Graduate Office at least one week prior to the MA Exam. The Graduate Office will then reserve a room for the MA Exam. The Graduate Office will inform the student and faculty of the location, and also send a reminder of the day/time and location a few days before the MA Exam.

- The Graduate Office will provide the MA Chair with the MA Exam grade sheet, to be completed at the conclusion of the MA Exam. There are three possible grades for the result of the MA Examination:
  - Pass, with a recommendation that the student apply for promotion to the UW History PhD program.
  - Pass, with a recommendation that the student not be considered for the UW History PhD program.
  - Fail. If the student fails the MA Examination, a written explanatory evaluation of the student’s performance in the exam must be provided by the MA Committee. The evaluation will be placed in the student’s file. The grade sheet and the evaluation are not confidential — the student may see both. There is no re-examination for the MA

- If the student passes the MA Exam, the MA Committee members must also sign the Graduate School’s Warrant for the MA Degree at the conclusion of the MA Exam. The Graduate Office transmits the Department’s approval for the degree to the Graduate School.

- The MA Exam grade sheet and the signed Warrant are placed in the student’s file.

- A student cannot be exempted from writing a History PhD examination in a field based on the result of the UW History MA Examination in that field or based on an examination or other work completed in a program outside the UW History Department.