Ph.D. Requirements (Departmental) for UW History M.A. Students

Quick Links
- Courses Credits and Grades
- Satisfactory Progress
- PhD Supervisory Committee and fields
- PhD seminar paper
- Foreign Language Requirement(s)
- Incompletes, X grades and N grades
- The PhD General Examination
- The Dissertation Prospectus
- The Dissertation
- The PhD Final Examination (dissertation defense)

Courses, Credits and Grades
- Students begin their PhD credits from the quarter of their promotion to the History PhD program. This is normally the quarter after they have completed the History MA degree.
- The PhD degree requires at least 90 credits, of which at least 60 credits of graduate-level (400/500/600) History and History field-related coursework must be earned prior to the PhD General Examination, and at least 27 credits of HSTRY 800 (Dissertation Research and Writing) must be taken after the PhD General Examination.
- 30 of the 60 credits required for the General Examination can be counted from the History and History field-related coursework done for the MA in History at the University of Washington. The other 30 credits of the 60 must be done as a History PhD student.
- At least three courses (15-18 credits) of the 30 credits taken at the PhD level must be numerically-graded 500-level credits of History or History field-related graduate coursework.
- PhD students are responsible for adhering to the credit limits set on 590: Special Topics courses; any 590 credits taken prior to beginning work at the PhD level count toward the 15 credit total limit in each division (15 credits of HSTRY 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTAA 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTAM 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTAS 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTCMP 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTLAC 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTAFM 590, and/or 15 credits of HSTEU 590).
- PhD students who are considering retaking a course that they have already taken at the MA level are responsible for checking the UW General Catalog to ensure that course is repeatable for degree credit.
- 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 full-time registration. They are not counted toward degree credits.
- All History graduate students must take HSTRY 571: Academic Career Preparation in their second year of the graduate program.
Satisfactory progress and performance in the PhD program.

PhD Supervisory Committee and fields

Students who are promoted to the History PhD program must officially set up their PhD Supervisory Committee and fields no later than the end of the quarter in which they were promoted to the PhD. The History Department's deadlines for establishing the PhD Committee and fields are earlier and supersede the Graduate School's requirements to establish the committee at least four months before the General Exam quarter: the committee must be officially established no later than the end of Spring Quarter for a student to take the General exam in Autumn Quarter; no later than the end of Summer Quarter for a student to take the General Exam in Winter Quarter; and no later than the end of Autumn Quarter for a student to take the General Exam in Spring Quarter. Under no circumstances will a student be allowed to take the PhD General 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.

The Request for Establishing A Doctoral Committee provides information and instructions for establishing the PhD Committee and fields, and includes the Graduate School Representative form and the Human Subjects form.

- The supervisor of the first (primary) PhD field serves as Chair of the PhD Supervisory Committee. Faculty who are adjunct with the History Department do not Chair a History PhD Committee (and supervise the student's first PhD field).
- The four PhD fields must each be different in scope and content and each must be supervised by a different faculty member.
- The four PhD fields must be drawn from at least two divisions and at least one field must offer genuine diversity from the student's primary area of concentration.
- One of the PhD fields can be outside of History and supervised by a non-History UW faculty member. This non-History field cannot be the student's primary field.
- Graduate fields are ranked in descending order. Expectations for a student's first field should be greater than for the third, and so on.
- The faculty supervisor (not the student) determines the required and recommended preparation needed for the field and the faculty supervisor completes those portions of the field form.
- The faculty supervisor determines any specific language requirement for the field.
- PhD students specializing in US history must offer at least one chronological field: Early America; Nineteenth Century US; Twentieth Century US; or a chronological field that is a combination of these periods, as appropriate.
- A field in the Comparative History division (Comparative Gender, Comparative Ethnicity and Nationalism, Historiography, Comparative Colonialisms) cannot be the student's first (primary) PhD field.
- The fourth field may be “coursed out” by completing relevant work in at least two classes under the supervision of the field supervisor. There will be no written exam for a “coursed out” field, but a project should be designed to enhance the professional skills of the candidate in teaching, digital history, public history, or methodological approaches. The fourth field will still be examined during the PhD oral exam. In designing the fourth field, graduate students and the field examiner should discuss an explicit outcome or project that will be the basis for questions in the oral exam. This could include:
  - Teaching syllabi, assignments, and other curricular material for a teaching field designed during coursework.
  - Digital projects that demonstrate mastery over specific digital tools, research methods, or pedagogical approaches.
  - Essays or other written work developed in courses or through a certificate program.
  - A public history project or a project that involves significant community outreach/education.
- The establishment of the PhD Supervisory Committee also requires that a Graduate School Representative (G.S.R.) be named to the Committee. The G.S.R. must be a member of the UW Graduate Faculty and s/he can have no connection to the UW History Department (as an adjunct, joint or affiliate appointment). The Chair of the student's PhD Supervisory Committee and the G.S.R. cannot both have appointments (as an adjunct, joint or affiliate) in the same department outside of History. For a list of members of the UW Graduate Faculty, see the Graduate School's Graduate Faculty Locator.
- Establishment of the PhD Supervisory Committee also requires the submission of the Graduate School's Human Subjects form.

PhD seminar paper
The PhD seminar paper must be completed before the end of the quarter prior to the PhD General 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.
- A copy of the PhD seminar paper must be provided to the History Graduate Office for inclusion in the student's file before the end of the quarter prior to the General Examination.

**Foreign Language Requirement(s)**

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 PhD fields they supervise; the language requirement(s) must be included in the “foreign language preparation” section of the PhD 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 PhD 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 PhD must be fulfilled before the end of the quarter preceding the PhD General Examination.

In cases where there is no field-specific language requirement(s) for the PhD fields, the student's 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 PhD 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 PhD. 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 PhD General must remove all Xs, Is and Ns from the transcript before the beginning of the quarter in which the General 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.
The PhD General Examination

The PhD General Examination consists of a four-hour written examination for each PhD field and a two-hour oral exam. The written examinations and the oral must be held in the same quarter.

- Students who promote from the History MA program to the PhD program are expected to take the PhD General Examination a year after their quarter of promotion. Ultimately, however, it is the PhD field supervisors’ responsibility to determine whether a student has completed the necessary field preparation to proceed to the General Examination. Extending the time to the PhD exams beyond these limits can be cause for concern about the student’s progress in the doctoral program; consequently an extension will be granted only in cases of extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control. A student who must postpone the PhD exams beyond the expected norms must submit an explanatory petition, supported by a letter from the Chair of the PhD Committee, for the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

- A student must write exams in all four PhD fields. A student cannot be exempted from writing a History PhD examination in a field based on the result of the History MA Examination in that field, or the result of a graduate exam or other work done in another UW or non-UW graduate program.

- Each quarter the History Graduate Office posts a message on the histinfo electronic list setting a deadline for students to sign up to take the PhD General Exam in the next quarter. Students signing up to take the PhD General Exam must indicate which written exam they intend to take on which exam date. After the sign-up deadline has passed, the Graduate Office checks the file of each student who signed up for the General 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 General Exam the following quarter (seminar paper and foreign language by the end of the quarter preceding the General Exam quarter, removal of Is, Xs and Ns from the transcript before the beginning of the General Exam quarter, etc.). Students who fulfill all the requirements to take the General Exam in the following quarter are sent via email further instructions for scheduling the day and time for the General Exam, instructions for taking the written exams, and an exam schedule. The student’s Committee members are sent the exam schedule and instructions for the faculty examiners.

- The PhD written exams are given from 9:30am to 2:00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the second and third (full) weeks of the quarter.
  - An alternate written examination schedule is permissible only in extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control, such as illness or accident. Not yet being prepared to take the exams during the regular exam schedule is not an extenuating circumstance. Alternate written exam schedules must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

- The Graduate Office emails the faculty examiners to request their exam questions. Faculty examiners must provide the exam questions to the History Graduate Office at least a week before the student is scheduled to write the exam.

- The Graduate Office will email the exam questions to the student on the scheduled exam day unless the faculty examiner directs otherwise prior to the beginning of the General Exam quarter.

- The student will receive the exam questions via email (to the UW email address) at 9:30am on the scheduled exam day. The student must confirm receipt of the questions via phone or email. The student will return the completed exam to the History Graduate Office via email (histgrad@uw.edu) at 2:00pm. This gives the student four hours to write the exam and a half-hour break.

- The Graduate Office will forward the completed exam to the faculty examiner via email. Examiners must email their exam comments to the students and the History Graduate Office within a week after the written exam was taken. Examining faculty read and comment on their own exams only.

- The four PhD field supervisors (one of whom is the Chair), the G.S.R., and the student participate in the oral portion of the General Exam. The student, the G.S.R., the Chair and at least two other field supervisors must be physically present at the oral. If necessary, one of the field supervisors (who is not the Chair) can participate via teleconference or skype.

- The oral portion of the General Examination is scheduled by the student and the Committee members (including the G.S.R.) for 2-3 weeks after the last written exam, to give the examiners time to read and comment on the exams and the student time to use the comments to prepare for the oral.

- The student must inform the History Graduate Office of the day/time agreed to for the oral portion of the General Exam at least two weeks before it is to be held. The History Graduate Office then reserves a room for the oral and provides instructions to the student for scheduling the oral with the Graduate School (only the student can do this through the Graduate School’s online system). The History Graduate Office must then submit its approval for holding the oral; upon receipt of this approval the Graduate School sends emails to the Committee and student with the day, time and location of the oral. The Graduate School also then produces the Warrant for the General Examination. The Graduate Office will send an email reminder to the Committee and student a few days before the oral.
The Graduate Office provides copies of the exams and comments to the G.S.R. prior to the oral, and provides the Chair with the PhD grade sheet and the Warrant at the beginning of the oral. At the conclusion of the oral portion of the General Exam, the student is graded on the written and oral performance in each field. The student is also given an overall grade for the General Examination: Honors, High Pass, Pass, or Fail. The Committee (including the G.S.R.) must sign the Warrant, indicating the result of the General Exam (pass/fail/re-examine), which is transmitted by the History Graduate Office to the Graduate School. The exams and comments, grade sheet and Warrant are placed in the student's file. The G.S.R. must also complete the G.S.R. Report form and submit it to the Graduate School.

A student who passes the PhD General Examination has achieved Doctoral Candidacy.

The Dissertation Prospectus

The prospectus should describe the dissertation in approximately ten double-spaced pages and include the following sections: Scope and Significance, Methods and Sources, and a Schedule for Completion. Attached should be a two-page selected bibliography of primary and secondary sources. The prospectus should be in a format from which research funding applications can be shaped.

- Students fulfill the dissertation prospectus presentation requirement during the quarter in which they take their PhD General Exam.
- The student and the Chair of the PhD Supervisory Committee should begin discussions about the proposed dissertation, the prospectus, and an appropriate dissertation Reading Committee during the process of preparing for the PhD exams.
- As part of the dissertation prospectus requirement, the student will also establish a Dissertation Reading Committee of three members, including their PhD Chair. The three readers must be UW faculty and members of the Graduate Faculty. The composition of the Reading Committee can change if necessary as the student progresses with the dissertation. The students must provide the History Graduate Office with the names of the members of the Reading Committee, so that the committee can be officially established through the Graduate School.
- The Reading Committee members must read a full draft of the dissertation prospectus and provide comments to the student. Once the PhD Chair and the student are satisfied with the prospectus and deem it acceptable in principle, the student will consult with the other Reading Committee members to schedule a one-hour prospectus meeting. This meeting can be added to the oral portion of the PhD Examination, if all members of the Reading Committee also serve on the PhD Supervisory (exam) Committee. In most cases, however, the prospectus meeting will be held separately after the PhD General Examination and will be attended by the student, the PhD Chair and the Reading Committee. At the meeting, Reading Committee members can approve the prospectus or request further changes.
- Each quarter, the Department will hold dissertation prospectus presentations to which all History faculty and graduate students are invited. The presentations are usually given during final exam week.
- The PhD Chairs of the student presenters must attend the presentation.
- Prospectuses will be pre-circulated to History graduate students and faculty via electronic email lists. The audience is not required to read the prospectus prior to the presentation.
- Each student's presentation will be 45-60 minutes in length. This includes the presentation of the prospectus and the comments/questions/discussion from faculty and other graduate student attendees. The presentation should give a sense of the scope of the project and may also discuss a particular aspect in more detail.
- After the presentation, the graduate student will consult with her/his Chair about whether any suggestions made by the audience should be incorporated into the prospectus. It is up to the PhD Chair to check that any necessary changes are implemented in the prospectus.
- Once the Chair is satisfied with the prospectus, the student must submit a copy of the prospectus (with the Chair’s signature) to the History Graduate Office. Changes in dissertation topic that emerge after the prospectus requirement has been fulfilled do not require submission of another prospectus to the Graduate Office.

The Dissertation

The completion of the dissertation marks the end of the student's graduate career in the Department. It also, however, marks the beginning of the student's professional life, and therefore represents the most serious obligation the student undertakes during graduate work. Students should plan their dissertation work very carefully, bearing in mind not only the research opportunities in and recent directions of their specialized field of history, but also funding possibilities and needs through the period of research and
The PhD Final Examination (dissertation defense)

- The student must meet with his/her entire Reading Committee at least once per year to discuss the progress on the dissertation.
- If circumstances require that a non-UW faculty member serve as a reader, the Reading Committee must consist of a full UW Reading Committee (three readers who are UW faculty) in addition to the non-UW faculty reader (for a total of four readers).
- Circumstances that might require a non-UW reader include if the student's primary field specialist has left UW and no other field specialist is available at UW.
- The non-UW reader cannot serve as Chair or Co-Chair of the Committee.
- Readers normally want to read the dissertation as each chapter is written (rather than waiting for a complete draft of the entire dissertation) so that they can comment on issues of organization, etc. and catch any potential problems in the research, direction, etc. of the dissertation early in the writing stages.
- Submit a complete final draft of the dissertation to your readers well in advance of your PhD Final Examination (dissertation defense). This will give the readers time to make final comments on the draft and give you time to make any required changes to the dissertation. The Reading Committee must read and approve a complete draft of the entire dissertation before the defense can be scheduled. The entire dissertation includes the introduction, chapters, conclusion, end/footnotes, and bibliography. A dissertation that requires additional research and writing, reorganization, rewriting, or is otherwise incomplete should not be approved for defense by the Reading Committee.

The PhD Final Examination (dissertation defense)

- After the Reading Committee has read and approved a complete draft of the entire dissertation, the student must contact the History Graduate Office to schedule the PhD Final Examination (dissertation defense). The Graduate Office will provide with the student with instructions for finding a day/time for the defense and a copy of the Department's PhD Final Exam Approval Form.
- The members of the Reading Committee (one of whom is the Chair), the Graduate School Representative (G.S.R), and the student participate in the defense; therefore, a day and time must be found to accommodate all of their schedules. If necessary, one of the readers (who is not also the Chair) can participate electronically via teleconference or skype. The G.S.R., the student, and the Chair cannot participate electronically -- they must be physically present at the defense, along with at least one other reader.
- The G.S.R. who served on the PhD Supervisory Committee for the General Examination continues to serve in this capacity for the Final Examination. The GSR can be replaced for the Final Exam only in extenuating circumstances: if the faculty member has retired, left UW, or is on leave and unavailable during the quarter of the defense. The student should ask the GSR whether s/he wants to read the entire dissertation or any part of it.
- By signing the Department's PhD Final Exam Approval Form, the readers confirm that they have read and approved a complete draft of the entire dissertation, and the readers and G.S.R. agree to the day and time scheduled for the defense.
- The student must inform the History Graduate Office of the day/time agreed to for the defense at least two weeks before it is to be held. The History Graduate Office then reserves a room for the defense and provides instructions to the student for scheduling the defense with the Graduate School (only the student can do this through the Graduate School's online system). The History Graduate Office must then submit its approval for holding the Final Examination; upon receipt of this approval the Graduate School sends emails to the Committee, G.S.R. and student with the day, time and location of the defense. The Graduate School also then produces the Warrant for the Final Examination.
- The Graduate School's email notification of the defense is sent to the members of the student's PhD Supervisory Committee, not just to the members of the Reading Committee. The members of the Reading Committee are also members of the Supervisory Committee. Members of the Supervisory Committee who are not also readers are therefore informed of the defense, but they do not have to read the dissertation or attend the defense (only the members of the Reading Committee, the G.S.R. and student must attend the defense).
- The Graduate Office will send an email reminder to the Committee and student a few days before the oral.
- The student should bring at least three copies of the Graduate School's Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Approval Form to the defense for the Committee's signatures (please note: this is not the same as the History Department's PhD Final Examination Approval Form). One copy of the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee Approval Form (with original signatures) must be submitted to the Graduate School, and this leaves a few spare signed copies "just in case."
- Chairs often like to have the student give a 15-20 minute presentation about the dissertation as a way to begin the Final Exam. The student should be prepared to talk about how the dissertation topic was chosen, research, significant findings, how the dissertation fits into the literature of the field, etc. etc.
- The PhD Final Examination is open to any member of the UW Graduate Faculty; it is not a "public" event open to anyone. If the
student has friends or family who wish to attend the defense, they must have the student's permission as well as the permission of the Chair of the PhD Committee in advance of the defense. Be advised that not all Chairs allow guests to attend the Final Exam. Guests (including other faculty members not on the Committee, etc.) do not participate in the Final Examination. Guests must leave the room whenever the student is asked to: at the beginning when the Committee is discussing the format of the exam, and at the end during the Committee's deliberations.

- The History Graduate Office provides the Chair with the Graduate School's Warrant at the beginning of the defense. At the conclusion of the defense, the Committee (including the G.S.R.) must sign the Warrant, indicating the result of the Final Exam (pass/fail/re-examine), which is transmitted by the History Graduate Office to the Graduate School. The Warrant (with the signed departmental PhD. Final Exam Approval Form attached) is placed in the student's file. The G.S.R. must also complete the G.S.R. Report Form and submit it to the Graduate School.

- The student is responsible for ensuring that the dissertation conforms to the Graduate School's formatting and other requirements for the electronic submission of the dissertation.

- The deadline for submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School is the last day of the defense quarter, or by the deadline shortly after the defense quarter established by the payment of the Graduate Registration Waiver Fee.

Department of History
University of Washington
318 Smith Box 353560
Seattle, WA 98195-3560

Phone: (206) 543-5790
Fax: (206) 543-9451
histmain@uw.edu

Source URL: https://history.washington.edu/phd-requirements-departmental-uw-history-ma-students