Ph.D. Program in History

1. Student Learning Objectives

   I. Master large portions of one primary and two secondary fields and the related historiography.
   II. Read historical works with comprehension and evaluate historical arguments critically.
   III. Write clearly and grammatically.
   IV. Locate and evaluate historical sources.
   V. Produce a book-length dissertation on an original research topic.
   VI. Engage in historical discussion and debate.
   VII. Participate in the professional community of historians.
   VIII. Develop a teaching philosophy and teaching skills.

2. Methods

   Candidacy Examinations: Written and Oral. Candidates complete one written exam in their major field and two in their secondary fields, evaluated by the primary advisor and two secondary examiners. The primary field essay is approximately 50 pages and the secondary essays 25-30 pages each. Satisfactory completion of the field essays as attested to by all three examiners is required before taking the oral exam. The oral examination committee consists of the same three examiners as the written portion. Candidacy examinations measure objectives I-VI.

   Prospectus Defense. Students meet with their faculty Dissertation Committees to discuss their dissertation proposals. Successful completion of the prospectus defense is required before advancing to candidacy. The prospectus defense measures objectives I-VI.

   Dissertation Colloquium Requirement. Within three years of approval of the dissertation topic, candidates are requires to make a public presentation of their research, either in a department “Brown Bag” seminar or at a professional meeting. The colloquium requirement measures objectives VI and VII.

   Teaching Portfolio Requirement. Candidates must submit two sample syllabi, a statement of teaching philosophy, and supporting materials. This requirement measures objective VIII.
The Dissertation and Dissertation Defense. The dissertation is a book-length work of original research and writing that makes a contribution to the historiography. This requirement measures objectives I-V. Candidates defend their dissertations in a formal meeting with the dissertation committee that is open to the public and is observed by a Dean’s Designee. The dissertation defense measures objectives VI and VII.

Assessment Forms. During coursework, course instructors complete the “Graduate Student Assessment Form,” assessing the students’ academic strengths and weaknesses. Responses on this form assess objectives I-VI and are qualitative.

Ph.D. exam assessment forms indicate whether the advisor thinks the student is prepared for the oral examination.

Student Representation. Student concerns and levels of satisfaction with the program are gauged in part by the participation of two elected graduate student representatives on the department’s Graduate Committee.

Data Collection. Data on completion rate of assessment forms, graduation rates, time to graduation, course enrollments, number of students participating in professional conferences, etc. are gathered by the Director of Graduate Studies and the graduate office administrator.

Student Self Reporting. Students receiving department funding for research travel submit a report on their research progress, which is posted on the Graduate Program’s website. Student achievements, such as fellowship awards and presentations at conferences, are also posted on the website.

Alumni Survey. As part of the department’s celebration of the 45th anniversary of the Ph.D. Program in History, the Director of Graduate Studies and graduate office administrator conducted an extensive search for and survey of Ph.D. alumni since 1966. Results are available on the program’s anniversary website: http://www.niu.edu/history/graduate/45thanniversary/index.shtml.