This manual is intended to help you in your role as academic adviser in the Ph.D. program. It includes an overview of the program and topical discussions relevant to you in your advising capacity. It also includes information on how the History Graduate Office supports you.

Overview of the doctoral program

The required elements of the program include

- taking at least 24 hours of course work including two formal research seminars
- submitting examination fields for approval by the Graduate Committee
- passing two language exams at average proficiency or one language at high proficiency
- writing the field essays and a teaching portfolio, and defending these essays and portfolio in an oral examination.
- writing and defending a dissertation prospectus
- maintaining continuous enrollment in HIST 799 dissertation research during candidacy until graduation
- conducting field research, writing the dissertation, and presenting it for defense.

The time from start to finish typically takes the full-time student five to six years. The limitation of time placed on the doctoral program by the Graduate School is nine years.

What follows is an explanation of each of the required elements in the order in which they typically take place. In each section, the explanation is followed by “Your role as advisor” for suggestions on how to advise your doctoral student in relation that the particular program requirement.
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YEARS ONE AND TWO

Coursework
The PhD requires a minimum of 90 credit hours. This includes a minimum of 54 credit hours of coursework. (See important note at the bottom of the page.)

The 54 credit hours of coursework include 30 credit hours from the master’s program and an additional 24 credit hours taken as a PhD student at NIU in graduate seminars, directed readings courses, and/or applicable 500-level courses. Students may take more than 24 hours in courses, but they must take at least 24 hours in coursework.

There are three conditions related to the coursework requirement.

1. Students must take two formal research seminars as part of the 24 hours of PhD coursework.

2. Students are limited to a maximum of 18 hours taken at the 500 level INCLUDING courses taken at the MA level (we allow 12 credit hours of 500-level courses at the MA, so they may take an additional 6 credit hours at most). Students should be encouraged to take formal reading seminars and directed readings to fulfill the 24 credit hours of PhD courses.

3. Students are limited to a maximum of 12-15 credit hours of independent study (736) in a single geographic region as designated by its letter (e.g. M for U.S., N for Latin America, U for Global), depending on the region as specified in the Graduate Catalog. The same holds for directed research (756).

It is expected that a substantial part of the students’ training will be autonomous.

In addition to formal coursework, students are expected to pursue their chosen interests through sustained and systematic reading of relevant literature.

Note: The credit hour requirement for students entering in 2012-2013 will drop to 72 hours. This does NOT affect the minimum 54 credit hours of coursework required for the PhD; it reduces the maximum credit hours of 799 Dissertation Research from 36 to 18. This change was implemented by the Graduate School to reduce costs to the student. Any current student may opt to adopt for the new credit hour requirement. They simply need to petition the DGS to make the change to the new catalogue.
Your role as adviser: meet with students under your direction to discuss their research interests and offer them guidance on course selection in their first two years. The PhD program is not formally tied to specific coursework requirements, so courses are used to develop knowledge in probable primary and secondary fields. Encourage students to take formal reading seminars to get to know other graduate students and faculty members/potential field advisers. Doing so enriches their educational experience and minimizes the risk of running into Caveat 3. The research seminars should be used to begin to explore aspects of potential dissertation topics.

In addition to taking courses, encourage your students to attend colloquium events, brown bags, and other public lectures that bring scholars to campus and to the region. This is an important part in the development of their identity as historians and in the development of graduate student culture in our department.

Languages:

All doctoral students must demonstrate average proficiency in two languages or high proficiency in one language before taking their candidacy examinations.

Your role as adviser: Help your students identify the languages in which they will demonstrate proficiency. Encourage your students satisfy the language requirement before the end of their second year of full time study. Students have the option of satisfying languages via on-campus summer courses offered specifically for graduate students by Foreign Languages and Literature or through the Office of Testing Services. Information on the testing procedures, including the forms students fill out to set up the exam, can be found on the History Grad web page by following the Checklist and Forms button. If your student has identified an accredited summer language program outside NIU that offers languages not offered at NIU, have them speak to the DGS about how to get credit for the course.

Note that for students interested in satisfying one language via quantitative methods, we will accept an NIU graduate level course in Statistics as we do not currently offer the Quantitative Methods for Historians course.
Choosing examination fields

By the beginning of the third semester of full time study, students should identify three examination fields in consultation with their adviser.

Doctoral students are expected to master a deep knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their primary field, and a competent knowledge of the major questions, debates, and bibliographic traditions in their secondary fields. Together, the fields prepare the student for close investigation into a particular historical question when developing the dissertation prospectus.

All fields must be recognized fields of study in the profession. In our program, the primary field is most commonly designated by major geographical region and a major chronological era (e.g. Early Modern Europe, Modern Latin America, Colonial U.S.) The two secondary fields may be geographic, thematic, or methodological (e.g. Asian History, Atlantic World, Immigration and Ethnicity, Legal History). One may be closely related geographically, chronologically, theoretically, or thematically to the primary field. One must be geographically or chronologically distant from the primary field.

To get the fields approved, students are to submit a form signed by their primary academic adviser to the DGS office early in the fall of their third semester for Graduate Committee review and approval. The Graduate Committee plays an advisory role only.

Once fields have been approved, students will write essays to synthesize the literature around major questions or debates in each field. Students can expect to read approximately 60 books and articles for the essay in their primary field and between 25 and 35 books and articles for each of their secondary field essays, although some advisers may require different amounts of reading to prepare for the essays.

Your role as adviser: Students tend to think of the three fields as hoops they must jump through rather than building blocks of their dissertation or fields that will make them attractive to departments when they look for jobs. Help them design their fields so that the three work together to achieve the goals of deep knowledge and comparative breadth. Encourage them to consider non-Western fields where appropriate. Suggest potential secondary field advisers, and keep students on track to submit their proposed fields in the third semester of full time study or its equivalent (after completion of 18 hours of course work).
For all field examiners: These essays are the single greatest impediment to progress toward degree. Please establish clear workloads and reasonable expectations. Help students design reading lists that distinguish between historiographical understanding (close reading of major works in a field) and bibliographic knowledge (an understanding of the trends, themes, questions etc in a field). Students may revise field essays until they meet your approval, but if a student fails to improve from draft to draft they should be advised that they are at risk of failing the candidacy exam. See Candidacy Examination in “Year Three” below.

Grants
The Graduate Program offers small (maximum $250) and large (maximum $1,000) grants to support summer archival research, particularly early exploration of potential dissertation topics. The competition is announced every spring.

In addition, many students apply for external grants to fund dissertation research in their second or third year. These grants are often submitted in advance of the candidacy examination and dissertation prospectus defense.

Your role as adviser: Encourage your students to attend the annual DGS workshop on grant writing, held every fall term. Encourage your students to apply for summer research grants at the end of their first and second year to explore potential sources for their dissertation research. These grants act as seed money for external grants to support field research once the student has advanced to candidacy. Review the grant application with the student to offer guidance on grant writing. Help them identify potential sources of external grants for their field of study.
Teaching Portfolio:
The portfolio includes a teaching philosophy statement, a sample syllabus for a lower division course in their broad primary field, a sample syllabus for an upper division course in their field of specialization, a statement of teaching objectives and goals for each course, and supporting material such as paper assignments, bibliographies, and sample examinations. It is submitted along with the field essays as part of the candidacy examination. Ideally, this exercise gives students two courses they can teach immediately upon getting a job.

A PowerPoint presentation on how to write a teaching portfolio is available on the History Graduate Program web site under the Handbooks link.

Your role as adviser: Help your student select appropriate courses to develop for the portfolio. Talk to them about your own approach to teaching, including the difference between lower division and upper division courses and about designing classes to achieve particular goals or learning objectives. Review the PowerPoint presentation to understand what the students are expected to complete. Review the draft portfolio to help the student refine it before submitting it for the candidacy examination.

Year One and Two review of progress toward degree
Students typically take two full academic years to reach this point. Required credit hours take three semesters of full time enrollment to complete. The additional outside work on language examinations, the field essays, and the teaching portfolio add a semester to the program of most students. All of the above elements must be completed before students may take their candidacy examination. Although some take their candidacy examination in the fourth semester, most will do so in the fifth semester.

Your role as adviser: encourage your students to keep on track with these requirements and offer them timely feedback on queries and drafts. Consider setting deadlines for each element of the program to move them through. This is particularly true of the field essays. Encourage them to apply for internal and external grants in advance of their candidacy exams. Remind them that once they defend their essays and dissertation prospectus they will be on their way. Encourage them to take advantage of the colloquium events sponsored on campus and in the region. Encourage your students to meet with the DGS to have a program check up each year or every 18 credit hours.
YEAR THREE

Candidacy Examination:
The candidacy examination is an oral examination of the PhD student’s three field essays and teaching portfolio. Ideally, this examination takes place no later than the fifth semester of full time study. Students must have completed all coursework (24 credit hours) and foreign language requirements (one language at high proficiency or two languages at average proficiency) before taking the candidacy examination. Doctoral students usually write their field essays between the end of their second semester and the end of their second year. It is up to each examiner to determine when the essay written for them is ready for the exam. The primary field examiner is responsible for approving the teaching portfolio for dissemination to the committee.

Note that the graduate program must submit the REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT A DOCTORAL CANDIDACY EXAMINATION form to the Graduate School the semester before the examination takes place. (This is found on the Graduate School web site. Click on the tab for Faculty and Staff. It is called “Candidacy Examination” under the Forms subheading.)

The candidacy examination is conducted by the three field advisers, who will receive and read copies of all three essays and the teaching portfolio. The purpose of the examination is to demonstrate that the student has acquired the knowledge needed to teach at the college level or to function as a professional historian in other contexts.

The procedure is as follows: the student will confer with the examiners to identify a proposed examination date and will complete Graduate School form one semester before the examination will take place. One month before the examination date, once all three essays have met the approval of their individual examiners and the teaching portfolio is completed, the candidate will provide copies of all these materials to the three examiners. The student will confirm the date with the Graduate Secretary, who will schedule the room and prepare the evaluation forms.

The examiners will examine the student on each of the three essays and the portfolio. Students must successfully defend all elements of the examination in order to pass the exam. If they fail to defend one essay, they will have the opportunity to reexamine on
that essay alone. If they fail to defend two of the three essays, their admission to the doctoral program will be terminated.

At the conclusion of the oral examination the examination committee will vote on whether the student has passed all elements of the candidacy examination. If successful, the student will be certified to the Graduate School as a candidate for the Ph.D. degree.

*Your role as adviser:* Keep your student on track to complete the essays in a timely manner and advise the student to get feedback on drafts of essays written for the other examiners. Work with the student and the other examiners during the semester BEFORE the exam to find a two-hour block of time to hold the exam and to submit the required form to the Graduate School. The History Graduate office will find a room and prepare the paperwork.

*Note that the examination must take place during an academic semester and that the student must be registered in something in order to take the exam. Students usually either enroll in HIST 756 Directed Research or HIST 799 Dissertation Research. HIST 799 is only permitted IF the student is also going to defend the prospectus before the end of the semester. If there is any doubt about the prospectus defense, advise your student to enroll in HIST 756 Directed Research.*

*If reexamination is required for one of the three essays or the teaching portfolio, the student will revise and resubmit the essay to the examiners. There is no specific policy on this, but given that the student will need to reapply to the Graduate School to retake the candidacy examination you should expect that the follow up will take place one semester after the original examination. If the student fails to satisfy the examiners on the second attempt, admission to the doctoral program will be terminated.*
Dissertation Prospectus and Prospectus Defense:

Upon passing the candidacy examination, the PhD candidate will write and defend a dissertation prospectus based on the proposed topic he or she has developed over previous semesters with the dissertation director. The prospectus defense normally takes about an hour during which the committee will discuss the prospectus with the student to offer suggestions, constructive criticism, or revisions required for approval. It can take place any time after the candidacy examination.

The prospectus defense committee needs three members, the dissertation director and two additional graduate faculty members. The prospective director will serve as chair of this committee. The other members should be faculty who will likely serve on the subsequent dissertation defense committee, but the dissertation defense committee does not have to be the same as the prospectus defense committee.

The procedure is similar to the candidacy examination: when the adviser and the student agree the student is ready to defend the prospectus, they will work together to form the committee and will identify a date and time convenient to all members. The student will notify the History Graduate office of the date and time. We will reserve a room and prepare the evaluation forms.

When the prospectus has been approved, the Director of Graduate Studies will nominate the dissertation director to the College and Graduate School. Dissertation directors must be senior (tenured) members of the Graduate School, although full (untenured tenure-track) members may direct a dissertation as long as a senior member is listed as co-director. Once the director is tenured and their graduate faculty status has been revised, we will resubmit the paperwork to designate them as the sole dissertation director.

Your role as adviser: Help the student craft a solid prospectus and talk to them about what to expect in the defense. If you see any potential problems arise during the defense be sure to put them in writing and articulate them to the student. Doubts do not preclude successful defense, but you should not send your student into the field unaware of your concerns. This may lead to substandard research that puts the student in jeopardy of failure.

The same requirements as candidacy apply: the prospectus defense must take place during an academic term and the student must be registered in HIST 756 or HIST 799
YEARS FOUR AND FIVE

History 799: Dissertation Research and Writing

Once your student has successfully defended the dissertation prospectus, he or she will enroll in History 799 “Dissertation research and writing.” Enrollment must be continuous, including summer term, until the dissertation is defended. Students may take as many or as few credits as they like in any term, from 1 to 15, but a maximum of 36 hours may be counted toward the degree (falling to 18 credit hours for students entering in the 2012-2013 academic year). If a student needs more time and goes beyond the maximum number of hours, the Graduate School simply disregards the extra hours. The credit hours do no harm to the student, other than to cost them money. If a student fails to enroll in HIST 799 without requesting a leave of absence, their admission to the degree program will be terminated.

The History Graduate office may periodically ask dissertation directors to write a report on their contact with students enrolled in 799 to evaluate their progress toward completion. There is no penalty for failing to make progress; this is simply a way for the Director of Graduate Studies to assess progress of doctoral candidates through the program. Failure to defend within six years of being advanced to candidacy results in the termination of the candidate’s admission to the program.

HIST 799 will receive a grade of Incomplete for every term until the dissertation is successfully defended. After the dissertation defense, the director will submit a grade change form to assign a final grade to the dissertation.

Your role as adviser: You are the principal contact between student and department during this part of the program. Your most important job is to keep in close contact with your student to encourage good progress toward completion and to offer feedback on work in progress. After the field essays, the dissertation is the most intimidating part of the doctoral program. Do not leave it up to your students to get in touch with you! The Graduate School imposes a limitation of time on the doctoral program, so there is real peril to the unsupported student who finds themselves at the end of nine years without a dissertation or with a dissertation that does not meet the standards of the department or the profession. Request chapters in draft form. Offer timely feedback for revising and editing. STRONGLY SUGGEST THEY PUBLISH AN ARTICLE WHILE WRITING THEIR DISSERTATION, TO IMPROVE THEIR C.V. FOR THE JOB MARKET.
Encourage your student to keep Graduate School policies, procedures, and deadlines in mind while writing the dissertation. The Graduate School has final editorial say over all dissertations, so it is in the student’s best interest to follow Graduate School editorial directions as they write.

Public presentation of research
Within three years after a doctoral candidate’s dissertation topic has been approved, the candidate must present a public colloquium on the dissertation in progress. This is normally done through the department’s brown bag or the History Graduate Student Association annual conference. The Graduate Catalog specifies that the colloquium be evaluated by a faculty committee and found satisfactory in order for the candidate to continue in the program.

Your role as adviser: Make your student aware of this provision, and use the provision as an opportunity to encourage them to present their research at major conferences. We rarely are in the position of having to formally evaluate the student’s colloquium presentation because the evaluation is done through post-presentation Q&A sessions in the case of the brown bag and in panel commentary in the case of conferences. It will be instituted in cases when students do not present their research in such a public forum, however. Students at this point in the program should have their eye on building their C.V. for future employment. Conference presentations, especially at major conferences appropriate to their field of study, are an important part of this process and count as satisfying this degree requirement. Encourage your students to submit these papers to journals for publication to the same end.
The Dissertation Committee

It is an oddity of the graduate program that no formal dissertation committee exists until the dissertation defense, but it is true. Doctoral candidates ideally will have worked with various field advisers throughout the process, but the formal committee is convened only for the defense. Potential committee members should be contacted to determine their willingness to participate well in advance of the defense.

The committee will consist of four or five members selected by the candidate and the adviser. The dissertation director is chair. Other members must include two or three other history faculty members and one member from outside the department, chosen for her or his interest or expertise in some aspect of the dissertation topic. According to Graduate School regulations, a majority of members of the committee must be senior members of the graduate faculty (e.g. Associate Professor or Professor), and one member, but no more than one, may be from another institution. The history members will probably include those who served on the dissertation prospectus committee, although this is not a requirement. These members should be chosen by the dissertation director and the candidate. No member of the faculty is required to accept the invitation to serve on the committee.

The committee must be approved in advance by the Dean, currently one month before the scheduled defense. The History Graduate office has a form to nominate the proposed members of the committee. We will prepare the form, collect members’ signatures, and send it to the Graduate School for approval. In addition, the Dean of the Graduate School will designate an individual to serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member. This “Dean’s Designee” is chosen by the Graduate School; it is not the department’s responsibility.

The dissertation defense is scheduled once the Graduate School has received the committee form and a copy of the dissertation to provide to the dean’s designee. This paperwork must be submitted within the first six weeks of the semester.
Your role as adviser: Timing is everything here. Your student must enroll in 799 in every semester including the term when the dissertation defense takes place. The defense must take place during an academic term. The paperwork to schedule the defense along with a paper copy of the dissertation is due to the Graduate School no later than the sixth week of the semester in which your student wants to defend the dissertation AND at least three weeks in advance of the defense. Letting that deadline slip will mean putting off the defense for months. Line up the dissertation committee members—including the outside member—well before the dissertation is completed.

The Dissertation Defense

Once the candidate has determined the date and time in consultation with the committee members and informs the History Graduate office, the Graduate Secretary will schedule the room, make up flyers to announce the defense, and prepare the paperwork for the Graduate School.

The defense is an oral examination of approximately two hours and is open to the public. The department requires the candidate to make a brief presentation of the dissertation at the beginning of the defense and to answer questions from the audience at the end. The candidate should be prepared to discuss questions relevant to the dissertation, including its thesis, organization, sources, scholarly contribution, and relationship to other work in the field.

The committee may suggest or require changes. These will be completed by the candidate in advance of the deadline set by the Graduate School, usually one month prior to the end of the semester. Once the post-defense dissertation is copyedited and approved by the Graduate School, the degree is awarded.

Your role as adviser: You have two main roles here. First, submit a grade change form for HIST 799. Second, bask in the successful completion of your doctoral student.
SOME RULES AND REQUIREMENTS ALONG THE WAY

Limitation of Time
The Graduate School requires that all elements of the Ph.D. be completed within nine consecutive years from the time when the student first enrolled.

It is important for advisers to get their students to take this limitation of time seriously, because failure to defend the dissertation within nine years of first enrollment will require course revalidations.

Failure to defend within six years of being advanced to candidacy results in the termination of the candidate’s admission to the program. They will have to apply for reinstatement. It is vital that students be encouraged to make steady progress through the program.

Revalidation
When students take longer than nine years to complete the degree, they will need to revalidate the courses that expired. The revalidation procedure is as follows: the student must inform the Director of Graduate Studies that they want to revalidate the course and submit their request to the relevant faculty member by the third week of the semester in which they intend to graduate. They will be asked to demonstrate current knowledge of the subject matter of the original course topic through one of several methods. These include, but are not limited to, an annotated bibliography, historiographical essay, or oral examination reviewing the significant works in the field written in the past decade. The length, format, and due date of the revalidation requirement will be determined by the faculty member in discussion with the student.

Enrollment Requirements
Graduate students must be enrolled in courses in every term during which they satisfy a degree requirement. Unless they are a TA, they can usually enroll in a single credit hour of directed reading to satisfy this Graduate School requirement.

Once they reach HIST 799, students must maintain continuous enrollment until the dissertation defense. Because of the cost per credit hour, this can become very expensive if students fail to make progress. If a student fails to enroll in HIST 799 without requesting a leave of absence, their admission to the degree program will be terminated.
Limitations on Independent Studies and Directed Research

The Graduate School allows a maximum of 12-15 credit hours of 736 Independent Study and 12-15 credit hours of 756 Directed Research in a geographic field. Advise your students to keep this in mind when deciding what classes to register for.

Important Deadlines

Letters of recommendations for TA renewals: January 15

Internal assessment forms: as soon as possible after the end of the academic term

Letters of recommendation for new applications: October 1, January 15, March 1

Letters of recommendation for Grad School awards like Lunsford and University Fellowships, and Dissertation Completion Fellowships: early to mid February

Nominations for outstanding PhD student and outstanding TA: mid February

Graduate School deadlines for candidacy exams, prospectus defense, and dissertation defense: go to Graduate School web site, click on Current Students tab at the top, and find Graduation Deadlines under “Deadlines” heading.

There’s a form for that!

The Graduate Program has a Forms page on our web site called “Graduate Forms for Professors.” If you can’t find the form you need, contact the graduate secretary to inquire where to find it.

NOTE: the Graduate Program office in the Department of History needs to receive all signed paperwork at least one business day in advance of the Graduate School deadline.