

HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN HISTORY

Northern Illinois University

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I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the NIU History Graduate Program! This handbook describes the procedures for graduate study in history and explains the rules and regulations governing our program. We hope that students and faculty will consult it frequently and offer suggestions for its improvement.

Our intention is to provide a useful description of the way that the program works. This handbook outlines formal rules set by the Graduate School and the department, guidelines established by the History Graduate Committee, and choices to be made by students and advisers. Procedures may change and exceptions may sometimes be necessary. Though this handbook aims to offer a definitive statement of departmental policies, students and faculty should still consult the Graduate Catalog, the History Department's Director of Graduate Studies, and appropriate representatives of the Graduate School as needed.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. History Department Office and Email

Graduate students are urged to stay in close touch with the department. They may request mailboxes in Zulauf Hall. Teaching assistants are automatically assigned mailboxes. Students should check their email and mailboxes often because we frequently send out notices about upcoming events and reminders of important obligations and deadlines. Graduate students should keep the office manager informed regarding any changes to their mailing and email addresses or phone number. They are ultimately responsible for checking their NIU student email accounts for notifications from the department.

2. Advising

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is responsible for monitoring department and university regulations, keeping official records, maintaining contacts with the Graduate School, and issuing permissions for courses. Students newly enrolled in a degree program are required to consult with the DGS before registering for courses. Other students must consult the director regularly to secure course permissions and to insure proper construction of a program and timely meeting of requirements. In addition to consulting with the Director of Graduate Studies, students also need to seek regular advice from faculty members in their fields of study. Advising by specialists in one's field is essential to help determine which courses, areas, and special skills one should be emphasizing and for identifying promising research topics.

3. Institutional Structure of the Graduate Program

The History Graduate Program functions under the rules established in the Graduate School by the Dean and the Graduate Council, a university-wide body consisting of elected and appointed faculty members from the various colleges, plus one graduate student member from each college. The student member from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is chosen by the College Student Advisory Committee from the nominees of each department. History nominates its candidate upon the recommendation of the History Graduate Student Association.

4. Forms

During a student's time at NIU, they may need to submit various forms to the department for a variety of purposes. Students may find a collection of the forms that they may need in the History Department Office or in the History Graduate Students' [Sharepoint page](#) on O365.

5. The Graduate Committee

The Graduate Committee oversees questions and interpretation of policy, advising, daily functioning of the program, relations with the Graduate School and the university, recruitment, publicity, assessment, and the graduate curriculum. Each member, student and faculty, has an equal vote, and decisions are by majority votes. However, matters concerning admissions, financial aid, research grants, and individual graduate students are decided by the faculty members alone at a separate meeting. Major changes to the graduate program must be considered and endorsed by the full faculty of the department in accordance with departmental governance policy.

6. Graduate Student Learning Expectations

The NIU Graduate Program in History seeks to develop specialized knowledge and skills in

the discipline of history for our students. Building on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students possess, the history graduate program trains students to create and communicate original contributions to their chosen fields of historical expertise.

At the **master's level** students should be qualified to teach introductory courses at a community college or to employ their research, writing and analytical skills in secondary education, Public History, and other non-academic positions. Students demonstrate this ability through completion of two field essays in geographical, chronological, or thematic areas of the discipline that serve as the MA comprehensive exam. In addition to acquiring a broad understanding of the major questions, debates, and approaches, MA students also learn how to conduct original research. Research seminars are exploratory and introductory for MA students. They provide MA students with the skills to produce a paper that contributes to knowledge in the form of the master's essay. The master's essay should make a significant original contribution based on research with primary sources and knowledge of secondary sources and demonstrate a student's ability to produce and effectively communicate new knowledge. The master's essay is the primary assessment instrument for the MA degree. For MA students preparing for doctoral work, acquiring a research tool (either average proficiency in a foreign language or proficiency in quantitative methods) demonstrates their mastery of a specific skill that will aid them in contributing to the discipline of history.

At the **doctoral level** students should be qualified to teach introductory and advanced courses in their primary field and introductory courses in their secondary fields of study at the university level. Students are trained in the research and writing skills of professional historians to make their own original contribution to historical scholarship. Research seminars require PhD students to conduct original research in primary sources that engages major questions of historical interpretation and grapples successfully with existing historiography, while perfecting the art of clear and coherent prose. Doctoral coursework builds mastery of the historiographies of their fields and prepares them for qualifying exams. These exams demonstrate a deep knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their primary field of specialization and a competent knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their secondary fields. The teaching portfolio assesses the PhD student's ability to design and organize coursework. For PhD students, fulfilling the Graduate School's research tool requirement includes demonstrating either average proficiency in two foreign languages, high proficiency in one foreign language, or average proficiency in one foreign language and proficiency in quantitative methods. This demonstrates their mastery of specific skills that will aid them in contributing to the discipline of history. The dissertation prospectus assesses student preparation for dissertation research and writing by having the student explain concisely the dissertation's topic, periodization, methodology, historiographical framework, and primary sources. The dissertation is the primary assessment instrument of the PhD student. It is a book-length work of original scholarship that demonstrates mastery of the research, analytical, and writing skills of a professional historian. It is based upon primary sources, engages major questions of historical interpretation, grapples successfully with existing historiography, and consists of clear and coherent prose. It displays creativity, insight, and the ability to conduct independent research.

III. THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

The master's program offers broad preparation for students interested in extending their undergraduate knowledge, seeking jobs in historically-related fields like archival work, museum work, editing, or consulting, and seeking teaching positions at the secondary or community college level. It involves greater specialization in geographical, chronological, or thematic areas of history than at the undergraduate level. The master's degree consists of at least 30 credit hours of coursework (36 credit hours for students doing a concentration in public history).

1. MA Admission

In considering admission, the Department takes a broad look at all available evidence of the applicant's preparation to do graduate-level work in history. Grades in relevant subjects, letters of recommendation from university professors, language skills, the application essay, and writing sample are carefully reviewed. The application essay should explain the student's preparation and motivation for graduate study in history along with their geographic and thematic interests. Currently the deadlines are January 15 for Fall admission with departmental funding, March 1 for Fall admission without departmental funding, and October 1 (international students) or November 1 (domestic students) for Spring admission without departmental funding.

2. MA Fields

The department offers a wide range of geographical, chronological, or thematic areas for students to study. MA students are expected to begin to specialize in specific fields of the historical discipline and choose courses that directly or indirectly relate to the two required field essays for their MA comprehensive examination.

3. MA Coursework

Master's students take a mixture of reading seminars, research seminars, and lecture courses. Students must take at least three 600-level reading seminars and at least two 700-level research seminars plus HIST 756 (Directed Research). They also may take up to four 500-level lecture courses, which are paired with upper-level undergraduate courses.

The 500-level lecture courses are useful to acquire basic knowledge of a field and can cover specialties in greater depth than thematic seminars. Reading seminars (600-level) emphasize reading in the professional literature and analytical discussion of interpretive material. Research seminars (700-level) help students develop essential investigative, interpretive, and writing skills.

4. MA Comprehensive Examination (Field Essays)

Successful completion of the MA comprehensive examination is a requirement of the degree and takes the form of two field essays. Each field essay typically asks the student to express a sophisticated view on a major historiographical question in a field. The field essay's purpose is to demonstrate professional competence (the ability to teach, do research, or work in public history) in that field. The two field essays are supposed to concern separate themes and therefore must avoid excessive overlap.

Each student will have a separate examiner for each of their field essays: a main adviser, who will also usually direct completion of the master's essay, and a secondary adviser. It is the student's responsibility to identify appropriate faculty members in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and ascertain their willingness to advise a field essay. Students

should notify the DGS of their intention, indicating which two examiners they would like to have evaluate their essays.

The two professors will prepare essay topics or questions and evaluate the student's essays. The field essays might ask one to evaluate how historians have addressed a particular question or to review a body of work more generally. The general topic and reading list for each essay will be determined in consultation between the student and the field examiners no later than the third semester of a full-time student's program of study or after 15 credit hours of coursework for a part-time student. Students can expect to read 20 to 30 books (or equivalent material as articles) and to write essays of at least 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length. They are encouraged to use the readings and papers from their reading seminars and 500-level courses as a starting point for their field essays, but must then work with a faculty examiner to develop a full field essay from any previous material.

The field essays should be submitted electronically to both examiners no later than the ninth week of the student's final semester in the program. The two examiners will read both field essays, consult with each other, and arrive at a joint assessment of the student's overall performance. The field essays (and thus the MA comprehensive exam) will be judged as "pass" or "fail." A candidate who fails may, with the consent of his or her committee, have an opportunity to rewrite the papers. A second failure is final.

Note that Graduate School regulations specify that a student must be registered for one or more credit hours during the semester in which the MA comprehensive examination is taken.

5. Master's Essay

A final research requirement of the MA program is the completion of a master's essay. In addition to taking 6 credit hours in research seminars which are topical, thematic, or methodological in nature, MA students must enroll in 3 credit hours of HIST 756 (Directed Research) under the guidance of the student's primary adviser. This is usually done during the student's final semester in the program. While in HIST 756, the student will expand and revise one or both of the seminar papers (in the latter case if the topic is the same) to produce the final **master's essay**. The master's essay is expected to be of publishable length (between 35 and 40 double-spaced pages, including footnotes). Students are encouraged to deposit their final master's essays in the Huskie Commons.

A formal master's thesis is not required, but students who need to undertake a thesis for a PhD program at another institution may do so. The difference between a master's essay and a thesis is that the essay is thought of as comparable to a publishable article in length, whereas a thesis is usually longer and divided into chapters. In addition, the thesis is drawn up in accordance with the monitored guidelines set by the Graduate School and is deposited in the library. The essay, in contrast, is monitored solely by the History Department. Getting a thesis approved is thus a longer, more complicated process comparable to the submission of a doctoral dissertation. Either research project must result in a polished, well-organized piece of writing that makes an original contribution to knowledge based on rigorous primary research.

Students should discuss the timing of their research with advisers as soon as possible. As a general rule, formal research work should commence as soon as practical, commensurate with the student having demonstrated the necessary proficiencies.

6. MA Language and Research Tool Requirement

MA candidates are required to demonstrate **average proficiency** in either an approved foreign language or quantitative methods. The tool selected should be consistent with the student's research interests and must have the approval of the appropriate advisers. The various ways of fulfilling [this requirement](#) are described in "[Additional Policies, Opportunities, and Information](#)." The only exception is those focusing on United States or British history who do not intend to pursue graduate study beyond the MA degree.

7. Summary of MA Requirements

- * At least 30 credit hours total (36 for a Concentration in Public History)
- * 9 credit hours must be 600-level reading seminars
- * 6 credit hours must be 700-level research seminars
- * No more than 12 credit hours may be in 500-level courses
- * No more than 6 credit hours may be taken outside the History Department
- * Average proficiency in a language or research tool
- * HIST 756 to complete a "**master's essay**"
- * Two field essays as part of a **MA comprehensive exam** completed under faculty supervision

Students are responsible for tracking their own progress through their degree program. They should be in regular contact with the Director of Graduate Studies and their faculty advisors to assure that they are fulfilling the degree requirements. Students must submit an application for graduation well in advance. The Graduate School will then conduct a degree audit that will flag any missing requirements.

8. MA with a Concentration in Public History

This concentration is designed to meet the needs of students seeking special preparation for careers in public and private historical agencies, archives, museums and historical societies, and research and consulting firms. A student pursuing this program must complete 24 of the usual 30 credit hours from the traditional MA degree in history classes. All students doing a Concentration in Public History must take HIST 600 (Internship in Public History) and either HIST 592 (Introduction to Public History) or ART 565 (Introduction to Museum Studies). They also must take at least two of the following electives: ANTH 562, ART 654, ART 655, ART 656, ART 657, HIST 594, COMS 557, or alternative elective courses approved by the Director of Graduate Studies or the Director of the Concentration in Public History.

Students pursuing a MA degree with the Concentration in Public History must satisfactorily complete a MA comprehensive examination (fulfilled by two field essays) and a master's essay (fulfilled through the course HIST 756). In addition, Public History students must complete a report or project related to the internship and have it approved by the department's Director of the Concentration in Public History.

9. Policy on Independent Studies for MAs Students

The department limits the use of independent study courses (HIST 736) to exceptional circumstances where they are necessary for a student's program and when no reasonable alternative exists. The reason for this policy is the necessity of maintaining regular course offerings as well as the belief in the importance of encouraging an atmosphere of intellectual exchange among students. Accordingly, HIST 736 may not normally count toward the minimum 30 credit hours for the MA degree. MA students may only take independent studies if they complete more than 30 credit hours. For example, if a student needs to stay enrolled to complete their MA comprehensive exam

after finishing the rest of their coursework, the student usually enrolls in a single credit hour of HIST 736. For students specializing in areas where the department's course offerings are limited (for example, Ancient, African, and Medieval history), exceptions to the policy of prohibiting independent studies to count as required coursework may be made with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

10. Deposit of Master's Essay and Field Essays

Before graduating, all master's students are required to submit a final copy of their master's essay and the two field essays of their MA comprehensive examination to the office of the History Department. The major adviser will submit a written evaluation of the final paper directly to the office. Students completing master's theses should consult the Graduate School procedures for completion of this requirement.

11. MA Limitation of Time

Students must fulfill all requirements for the degree within a period of six consecutive years from their first graduate course, including transfer courses. This time limit is monitored by the Graduate School. If a course falls outside the six-year period, a student may retake the class with departmental approval, substitute another course of equivalent semester hours, or discuss with the Director of Graduate Studies the possibility of having the course "revalidated" (a process by which the student demonstrates current knowledge of the material to the satisfaction of appropriate faculty).

12. MA Application for Graduation

Students must apply to graduate on MyNIU several months before the end of the semester. Registration and Records supplies the deadlines and information about graduation at <https://www.reg.niu.edu/registration-records/graduation/index.shtml>. Failure to register to graduate will delay receipt of one's degree.

IV. THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

The doctorate is the highest degree available to students of history and often their entry into the historical profession. The doctorate is an appropriate degree for students seeking teaching, administrative, or research positions in universities, colleges, community colleges, foundations, government agencies, and major libraries and archives. It is appropriate for those who want to develop their historical understanding to the fullest extent in a rigorous professional atmosphere.

1. PhD Admission

Because of the length of time and the high level of knowledge and analytical skill necessary to complete the doctoral program, the Graduate Committee considers PhD applications with great care. Students must already possess a master's degree in a relevant field to be admitted to the PhD program. For students pursuing an MA in History at NIU, they must apply again for admission to the PhD program. The department takes a broad look at all available evidence of the applicant's preparation to do doctoral-level work in history. Grades in relevant subjects, letters of recommendation from university professors, language skills, the application essay, and writing sample are carefully reviewed. By the time of admission to the PhD program, it is expected that students will have started to pursue clear fields of specialization and made significant progress in the language and research tools required of them. They should ideally possess ideas about potential dissertation topics. The availability and willingness of a faculty advisor to work with a potential PhD student is also a major factor in admission decisions. Currently the deadlines are January 15 for Fall admission with departmental funding and March 1 for Fall admission without departmental funding.

2. PhD Coursework

To earn a PhD in History at NIU, doctoral students must complete a total of 72 credit hours, but these credit hours include 30 credit hours from a master's program and up to 18 credit hours that can be taken during dissertation writing as HIST 799. Thus, in practice the coursework that PhD students complete during their initial stage in the PhD program comes to at least 24 credit hours (typically 8 courses). For full time students, these courses should be taken during their first year and a half in the program. All PhD students are required to take two 700-level research seminars. The remaining six courses (18 credit hours) should come from 600-level reading seminars, independent studies with faculty advisors, and usually up to two applicable 500-level courses. Students should consult with their primary academic adviser before each semester to discuss the appropriate course selections for their program. After completing the 24 credit hours of coursework, doctoral students enroll in HIST 736 (while preparing for candidacy examination), HIST 756 (while preparing a dissertation prospectus), and HIST 799 (while researching and writing a dissertation).

3. Policy on Independent Studies for PhD Students

In general, the department encourages graduate students to enroll in the courses that are offered. It does so out of the necessity of maintaining regular course offerings as well as the belief in the importance of encouraging an atmosphere of intellectual exchange among students. At the PhD level, however, the department also recognizes the legitimate use of independent studies (HIST 736). Students contemplating taking an independent study should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and obtain the agreement of the faculty member in question. Typical reasons for enrolling in an independent study include the need for additional study in a field not otherwise being offered and preparation of PhD students for their field examinations.

4. PhD Academic Adviser

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) may act as a student's provisional adviser when they first enter the PhD program and will continue to help advise the student about the necessary degree requirements. As soon as possible, however, the student should identify their primary field adviser. This adviser will be a member of the Graduate Faculty and will be responsible for guiding the student's selection of courses, PhD fields, and field examiners. At a later stage in the program, the primary field adviser typically becomes the student's dissertation director. To be a dissertation director, the faculty member must be a senior member of the Graduate Faculty.

5. PhD Qualifying Exam (often waived)

In some cases, students are conditionally admitted to the PhD program. These students may be required to take a qualifying examination before the end of their first semester of coursework at NIU. The purpose of the qualifying examination is to assess a student's preparation for doctoral-level work, especially dissertation research. Students who received their MA degree from NIU will normally be exempt from the qualifying examination unless the examiners of their MA comprehensive examination stipulated that they should be required to take it. The DGS also frequently waives the qualifying examination requirement for students who earned their MA degrees elsewhere. This decision will be based on the student's previous academic record, performance during the first semester of doctoral work, and the recommendation of the student's adviser.

The examination, if required, is normally conducted by a committee of three faculty members representing potential candidacy examination fields. The examination is oral and lasts for approximately an hour. The committee may question the student broadly on topics related to these fields and their literature and more closely on topics that they have studied or researched in their previous graduate work. The committee may also ask about the student's plans for a dissertation topic. This is not considered a "field" exam, but rather an assessment of the student's scholarly potential, capacity for critical analysis, and historical knowledge to date. Following the examination, the committee will consult and reach a decision. The committee chair will inform the student of the outcome at that time.

6. PhD Fields

Doctoral students select three fields in which they will gain significant mastery as scholars. These fields depart significantly from the fields at the master's level in that they are not tied explicitly to coursework requirements or necessarily limited to an established array of geographical and temporal options. Instead, doctoral students work with faculty to construct one primary and two secondary fields that shape their expertise as a historian. Students must pass written and oral candidacy exams on these three fields.

The three fields should both make sense intellectually and be conducive to success in a student's chosen career. Field preparation and evaluation are meant to help students to develop a breadth of knowledge of the literature in their chosen fields. Doctoral students are expected to master a deep knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their primary field of specialization. They are expected to master a competent knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their secondary fields. Together, the fields prepare the student for close investigation into a particular historical question when developing the dissertation prospectus.

Primary and secondary fields should be complementary to afford the student the best possible

preparation for original research in their chosen area. The following are the criteria for field selection. The primary field must be a recognized field of study in the profession. The two secondary fields must represent recognized fields of study within the profession. One may be closely related geographically, chronologically, theoretically, or thematically to the primary field. One must be distant from the primary field, either geographically or chronologically. Either (but not both) of the secondary fields may be outside the field of history, but that is not a requirement. The exact character of each field will be determined by consultation between the student and the proposed examiner. No one faculty member can examine a student in more than one field, nor is any faculty member obliged to agree to a field desired by a student.

Students are encouraged to discuss field selection with their primary field adviser and with appropriate faculty members upon entering the program and to make selections early enough to plan a coherent program of coursework. No later than the beginning of the student's third semester of full-time PhD study (and preferably by the end of the second semester), students are required to submit a list of their proposed exam fields and examiners to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Fields must be approved by the Graduate Committee, the DGS, and the student's advisor.

7. PhD Candidacy Examination

PhD students must pass written and oral candidacy examinations. These examinations require the student to demonstrate professional competence in three fields. At NIU, students typically advance to candidacy before defending their dissertation prospectus. Per Graduate School requirement, a form scheduling the PhD candidacy examination must be submitted by the semester before the oral exam takes place.

a. *Written Exam*

The written examinations are in the form of field essays and a teaching portfolio.

i. Field Essays

Essay topics are to be determined in consultation with the field examiners. They are typically historiographical essays asking the candidate to synthesize the literature around a major question or debate in that field. Students can expect to read approximately 60 books in their primary field and write a field essay up to 50 double-spaced pages in length. Between 25 and 35 books are typically assigned for each secondary field and the essays run about 20 to 25 double-spaced pages in length. These are general guidelines only. Some advisers may require different amounts of work to prepare students for each of their essays.

Essays may be written over a period of time and should be revised and updated as students' mastery of the field develops. It is the expectation that students will work on these essays until the field director is satisfied with the quality of the essay. It is possible, however, that a student fails to achieve the standards set by the examiner. A student who fails a field essay will normally be permitted to revise and resubmit the essay. A second failure will ordinarily be final and result in termination of the student from the program. There are a limited number of circumstances in which a student who has twice failed to satisfy the essay requirement of an individual examiner may substitute a different field. Under no circumstances, however, will any student who has failed two different field essays be allowed to continue in the doctoral program. Once the examiners are satisfied with the essays they directed, students will submit electronic copies of all three essays and the teaching portfolio to all examiners in anticipation of the

oral examination, which is to take place within one month of the submission of the essays. This should normally take place by the fifth semester after a full-time student has entered the doctoral program.

ii. *Teaching Portfolio*

Students will also prepare a teaching portfolio. It will include two sample syllabi (usually one for an upper-division course for a topic in the student's major field and the other for a lower-division survey course); a teaching philosophy statement; and supporting material such as a paper assignment, a book synopsis assignment, or an examination. The syllabus for the lower division course could be developed from one of the courses in which the student was a TA. The teaching portfolio is reviewed and approved by the student's primary advisor.

b. Oral Exam

When all the field essays and teaching portfolio have been completed, there will be a two-hour oral examination, which should normally be taken no later than the fifth semester after a full-time student has entered the doctoral program. Graduate School regulations specify that a student must be registered for one or more credit hours during the semester in which a comprehensive exam, including the PhD oral candidacy exam and oral defense of the dissertation, is taken. Therefore, it may be necessary to register for HIST 736 (Independent Study) during the semester in which a student takes their PhD oral candidacy exam. At the conclusion of the oral examination, the committee will decide whether the student has passed the candidacy examination. Upon satisfactory completion of the candidacy examination, the student will be certified by the Graduate School as a candidate for the PhD degree. PhD candidacy is also contingent upon prior completion of required coursework and completion of the research skills proficiency requirement.

8. PhD Language and Research Tools Requirement

Doctoral students must demonstrate ability in foreign languages or quantitative research methods. These skills are extremely important for conducting professional-level research and engaging in wide-ranging scholarly conversations. To meet this requirement, a PhD student may demonstrate **average proficiency** in **two** approved foreign languages, **average proficiency** in **one** approved foreign language and in **quantitative methods**, or **high proficiency** in **one** approved foreign language. Descriptions of average and high proficiency, along with the various ways of fulfilling [these requirements](#), are described in "[Additional Policies, Opportunities, and Information](#)." The language and research tool option selected must be relevant to the student's fields of study and consistent with the requirements of their proposed dissertation research. It should be fulfilled as early as practical during one's PhD work, and must be fulfilled in order to be admitted to PhD candidacy.

9. HIST 799 (Doctoral Research and Dissertation)

Once a student has completed coursework and passed candidacy exams, they should begin enrolling in History 799 (Doctoral Research and Dissertation). One may do this for the first time in the semester in which they defend their dissertation prospectus, or may choose to wait until the term after the prospectus defense to enroll in HIST 799. By the time a PhD student graduates, they must fulfill three requirements with respect to this enrollment. First, they must reach a total of 72 credit hours to earn a PhD, including the 30 credit hours from an MA degree and 24 credit hours of doctoral coursework. That means that a student needs at least 18 additional credit hours beyond coursework. Second, the Graduate School stipulates that all doctoral students must complete at least 12 credit hours of 799. Third, all students must be

continuously enrolled in at least one credit hour of HIST 799 every semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) after defending their prospectus while pursuing their degree. HIST 799 remains marked as incomplete on the student's transcript until they defend their dissertation.

10. The PhD Dissertation

a. *Dissertation Topic and Director*

Students should be thinking about a possible dissertation topic throughout PhD coursework and preparation for their candidacy examination. They will have completed a couple of research papers that lead them in that direction. By this point they will have found a primary field advisor. This advisor almost always becomes the director of the student's dissertation. Dissertation directors must be senior members of the Graduate Faculty by the time the student defends their prospectus.

Upon identifying a general topic and a faculty expert in the area willing to serve as an adviser, the student should consult with them to work out the parameters of a viable topic and determine what sources and methods will be needed to complete it. If a student is not at this stage, either because previous explorations have not proved fruitful or because their interests have changed, then they should proceed immediately to identify a new topic and talk with the faculty member who can direct it.

In order to complete a dissertation, students must have a faculty director qualified in the field in question who is willing to serve as the director. Most faculty members will be pleased to discuss this possibility. However, a professor may decline to direct a student's work if they do not feel qualified in that area, do not consider the topic viable, do not have confidence in the student's ability to complete it satisfactorily, or do not have sufficient time to provide appropriate direction. The department cannot guarantee a director and cannot necessarily supply the expertise for any topic a student may choose, even a viable one. It is the student's responsibility, therefore, to find a topic that is tenable given the resources available in NIU's program.

Once a student has a potential topic and prospective director, they will need to discuss the proposed topic with other faculty members who might become part of their dissertation committee. They will need to assemble a committee of their director and two additional Graduate Faculty members to approve their dissertation topic. 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. It is in the student's interest to enlist the best possible faculty experts – in terms of both methodology and topic – so that they will have the benefit of well-informed and productive feedback and criticism. These same faculty members can provide guidance and advice if a student encounters problems in their research.

There are no formulas for finding a good dissertation subject. A dissertation should be based principally on primary sources and must represent a substantial contribution to knowledge based on original scholarship. Its subject should meet the student's professional needs in terms of job applications and future publications. The topic should also be something that interests the student deeply because they will be devoting years of their life to its successful completion. The more one discusses possibilities with faculty experts and fellow students, the better. To get ideas, one might consult the American Historical Association's ["Directory of History Dissertations."](#)

b. *Dissertation Prospectus and Prospectus Defense*

Once a student has decided upon a topic and acquainted themselves with the relevant

secondary literature, they will develop a dissertation prospectus that will be read and discussed by their committee. Typically, the prospectus is completed after the student finishes their written and oral examinations and advances to candidacy, but this timing is not set in stone. During a semester when the student is working on their prospectus, they will often enroll in HIST 756 (Directed Research) or, if they have already advanced to candidacy, HIST 799 (Doctoral Research and Dissertation).

The prospectus should define the topic concisely, provide justifications for the topic's significance and periodization, present the dissertation's methodological approaches, place the topic within its historiographical framework, outline the major interpretive questions being asked, tentatively preview the arguments being developed, delineate the archival sources and other major primary source collections that will serve as the foundation for the dissertation, and provide, if possible, a tentative chapter outline. It should include a working bibliography as well. The prospectus will necessarily be a general statement, but should be as precise as one's present state of knowledge will permit. It is understood that at this stage a student cannot know exactly where the sources will lead them and will likely make modifications as they pursue the project. Major changes of topic will have to be approved by the committee.

Once the prospectus is ready, the dissertation director will arrange a meeting of an hour or so. There the committee will discuss the prospectus with the student. They will offer suggestions and constructive criticism and may require revisions. Once the topic is approved, the dissertation director must submit a topic approval form to the History Office.

c. *IRB Inquiry Form*

The Graduate School requires students writing a dissertation to file an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Inquiry Form. This should be done as soon as their research topic is approved. This form is available on the Graduate School website and must be submitted no later than the end of the first week of classes of the semester or term in which the student intends to defend the dissertation.

d. *Researching and Writing the Dissertation*

Research and writing a dissertation is both the hardest part of completing a doctoral degree and the element with the fewest specific instructions. Students should give free rein to their ingenuity, methodological skill, and imagination. Research, writing, and revision are parts of the process of preparing a dissertation. Sometimes students focus on conducting the bulk of their dissertation research first and then turn to the writing process. Other times students research and write separate chapters one after another. Revision is also an important and time-consuming aspect of the process, since initial drafts can always be improved. Students need to stay in close touch with their dissertation director and committee of faculty members while working on their dissertations. Dissertation directors often expect frequent progress reports and will review drafts of chapters and offer feedback. If one's research involves human subjects (e.g. depends upon questionnaires or oral interviews), one is required to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the project before data collection begins. It is also in a student's interest to consult the formatting requirements of the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Office while writing the dissertation, as the final dissertation will need to adhere to these guidelines.

e. *Colloquium Requirement*

Within three years of approval of their dissertation topics, doctoral students must give a public presentation on their dissertation in progress. The presentation may be part of the department's

“Brown Bag Colloquium Series.” The colloquium will be evaluated by a faculty committee and must be found satisfactory. A conference paper at a regional or national meeting may be substituted for the colloquium.

f. *Dissertation Committee*

Soon after or before a doctoral student advances to candidacy, a dissertation committee should be established with the dissertation director as chair. This committee will include between at least three and up to five members of NIU Graduate Faculty. The faculty members from the student’s candidacy examination and prospectus committee often serve on the dissertation committee. Professors from other universities may serve on a student’s dissertation committee as well, but they must first be approved as Graduate Scholar Faculty by the Graduate School at NIU. The Graduate School specifies the following criteria for voting members of a dissertation committee: at least half must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members at NIU, at least half must be senior members of the Graduate Faculty at NIU, and all members must belong to the NIU Graduate Faculty. A “Dissertation Committee Approval” form should be submitted to the Graduate School once the dissertation committee is formed.

g. *Oral Defense of Dissertation*

After a doctoral student’s dissertation is complete, the dissertation committee will conduct an oral defense. The “Request for Oral Defense” form must be sent to the Dean of the Graduate School at least three weeks in advance of a defense and **the student must be enrolled during the semester when the defense takes place**. Either the dean or the dean’s designee will serve as an ex officio, nonvoting member of all committees to participate in the oral defense of the dissertation. The Graduate School will also advertise the date, time, and location of the defense to the public, along with the title of the dissertation. 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. Both presentation and defense are open to the public. The remainder of the defense is an oral examination of approximately two hours in length. 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.

h. *Submitting the Final Version of a PhD Dissertation to the Graduate School*

After a successful oral defense of a PhD dissertation, the student will need to make any further revisions required by the dissertation committee and get final approval from them. At that point the student must submit the post-defense version of the dissertation to the Thesis and Dissertation Office of the Graduate School. There they will work with the student on any final corrections. Once all formatting and copy-editing corrections have been made, the student uploads the final dissertation. Students should plan on submitting their dissertation well in advance of the relevant deadlines since the revision process can be time consuming.

11. PhD Limitation of Time

The Graduate School requires doctoral students to finish all requirements for the PhD degree within a period of nine years immediately prior to graduation. Coursework taken to complete language or research-tool requirements is typically exempt from this timeframe requirement. In measuring the allotted time, students should remain mindful that it often takes at least a full semester to get readers’ comments, make corrections, and produce final corrected copies of a dissertation. Thus, the writing of the dissertation will have to be completed considerably earlier than the actual deadline. Extensions of time are granted only by the Dean of the Graduate School upon petition of the department. Students may have to demonstrate competency in

previous courses that fall outside this nine-year window.

12. PhD Application for Graduation

Students must apply to graduate on MyNIU several months before the end of the semester. Registration and Records supplies the deadlines and information about graduation at <https://www.reg.niu.edu/registration-records/graduation/index.shtml>. Failure to register to graduate will delay receipt of one's degree. Doctoral students should also make sure to submit their dissertation to the Thesis and Dissertation Office of the Graduate School well in advance of graduation.

V. GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS AND OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

The most significant source of financial support for history graduate students is provided in the form of graduate assistantships. Students who do not receive assistantship appointments in the History Department should be aware of the existence of assistantships in other institutional units on campus. These positions often require particular skills, and students apply for them like any job. In addition, history graduate students, depending on their field and expertise, may secure financial support through various affiliated centers on campus such as the Women and Gender Studies Program, the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, the Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability, and Energy, and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. The department is also sometimes able to place one history graduate student in a two-year paid internship in the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) program at the Regional History Center in NIU's Founder's Memorial Library.

The History Office usually receives notification of suitable openings available elsewhere on campus and forwards these via email to history graduate students. It is important to keep an eye out for these announcements. The Director of Graduate Studies can also advise students about the availability of fellowships, tuition waivers, and other forms of financial assistance.

1. Graduate Assistantships

a) *Application*

Application for an assistantship can be made once a year by filling out the appropriate form available online at <https://www.niu.edu/history/graduate/grad-application.shtml> and <https://www.grad.niu.edu/>. Assistantships are awarded for the fall to spring academic year. The departmental deadline for applying for the following academic year is January 15. Other units that employ graduate assistants may have different deadlines.

If a student already holds an assistantship in the department, they will receive an email late in the fall semester prompting them to apply for renewal. The application must be completed by January 15 and submitted to the History Office along with a letter of recommendation from a faculty member that ideally speaks to the student's academic abilities and performance as a teaching assistant. The renewal application form is available in the "History Graduate Student" webpage on O365 Sharepoint under "Graduate Student Forms."

Initial awards are made by the Graduate Committee on the basis of academic record, faculty recommendations, and successful progress toward the degree for students already in the program. Incumbents are reviewed in terms of successful performance of previously assigned assistantship duties as well as evidence of normal progress to the degree.

b) *Duties and Benefits*

Graduate assistants (GAs) are assigned to duties (20 hours/week) that aid the department in fulfilling its mission. GAs may be assigned as research assistants. However, the vast majority are teaching assistants (TAs) who assist in the department's undergraduate courses. TAs are assigned to specific faculty members teaching undergraduate courses and are expected to attend lectures, grade papers and other assignments, lead discussions or review sessions, hold office hours, and proctor exams. TAs may also be invited to give guest lectures. Duties vary according to the preferences and needs of individual faculty members.

Assignments are made each semester by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in

accordance with department guidelines. Priority is given to the professors with the largest classes and to those with the heaviest teaching load. While the fields of study of GAs are taken into account when making assignments, it is not always possible to match the assignment with a student's field. Faculty and TAs may register their preferences with the DGS.

Assistantship stipends are set by the Graduate Committee within budget constraints and stipend floors and ceilings established by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School. Stipends are differentiated by level: at present there is one rate for MA students and one for PhD students. Stipends cover nine months from August 16 to May 15. In addition to the monetary stipend, GAs receive a partial waiver of tuition. However, they are required to pay the remainder of the tuition and student fees. GAs are entitled to a partial tuition waiver during the summer session either preceding or following the academic year appointment. GAs appointed for only one semester are also eligible for partial tuition waivers for the adjacent summer session.

c) *Credit Hours*

Graduate assistants in the History Department are normally required to enroll for at least 9 credit hours in each of the fall and spring semesters. Students with summer appointments must enroll in six hours. Additionally, during their first semester teaching assistants are required to enroll for one hour of HIST 695: Seminar in College Teaching of History. Requests to take less than the required load in a given semester should be submitted in writing to the DGS.

d) *Summer Assistantships*

On rare occasions the department has been able to offer summer assistantships. Students needing summer support should seek jobs elsewhere on or off campus or investigate other kinds of summer research grants. Occasionally the department hires an advanced PhD student to teach an undergraduate course during the summer. If opportunities arise, the DGS will send out a notice to qualified graduate students inviting applications.

e) *Assistantship Durations and Renewals*

Graduate assistantships are awarded annually but may be renewed subject to the following criteria. The Graduate Committee generally approves two years of assistantship support at the MA level and four years of assistantship support at the PhD level. Students are expected to be making good progress toward their degrees, engaging in excellent academic work, and performing their assistantship duties professionally in order to have their graduate assistantship renewed. Poor grades, multiple incompletes, negative reports from faculty members, failure to proceed with degree requirements at a satisfactory pace or inadequate performance of TA duties may result in a student not having their assistantship renewed.

The Graduate Committee normally counts fellowships and other awards initiated by the department or by members of the department on behalf of students as equivalent to assistantship awards. A student must obtain advanced permission from the DGS to have a funding opportunity outside of the department extend the length of their departmental support beyond the standard two- or four-year period. This policy covers graduate school fellowships, assistantships from other units on campus, assistantships funded by faculty members' external grants, IRAD internships, and other awards funded from the general revenue funds of the State of Illinois, but not outside fellowships such as Fulbright awards, Social Science Research Council Fellowships, or grants from private agencies or foreign governments.

f) *PhD Aid Beyond the Normal Limits*

Occasionally, the Graduate Committee has been able to offer an additional year or years of assistantship aid to PhD students. This support is not offered routinely and undergoes separate procedures for consideration. The Graduate Committee expects PhD students applying for a fifth year of aid and beyond to have passed their candidacy exams, had their dissertation prospectuses submitted and approved, and to be in a position to devote the bulk of their time to dissertation research and writing. Typically, the Graduate Committee offers funding to incoming students and assistantship renewals before providing additional years of funding to doctoral students on assistantship who have finished their standard four years of funding.

g) *Standalone Teaching*

The department sometimes finds itself in the position of needing to find someone to teach a regularly scheduled undergraduate course that cannot be staffed by faculty or an instructor. In such instances, the department occasionally checks if advanced PhD students would like to teach their own class. As this teaching assistant assignment often requires significant additional labor on the part of the student, it is deemed only appropriate for post-candidacy students who would benefit from the additional teaching experience of working as a standalone instructor. No more than one or two semesters of standalone teaching should typically be requested from any single student.

2. Internal Fellowships

There are a small number of fellowships available from NIU such as the Rhoten Smith Assistantships and the Carter G. Woodson Scholars Program. These opportunities are aimed at students with outstanding academic records and those from under-represented minorities. The terms of these awards vary, but most offer full funding without requiring additional work. Students interested in being considered for nomination should submit an application to the Director of Graduate Studies in the History Department early in the spring semester. The Graduate Committee will discuss which students, if any, to nominate for these awards. A current list of the opportunities can be found at <https://www.niu.edu/history/graduate/grad-funding.shtml>.

3. Dissertation Completion Fellowships

Dissertation Completion Fellowships are intended for PhD students during the advanced stages of their dissertation work who expect to complete the PhD degree by the end of the year in which they hold the grant. They provide stipends for one year, plus some additional money to cover dissertation-related expenses. These are appropriate grants for students poised to complete the degree. The application deadline is early in the spring semester for the following academic year. Applications should be submitted to the DGS and must be endorsed by the dissertation director and ranked by the Graduate Committee. The DGS coordinates the applications, collects the necessary letters, and forwards the completed applications to the Graduate School. The expectation is for students to complete their degree during this fellowship. Therefore, those awarded a Dissertation Completion Fellowship are not normally eligible for additional department funding.

VI. ADDITIONAL POLICIES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND INFORMATION

1. Information about Language and Research Skills

Knowledge of languages beyond English assists in better understanding the diverse peoples and cultures in the United States and the rest of the world. The specific requirements for language and research skills for the [MA program](#) and [PhD program](#) are described earlier in the handbook in the sections on those degrees. Briefly, MA students should obtain at least **average proficiency** in one language or quantitative methods (unless they focus on US or British history and do not intend to pursue a PhD) and PhD students must either obtain **high proficiency** in one of them or at least **average proficiency** in two of them. According to the Graduate School, **competency** demonstrates **high proficiency**. The following explains what these levels of proficiency mean and how a student can meet these requirements.

a. *Average Proficiency in a Foreign Language*

The criterion for **average proficiency** is reading knowledge of a language comparable to that acquired by the end of two years of reading instruction in the language at a college or university in the United States.

One way that students can demonstrate average proficiency in a foreign language is by passing a translation examination. They will need to make arrangements to take the Graduate Foreign Language Reading Translation Exam (GFLRTE) through Testing Services on Campus (<https://www.niu.edu/testing/>). Please note that NIU charges students a fee for this service. Students should anticipate an interval of approximately six weeks between registration and the availability of the test and another two weeks between administration of the test and the reporting of results. Exams are available in languages taught by the faculty of the NIU Department of World Languages and Cultures. Some fields of study may require demonstration of proficiency in languages not available through the NIU Department of World Languages and Culture. In those cases, arrangements must be made with the History Department. In certain cases, with DGS approval a faculty member or outside evaluator with fluent knowledge of a language not offered by Testing Services can administer an exam.

For the translation examination the student selects a history book (or a series of articles) of at least 200 pages in the language. The student then needs to bring it to the Director of Graduate Studies who will issue a form certifying that it is an appropriate selection for our discipline. Next the student delivers the book and the form to Testing Services and applies to take the exam. Testing Services will submit the book to an anonymous examiner from the World Languages and Cultures Department, who will select a passage of between 575 and 625 words and return the book. At the exam, the student is asked to translate the passage into acceptable English, using a dictionary, in a period of 90 minutes. The exam is graded pass or fail and may only be taken once per academic session.

A student can also satisfy the requirement for average proficiency in a foreign language by achieving a grade of B or better in the equivalent of at least 12 credit hours (typically four semesters) of foreign language coursework at an accredited institution of higher learning within the last five years. Record of their performance in these courses will need to be demonstrated on academic transcripts if they want to skip taking the exam at Testing Services. Students may also fulfill these credit hours while enrolled in a graduate program at NIU (either at NIU or another accredited institution), but the language courses do not count toward their degree

requirements.

b. High Proficiency in a Foreign Language

The criterion for **high proficiency** is reading knowledge of the language sufficient to enable a student to effectively use appropriate literature in their field.

The procedure for setting up an examination for high proficiency is the same as for an average proficiency translation exam, described above. But the content of a high proficiency exam is different in several respects. The exam is three hours in length instead of 90 minutes, and it consists of two parts. The first part is a short (200-300 word) passage that the student is asked to translate rather literally. The second is a much longer extract of about 5-7 pages, for which the student is asked to provide a “substantive overall summary” in English. Whereas a survey text would be appropriate for an average proficiency translation exam, a specialized historical monograph or scholarly historical journal (200 pages or more) should be selected for the high proficiency exam. Indeed, the exam is formally described as a test of a student’s ability to read foreign-language scholarly journals in their field of study. A dictionary is allowed. The exam is graded pass or fail and may only be taken once per academic session.

c. Competency in a Foreign Language

A student can demonstrate **competency** in a foreign language through several methods. In the view of the Graduate School, competency satisfies the requirement for either average or high proficiency in a foreign language. A student may successfully complete two intensive, graduate-level summer courses (six credit hours) in reading French, German, or Spanish offered at NIU. The grading system for these courses is S/U (satisfactory or unsatisfactory). A student achieving a grade of S in the first course is allowed to take the second course. The Graduate School accepts a grade of S for the second course as demonstration of competency in the language.

Students who are native speakers of a language other than English and who have evidence of fluency in their native language may petition the DGS to satisfy the foreign language requirement in this way. According to the Graduate School, “competency” in a foreign language may also be demonstrated by the possession of a degree from a college or university at which that language was the language of instruction. PhD students must have the written support of their advisor in order to be allowed to fulfill the research skills requirement by this method.

d. Research Proficiency in Quantitative Methods

To demonstrate average proficiency, the Graduate School requires that students pass two graduate-level courses in quantitative methods. For graduate students in history, this would typically include earning a grade of B or better in HIST 601: Quantitative Methods for Historical Social Analysis or an approved graduate-level course from outside the department. Due to lack of demand, HIST 601 has not been taught for many years and will not be taught in the foreseeable future. If a student is considering using average proficiency in quantitative methods to meet a skills requirement, they should consult with the DGS about appropriate courses.

High proficiency in quantitative methods is a theoretical possibility that has never been tried in the History Department. The criteria for meeting such a requirement will be established by the department on an individual basis when and if the need arises. The option is appropriate only for a student planning on making extensive use of quantitative methods in research, and it would have to be approved by the student’s advisers and by the Graduate Committee.

2. Student-at-Large and Transfer Credit

If a graduate student enrolled as a student-at-large (SAL) before being admitted to the history program, they can, with the department's permission, count up to 15 credit hours of appropriate graduate coursework taken as a SAL towards their MA or PhD degree. If a student transferred from another school, they can count up to 15 credit hours of appropriate graduate coursework toward their NIU degree. However, the combined total of student-at-large credit hours and transfer hours may not exceed 15 credit hours for each degree program. The same rules apply to PhD students as MA students, except that they can count 30 applicable credit hours from their master's degree towards their PhD degree. Thus, for PhD students the 15 allowable transfer or SAL credit hours are **beyond** the master's degree.

3. Course Load

The Graduate School defines a normal full-time load as 9 credit hours per semester (fall or spring). Students without assistantships may take course loads between 3 and 15 credit hours, but the department considers 9 credit hours each semester to be a full-time load. Part-time students often take less than this but take longer to complete their degrees. Graduate students on assistantship should usually take at least 9 credit hours a semester but can request a reduction down to 6 credit hours from the Director of Graduate Studies if circumstances warrant it. Usually this reduction only applies to advanced PhD students who have already completed the required 72 credit hours for their degree.

4. Incompletes

Certain research courses, notably HIST 799 (doctoral research and dissertation), receive automatic grades of incomplete every semester until a final grade is received for the entire research project. In all other cases graduate students are expected to complete their coursework and receive a final grade by the end of the semester. If special circumstances prevent this completion, the instructor may, at their discretion, grant a grade of I ("incomplete") and file a form with the History Office indicating what work still needs to be completed and the deadline for doing so. Students must complete the required remaining work for the course within 120 days of the final day of examination week of the term in order to receive a grade in the course. If they fail to complete the work by the designated deadline at the conclusion of 120 days, the incomplete (I) will be converted to an F.

5. Academic Standing

To remain in good academic standing, a student has to maintain a 3.00 GPA in all graduate coursework. This includes courses taken as a student-at-large but not work transferred to NIU from other institutions. Please note that this includes all graduate courses taken at NIU regardless of when they were taken and regardless of whether they were needed for the history program. Thus, if a student took a graduate course in nursing before entering the history program and received a grade of C, they would have to earn an A in the same number of credit hours to maintain a B average.

If a student fails to maintain a 3.00 GPA, the Graduate School will send notification that the student has been placed on academic probation. The student must then bring their GPA back up to 3.00 by the time they have completed 9 additional credit hours of graduate coursework. If the student fails to do this, they will be academically dismissed. Academic dismissal is also automatic if a student receives 6 credit hours of D, F, or U (Unsatisfactory, for courses graded S/U) or WF (failing at time of withdrawal). Dismissed students may petition to the university's Graduate Council Appeals Committee for academic reinstatement.

6. Re-entry

If a student is enrolled in a graduate degree program and interrupts their enrollment for 12 months or more, then they must apply to the Graduate School for re-entry.

7. Revalidation of Expired Coursework

Graduate students are required by the Graduate School to complete their programs within a set amount of time. For MA students, this is six years from the date of first enrollment. For PhD students, this is nine years. Courses expire once these time limits have elapsed. If a student fails to complete the degree requirements within the stipulated time period, the Graduate School requires that they either take new courses to substitute for the expired courses or petition to revalidate expired courses in order to graduate. If a student finds themselves in this position and wishes to revalidate an expired course, they must inform the Director of Graduate Studies and submit their request to the relevant faculty member by the third week of the semester in which they intend to graduate. The student will be asked to demonstrate current knowledge of the subject matter of the original course topic through one of several methods. These may 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.

8. Academic Integrity

Graduate student work should reflect the highest professional standards of academic integrity. The standards by which professional historians conduct themselves are found in the American Historical Association's "Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct," which is available on the AHA website (<https://www.historians.org/>). Students should familiarize themselves with this publication, which includes the following definition of plagiarism: "The expropriation of another author's work, and the presentation of it as one's own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship." The Graduate Program of the History Department enforces the standards of academic integrity. NIU's statement of academic integrity and procedures and sanctions related to these standards can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

9. History Graduate Student Research Funds

Every year the History Department awards a number of grants to graduate students to help cover summer research expenses. Funds are generated from the contributions of alumni, faculty, and friends of the department. Applications for the Hayter-Young award are accepted on a rolling basis and open to both MA and PhD students. Applications for the Alfred F. Young Dissertation Research Grant occur in the middle of both the Fall and Spring semester and are only open to PhD students. Such internal departmental grants are a good opportunity for students to practice and refine grant-application skills.

10. Support for Conference Presentations

History graduate students are strongly encouraged to present the results of their research at scholarly conferences. To help make this possible, the department uses alumni contributions to offset part of the cost of student travel for such purposes. The Graduate School also has limited funding for graduate student conference travel. Students requesting such assistance should inform the department chair and the DGS and apply at <http://go.niu.edu/GradTravelGrantForm>.

11. History Graduate Student Association

The History Graduate Student Association (HGSA) is an NIU-recognized student association composed of all graduate students in the department and involved in the academic and social aspects of graduate study. It meets periodically to choose officers, discuss issues of concern to graduate students, and name or nominate members of departmental and university committees. It organizes brown bags, student presentations, and social events. Most importantly, it organizes and runs an annual history graduate student research conference. The association also holds voting membership on the departmental Graduate Committee. Two students serve on the Graduate Committee and up to three sit on the Lecture-Colloquium Committee, which schedules lectures by visiting scholars.