

Department of History
Plan for Graduate Students Outcomes Assessment
2007
(Effective, Fall 2007)

The primary mission of History's Graduate Program is to prepare and train students in the craft and work of historical scholarship – one of several missions of the modern university. This involves a refined understanding of the past, the acquisition of graduate level research techniques, the conduct of independent research involving the use of primary sources, a critical appreciation of historiography and relevant historical theories and interpretations, the ability to specialize in one or more areas of interest, and an awareness of professional obligations and opportunities. More precisely, the Graduate Program seeks to prepare students in: (1) a practical track leading directly to specialized careers in such areas as teaching, journalism, and other public and private service sectors; (2) an academic track leading to entry into advanced training and especially doctoral degree programs. The students will complete requirements for an M.A. or an M.S. as specified in the current Graduate Handbook.

Criteria for Assessment

To measure success in achieving the history graduate program objectives, the Department will assess students upon the completion of their degree according to the following criteria:

1. Enhancement of analytical skills and argumentative writing founded on sound interpretation of evidence.
2. Effective use of advanced inquiry practices, particularly independent collection, analysis, and critical assessment of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources.
3. Conversant with new trends and methodologies in the field of History.
4. Advanced knowledge of issues in their major field and familiarity with some issues in a wider world context.
5. Understanding of the professional requirements of a historian, including ethical approaches, bibliographical conventions, and a sense of civic responsibility.

Assessment Methodology

1. The department requires that graduate students keep a portfolio containing work they have completed over the course of their graduate program. The portfolio must include the following: the major research paper completed in the second semester of the year-long seminar; the paper completed for History 650 (Method and Theory); and two papers from other courses. The students must turn in the portfolio upon completion of the requirements for the master's degree.

2. Members of the Graduate Committee will administer written and/or oral exit interviews of students just prior to their graduation. If oral, the interviewers will write brief reports of their findings and add all exit interview material to the student's portfolios.
3. The department requires graduate students to complete an oral defense either of their Master's thesis or of their research seminar paper before a committee of Graduate School faculty, who will file the results with the Department. A copy of these results will be placed into the student's portfolio.
4. Three years following the students' graduation from the program, the Department will mail questionnaires to them or conduct telephone interviews regarding the students' careers and assessing retrospectively the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Use of Data

The most important role of this committee is to report its findings to the overall department and relevant departmental committees. Preferably, this report should be made in the fall at a departmental meeting and the data should be made easily available to all faculty members. The data can be effectively used by individual professors to understand weaknesses of our students and program and address them, as appropriate, within their classes. Further, the data should be used by the department to help make decisions on a variety of issues, both in terms of the need for change and knowledge of areas in which the department's current policies seem to be highly effective. When appropriate, the committee shall make specific recommendations to the department. However, the recommendation of specific changes is not viewed as the primary purpose of this committee.

The committee may use the data to help determine nominations for student awards. Otherwise, the data are not intended to be used to evaluate individual students. The data are not to be used for the evaluation of individual faculty members.

In recognition of students' right to privacy as well as the FERPA law, all student portfolios shall be kept confidential.

Approved – April 25, 2007