

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF

HISTORY

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Section I – Program Overview

History, as three recent interpreters have written, is a “discipline, a profession, and a career.” (T. Bender, P. Katz, and C. Palmer, *The Education of Historians for the Twenty-First Century*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004, pp. 4-5.)

As a discipline, history has standards of evidence, styles of argumentation, and a literary and narrative dimension that distinguish it from other forms of scholarship. Historians interpret politics and institutions, and they study intellectual communities and social dynamics. Perhaps most importantly, they give a voice to those who might otherwise not be accorded one by society. History has been among the most interdisciplinary of all the modern academic disciplines.

As a profession, history involves a variety of scholarly activities and modes of intellectual production. Historians write for each other and for a public at large, and they are committed to styles of written communication and oral interaction that are clear, informative, and ethically sound. At conferences and in classrooms, in government and in museums, historians research and communicate about the past while remembering its lessons to help create a better future.

As a career, history is, and should be, many things: historians work in the academy, creating new knowledge and teaching students at the college and university level; historians teach at the K-12 level of the educational system; historians design and curate exhibits in museums; and historians work for the government, for corporations, and for media outlets, strengthened and empowered by the standards and practices they acquire through rigorous professional training.

At Michigan State University, we are committed to studying and producing history in all its modern, multifarious, and happily diverse manifestations. We offer exciting and innovative graduate training, and we aim to cultivate graduate students who are ambitious and open to training that is itself dynamic and evolving. In the MSU History Department, through seminars, independent reading and research, and close relationships with faculty mentors, graduate students have the chance to learn, practice, and perfect the various tasks of professional historians on the way to earning a PhD degree.

At a practical level, we make efforts to give graduate students the tools, structure, mentoring, and financial support allowing them to complete the program in a timely manner. The Department does not offer a terminal MA. Students accepted into the PhD program take two years of coursework and complete comprehensive examinations in the third year, leaving ample time within the framework of department funding to conduct research and write the dissertation.

Along the way, we offer regular and numerous opportunities for students to enhance their portfolios and expertise and become competitive for a diverse range of professional positions inside and outside the academy.

Our graduate students are willing to be active partners in an evolving community, and we invite and expect students to take part in departmental matters – such as visiting lecturers, the graduate community, faculty searches, and so on – beyond the basic course requirements.

In addition to the information found in this handbook, students should read and regularly consult the university-wide handbook from the [Office of Spartan Experiences](#). Of particular interest there is the section on [“Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities.”](#)

Section II – Program Components/Plan Options

Synopsis of the Doctoral Program

The First Year:

1. Completion of HST 803 and other first-year courses selected in consultation with the Graduate Program Director and advisor
2. Selection of the major professor/dissertation research advisor
3. Selection of the Guidance Committee
4. Initial Guidance Committee meeting. At this meeting, the complete course program must be formally decided as well as a plan for foreign language requirements.
5. Completion and submission a Ph.D. plan of study in the GradPlan system. This should be completed in conjunction with the initial Guidance Committee meeting.
6. Completion of preliminary language form should be turned in to the Academic Programs Coordinator.
7. International students who are working as teaching assistants receive a 50 or higher on the MSU Speaking Test or the ITA Oral Interaction Test.
8. All students must be certified in the first of their required foreign languages.
9. Evaluation of the student's performance as a teaching assistant

The Second Year:

1. Continuation and completion of course work as agreed upon with the Guidance Committee, including HST 804
2. Ongoing evaluation of the student's performance as a teaching assistant
3. Completion of MA thesis or equivalent paper
4. Meeting to discuss comprehensive exam format and content, sign and submit a Comprehensive Examination Agreement

The Third Year:

1. If necessary, enrollment in courses prescribed by the Guidance Committee
2. Demonstration of proficiency in second foreign language if required.
10. Satisfactory completion of the comprehensive examination and completed form turned in to the Academic Programs Coordinator.
3. Approval of doctoral dissertation proposal
4. Ongoing evaluation of the student's performance as a teaching assistant
5. Enrollment in HST 999. Michigan State University requires 24 credits for graduation.

Each Subsequent Year:

1. Dissertation research and writing
2. Ongoing evaluation of the student's performance as a teaching assistant
3. Continued enrollment in HST 999 until you have achieved the minimum 24 credits Michigan State University requires for graduation. The maximum number allowed is 36.

The Final Semester:

1. Final oral examination in defense of the dissertation and completed form turned in to the

Academic Programs Coordinator.

2. Submission of dissertation to the Graduate School
3. Registration in at least 1 credit of HST 999 during the semester in which the student defends the dissertation. If the student plans on defending during a semester in which she/he/they are not a GA, or during the summer semester, it is up to the student to cover the cost of that credit.

Comprehensive Examination Policy

Graduate students are expected to become experts in one major field and two minor fields, and they will constitute a committee that consists of two professors in the major field and one each in the two minor fields. That committee will develop and administer the comprehensive exam. Ideally, the two major field examinations will collectively include questions and exercises testing students' mastery of history, historiography, and pedagogy. Minor field examinations should be considered abbreviated exercises assessing some aspects of these three areas. These minor field exams may, for example, consist either of written responses to questions or the design of a syllabus and related pedagogical materials.

The examination will be conducted as follows:

1) By the end of the spring term of her/his second year, the student will convene a meeting of the examination committee to decide on the three areas in which she/he/they are to be tested. At that meeting, the student and committee will complete the Comprehensive Examination Agreement form, which will delineate the dates and format of each exam. This will be signed by all four committee members and submitted to the Academic Programs Coordinator.

For each individual examination, the examiner will provide the student with essay questions that are to be answered in writing. A portion of the examination can be the design of an undergraduate or graduate class, including the creation of a syllabus for a course in her/his field, preparation of lectures, and other discussion of pedagogical materials. The duration of the written exam is up to each examiner, but writing time is ordinarily limited to 48 hours. At the examiner's discretion, the written exam may be open or closed book, and each examiner decides whether to give the student a choice among prompts or to have them answer all questions.

At the discretion of the committee as outlined in the signed Comprehensive Examination Agreement, the student may be given the entire written comprehensive exam in all three fields at one time. In this case, the committee chair solicits questions from the four examiners and provides these questions to the student. The student is responsible for providing these responses to the chair, who then distributes each one to the respective examiner. The duration of the exam can range from 48 hours to two weeks.

2) Once the examination format is decided, the student will meet with each examiner to come to an agreement on the material on which they will be examined. For major fields, this usually consists of a reading list of at least seventy-five books, and for minor fields this usually consists of a reading list of approximately fifty books, though these parameters can vary according to case.

3) The student prepares for the examination. The History Department expects graduate students to complete their exams by the end of their sixth semester in the program. Failure to meet this deadline will be considered by the graduate committee in the process of awarding student financial packages for the following year.

- 4) The student takes the examination. If the student is taking their exams separately, all four must be completed within six months. For example, if the first exam is taken on September 15, the last exam must be completed by March 15. The student need not use the full six months, and the Department strongly recommends committees to conduct the examination over a shorter time period.
- 5) Each individual examination is evaluated by the professor administering it.
- 6) Within one week of each exam, the student is informed of the result.
- 7) In the event that a written response is deemed unsatisfactory by an examiner, the student may be asked to revise it, or they may be given a new question. This revision and/or reexamination must take place within four weeks of the student being notified of unsatisfactory performance. The resubmitted response will be assessed in the context of the overall comprehensive exam at the oral defense. If the second examination is deemed unsatisfactory by the examiner and committee, the student cannot continue toward the degree and arrangements will be made to exit the student from the PhD program – usually in the form of a terminal MA.
- 8) Within a period not to exceed two weeks after the last written exam is completed and passed, an oral exam will follow with the entire committee. Students must be enrolled for at least one credit during the semester the oral comprehensive examination is taken. The student may also present the dissertation prospectus at this meeting, or that may be done at a later meeting. If the prospectus meeting is done separately, it must be held within six weeks of the comprehensive exam defense.
- 9) At the conclusion of the oral defense, the committee chair is responsible for collecting and submitting to the Academic Programs Coordinator the questions and the students' responses. These will be retained in students' files.

The Dissertation Prospectus

Within six weeks but normally at the time oral comprehensive examination, the student will defend a dissertation prospectus to the members of their guidance committee. This prospectus must offer a plan for the dissertation that shows awareness of relevant historiography, discusses the available sources, and presents a prospective schedule of research and writing. The prospectus must be approved by the committee before the student is admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. Students should submit the prospectus for the committee for their review no later than a month before it is to be defended. After the conclusion of the defense, students should submit the signed Record of Dissertation Proposal to the Academic Programs Coordinator.

Options for Specializations and Certificates

MSU offers numerous opportunities for graduate students to participate in specialization and certificate programs that can enhance their research skills and expertise, aid in professional development, and provide experiences preparing students for diverse careers. The full lists of these programs can be found [here](#).

Programs that may be of interest to History graduate students include but are not limited to American Studies, Digital Humanities, Chicano/Latino Studies, Museum Studies, Community Engagement, Women's and Gender Studies, and Global Urban Studies. Some students pursue the Certification in College Teaching, which provides a great structured opportunity to organize, develop, and document their teaching experiences. If you have questions about pursuing a graduate specialization or certificate, please contact the Graduate Director.

Policy on Dual Degrees

All dual major doctoral degrees must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. A request for the dual major degree must be submitted via GradPlan within one semester following its development and within the first two years of the student's enrollment at Michigan State University. In order to receive a dual major, the following conditions must be met:

1. The intent to receive the degree in two areas must be outlined in the guidance committee report.
2. The guidance committee will include members from both doctoral programs.
3. The Ph.D. Degree Plan must reflect the required standards for both doctoral programs.
4. The integrated course work must be satisfactory to both graduate programs and meet the requirements for awarding of a degree in that program.
5. The comprehensive examination must be passed to the satisfaction of both departments.
6. Responsible Conduct of Research requirements will be approved by the guidance committee; they should meet the RCR requirements in both programs.
7. There must be a single dissertation that represents an integration of the two disciplinary areas.
8. Guidance committee members from both departments must be satisfied that the dissertation represents a contribution meeting the usual standards in both areas.

Additionally, students in the CSS are required to complete an MOU which can be obtained from the College of Social Science Graduate Studies webpage.

Section III – Degree Requirements for Ph.D.

Coursework Requirements

1. Completion of HST 803 in the first semester of study
2. Completion of HST 804 in the fourth semester of study
3. Completion of HST 812, unless waived by Advisor and Graduate Director
4. Completion of 24 credits of 800-900 or graduate-level equivalent courses in History or in other relevant disciplines. Note: the number of independent studies a student takes cannot exceed 12 credits.
5. Completion of at least 24 and no more than 36 credits of HST 999

During the first two semesters of doctoral study, each student will convene a meeting of her/his Guidance Committee. That committee recommends the amount of graduate credit beyond the master's degree level from other institutions which should be accepted; what study, if any, may be done in absentia, and under what conditions; what language examinations or alternative programs, if any, the student should take. Ordinarily, the Guidance Committee will recommend students enroll in three seminars (or two seminars and a language course) each semester for the first two years of study. This schedule assumes a half time graduate assistantship. The guidance committee is responsible for insuring the adequacy of the overall program, in keeping with the general policy that four or more academic years of study and research beyond the bachelor's degree are required.

Foreign Language Requirement

The Department of History ordinarily requires proficiency in two foreign languages for the Ph.D. For students whose research interests and areas of specialization do not require competency in two languages, the Guidance Committee may determine that one foreign language is adequate. Each student's course of language study will be agreed upon in consultation with the Guidance Committee during the first-year meeting, and students must submit the completed Foreign Language Proficiency forms to the Academic Programs Coordinator. Unless accommodations are made proactively in agreement with the Guidance Committee, students must satisfy the first language requirement by the end of the first year of doctoral study. Failure to do so will result in denial of registration privileges in other course work until that language requirement has been met. The second language, where necessary, should be satisfied before the comprehensive examinations are begun.

For complete and up-to-date information on the procedures for demonstrating proficiency in specific languages, see the Foreign Language Proficiency Information Packet on the Graduate Forms section of the History Department's website.

Students must be enrolled for at least one credit during the semester when language proficiency is certified.

MA Thesis or Equivalent Paper

The History Department at MSU currently only offers a terminal Master's degree in cases

where a student has decided to exit the PhD program or must exit due to the failure of their comprehensive examination or poor academic performance (as outlined on page 16).

For students enrolling in the doctoral program who do not already have an MA in history, however, the completion of a master's thesis or significant research paper, normally including research in primary sources, is required. Students with MA degrees in disciplines other than History may have this requirement waived with the consent of their Guidance Committee. Whether a student writes a formal thesis or a research paper is up to the individual student in consultation with the major advisor.

There need be no significant difference between the thesis and paper in terms of length or difficulty, only in form. The thesis, usually completed in the second year of the program, is written under the direction of the History faculty advisor. Regardless of format, this is to be a substantial research paper demonstrating skills in primary source research and acquaintance with the relevant historiographical materials. In many cases, it will be produced as a project germinating in research seminar taken as part of required coursework. In some cases, this paper will begin independently and through guided mentorship by the advisor.

To fulfill the requirement, students must enroll in one credit of HST 890 in the second year. During that semester, the advisor reads the paper and submits the grade for it to the Graduate Director as part of the timetable for normal grade submission for all courses.

If a formal MA thesis is written, a committee consisting of three MSU faculty members, including the research advisor and at least one other History faculty member and representing two fields of history will participate in an oral examination of the student's work.

Residency Requirement

In accordance with MSU's Academic Programs Catalog, all graduate students must fulfill a residency requirement, defined as follows: "A minimum of 6 credits in the degree program must be earned in residence on the East Lansing campus or at approved Michigan State University instructional sites, but many programs require more. Requests for waivers of this requirement must be submitted by the department or school responsible for the degree program to the appropriate college and then to the Dean of the Graduate School."

Campus Solutions

Michigan State University requires all students to update their own progress in Campus Solutions, Student Information System (student.msu.edu). This plan should always be kept current and accurately and completely reflect progress toward your degree. It is imperative that each student maintain and update their course plan as they move through the program.

Members of the student's committee can be changed with the written consent of the student's main advisor and Graduate Director via campus solutions. The main advisor can be changed with the consent of the Graduate Director.

Graduate/Degree Certification

The semester before the student intends on graduating, regardless of whether the student plans to attend the ceremony, it is necessary to [apply for graduation](#) via the Registrar's Office.

Important information about dissertation deadlines and submission guidelines can be found on Graduate School's website: <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>. You must familiarize yourself with these well in advance of your intended graduate date so that you leave adequate time to receive all the necessary approvals.

Time Limits on Graduate Study

In accordance with MSU's Academic Programs Catalog, in order to be allowed to complete the PhD, all of the comprehensive examinations must be passed within five years and all remaining requirements for the degree must be completed within eight years from the first semester the student is enrolled in the program. Applications for the extension of the five-year comprehensive exam period as well as the extension of the eight-year period of time toward degree must be submitted by the department for approval by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School. If significant time has lapsed between the student's comprehensive examinations and the approval of the eight-year extension, the comprehensive examinations must be passed again.

Time extensions for the comprehensive exam and graduation cannot be granted at the department level, and all requests must be approved by the College of Social Science and the Graduate School. The History Department strongly encourages students to make plans to complete their degrees within the time frame noted above and avoid running the risk of an extension being denied.

Section IV – Selection of Thesis/Dissertation Advisor

The Graduate Director will serve as the advisor for all newly admitted graduate students for their first semester. Students are encouraged to consult with the Graduate Director as early as possible during that semester to begin the process of selecting an advisor. The advisor must be appointed under the rules of tenure and holding the rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor in the History Department. If a student and prospective advisors are amenable, a student may opt to have two faculty members co-advise.

The student-advisor relationship is crucial to success in graduate school. The advisor assists with forming the Guidance Committee, and she/he/they provide ongoing mentorship throughout a student's time in the program. On an annual basis, the advisor provides a formal written evaluation of each student's program progress.

For students, it is important to maintain regular contact with advisors in order to facilitate timely progress toward the degree. They are encouraged to collaborate with their advisor early on to create an individual development plan that takes into account the strengths and challenges of the student as well as the students' career goals. One resource to help get this conversation started is [ImaginePhD](#). The Graduate School also offers its [Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships](#), and this provides guidelines and best practices for the student-advisor relationship.

Graduate students and faculty members share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility. In the event of a conflict between a student and the advisor, the student should speak with the Graduate Director immediately. The Graduate Director will try to resolve the conflict; if a student and/or advisor can no longer work together, the main advisor can be changed with the consent of the Graduate Director. In the event that this precipitates a change to the student's major field, the change may prompt a reconsideration of a student's funding, as all offers of admission are made based on the student's application to and interest in a particular field.

Section V – Formation of the Guidance Committee

In consultation with the advisor, each student will form a guidance committee within the first two semesters of study, and by the end of the first year the guidance committee must have its initial meeting. Within two weeks of the initial guidance committee meeting, the student must submit a Ph.D. Plan in the GradPlan system, and this is subject to approval by the Graduate Director and the Dean of the College.

This guidance committee shall consist of no fewer than four members, at least three of whom must be regular History faculty members. The prospective dissertation director normally serves as the committee chair and major advisor; the second member of the committee also represents the major field; the third, fourth and any additional members will represent the minor fields. University-wide rules about the composition of guidance committees can be found [here](#).

With the approval of the advisor, the guidance committee, and the Graduate Director, the student may add additional members who can make distinctive contributions to the program of study. They may be drawn from the Department of History or from other departments within the University. These members may also be emeritus faculty or professors at other universities. A student must obtain approval from the College and the Graduate School to add a non-MSU faculty member to a guidance committee. To initiate this process, consult with the Graduate Director. Requests must include: 1) a letter from the Department Graduate Director to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School, requesting that the individual serve on a specific student's committee and why the person is appropriate (e.g. special expertise); 2) a letter from the individual to be added stating his/her/their willingness and commitment to serve as a member of the student's committee; and 3) the non-MSU faculty's CV and email address. More information on this process is available [here](#).

Once constituted, the guidance committee plans with the student the course work and other activities required to develop competence in the fields of study. The committee and the student will agree to the student's program and at the end of the student's second year complete a Comprehensive Examination Agreement. Following the successful completion of a student's comprehensive examination, the guidance committee commonly becomes the dissertation committee. A student may, however, change the composition of the committee to better reflect the needs of the dissertation with the consent of the student's main advisor and Graduate Director via GradPlan.

GradPlan was developed for Ph.D. students to lay out their Ph.D. program of study and make notes on all the requirements as they are completed. This is completed within the first two semesters of doctoral study, and it is imperative that each student maintain and update their GradPlan as they move through the program.

Graduate students and faculty members share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility.

As noted above, members of the student's committee can be changed with the written consent of the student's main advisor and Graduate Director. The main advisor can be changed with the consent of the Graduate Director.

If at any time an individual committee member, including the major professor, feels they are unable to work with a student or that their expertise does not fit a student's proposed plan of study or research, they have the right to remove themselves from the guidance and/or dissertation committee. In cases where a student's main advisor removes themselves, leading to the dissolution of the original guidance committee, the student must – in consultation with, and in the timeframe specified by the Graduate Director – constitute a new committee. As per Article 2.4.2 of Michigan State University's [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#), every effort will be made to resolve the problem. An inability to resolve the problem will initiate actions to arrange for the student to exit from the PhD program.

Section VI – Dissertation/Thesis Defense and Final Oral Examination

Each student working toward a Ph.D. degree must conduct original research to be used in a dissertation which makes a significant contribution to scholarly knowledge. The research is to be conducted under the guidance of and acceptable to the major professor and the guidance committee. All doctoral students must register at Michigan State University for and successfully complete a minimum of 24 semester credits of doctoral dissertation research (HST 999). It is the policy of Michigan State University to permit and facilitate dissertation research by students from developing nations in their home countries, whenever feasible.

The dissertation must be produced and organized according to regulations prescribed in The Graduate School Guide to [Formatting](#). The Students should familiarize themselves with these guidelines and deadlines early in the process of dissertation writing.

The student must submit the dissertation to all committee members in order to give them adequate time to review before the oral examination. The dissertation must be in completed form and acceptable to the major professor. And the oral examination must be scheduled for a date not earlier than two weeks after the dissertation and abstract have been submitted to the major professor and guidance committee. When scheduling the oral examination, the student needs to also allow sufficient time after the examination to prepare the completed and formatted dissertation for submission to the Graduate School. For this reason, it is advisable to submit the dissertation to all committee members no later than the fourth Friday of the last semester of a student's program.

The student must be registered for at least one credit the term in which the final oral examination is taken. If a student intends on defending their dissertation in the summer semester or a semester in which they are not serving as a Graduate Assistant, it is the student's responsibility to enroll in one credit of HST 999. It is the student's responsibility to pay for this credit and any outstanding HST 999 credits below the 24 required for graduation.

The final oral examination in defense of the dissertation is conducted and evaluated by the guidance committee and, at the discretion of the Dean of the College, by one appointed faculty member whose voting status is determined by the College. Other interested faculty members and members of the public may attend the presentation portion of the examination without voting. The dissertation and the student's performance on the final oral examination must be approved by a positive vote by at least three-fourths of the voting examiners and with not more than one dissenting vote from among the Michigan State University regular faculty members of the guidance committee.

When the guidance committee has reviewed and approved the dissertation and the student has passed an oral examination in its defense, the student shall incorporate in the dissertation any recommended changes and corrections before submitting it to The Graduate School.

After the guidance committee and any appointed examiners have reviewed and approved the dissertation and after the student has passed the final oral examination in its defense, the student must incorporate into the dissertation any recommended change(s) and corrections before presenting it to the chairperson of the guidance committee for final review and signature of the approval form. Not later than the deadline date indicated by the Graduate School for the semester in which graduation is expected, the student must [submit](#) to the Graduate School a final electronic copy of the dissertation and the approval form signed by the dissertation advisor. In addition to the main body of a thesis or dissertation, the Graduate School now permits the submission of supplementary materials to ProQuest. These supplemental materials will not be reviewed by the Graduate School for formatting requirements, but they must be acceptable by ProQuest and comply with ProQuest's criteria and storage limits. All supplementary materials need the written approval of the thesis/dissertation committee chair. The MSU library may accept supplementary materials approved by the thesis/dissertation committee chair per their collection criteria. The Graduate School does not review these materials for formatting requirements.

At the time of submission to ProQuest, authors now have the opportunity to create an ORCID that provides researchers with a unique identifier for linking their research outputs and activities. An ORCID:

- Improves recognition of research contributions
- Reduces form-filling (enter data once, re-use it often)
- Works with many institutions, funders, and publishers
- Is a requirement of many journal manuscript submission systems and grant application forms.

Learn more about ORCID [here](#).

All dissertations and theses are on file at the MSU Library and can be found via the library catalogue.

All students also must complete the Graduate School Exit survey in order to graduate. For doctoral exit surveys, direct questions to ExitSurvey@grd.msu.edu.

Section VII – Departmental Policies on Academic & Professional Performance

According to Section 2.4.8 of Michigan State University's [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), "Graduate students have a right to periodic evaluations to assess their academic progress, performance, and professional potential. Evaluation of graduate students shall be made only by persons who are qualified to make that evaluation...Written evaluations shall be communicated to the graduate student at least once a year, and a copy of such evaluations shall be placed in the graduate student's file." The student is also required to upload a copy of the evaluation to Campus Solutions.

Academic training and performance is closely tied to a student's performance as a teaching and/or research assistant; the assessment of a student's standing in the program therefore takes both into account. Each year, the Graduate Director conducts an annual review of the progress of each of its graduate students on the basis of: letters from the student's guidance committee or advisors; grades earned in the previous two academic semesters; evaluations of the student's performance as a teaching or researching assistant; and other relevant academic and professional performance measures, for example fellowships, honors, and publications.

To initiate the process, all students should prepare a progress report and solicit two letters of evaluation from History Department faculty in the Spring semester. One of these letters must come from the major professor. These documents, along with each student's teaching evaluations, are reviewed by the Graduate Director.

Students are considered to be in acceptable academic standing if they are maintaining progress in the program as specified on page 3 of this Graduate Handbook. Each student's review letter will indicate if there are areas in which the student needs to improve, or if there are program requirements that need to be met to remain in good academic standing.

Unsatisfactory Performance and Dismissal

If during an annual review or a student's re-application for department funding outlined on pages 22 and 23 it is determined that a student's progress or performance is unsatisfactory and their status in the program is in jeopardy, the progress report letter will provide official written notification of that assessment. In addition to the timely completion of program milestones, a student may be judged as underperforming if they have more than one incomplete or deferred grade in a semester. A grade of a 3.0 in a student's major or minor fields are judged cause for concern, with grades below that taken as evidence that a student's academic performance is lacking in quality. The progress report letter will indicate specific problem areas as well as a plan and expected timetable for improving the student's standing.

If the student fails to address the problems within the given timeframe, they may be dismissed from the program. The Graduate Director may instead choose to suspend a graduate student from the program until specific requirements are met. Dismissal for cause is also possible in extreme cases such as academic dishonesty. Except in the last instance, the Graduate Director will work with the student and their guidance committee to establish a written plan that enables the student to exit the program with a master's degree.

Students in the History Department are also subject to performance criteria established by the

College of Social Science. To remain in good academic standing in the College, graduate students are expected to:

- Adhere to the expectations and responsibilities outlined in the Spartan Life Policies and General Student Regulations, the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities, and the College of Social Science Community Code of Conduct.
- If also employed by Michigan State University, graduate students must adhere to University Policies stipulated in the Employee Handbook, including Rules Governing Personal Conduct of Employees.
- Adhere to University, College and program guidelines for academic integrity.
- Maintain a semester *and* cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- Accumulate no more than two required courses of two or more credits each that fall below a 3.0 grade.
- Make satisfactory progress towards degree completion each semester.
- Complete program milestones in a timely manner according to the timelines set by the graduate program.
- Complete all qualifying or comprehensive exams no later than Year 5 from date of the first course counted in the doctoral plan of work (PhD Degrees)
- Complete all degree requirements for the doctoral degree no later than Year 8 from the date of the first course counted in the doctoral plan of work (PhD Degrees)

Per Section 3.2.3 of the Michigan State University's Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities, "Graduate students shall have the right to inspect any of their own educational records, except as waived by the graduate student (e.g., confidential letters of recommendation). Student educational records include official transcripts, student disciplinary records, and records regarding academic performance. Students shall have the right to provide a written explanation for documents in their files. The explanation shall be included in the graduate student's educational records file."

Policy on Deferred Grades and Incomplete Grades

Except in multi-term courses, the department discourages graduate students from incurring deferred grades in their courses. The presence of incompletes on a student's transcript can have adverse effects on their career in the following ways:

1. With respect to continuation in the program, failure to complete deferred or incomplete grades can cause a student to forfeit the right to continue enrollment. The required work for an incomplete must be completed and the grade reported to the Office of the Registrar no later than the middle of the next semester. The extension of this deadline is only possible with College approval under extenuating circumstances. Those with a deferred grade have six months from the last class day.
2. Students applying for graduate assistantships or their renewal must expect the existence of deferred and/or incomplete grades to work against their favorable consideration in competition. Failure to complete deferred and/or incomplete grades on time can cause a student to forfeit their funding all together.
3. No student may take their comprehensive examination for the Ph.D. degree until all deferred and incomplete grades in the fields to be examined have been removed.

Section VIII – Departmental Policies on Integrity & Safety in Research &

Creative Activities

The History Department takes its commitment to professional ethics seriously. Students need to learn the best practices of the historical profession and should become familiar with the American Historical Association's "[Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct](#)."

As in all units at Michigan State University, professional integrity is essential to all research activities. The University has adopted formal [Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#) at the University that highlight key principles of behavior. "Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research" is the foundation underlying all research activities at MSU. The MSU Graduate School has a companion set of [Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Research Mentoring](#).

Students whose work may have some connection with living human subjects (those doing oral histories, for example) must comply with the rules established by Michigan State's University Human Research Protection Program. The rules and regulations may be found [here](#).

Violations of professional ethical standards shall be adjudicated by the graduate committee, the Graduate Director, and the student's advisory committee. Penalties may include a failing grade, suspension, and/or expulsion from the History Department's graduate program.

The History Department provides mentoring to students in matters of professional ethics in its courses HST 803, 804 and 812, and the Department expects the student's main advisor to play a key role as a mentor and model for professionally ethical behavior.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and presenting them as one's own. A student commits plagiarism, when he/she/they submit as their own work part or all of another person's written or spoken material, be it published or not. A student commits plagiarism if he/she/they copies or paraphrases from a source without acknowledging the source. A student knowingly allowing another to copy his/her/their work and present it as his/her/their own is also guilty of plagiarism.

A History instructor who discovers a graduate student has committed plagiarism on a class assignment, on a comprehensive exam response, in a dissertation, or in any other work submitted for any purpose, will follow the All-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades, as outlined below. According to this policy, instructors, examiners and dissertation committee members may give graduate students who have plagiarized materials failing grades for assignments in which plagiarized material appears and/or failing grades in courses in which plagiarized material is submitted.

Students who plagiarize material during graduate exams will fail their exams and will not have the option to retake them unless the failing grade is changed as a part of a formal appeal process as outlined under the All-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades.

Integrity of Scholarship

According to the All-University [Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#), MSU has adopted a university-wide policy addressing principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records. This Policy recognizes that

- The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles and in so doing protect the validity of University grades. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind.
- If any instance of academic dishonesty is discovered by an instructor, it is his or her responsibility to take appropriate action. Depending on his or her judgment of the particular case, he/she/they may give a failing grade to the student on the assignment or for the course.
- In instances where a failing grade in a course is given only for academic dishonesty, the instructor will notify the student's academic dean in writing of the circumstances.
- The student who receives a failing grade based on a charge of academic dishonesty may appeal a judgment made by a department, school, or a college.
- When in the judgment of the academic dean, action other than, or in addition to, a failing grade is warranted, the dean will refer the case to the college-level hearing board, which shall have original jurisdiction. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, the appropriate judiciary will be randomly selected by the Assistant Provost from one of the three core colleges. Appeals from the judgment may be made to the All-University Academic Integrity Review Board.
- In instances of academic dishonesty where the instructor feels that action other than, or in addition to, a failing grade in the course is warranted, the instructor will report the case to his or her departmental or school chairperson and to the student's academic dean. The dean will then refer the case to the college-level hearing board, which shall have original jurisdiction.

In adjudicating these matters, the History Department follows Section 2.4.9 of Michigan State University's [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Policy

Responsible Conduct of Research Training is required for all graduate students at Michigan State University. Below are the requirements for history graduate students.

- Year 1 requirements are to take 4 online CITI training modules, which are due by the end of a student's first year.
- Year 2 requirements are to take 3 of the 6 possible RCR Basic Modules on CITI.
- Year 3 and forward requirements are to take 3 hours of annual refresher training. This can be met by any of the following methods: completing CITI modules, Graduate School workshops, History Dept RCR workshops or one-on-one discussions with one's advisor.
- In addition, a minimum of 6 hours of face-to-face, discussion-based workshops need to be complete before completing comp exams. Please see the list of ways to complete this

requirement on the [Graduate School's RCR website](#).

Any questions regarding RCR can be directed to the rcr@msu.edu.

Professionalism

Graduate students and faculty members share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility. The principle of professionalism is not a set of rules that specify conduct but rather an overarching guideline that provides direction in identifying appropriate and inappropriate conduct. The History Department demands that all students set and keep high standards of collegiality and professionalism in the interest of maintaining a climate that is conducive to learning and research among all departmental members and the broader academic community.

Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a professional manner and to exhibit characteristics of a professional scholar. If a student engages in conduct that is deemed unprofessional, the department will generally treat such conduct as an additional place where students need to be taught appropriate skills to succeed in the profession. Such instances are generally handled by a combination of the advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Chair.

If the conduct persists or if it is particularly egregious, the conduct may be noted in the student's academic file and specific guidelines may be provided to guide future conduct. Repeated or egregious unprofessional conduct can be used as grounds for removal from the program. Such decisions will be handled by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Departmental Chair, in consultation with the appropriate Associate Dean in the College of Social Sciences.

Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy

All TAs and RAs must complete MSU's on-line training about the [Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct](#) (RVSM) policy. You will receive notifications about this mandatory training from the university on an annual basis.

DEI Training

All students must also complete MSU's online DEI training. Visit the [training](#) page from MSU's Office of Regulatory Affairs for FAQs and the link to take the training in the Ability system.

Graduate Student Safety and Wellness

Michigan State University offers a number of resources to assist graduate students in developing and maintaining good physical, psychological, and emotional health. Find a complete list of available programs [here](#).

Disability Accommodations for Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs, and TEs) are both students and employees. They are thus eligible

for disability accommodations in both of these roles, and these accommodations are provided through distinct documents coordinated by RCPD: Students receive VISAs (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations) or VISTAs (Verified Individualized Services and Temporary Accommodations) and employees receive SEADs (Statements of Employee Accommodation Determination). Graduate assistants can register for both situations using [RCPD's MyProfile portal](#).

Travel Policy

All graduate students traveling for research purposes must submit to the Academic Programs Coordinator a [Travel Authorization Form](#). If the travel is to be funded by the History Department, funds will not be disbursed prior to receipt of the form.

MSU's [Travel Clinic](#) promotes safe and healthy travel by providing counseling to travelers about appropriate vaccines and preventive medication. It has a number of useful resources.

Section IX – Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

Should conflicts or grievances of any sort arise, students are encouraged to contact the Graduate Director and/or the Department Chairperson to find an effective way to solve the problem. When needed, the Graduate Committee may be called upon to resolve disputes. [Article 5](#) of Michigan State University's Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities has additional guidelines and suggestions for conflict resolution policies and procedures.

The Michigan State University Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) and the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR) documents establish the rights and responsibilities of MSU students and prescribe procedures to resolve allegations of violations of those rights through formal grievance hearings. In accordance with the SRR and the GSRR, the History Program has established its own Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating graduate student academic grievances and complaints. You can find the History Department's hearing procedure [here](#).

Section X – Work Related Policies

Through the awarding of Assistantships, the Department of History seeks to attract promising students into its graduate program, to secure their services for its instructional program, and to further their professional education.

Regular appointments of graduate assistants are made by the Chair on behalf of the Graduate Director and Graduate Committee. The principal appointments for each academic year are announced at the end of March or in early April. Students applying to the Department for the first time and students who hold an assistantship compete on a basis of equal opportunity. All information supporting an application for a GA position must be submitted each year for continuing students. In addition to the annual awards, supplementary appointments may be made at any time during the school year when demonstrated need for them exists and funds are available. In such cases the Chair acts on the advice of the Graduate Director. The Department also participates in the University-wide fellowship programs including University Distinguished Fellowships and University Enrichment Fellowships.

Graduate assistantships are available only to graduate students who are actively pursuing graduate degree programs and who are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees and meeting the University and College academic standards.

Graduate assistants must be registered each semester in which they hold assistantships. For a half-time assistant, minimum enrollment is 6 credits for master's degree students and 3 credits for doctoral students. For doctoral students who have successfully completed comprehensive exams, minimum enrollment is 1 credit.

Annual Renewal of Multi-Year Funding Packages

The History Department offers multi-year funding packages for students as a recruitment tool. These funding commitments are contingent upon adequate progress in the student's program of study. All students who are awarded multi-year packages, both from the University and from the Department, are required to submit annual statements of progress to the Graduate Director. The elements of each application (or re-application) for an assistantship are:

1. Teaching Assistant application provided by the Academic Programs Coordinator
2. A statement from the applicant about her/his work area the previous year

The evaluation of this material by the Graduate Committee will be done in a way that ensures that adequate attention is paid to all salient features of an applicant's record as it stands when applications are closed. While no single feature of that record is likely to be absolutely determinative, it should be understood that the Committee will:

- Regard cumulative grade-point averages which fall below 3.5 for graduate work and/or the attainment of any grade below 3.0 as evidence that the applicant's academic performance is clearly lacking in quality.

- Expect the prompt removal of Incomplete grades and regard their presence in regular courses as evidence of less than satisfactory academic progress.
- Regard with disapprobation evidence of a dilatory approach to the fulfillment of foreign language requirements and/or a student's inability to form a guidance committee by the end of the second semester.
- Assign considerable weight to reports of below-average performance on graduate assistant assignments.
- Consider below-average progress reports as evidence that an applicant's academic performance is not meeting expectations.
- Construe failure of the comprehensive examinations as evidence of inadequate academic achievement within the terms set by the Guidance Committee.

Graduate Assistant Duties and Terms

Michigan State University Teaching Assistants are employed according to the terms outlined in the [Graduate Employees Union Collective Bargaining Agreement](#).

Teaching Assistantship duties normally take one of three forms: the assistant may be assigned to lead discussion sections in one of the introductory survey courses, may serve as a grader in an undergraduate course with a large enrollment; or serve as the principal instructor for a course. In any case the assistant is expected faithfully to carry out the duties assigned by the course instructor. For half-time assistants these duties will normally average 20 hours of work per week.

It rests with each instructor to make clear at the beginning of each semester his/her/their expectations with respect to such features of the assistant's work as the keeping of office hours, other counseling activities, and the timely handling of papers and examinations. Assistants are required to attend lecture sections of the courses to which they have been assigned, even when they may previously have assisted for the same professor in the same course. While every reasonable effort will be made to match assignments with the academic interests of the assistants, in practice students must expect to be assigned to courses lying outside their preferred fields of study when enrollment and other considerations make this necessary. The failure of assistants to carry out assigned duties is regarded by the Department as prejudicial to the effective discharge of its instructional and administrative functions. It may therefore result in immediate termination of an assistantship appointment.

The terms which govern the appointment of graduate assistants are set by the College of Social Sciences and contain the following important provisions:

- Appointment to a graduate assistantship for all or part of a given academic year carries no presumption with regard to preferred treatment when reappointment is requested.
- The appointment of graduate assistants is made at Level I, II and III as determined by the University contract with the GEU. Students enter at Level I by having less than one year of experience as a graduate assistant or a full support fellow. Level II students have a master's degree or equivalent and/or two semesters of experience as a graduate assistant or a full support fellow in the employing unit. Level III is achieved when 6 semesters as a graduate assistant have been completed, provided that students have also attained a

master's degree or equivalent. The GA experience must be in the employing unit or in a department considered relevant by the chairperson or employing unit.

- Stipends at all levels are set annually to take account of the changing pay structure within the University.

Appointment dates are listed below. The employee is required to be on campus and available to their supervisor during the duration of these dates:

- Fall Semester – August 16 to December 31
- Spring Semester – January 1 to May 15
- Summer Semester – May 16 to August 15

English Language Proficiency for International Students

According to MSU's Academic Programs Catalog "All international applicants and applicants for graduate programs whose first language is not English must be able to demonstrate their English language proficiency. Those applicants who do not demonstrate English language proficiency must fulfill the requirements stated below as part of the admissions procedure. Graduate students may be admitted on regular status or on provisional status."

MSU candidates for TA appointments who were required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to Michigan State University must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. Those international teaching assistants (ITAs) may meet this requirement in one of the following ways:

- Presenting a TOEFL iBT speaking section score of 27 or higher.
- Receiving a score of 50 or higher on the MSU Speaking Test
- Taking AAE 451 or AAE 452 (ITA language support courses) and receiving a score of 50 or higher on the ITA Oral Interaction Test (ITAOI).

Those ITAs who received a waiver of the TOEFL or of other accepted tests of English proficiency for admission, must also meet the requirement of proficiency in spoken English before they are assigned to teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. To meet this requirement, those ITAs may use any of three options listed above.

Individual exceptions from these requirements (on a case-by-case basis in rare circumstances) will be considered by the Graduate School in consultation with the ELC upon the request of the department and with the endorsement of the Associate Dean of the College.

For non-TA duties, the History Department does not require the SPEAK test.

Grief Absence Policy

For all graduate students requesting accommodations for a [grief absence](#), it is the responsibility of the student to: a) notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation, b) provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty, and c) complete all missed work

as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty.

It is the responsibility of the advisor/major professor to: a) determine with the student the expected period of absence, acknowledging that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances, b) receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return, and c) make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence.

If employed as a RA or TA, the graduate student must also notify their employer. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants should refer to the bereavement policy outlined in Article 18 of the [MSU Graduate Employees Union Collective Bargaining Agreement](#).

Students who believe their rights under this policy have been violated should contact the University Ombudsperson.

Medical Leave

Graduate students may take unpaid medical leave at any point in the program. It is worth noting that medical leave does not stop the clock on the eight-year period of time toward degree. However, should an extension be necessary the College and Graduate School will work to accommodate the request. Each student is strongly encouraged to consult with their major advisor and the Graduate Director before going on leave in order to establish a timeline for recovery and return.

A graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of their appointment because of illness or injury shall notify the Graduate Director as soon as circumstances permit. Similarly, a graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of their appointment because of pregnancy shall notify the Graduate Director as soon as circumstances permit.

During the illness, injury, or pregnancy the History Department shall adjust (reduce, waive, or reschedule) the graduate assistant's duties as those duties, and the assistant's physical circumstances, reasonably dictate. If total absence from duties becomes necessary, the Department shall maintain the stipend of the appointment, provided the graduate assistant is still enrolled, for a period of two months, or to the end of the appointment period or of the semester, whichever should occur first.

For more information, graduate teaching assistants should refer to the medical leave policies in the GEU contract Article 18 of the [MSU Graduate Employees Union Collective Bargaining Agreement](#). All graduate students should refer to [Academic Programs](#).

Policy on Use of Department Facilities

All MSU-related correspondence should be sent from your university issued email address. Phones are not provided for graduate student use.

All graduate students are assigned a mailbox in 241 Old Horticulture. These mailboxes should be kept locked, especially if students are turning in papers, as it is a violation of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations for students to turn in papers to unsecured

mailboxes. The mailroom is open from 8:00 to 4:45, Monday through Friday. The department has a large printer/copier, and this is to be used only for TA and RA related work. You will need to obtain your supervising faculty member's copy code in order to make copies, or you may send print jobs to the Academic Programs Coordinator no less than 48 hours before they are needed.

There is a shared workspace in 347 Old Horticulture. This room is left unlocked on nights and weekends and personal belongings should not be left there. The shared graduate computer room in 330 Old Horticulture. The room is equipped with a PC and a Mac, as well as a printer/scanner. This printer should be used only for brief (i.e., 1-2 pages) print jobs, for example printing out a form. This printer is not to be used for printing papers for classes or for tasks relating to your RA or TA assignment. The department will pay for one toner cartridge per semester. The graduate lounge is in 232 Old Horticulture and is equipped with a refrigerator and microwave. This room is open from 8:00 to 4:45, Monday through Friday. Students working as TAs can meet with students in rooms 347, 300, or 232.

The History Department has a small number of offices that are reserved for students. Priority is given to students who have passed comprehensive examinations and advanced to ABD status. Space permitting, these offices are available for students who are in good standing and funded by the department or holding prestigious external grants. These offices are to be used primarily for dissertation writing. It is expected that students will use their offices, so students away conducting research should not apply. These offices are often shared, and they are assigned on a year by year basis. We do not make permanent assignments. For those using an office, students are not permitted to paint or hang anything with nails. Noise levels must be kept to a minimum. The Graduate Director and/or Department Chair may change office assignments at any time and for any reason.

Section XII – University Resources

In addition to the links provided in the above sections, History Department graduate students will find useful information about policies, procedures, and support via the links below.

- Resources provided by the Graduate School:

- [Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion programs](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Forms](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Graduate life & wellness](#)
- [Mentoring](#)
- [Policy information](#)
- [Professional development](#)
- [Research integrity](#)
- [Traveling scholar opportunities](#)
- [University Committee on Graduate Studies](#)

- Resources provided by university-level units such as:

[Office for International Students and Scholars](#) (OISS)

[Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD)

[Student Affairs](#)

[MSU Libraries](#)

[The Writing Center](#)

[Olin Health Center](#)

[Inclusion & Intercultural Initiatives](#)

[University Outreach & Engagement](#)