

Graduate Program Handbook

Department of History
Vanderbilt University

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1. The Graduate Program in History at Vanderbilt

Guidelines approved by the Department of History
Last updated ***

With forty full-time faculty members, the Vanderbilt History Department trains graduate students in a wide range of fields and methodological approaches, covering periods from antiquity to the present. Faculty with primary or joint appointments in the Department can be found on the faculty web page [here](#) and those with secondary appointments [here](#). Links lead to detailed information on each member of the Department. Several [graduate fields](#) have web pages of their own.

The program has been designed to provide our students with sound professional training, both intensive and comprehensive, while enabling them to advance expeditiously toward a degree. Students are reminded that the general rules of the Graduate School, with which this program is in accord, are published in the Graduate School Catalog, available online [here](#). All students should familiarize themselves with the section on academic regulations. They should also be aware of the Honor Code and the regulations governing non-academic matters, which are published in the student handbook. The handbook is available online [here](#).

Graduate students can take advantage of numerous programs of lectures, seminars and workshops offered by the History Department and by other departments and interdisciplinary centers and schools at the University. The Department sponsors the [Vanderbilt History Seminar](#), which meets regularly to discuss a pre-circulated paper presented by visiting scholars and, occasionally, by Vanderbilt faculty. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the seminar as part of their graduate education, to gain familiarity with diverse historical approaches and methods.

History sponsors or co-sponsors multiple activities including in the areas of British studies, Asian studies, the history of science, medicine, and technology, and the history of law. Many other opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement can be found elsewhere. [The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities](#) houses on-going seminars in areas ranging from [Circum-Atlantic Studies](#) to postcolonial theory, science studies, and pre-modern cultural studies. A partial listing of other centers and programs whose activities would be of interest to history graduate students would include the [Center for Latin American Studies](#), the Center for [Medicine Health, and Society](#), the [Max Kade Center for European and German Studies](#), the Department of [African American and Diaspora Studies](#), and the programs in [American Studies](#), [Asian Studies](#), [Jewish Studies](#), and [Women's and Gender Studies](#).

The [Graduate History Association](#) organizes activities for graduate students. Its elected officers serve as liaisons with the department faculty.

1.A. The Master's Degree

The History Department does not accept external applications for a terminal master's degree.

The M.A. is usually earned *en route* to the Ph.D. It is also available to Vanderbilt undergraduates who enroll in the 4+1 program in history. Information on the 4+1 program can be found online [here](#). Students apply for admission after the first semester of their junior year. In addition to completing all requirements for the B.A., students in the program must have 30 graduate credit hours with at least a B average and must submit one substantial research paper from their +1 year plus one substantial research paper from their final undergraduate year in order to receive the M.A. The courses will normally be in the History Department, but appropriate graduate courses in other departments or programs may be counted, subject to the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in history.

Requirements for the M.A. for doctoral students are described below, in the section on the Ph.D. program.

1.B. The Ph.D. Program

The purpose of the Ph.D. program is to train professional historians as scholars and teachers. The course of study will provide the scholarly tools for an academic career. Students will acquire and demonstrate expertise in a general field as well as appropriate subfields. They will also pursue training outside their area of scholarly interest as part of developing their proficiency in the teaching of history and their ability to situate particular research projects within a larger context.

The Ph.D. requires 72 hours of graduate credit, including 45 "quality hours." All graduate courses taken at Vanderbilt for a letter grade count as "quality hours." The remainder of the 72 hours includes dissertation research, which is graded satisfactory (S)/unsatisfactory (U), and transfer credit where appropriate. In special cases, a student can petition the Graduate School to convert transfer credits into quality hours, but the department prefers student to take the appropriate courses at Vanderbilt.

Transfer Credit: on recommendation of the History Department and with the approval of the Graduate School, credit up to 6 semester hours may be transferred from graduate schools in other accredited institutions when the student first arrives at Vanderbilt. Only those hours in which the student has achieved at least the grade B or its equivalent will be considered for transfer. Grades earned on transferred credit do not affect the student's Graduate School average unless such courses are approved as quality hours, on petition from the History Department.

Students must maintain continuous registration with the Graduate School, even if not physically present in Nashville. The normal academic, full-time registration is 9 to 13

hours per semester. Until they reach a total of 72 hours, students who register for fewer than 9 hours will lose full-time status. Those who register for more than 13 may incur supplemental tuition charges. After they have accumulated 72 hours, students register for 0 hours in History 9999 Dissertation Research in order to maintain full-time status.

It is possible to combine a doctorate in history with credentials from other departments and programs. Interdisciplinary graduate certificates, requiring 15-18 hours of course work, are available in American Studies, African American/Diaspora Studies, Gender Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies, and Medicine, Health, and Society. The M.A. in Medicine, Health, and Society is designed to be combined with a traditional Ph.D.

1.C. The First and Second Years

The first two years in the Ph.D. program are devoted to taking classes, writing two substantial research papers, passing the necessary language examinations, and preparing for the qualifying examination, which is taken by May of the second year, or in some cases, by December of the third year.

The Graduate School requires that every Ph.D. candidate complete a total of 30 quality hours with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 before taking the qualifying examinations. In the first year, history students usually enroll in 3 courses in the fall semester and 4 courses in the spring semester, including a 1-hour independent study. In the second year, they enroll in 3 courses each semester. In the spring, students who take only 2 regular graduate courses register for enough credit in History 8999 (non-candidate research) to avoid falling below the minimum number of hours. (The designation non-candidate research simply refers to the status of students who have not yet passed their qualifying examination and been officially admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D.) Recognizing the need for maximum flexibility in meeting the course requirements, the History Department encourages students to work closely with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) as well as with specialists in their fields of interest to develop a plan of study.

1.C.1 Advising

The DGS serves as a general adviser to students as they embark on their studies, and a faculty adviser in an appropriate specialty is assigned to each student in the first year. By the beginning of the second year (and, in many cases, earlier), the student will have selected a professor to direct their dissertation, who may or may not be the same as the initial adviser. Students confer with their adviser when they choose courses, research topics, and fields for the qualifying examination, and as they begin to define their thesis topic.

1.C.2. Courses

Courses include graduate courses offered by the History Department; graduate courses offered by other departments, programs, and schools; undergraduate courses for graduate credit; and supervised reading courses with individual faculty members.

History 6100/6110 and 8000

The History Department requires all first-year students to take a two-semester introduction to methods and research, History 6100-6110. These courses are designed to familiarize students with a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. History 6100 focuses on recent trends in historical scholarship. In 6110, students write a major research paper. It is linked with a one-hour independent study (History 8000) with a specialist in the student's field. Students will be encouraged to submit work simultaneously to the instructors of 6110 and 8000.

History 6300

The Department requires all students to complete History 6300, "The Art and Craft of Teaching History," during the second semester of their third year in the program.

History 6400 and 6410

The Department recommends all students of American History to complete History 6400 and 6410, "Readings in American History."

History 6500 and 6510

The Department recommends all students of Latin American History to complete "Readings in Early Latin American History" (6500) and "Readings in Modern Latin American History (6510)."

Reading Seminars

These seminars provide the context within which students will write a substantial research paper, utilizing primary sources.

Mezzanine (Undergraduate) Courses (5000 level only)

Students may take undergraduate courses that are approved for graduate credit. A complete list appears in the courses section of the Graduate School Catalog (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/grad/Grad01.html>). Other 5000-level mezzanine courses may be taken for graduate credit if the student obtains special authorization from the instructor, the DGS, and the Graduate School. **The request must be approved by the DGS in time to reach the Graduate School by the tenth day of classes.** Copies of the appropriate form are available from the Graduate Program Assistant.

Independent Studies

Students may design independent study courses under the supervision of a faculty member to deepen their knowledge in particular areas. In consultation with the instructor, the student must prepare a plan of work for the course and complete a form for submission to the Graduate School. Copies of the form are available from the graduate secretary. **The petition must be approved by the DGS in time to reach the Graduate School by the tenth day of classes.**

Graduate Courses in Other Departments, Programs, and Schools

Students may enroll in graduate courses in other departments and interdisciplinary programs of the College of Arts and Science and in other schools of the university. They should consult with the DGS to make certain the course is suitable. The departments of Anthropology, African-American and Diaspora Studies, English, French and Italian, German, Russian and East European Studies, Political Science, Sociology, and Spanish and Portuguese regularly offer classes at the graduate level that are appropriate for history graduate students to take as part of their program. Interdisciplinary programs include Classical and Mediterranean Studies, the Graduate Department of Religion, Latin American Studies, Medicine, Health, and Society, and Women's and Gender Studies. Students with an interest in the history of medicine, public health, and disease are encouraged to take the MHS interdisciplinary graduate colloquium, MHS 6100. Other schools include the Vanderbilt Law School, the Peabody College of Education and Human Development, the Owen School of Management, and the Divinity School.

1.C.3. Research Papers

Students must write two substantial research papers to fulfill the departmental research requirement. The first of these is written in the context of History 6110/8000 during the first year. It should be completed and graded by May 15, shortly after the end of classes. Students who receive a grade lower than "B" will have the opportunity to revise the paper and resubmit no later than August 1st. If no paper is received by August 1st, the student will not be allowed to register for second-year classes and will be dismissed from the program.

Students write the second paper in either their first or second year, as part of formal course work or in an independent study. It must be completed and approved before the student sits for the qualifying examination. The student should let the instructor know that they are submitting the paper for the departmental research requirement. When the paper is approved, the instructor must notify the DGS and the Graduate Program Assistant.

Note: Papers written for courses in other departments will be evaluated by the student's adviser. Students who have written a master's thesis in history at another institution may petition to have it count as the second research paper for the Vanderbilt program. A student who wishes to take advantage of this option should submit a copy of the M.A. thesis to be evaluated by the DGS and the student's adviser. A positive recommendation

would then go to the Graduate School. Bear in mind that if the petition receives final approval, the student would be ineligible to receive a Vanderbilt M.A.

1.C.4. Grades and Deadlines

Students are expected to earn a grade of “B” or above in all of their courses. Students do not earn credit for any course in which a grade lower than “C” is received. Students who receive a “B” or lower in any course taken for graduate credit or who receive more than one “B plus” or only “A minus” grades, or whose GPA falls below 3.75 will be expected to discuss the grades and their future in the program with the DGS. Under certain circumstances such students might be placed on academic probation (see below). By Graduate School regulations, students who fall below a grade point average of 3.0 will be placed on probation. University regulations stipulate that a “B” average (3.0) is required for graduation.

Students are expected to complete course work in the semester in which it is assigned. Course instructors, however, may assign a grade of “I” (incomplete) if work is not completed by the end of the semester.

Note:

- Under Department rules, students in the first year must complete all fall term course work by May 1st. Spring term course work should ideally be finished by August 1st and in no case later than December 1st of the second year. Students in the second year must complete all course work and fulfill the research requirement by the time they sit for the qualifying examination. In addition, students must constitute a Qualifying Examination (QE) committee and file a “Fields for the Qualifying Examination” form, signed by all members of the committee, no later than the end of the fall semester of the second year. (See the section on the Qualifying Examination Committee, below.) Failure to meet these deadlines will render students ineligible to receive departmental or university research funds or summer funding.
- University regulations hold that an “I” not replaced by a regular grade within one year may be changed at the discretion of the instructor to the grade “F”. Otherwise, it automatically becomes permanent and remains on the transcript.

1.C.5. Language Requirements

The Basic Language Requirement: all candidates for the Ph.D. must demonstrate a reading knowledge of a language or languages other than English. In U.S. and British history, one language other than English is required. In all other fields, the minimum is two. At least one will typically be a language the student will use for research. The standard for this language will be determined by the adviser. Any language will be accepted if there is a Vanderbilt faculty member qualified to judge the student’s level of competence, or if

the student can meet the requirement without taking an examination at Vanderbilt. (See below, under “Alternatives to the Examination.”) Students should consult the DGS about the various possibilities.

Language examinations are offered at designated times each semester. They are set by Vanderbilt faculty, ordinarily from the History Department. The examinations require the student to translate multiple passages from a foreign language. Usually one is translated in full, and two others are summarized. The use of a paper dictionary is allowed. Students may take language courses at Vanderbilt to help them prepare for the examinations, but such courses do not count for the degree. Consult the DGS about other opportunities for language study. The Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship program administered through federally-funded (Title VI) area studies centers provides funding for US citizens for studying modern foreign languages. The priority is to encourage the study of less commonly taught languages, such as Arabic and Portuguese. Some universities have summer language institutes, at which students pay normal summer-school tuition.

Alternatives to the Examination(s):

- The Graduate School may accept certification from the Department that the minimum requirement in a language has been met if the student is able to present an acceptable academic record of the equivalent of at least 12 semester hours in the language.
- A student who has fulfilled the language requirement at another graduate school, language school, or equivalent, prior to entering Vanderbilt may, at the discretion of the History Department and the Graduate School, petition to transfer the certification if the student does so within three years after having received it.
- A student whose native language is not English may petition the Graduate School, through the DGS, to accept that language without an examination.

All students must fulfill their basic language requirement before they take their qualifying examinations. Students who need to take two language examinations must pass the first one by the end of the first year. Those who have not satisfied the requirement by the end of that year should use the following summer to improve their language skills.

The language requirement for doctoral research: In addition to satisfying the basic language requirement, students are expected to develop proficiency in any languages required for their dissertation research. They should normally have met this requirement by the time they take the qualifying examination, but an exception may be made for fields requiring more than one foreign language.

1.C.6. The M.A. Degree for Doctoral Students

The M.A. degree requires 30 quality hours, with at least a “B” average and no incompletes, completion of foreign language requirements appropriate to field of specialty, fulfillment of research requirements (two substantial research papers, both

written while at Vanderbilt University).

All students will complete this checklist in the normal course of the program (typically at the end of year 2).

Filing for the M.A. Degree

Filing for the M.A. must be completed several months in advance. Complete the “[Intent to Graduate](#)” form and submit it online, at the beginning of the term in which you expect to receive the degree. The deadline can be found on the form and on the Graduate School website. Choose either “MA-non-thesis” or “MA-thesis.” Additional guidance may be found [here](#).

For Students with Previous Master’s Degrees

Students who have written a master’s thesis in history at another institution may petition to have it count as the second research paper for the Vanderbilt program. Bear in mind that taking this option means that the student would be ineligible to receive a Vanderbilt M.A. in History, but would rather proceed to candidacy for the Ph.D.

1.C.7. The Qualifying Examination (Q.E.) Committee

In the second year, normally no later than October 15, each student, in consultation with their adviser and the DGS, must propose a Qualifying Examination Committee. The committee is appointed by the Graduate School on the advice of the DGS. In accordance with Graduate School regulations, the committee consists of no fewer than four members of the graduate faculty. Three will be from the History Department, including the adviser, who will serve as chair, and must have a full appointment in the History Department. One committee member must come from outside the Department (a member of the history department at another university is also an acceptable possibility). If one minor field is in a discipline other than history, the outside member will come from that discipline. Any variation of the committee makeup must be approved by the Graduate School. The committee must represent the student’s minor as well as major fields. (On fields, see the section on the qualifying examination, below.) The function of the Q.E. committee is to help the student prepare for the qualifying examination and to conduct the examination.

1.C.8. The Qualifying Examination

In consultation with the Qualifying Examination committee and the DGS, the student prepares for the qualifying examination, which will be taken by May of the second year, or in some cases, by December of the third year. By the end of the fall semester of the second year, students must file a “Fields for the Qualifying Examination,” signed by their committee members and the DGS, indicating their proposed fields for the examination.

The examination cannot be scheduled until the student has 30 quality hours, with at least a “B” average, no incompletes and has met the language requirement.

In the examination, the student must demonstrate mastery of a major field and two minor fields.

- The major field is typically defined as a long time span and either a regional or a national geographic framework (for example, Europe 1600-1789 or modern Latin America). A large topical field such as modern medical history, Anglo-American legal history, or the Reformation may also be appropriate.
- One of the minor fields may be a subfield of the major field, defined by topic and/or geography. An example would be a major field on modern Latin America combined with a minor field on Brazil. A topically or geographically defined minor may cover a shorter time period than the major field, e.g., a major field on the U.S. since 1865 and a minor field on American diplomatic history in the twentieth century, or major field on Europe, 1600-1789 and a minor field on France, 1715-1789. If the major field covers a sufficiently long chronological span, the minor field may be defined as a shorter time period within that span. An example would be Latin America/colonial Latin America. Except in the case of the U.S., a minor field should not ordinarily be a subfield of the history of a single country.
- The other minor field must be distant from the major field in terms of topic, chronology, and/or geography. Typically, this field will have theoretical, cross-cultural, and/or interdisciplinary components (e.g. comparative slavery, postcolonial theory and history, comparative nationalisms). This field may be primarily based in a department other than history or in an interdisciplinary program that trains students at the graduate level, such as Jewish Studies, the department of African-American and Diaspora Studies, or the Graduate Department of Religion.

Students prepare reading lists for each of their fields. Such lists ordinarily include both material students have already read, in courses and elsewhere, and new material read specifically for the qualifying examination. Students should consult reading lists prepared by graduate students who have already taken their examination. The length and character of the reading lists are determined in consultation with the appropriate members of the faculty. Lists ordinarily range in length from 80 to 100 monographs for the major field and 50 to 80 monographs for the minor fields, although these numbers may vary significantly in individual cases. Lists will normally be finalized, and no longer subject to change, by February 1 of the student’s fourth semester in the program. During their preparation for the qualifying examination, many students meet periodically with the members of their committees to discuss their progress. Students may also form reading groups with other graduate students to facilitate their preparation.

The examination, conducted by the student’s Qualifying Examination Committee, consists of a written and an oral component. Only after the student has

successfully passed the written exam in all fields is the student permitted to take the oral part of the exam. The oral examination should be scheduled approximately two weeks after the written examination. The Graduate School must be notified at least two weeks in advance of the time and place of the oral examination. The Qualifying Examination Committee will alert the student at least 72 hours before a scheduled oral examination on whether the student has passed the written examination.

The written portion normally includes two questions on the student's major field and one on each of the minor fields. The oral component can cover any aspect of the student's fields and may include follow-up questions on the written component. The emphasis should be on the general area in which the student plans to write his or her dissertation. The examination should not, however, focus on the student's specific dissertation topic. The oral portion is not a public examination, and voice recordings of it are not permitted.

The qualifying examination results form, signed by the committee members and the DGS, shall be forwarded to the Graduate School immediately after the oral examination. When the student has passed both parts of the qualifying exam, the committee shall recommend to the Graduate School that the student be admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D.

A student who does not pass the examination the first time is entitled to take it again. A student may be judged to have failed the entire examination or parts of it. The re-test, which must be taken within six months of the student being notified of having failed, will include only the failed field or fields. If the student does not pass the examination as a whole at this point, they will not be permitted to continue in the program.

Following the qualifying exam, second year students will take the first half of the Prospectus Seminar, History 8200. This first half usually takes place during the course of several class meetings in the month of May, and continues into the subsequent fall semester.

1.D. Third Year

All students will take the second half of History 8200, the Prospectus Seminar, in the fall, which aids students in preparing the dissertation prospectus and beginning work on the dissertation itself. It is graded on a regular basis (letter grades) and counts for 4 quality hours. All students also take History 6300, the Art and Craft of Teaching History in the spring. In the fall semester, students who passed the qualifying examination in May will take History 9999 (Ph.D. dissertation research) for their remaining hours. Students who will be taking their examination in December normally will take one additional graduate course and an independent study focused on preparation for the examination. In the spring, all students will register for an appropriate number of hours in History 9999.

History 9999 is graded satisfactory (S) and unsatisfactory (U). These grades reflect progress made within a given semester rather than the quality of the final product. A "U"

grade means that no credit hours will be awarded for the course. One “U” grade requires consultation between the student and the dissertation adviser. A second “U” grade triggers a department-level intervention, involving at least the dissertation adviser, the dissertation committee, and the DGS. By graduate school rule, the accumulation of three “U” grades will lead to dismissal from the program and the Graduate School.

Students normally begin fulfilling their teaching requirements in their third year, normally by serving as Teaching Assistants (TA), or sometimes as graders for courses. Students will be asked to state their preferred teaching assignments in the spring before their third year. Completion of teaching requirements can under particular circumstances (e.g., holding a fellowship that involves travel to archives) be delayed with permission of the DGS.

1.D.1. The Dissertation Committee and Prospectus

The summer between the second and third years of the program should be devoted to preliminary dissertation research, initial drafting of the dissertation prospectus, and constituting the Dissertation committee, if different from the Qualifying Examination committee.

Students have the option to make changes to their Qualifying Examination Committee after their exams, now known as the Ph.D. or dissertation committee, or whenever their intellectual interests change. If a committee member leaves Vanderbilt, it is the student’s responsibility to make certain that the committee composition conforms to the Graduate School requirements. The functions of the Dissertation committee are (a) to administer the dissertation prospectus; (b) to aid the student and monitor the progress of the dissertation; and (c) to read and approve the dissertation and administer the final dissertation defense. While the student is writing the dissertation, each committee member should meet with them at least once a year to assess what has been accomplished and help in planning the next stages of the project.

In general, the prospectus includes:

1. A clear statement of the topic and a formulation of the particular historical problem that the project will address. It should position the topic within the existing historical literature, explain the research approach or methods to be used, and discuss the sources to be consulted.
2. A tentative chapter outline with brief summaries of the proposed contents
3. A preliminary bibliography, listing the principal secondary sources and the major archival or other primary sources to be used.
4. A tentative schedule for research, writing, and completing the project.

For students passing the qualifying exam in the spring of the second year, the prospectus is due mid-fall semester of the third year. Students sitting for the examination in the fall of their third year should complete the prospectus by spring break. Any further delays

will result in the student being placed on academic probation. The committee meeting to approve the prospectus will ordinarily be scheduled two or three weeks after the prospectus is received.

ABD Status

Although the term “ABD status” is not in official use at Vanderbilt, many agencies and foundations that award grants and fellowships require applicants to have reached this point in their graduate career. To be certified as having attained ABD status, a student must have completed everything but the dissertation: passed the qualifying examination, had the dissertation prospectus approved and received 72 hours of credit, including 45 quality hours. The DGS can also write a letter noting that we expect a student to have reached ABD status by the end of the semester or the academic year.

1.D.2 The Dissertation

The dissertation must constitute an original and unique contribution to knowledge, based on independent primary research. The student’s adviser directs the research and supervises the writing of the dissertation; other members of the dissertation committee may read preliminary drafts and suggest changes where appropriate. Students should aim for a final length of approximately 250 to 350 pages, double-spaced.

Timetable

Failure to complete the dissertation in a timely manner can result in a student being removed from Ph.D. candidacy. Under the regulations of the Graduate School, the dissertation must be completed within four years after admission to candidacy. Upon petition to the Graduate School a one-year extension of candidacy may be granted, if the student can present evidence of significant progress toward completion. If such a period has expired without successful completion of the dissertation, the student may be dismissed from the Graduate School. Readmission to the Graduate School, and to candidacy, requires application to the Graduate School, with the approval of the program faculty. In such cases the student may be required, by the Graduate School or by the Ph.D. committee, to demonstrate competence for readmission by taking a qualifying examination or additional course work.

1.E. Fourth Year and After

From the fourth year forward, students will normally enroll in History 9999 Dissertation Research each semester. It is graded satisfactory (S) and unsatisfactory (U) and counts for “0” hours. (The provision for zero hours is part of the Graduate School’s method for keeping students in the full-time category.) Students are encouraged to participate in writing groups or to present their work in seminar series or conferences. Students may

register as half-time students in History 9995 if they are devoting a minimum of 20 hours per week to their dissertation; it is graded on the same basis as History 9999. All students who have completed the 72 hours required for the Ph.D. are subject only to the minimum tuition charge and the Activities and Recreation fees.

Students normally complete the balance of their teaching requirements in their fifth and sixth years.

1.E.1. Completion of the Dissertation

As they near completion of the dissertation, students should consult with the Graduate Program Assistant about University deadlines and filing procedures. An “Intent to Graduate” form must be submitted to the Graduate School about three months before the date on which the degree will be conferred. The Graduate School calendar gives the precise date.

The student should provide the members of the Ph.D. committee with a complete draft of the dissertation well in advance of scheduling the defense, and no later than three weeks prior to the defense date. All members of the committee must find it acceptable and so report to the DGS before the defense can go forward.

Note: The Department recommends scheduling the defense for at least two weeks before the deadline for submitting the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School (see below). The interval will give the student time to make minor corrections and ensure that the copy conforms to Graduate School rules on formatting and related matters.

The DGS, after consultation with the candidate, will notify the Graduate School at least two weeks in advance of the place and time of the examination and the title of the dissertation. The Graduate School then formally notifies the Ph.D. committee and submits the defense notice to Vanderbilt’s electronic calendar. The public is invited to attend.

1.E.2. Dissertation Defense

The defense is a collegial conversation between the student and the members of the Ph.D. committee. All committee members participate, either in person or via Zoom, barring extraordinary circumstances. The student begins the defense with a brief explanation of the project before fielding questions and comments from the members of the committee. The student is expected to demonstrate an understanding of the larger context of the specific subject of the dissertation as well as answer questions about the dissertation itself. Members of the committee will often offer advice on how to revise the dissertation for publication. A defense ordinarily lasts approximately two hours. At the conclusion of the defense, the committee will briefly confer and then notify the candidate of the result

(pass or fail), as well as notify the student of any required changes to the dissertation text. The dissertation defense results form, signed by the committee members and the DGS, will be forwarded immediately to the Graduate School.

1.E.3. The Final Copy

Candidates must submit the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School at least ten business days before the date of graduation. Candidates are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the rules and formatting procedures pertaining to the dissertation found on the Graduate School's website. Failure to abide by University guidelines may delay graduation.

Dissertations are required to be publicly available by placing a copy in the Vanderbilt Heard Library, posting an electronic version on the library website, and by filing with UMI/ProQuest authorization for inclusion in an accessible database. In some instances, students may request a delay in the release or posting of their dissertations for a limited time period. In no circumstance will the release of the dissertation be delayed for more than two years. Unless requested for a shorter period of time, any request to delay public release will expire at the end of two years and the Graduate School will proceed with the public release through the library.

All dissertations are microfilmed. Microfilming does not preclude publication by other methods, but it is tantamount to publication and a microfilmed dissertation, if not copyrighted, is in the public domain and may not subsequently be copyrighted in its original form. For students who choose to have their dissertation copyrighted, the Graduate School will facilitate the process. The abstract is published in *Dissertation Abstracts*, which publicizes the completion of the dissertation and announces its availability on microfilm.

1.E.4. Fellowships and Financial Aid

All history Ph.D. students receive six years of funding so long as they remain in good standing. Students must be enrolled full time, and are expected to meet departmental and Graduate School benchmarks in order to maintain their fellowship status.

In most cases, students will be required to serve as teaching assistants, graders, or instructors of record in the third, fifth, and half of the sixth years of study, with the first, second, and fourth years designated as service-free. Students contemplating taking on any form of paid work must consult with their adviser and DGS for approval.

Funding comes from a variety of sources, among them the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Provost's Office, and several departmental endowed funds, including the Albert H. Gordon Fellowship, the Herbert and Blanche Henry Weaver Summer Fellowship Awards in History, the J. León Helguera Fellowship, and the Ingram

History Graduate Fellowship.

Applications for external funding

Students in the College of Arts and Sciences are required to submit at least one major application for external funding during their time in the PhD program. This is a College requirement for graduation. What qualifies as a “major” application will vary from subfield to subfield: normally any application that allows students a lengthy period of time to travel to archival or library collections will qualify (e.g., Fulbright, DAAD, Huntington Library, etc). Successful applications for external funding do little to change a student’s status vis-à-vis university funding, and normally students will continue their fellowship period at the standard level of the Vanderbilt stipend. However, successful applications for external funding may affect the scheduling of teaching requirements. Students whose applications are successful should consult the DGS about such potential adjustments.

Research Support

The Department offers graduate students at all levels the opportunity to compete for small grants-in-aid for research travel and other expenses related either to the doctoral dissertation or for seminar papers and projected articles unrelated to the dissertation. There is no limit to the number of times a student may apply. Several of Vanderbilt’s centers and interdisciplinary programs, such as the Center for Latin American Studies, also fund research by graduate students. The College of Arts and Sciences holds an annual competition for Summer Research Awards.

Participation in Scholarly Conferences

Students who are the sole presenter of papers at major conferences may apply to the Graduate School for up to \$1000 support. Students must have completed at least one academic year in the Vanderbilt Graduate School. Grants are limited to a maximum of one award per budget year (July 1-June 30) and students are allowed a total of 3 travel grants from the Graduate School for their entire tenure at Vanderbilt.

Graduate students planning to present research at a conference, whether domestic or international, should apply in the first instance to the Graduate School for up to \$1000 in travel expenses. Students may apply concurrently to the History Department for additional funds to offset the cost of their travel. (*Note*: this rule pertains only to students who have not already exhausted their allotted number of Graduate School-funded trips.)

Teaching Requirement

All students gain experience as teachers in the teaching practicum course in the third year (History 6300) and as teaching assistants. Teaching assistants will be supervised by the faculty member who is the instructor of the course to which the student is assigned. The faculty member will report to the DGS on the student’s performance in the classroom.

Some advanced Ph.D. students will have the opportunity to teach their own courses in the summer sessions or during the academic year as needed by the Department and allowed by the Graduate School.

If a teaching assistant's numerical course evaluations fall below the standards set by the College of Arts and Sciences, the student will be put on teaching probation. The Center for Teaching and the Department will provide the student with resources to improve classroom performance.

2.Academic Probation and Dismissal from Program

Overview

The History Department takes great pride in supporting graduate students through the process of earning a PhD. However, at times it becomes apparent that a particular student cannot or should not continue in the program. This section of the Handbook is designed to outline the procedures by which students in that situation can be dismissed from the program. In substance, it summarizes provisions already found in the graduate handbook. Because probation and dismissal are often fraught processes, it is important that clear and fair procedures be followed. Students, faculty advisers, and the department as a whole all have obligations in this respect.

Students are classified in four ways: (a) in good standing, (b) on leave of absence, (c) on academic probation, (d) subject to dismissal.

Students in good standing meet the following criteria:

If they are in their first two years,

- they maintain a GPA of 3.5
- they are enrolled in the required number of credits
- they have no more than one unresolved incomplete (I) grade
- they have passed one language exam by the end of their first year, if two languages are required
- they have passed one language exam by the end of their second year, if one language is required
- they have passed both language exams, if two are required, by the end of their second year
- they have assembled a qualifying exam committee by the end of the fall semester of their second year
- they have finalized their qualifying exam reading lists by Feb 1 of their second year

If they are in their third year,

- they have earned quality grades in all required courses (i.e., no incompletes)
- they have passed their qualifying examinations (written and oral) by the end of fall term
- they have received satisfactory (S) grades in HIST 9999 and 6300
- they have assembled a dissertation committee
- they have submitted a passing prospectus by the end of the fall semester
- they are fulfilling or have approved plans to fulfil any teaching requirements

If they are in their fourth year or beyond,

- they have fulfilled or have approved plans to fulfill any teaching requirements
- they are continuing to make adequate progress on the dissertation, as confirmed by their adviser
- as part of making progress on the dissertation, they have arranged an adequate number of meetings with their chair and committee members

Any student who has not met the requirements as outlined above will be placed on academic probation.

2.A. Academic Probation

Academic probation is a remedial status, not a disciplinary function. Academic probation is designed to give students clear benchmarks in order to continue in the program and to finish within normative time. Placing a student on academic probation is also necessary prior to dismissal from the program for academic reasons (although two exceptions to this rule are discussed below). At any point during routine discussions and evaluations, either the academic advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) may counsel a student that they would be better off leaving the program. Should a student, under those circumstances, choose to leave the program, this will be considered a voluntary departure rather than a dismissal.

Academic probation is a core academic matter, and is not subject to interference by other offices on campus. Other campus offices (e.g., the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Academic Success) may be consulted in the probation processing an advisory capacity. The DGS and the History Department's Graduate Committee are in charge of all cases of academic probation; the student's advisor may play a consultative role but cannot independently authorize a probation or overturn it.

- In cases where the student subject to probation is advised by the DGS (thus presenting a conflict of interest), the Department Chair will be in charge of arranging and monitoring the academic probation; any appeals of the Department Chair's decisions will be directed to the graduate committee (without the vote of the DGS), who will make decisions by majority vote, with any ties going in favor of the Chair.

In cases of dispute or conflict over the terms of academic probation, whether raised by the student or the advisor, the Graduate Committee (without the vote of the DGS) will serve as the final arbiter, by majority vote, with any ties going in favor of the DGS. Any disputes about the nature, conditions, or reasons for academic probation must be raised in writing within 2 weeks of the notification of academic probation. The Graduate Committee will adjudicate such disputes within 1 week, or preferably sooner if the probationary semester is due to begin. They may choose to do this via written consultation, or via a hearing. Any decision on a dispute or appeal must be issued in writing.

Students must be notified of the academic probation, and of any terms of such probation. This must be done in writing, normally via email. A student's academic advisor and the Department Chair must be copied on any notification of probation. A notification of probation must include:

- the reasons for the probation (e.g., failure to pass a particular language exam on time, failure to maintain a suitable GPA)
- the steps necessary to rectify the deficiencies

Academic probation is for the length of a full semester, and all remedial steps must be completed by the end of the probationary semester. Under ideal circumstances, students will be placed on probation before a semester begins, or, in the case of a spring semester, within two weeks of the start of term. In cases where the student is placed on probation during a semester or after the first two weeks of spring semester, the student will have until the end of the subsequent semester to remedy any deficiencies. If the student cannot comply with all the terms of the probation by the end of the stipulated period, the student will become subject to dismissal.

Upon receipt of notice of probation, a student must either acknowledge the terms and agree to them, or raise a formal dispute. If the student undertakes neither action within 1 week of notification, the academic probation goes into effect on the terms stated in the letter, and there are no further opportunities for dispute.

In all cases, remedial steps must be objectively achievable (e.g., pass the German exam, submit a complete dissertation chapter and have it approved by the advisor), rather than subjective in nature (e.g., improve your writing). In cases where a student has failed to acquire a particular skill necessary for dissertation research, a probationary requirement might be that the student pass (with a grade of A or B) a designated course, or take such a course as an independent study with the relevant expert.

Probation is for the length of a semester and cannot be extended. There is, however, an equitable exception to this rule in cases where a faculty member responsible for evaluating remedial steps has failed to complete his or her obligations in a timely manner, or cannot do so because he or she is otherwise incapacitated. The DGS shall determine if a faculty member is dilatory or incapacitated, and shall notify the faculty member

(copying the Department Chair). In cases where either the student or the faculty member disputes this determination of the DGS, the Department Chair will make the final decision. If a faculty member is found to be dilatory or incapacitated, the terms of the probation will remain the same, but the probation will be extended for one further semester. In the unusual case that a faculty member continues during the extended semester to be dilatory or incapacitated, the DGS will remove that faculty member from the student's committee, and, in consultation with the Graduate Committee and any relevant faculty from adjacent fields, evaluate any relevant assignments, and make any further necessary judgments concerning the probation by the end of the extended semester. In cases where those judgments are disputed, the Department Chair will make the final decision, in all cases by the end of the extended semester.

In cases where a student meets the terms of the academic probation and successfully completes all benchmarks on time, the student will be returned to good standing. Students will be notified in writing that they have returned to good standing, and the student's advisor and the Department Chair will be copied on all such communication.

In cases where the student does not meet the terms of the academic probation, the student will become subject to dismissal. At the end of the probationary semester, the DGS will notify the Graduate School that the student is to be dismissed. The student, the student's advisor, and the Department Chair will be copied on all such notifications. Dismissal will proceed immediately, subject to the procedures of the Graduate School.

2.B. Dismissal Prior to Probation

In rare cases, academic deficiencies may be so severe that they cannot be remediated through academic probation. There are two situations in which this might occur.

- Cases concerning GPA. The Graduate School requires a 3.0 GPA for graduation (see the Graduate Course Catalog, p.41: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/documents/graduate.pdf>). If in the first semester the student's GPA falls below 2.0, that student is eligible for immediate dismissal. If the GPA falls below the benchmark during a subsequent semester, and the student cannot improve his or her GPA to the benchmark level within one semester, academic probation (which is remedial in nature) is not suitable.
 - o In these cases, the DGS should notify the student, the student's advisor, and the Department Chair. The DGS should then petition the Graduate School for the student's immediate dismissal from the program.
- Failed Qualifying Exams. In cases in which a student has failed all or part of Qualifying Exams for the second time, that student will automatically become subject to dismissal.

2.C. Academic Probation and Leave of Absence

Leave of Absence (LOA) and Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA) are statuses used by the University to indicate that a student needs absence from the University to attend to

medical concerns, be they physical or psychological, or other personal or familial concerns. Students on (M)LOA are essentially on “pause” with respect to their University and departmental obligations – their time on fellowship is paused, and semesters on (M)LOA do not count against the University’s total commitment to a student. Please consult the Graduate School’s website for further particulars on (M)LOA.

A student taking (M)LOA who is also academically deficient may be put on academic probation. Because academic probation is remedial in nature, there is no conflict between placing a student on probation and (M)LOA simultaneously. Upon University-approved return from (M)LOA, a student will be responsible for fulfilling the terms of academic probation within the space of the semester in which they return.

2.D. Disciplinary Actions and Grievances

Policy Violations and Disciplinary Action

Unlike Academic Probation, the Graduate Honor Council (GHC) makes determinations with respect to violations of university policies. If the GHC determines that a student has committed a violation of the Honor Code, the Council shall choose from among the following penalties: reprimand; failure of work in which the violation occurred; suspension from the Graduate School for a period not less than the remainder of the semester and not more than two semesters; or expulsion from the Graduate School.

Penalties of suspension and expulsion shall only be determined by a panel consisting of the President of the Graduate Honor Council plus eight persons. The Graduate Honor Council, in the case of a reprimand, will carry out the penalty. When it involves failure of the work or course, the faculty responsible for the course will carry out the penalty, and the Graduate School will do so when it involves suspension or expulsion from the Graduate School.

For more detailed information on the Graduate Honor Council and Honor Code, see:

<https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/gsc/honor-council/>

For information on other Student Accountability matters, see the Student Handbook at:

https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/student-conduct/

Grievances

Students who believe their academic performance has not been judged reasonably or fairly, or who believe their intellectual contributions have not been fairly acknowledged, should discuss their concerns with the DGS or, as necessary, the chair of the Department. If the student’s concerns cannot be resolved at the departmental level, the student may then request a further review of the issues in question by the office of the dean in the College of Arts and Science. The student may appeal the outcome of the school-level

review to the Graduate School. (Graduate School Catalog 2019-20)

For more detailed information about concerns related to academic performance and intellectual contribution, see: Graduate School Catalog at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/documents/graduate.pdf>; and Student Handbook at https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/university-policies-and-regulations/#complaint-and-grievance-procedures

3. Recommended Timing of Progress Through the Graduate Program

<https://as.vanderbilt.edu/history/graduate/201909HandyTimetable-ProgressToDegree.pdf>

This document clarifies the expectations of when each of the steps through the program should ideally be completed. Please bear in mind that, in individual cases, there may be a need to be flexible about the timing of specific aspects of the program. Overall, however, we believe it is best for our students to have a clear idea of the pacing of progress that the faculty believe will prove most fruitful.

Year 1

1st semester (Fall)

HIST 6100;
2 additional courses
Languages (non-credit)
Explore possible dissertation topics
Start thinking about major and minor fields

2nd semester (Spring)

HIST 6110
HIST 8000: 1 hour independent study with first year advisor or recommended specialist; in conjunction with HIST 6110; Oversight of 1st year paper; See 6110 guidelines
2 additional courses
Write 1st of 2 required research papers
Tentative selection of major and minor fields, and of Ph.D. committee
Consult by May 1 with committee members about summer readings for qualifying exam and about summer research for 2nd research paper
Take at least one language exam if two are required.
Apply for internal funding for language training support in summer.
Narrow range of possible dissertation topics

1st summer

Languages

Read in major and minor fields to prepare for qualifying exam
 Preliminary research on potential dissertation materials and concepts
 Conduct research in preparation for 2nd research paper, if possible

Year 2

3rd semester (Fall)

3 courses

Write 2nd required research paper in conjunction with one of the three courses or independent study taken this semester

Finalize major and minor fields and Ph.D. committee by October 15th.

Turn in Fields for Qualifying Exam Form to Department by October 15th.

Work on finalizing reading list for major and minor fields for qualifying exam

Languages (non-credit)

Apply for archival travel grants for 2nd summer

Make a list of grants to support dissertation research

Continue exam and dissertation reading

Refine dissertation topic

4th semester (Spring)

3 courses; students are encouraged to take independent study courses and/or reading courses geared toward preparing for their qualifying exam

Students should exercise caution in this semester in taking courses outside the department that require major papers to be written, unless such courses help with preparing for qualifying exam

Study for qualifying exam

Apply for archival travel grants for 2nd summer

Submit forms for Ph.D. committee at least 2 weeks before qualifying exam

Mandated language exams must be passed by April 7

Take qualifying exam by May after classes end (or in some cases by December of the 5th semester)

2nd summer

HIST 8200: prospectus seminar (Maymester/ Aug-Oct; appears in YES as a fall course)

Year 3

5th semester (Fall)

HIST 8200: prospectus seminar. Return start of fall semester with draft.

TA assignment

Apply for grants for dissertation research

Present dissertation prospectus by end of 5th semester (or by Spring break of the 6th semester for those who took qualifying exam in 5th semester)

6th semester (Spring)

HIST 6300: teaching workshop

TA assignment

Work on dissertation

3rd summer
Work on dissertation

Remaining years

Dissertation research and writing
HIST 9999: Dissertation research each semester in residence
Three more semesters of TA work, for a total of 5 semesters of service

4. How the History graduate program works

4.A. Graduate School, College, and Department

All graduate students in History are affiliated with three institutional levels of Vanderbilt at the same time: the Graduate School, the College of Arts & Science, and the History Department.

The Graduate School oversees all graduate education at Vanderbilt and houses numerous offices designed to facilitate teaching, research, and training, assist with students' practical problems, and handle the most basic administrative aspects of graduate school. History graduate students, like all other graduate students who study in the College of Arts & Science, are enrolled in the Graduate School, rather than being enrolled directly in the History Department or the College. The Graduate School is located in Alumni Hall on campus. The Graduate School Catalog offers information on a wide range of matters of importance to graduate students, including:

- Career development
- Graduate Student Council
- Center for Teaching
 - TA Orientation
 - Certificate in College Teaching
 - Blended and Online Learning Design
 - Certificate in Humanities Teaching and Learning
 - Graduate Teaching Fellows
- Student Care Network
- University Counseling Center
- Center for Student Wellbeing
- International Student and Scholar Services
- Services for Students with Disabilities

For more details see <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/documents/graduate.pdf#grad>

The College of Arts & Science is one of ten core academic units of Vanderbilt University. With approximately 370 tenured or tenure-track faculty members, and 200 non-tenure-track faculty, it is the largest academic unit of the university. The College has 35 departments or programs, many of which train graduate students in their respective fields of specialization.

The History Department is one of the largest departments in the College, with 42 full-time tenured or tenure-track scholars among its core faculty. Annual enrollment of new graduate students in the department typically ranges between four and seven students per year; the total number of History graduate students at any given time is approximately 30 students.

4.B. How the History Department is structured

Departmental officials

The head of the department is the Department Chair. Generally, a chair serves for a 3-year term, although in some cases interim chairs are appointed for shorter terms and some chairs serve longer than three years. The department chair has limited executive authority over members of the department, and is charged with handling such internal matters as nomination to

committees, assignment of courses to teach, assignment of staff roles, hiring of staff (subject to approval from the Dean or other University officials), or assignment of office space. Even in such cases, the ultimate executive authority still lies with the Dean: if a faculty member refuses to comply with the requests of a department chair, it is the Dean who has the final authority to require compliance from the faculty member. The faculty member can make use of the grievance process, as specified in the Faculty Manual. In handling personnel matters, the department chair must comply with all University policies regarding confidentiality, due process, and general university policies as well as federal and state law.

In the College of Arts and Science, the hiring and firing of faculty, and/or the disciplining of faculty, are handled by the Dean and Provost. When the department wishes to hire someone to join its faculty, it must first secure the support of the Dean, who then requests authorization from the Provost. Conversely, if a faculty member has been found to have engaged in violations of university policy, it is the Dean who is charged with taking disciplinary action against that faculty member, with approval from the Provost. These actions can include termination of employment if warranted, using the process set out in the Faculty Manual. Matters of promotion, salary, or pay raises are handled according to the procedures laid out in the Faculty Manual. The tenure and promotion process is set out in the University's Faculty Manual at:

<https://wp0.vanderbilt.edu/faculty-manual/part-ii-appointment-and-tenure/ch3-principles-rules-and-procedures-for-promotion-and-the-award-of-tenure/>

The Vice Chair is in charge of organizing the graduate admissions process, which is handled via caucuses of the faculty divided by field of specialization. The Vice Chair also handles other matters such as coordinating workshops for professionalization of the graduate students, and assisting the chair and other departmental officials in fulfilling their duties.

The role of Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is described in detail below under 4.C.

The Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) oversees the undergraduate course offerings, as well as the scheduling and staffing of undergraduate courses. He or she is also responsible for overseeing the advising of undergraduates and the recruitment of majors.

The Directors of the Vanderbilt History Seminar oversee the selection of the seminar's annual themes, the invitation of scholars to participate, and the running of the seminar sessions themselves.

Faculty ranks

Non-tenure-track faculty serve for terms of various length, under appointment by the Dean of the College. Their ranks in ascending seniority are: lecturer, senior lecturer, principal senior lecturer.

Tenure-track and tenured faculty ordinarily hold one of the following ranks, in ascending seniority: assistant professor; associate professor; and professor. The promotion from assistant professor to associate professor ordinarily entails the award of tenure. For a detailed account of the tenure-and-promotion process at Vanderbilt, and of academic ranks, see the Faculty Manual: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/faculty-manual/part-ii-appointment-and-tenure/>

Principal committees for departmental self-governance

At Vanderbilt, as at most other universities, departmental faculties are expected to run their own affairs via committees that handle specific tasks or functions within the department. The principal committees in the History department are:

Graduate Studies Committee (chaired by DGS)
Admissions Committee (chaired by Associate Chair)
Undergraduate Studies Committee (chaired by DUS)

Speakers Committee (appointed annually by department chair)
 Faculty promotion or review committees (appointed on ad hoc basis by department chair)
 Faculty hiring committees (appointed on ad hoc basis by department chair)
 Essay Prize committee (appointed annually by department chair)

Staff roles (see the separate detailed description below under Section 6)

Office Manager: oversees other office staff; handles budget; oversees policy matters regarding employment, grants, leaves, etc.
 Graduate Program Assistant: facilitates administration of graduate program
 Undergraduate Program Assistant: facilitates administration of undergraduate program

Graduate History Association

<https://as.vanderbilt.edu/history/graduate/gha.php>

All department students automatically receive GHA membership. GHA leadership currently includes co-presidents, a treasurer, and a secretary. The GHA's mandate encompasses liaising between the faculty, graduate students, and the larger Vanderbilt graduate student body; hosting events for graduate students; and assisting in the development of an inclusive departmental community.

One of the GHA's main initiatives is a series of roundtables held throughout the academic year. These academic forums are intended to foster graduate student-faculty mentor relationships at Vanderbilt. Generally, roundtables consist of a discussion of a draft of unpublished research and two or three articles relevant to the subject. These roundtables are small, directed sessions designed to critically workshop a faculty project (book chapter, article, etc.). In addition to the roundtables, GHA hosts a number of social and academic events over the course of the year. Highlights include social mixers, year-end celebrations, professionalization workshops, student-led seminars, comprehensive exam "care packages," and career development workshops. The GHA is always happy to organize new initiatives and encourages students to propose events.

4.C. The role(s) of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

In the broadest sense, the DGS is responsible for making sure that the graduate program functions smoothly, that it meets the needs of both faculty and graduate students, and that any problems arising in the progress of graduate students toward their degree are dealt with as promptly and constructively as possible. The DGS, in consultation with the department chair and department faculty, establishes the graduate course offerings that will be made available in any given year. In addition, the DGS continually evaluates the graduate program, and, in consultation with the department faculty, graduate students, and Graduate Studies Committee, undertakes whatever changes or reforms to the program are deemed advisable.

On the website of the Graduate School the roles of the DGS are set forth as follows:
https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/faculty_staff/dgs/index.php

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) assists students in their program and serves as a liaison between the program and the Graduate School.

Below are the typical duties of the DGS. Duties listed with an asterisk [*] are ones in which the DGS interacts directly with the Graduate School.

1. **Recruiting** - Spearhead the program's efforts in recruiting and attracting qualified applicants. [Learn more.](#)
2. **Admissions*** - In the History Department this role is filled by the Vice Chair. [Learn more.](#)

3. **Orientation** – Lead in the orientation of new students into the program, the Graduate School, the University and the city. DGS should also be responsible for *updating the guidelines* for the program. [Learn more.](#)
4. **Registration*** - Aid students and the Graduate School in the registration process. [Learn more.](#)
5. **Transfer of Credits*** - Request the transfer of credits from the graduate school of an accredited institution or from a professional degree program at Vanderbilt. [Learn more.](#)
6. **Monitor Progress** – Maintain records on students and monitor the progress of the students. [Learn more.](#)
7. **Professional Development** – Assure that teaching and research activities assigned to the student contribute to professional development and that the performance of these is appropriate. [Learn more.](#)
8. **Funding Opportunities** – Provide to the student information about funding opportunities from the Graduate School, such as [Travel Awards](#) and [Dissertation Enhancement Grants](#) (currently inactive), and from [other sources](#), such as the [NIH](#), [NSF](#) and private foundations. [Learn more.](#)
9. **Ph.D. Committee & Qualifying Exam*** - Submit *in advance* requests to [appoint](#) or [revise](#) a Ph.D. committee, [arrange for the Qualifying Examination](#), and return to the Graduate School the completed and signed [examination results form](#).
10. **Requests for Extension*** - On behalf of the student, and *in advance*, request extension to complete requirements for the Ph.D. or an extension of the deadline for taking the Qualifying Examination.
Contact: graduateschool@vanderbilt.edu
11. **Request for Leave of Absence*** - Request *in advance*, on behalf of the student, a leave of absence.
Contact: graduateschool@vanderbilt.edu
12. **Dissertation Defense, Defense Results, and Intent to Graduate*** - Submit *in advance to the Graduate School*, [the date, time and place of the Dissertation Defense](#). When the defense has been completed, see that the completed and signed [defense-results form](#) is returned to the Graduate School. Ensure that the student has submitted an Intent to Graduate Form. [Learn more.](#)
13. **Program Spokesperson*** - Act as the program’s spokesperson to the Graduate School office, keeping the Graduate School informed of developments affecting the students, e.g., the termination or withdrawal of a student. Contact: graduateschool@vanderbilt.edu
14. **Awareness of Regulations** – It is also important that the DGS be knowledgeable of *the rules and regulations listed in the [Graduate School Catalog](#)*.

5. Mentoring and being mentored: best practices

The DGS serves as a general adviser to students as they embark on their studies, and a faculty adviser in an appropriate specialty is assigned to each student in the first year. By the beginning of the second year (and, in many cases, earlier), the student will have selected a professor to direct their dissertation, who may or may not be the same as the initial adviser. From that point on, the dissertation director serves as the adviser, unless the student subsequently decides to be advised by another qualified faculty member, or the initial advisor retires or leaves Vanderbilt. Decisions about changes of advisor are normally made in consultation with the DGS. Students confer with their adviser when they choose courses, research topics, and fields for the qualifying examination, and as they conduct the research and writing for their dissertation.

The relationship between the dissertation director and the student is one of mentorship. What is mentoring?

...mentoring is a[n] intricate, long-term, one-on-one relationship that goes well beyond simply providing information. True mentoring is a complex process between professor and college adult learner that supports a mutual enhancement of critically reflective and independent thinking.

M.W. Galbraith, "The adult education professor as mentor," *Perspectives: The New York Journal of Adult Learning*, 1(1), 9-20, 2003.

Here is a helpful document from the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching that describes best practices for both the dissertation director and the student as they work together in furthering the student's progress to the PhD.

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/mentoring-graduate-students/>

6. TA and Grader Guidelines

The following guidelines have been adopted by the department to help graduate students and faculty in allotting their teaching responsibilities.

1. On average, we expect that a typical TA leading discussion sections will spend about 175 hours per semester in class, in office hours, preparing for class, and grading assignments.
 - a. 42 hours of class time
 - b. 28 office hours (average of 2 per week for 14 weeks)
 - c. 28 hours of prep time (2 hours for each of the 14 weeks' discussion sections)
 - d. 75 or so hours grading
2. For those graduate students who are not assigned to large lecture courses with discussion sections, the supervising faculty member will work closely with the graduate student to determine the appropriate division of labor. Graduate students will attend all classes, and they will have 2

hours of office hours per week (for a total of $42 + 28 = 70$ hours). The remaining 105 hours will be allocated depending on the specific circumstances of the course. All hours above 175 per student will be handled by the course instructor.

3. We request that all graduate student assistants keep a log of their hours that shows the amount of time spent grading and time spent preparing for class. This will allow us to gauge levels of parity and adjust hours (if necessary) in the assignments for coming years.

7. Departmental staff roles: Who for What?

Undergraduate Program Assistant

- Any issues related to the Undergraduate program (*e.g. major/minor declarations, advising, enrollments, listserv, events, etc.*)
- Course scheduling and room assignments
- Manages departmental website updates
- Faculty support for VU teaching tools (*e.g. YES, Brightspace, etc.*)
- Faculty support for VU financial and expense tools (*Oracle*)
- Procurement requestor (*office supplies*)
- Space and building issues
- Line manager (*undergrad students and department student workers*)
- Department event coordinating

Graduate Program Assistant

- Any issues related to the PhD program, for students and faculty, including, but not limited to:
- Admissions, recruitment, & orientation
- Events and programming
- Student support for travel & reimbursements
- Examinations and defenses
- Student teaching course evaluations
- Procurement requestor (*graduate program*)
- Line manager (*graduate students*)
- Manages updates for graduate portion of website

Office Manager

- History Financial Unit Manager (*FUM*) – review & approve all financial transactions for History
- Any issues or questions related to departmental finances, budgets, & spending (*e.g. faculty funds, grants, endowments, hiring external consultants, etc.*)
- Any issues or questions related to faculty appointments (*e.g. hiring, payroll, contracts, tenure & promotion, leaves, etc.*)
- Questions about VU policies (*e.g. HR policies, Research Fund Guidelines, Travel & Expense*)
- Hiring students (*e.g. undergrad/grad student workers, research assistants*)
- Any issues related to Staff or departmental student workers