

**PhD Student Handbook
Department of Anthropology**

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The guidelines in this document apply to PhD students who have enrolled in and since Fall 2022.

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PURPOSE OF STUDENT HANDBOOK

The purpose of the PhD in Anthropology Student Handbook is to help guide students as they progress through the PhD program. Because the PhD program is conferred and governed by the academic requirements established by the Vanderbilt University (VU) Graduate School, students should also be familiar with the policies and procedures in the [Vanderbilt University Student Handbook](#) and [Vanderbilt University Graduate School Catalog](#). For questions about information in the handbook, students should contact their advisor, the Program Manager, or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

OVERVIEW OF PHD PROGRAM

The broad theoretical orientation of the faculty and their secondary areas of research make possible a solid general training in anthropological theory and methods. Especially intensive graduate training is offered in the archaeology, biology, social analysis, and history of Central America, Mexico, and South America, as well as scholarship in Caribbean and North American anthropology. More specialized courses include training in Maya languages, pre-Columbian iconography, GIS, archival research methods, specialized artifact analysis, skeletal analysis, stable isotope analysis, and genetic research. The Ph.D. requires three years in residence and forty-five hours of formal course work beyond the B.A. degree. Candidates entering with a master's degree or previous graduate coursework may transfer up to 18 hours of credit, which would then reduce the number of semesters of funding accordingly. The Ph.D. degree also requires proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese or another relevant language (such as French in the Caribbean), a comprehensive examination ("Comps"), successful defense of a dissertation proposal (Qualifying Exam) to advance to Ph.D. candidacy, and a dissertation based on original field, laboratory, or archival research.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Seventy-eight (78) hours of graduate credits are required, at least 51 of which should be in formal coursework: graduate seminars (8000-level and above) and independent study. On occasion, undergraduate courses with extra work for graduate students (3000-level and above) will be accepted as graduate course work.

At least 27 hours of course work must be in 5000-level and above graduate seminars. During the first 42 hours of course work, students should be concerned with completing requirements and filling gaps in their knowledge. After completing 51 hours of course work, the remainder will consist of either pre-dissertation research hours or dissertation research hours, depending on the status of the student. For new students holding MA degrees, transfer credit may apply to the hourly requirements for up to a maximum of 18 hours (~1 year) of course work. During the student's first year in residence, their advisory committee will coordinate with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to determine how many, and which courses will be approved for transfer credit. However, the number of course hours approved for transfer will be subtracted from a student's total stipend award. That is, if two semesters (18 hours) of coursework are approved for transfer credit, two semesters of stipend support will be subtracted from the six-year stipend package.

Full-time students are expected to enroll in the Graduate School during each fall and spring semester. After completion of the required 78 hours for the Ph.D. degree, full-time students register for 0 hours of dissertation research. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree who are away from the University must continue to register for 0 hours of dissertation research to remain in good standing. In addition, all students must have Vanderbilt University health insurance every semester that they are enrolled, unless they file a waiver showing that they have health insurance from some other source. This other source of insurance must be approved before the deadline in August every year.

It is the responsibility of graduate students to register for courses (including 0-credit hours of dissertation research) each semester, to track their status to ensure that they have met all the course requirements and to maintain their health insurance coverage according to University rules.

Course Distribution Requirements

These requirements ensure that our students receive holistic training in anthropology. The four subfields in anthropology are archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology/ethnography, and linguistics. All students must complete the following:

6 credits: History of Anthropological Theory I (Anth 8000, 3 credits) and II (Anth 8001, 3 credits) to be taken in the student's first or second year.

6 credits: Professionalization Seminar I and II (ANTH 8002 and ANTH 8003) to be taken in the student's first year

6 credits: Primary subfield

6 credits: Secondary subfield

3 credits: Third subfield

6 credits: Two electives in anthropology or two Independent Study courses in anthropology (or one of each). These two courses are meant to form the basis of the two comprehensive exam essays (see description of the comprehensive exam below).

3 credits: Research Design Graduate Seminar (Anth 9000) (This class should be taken in the student's third or fifth semester (it is typically offered in the Fall). If it is taken in the fifth semester, another graduate seminar can be taken in the third semester to ensure that the student earns 36 credits total by the end of the second year.)

6 credits: Two electives (e.g., anthropology courses in any subfield; courses outside the department for the CLAS certificate; courses in other departments deemed appropriate for the student's training; quantitative methods in another department, etc.)

Total after two years: 42 credits (i.e., four courses a semester for the first year and three courses a semester in the second year)

These 42 credits must be completed by the end of the fourth semester of enrollment. They are part of the requirement to earn an M.A. and advance in the program. Students must also pass Comprehensive Exams ("comps"); this entails writing two substantial essays (which will be written primarily in the two elective/independent study courses). These must be submitted by the last day of class (i.e., before the exam period starts) in the fourth semester of enrollment. Details on the two comps essays are below.

In the fifth semester, the student must complete nine more credits of coursework. These can be Independent Study courses or other courses that the student and committee deem appropriate for their training. This will bring the student past the required 51 credits of coursework for the Ph.D. Those students who did not take Anth 9000 (Research Design) in their third semester should take it in their fifth semester.

Students choose their primary and secondary subfields in consultation with their advisory committee. Depending on a student's background and research interests, committees may require specific additional course work, including more preparation in other sub-fields, languages, and research methods.

After completing 51 credits, the student should enroll in Non-candidate Research credit hours (Anth 8999). After the student achieves doctoral candidacy, they must enroll in Ph.D. Dissertation Research credit hours (Anth 9999) every semester. When the student reaches 78 credit hours, they must enroll in 0 hours of Ph.D. Dissertation Research (Anth 9999) to stay enrolled in the program. It is the student's responsibility to register for courses in a timely manner. Stipends and TA-ships cannot be allocated for students who have not registered for courses at least one month before the semester begins.

Print this checklist to ensure that you are meeting the program requirements. It is the student's responsibility to track their progress in the program and submit paperwork on time.

Grounds for Probation and Dismissal from the Program

If Comprehensive Exams are not completed by the last day of the 4th semester of enrollment, the student will be placed on academic probation. The student has the 5th semester (i.e., the semester of probation) to complete comps and continue with other required coursework. If comps are not completed during that time, the student will be dismissed from the program.

If Qualifying Exams are not completed by the last day of the 6th semester of enrollment, the student will be placed on academic probation. The student has the 7th semester (i.e., the semester of probation) to complete quals and continue with other requirements. If quals are not completed during that time, the student will be dismissed from the program. Extended timelines may be approved for medical leave, parental leave, or other extenuating circumstances. It is up to the student to coordinate with their advisory committee and the DGS on any exceptions regarding the timing of these requirements.

According to the Graduate School rules, if a student's cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0, they will be placed on probation. If this continues through the next semester the student may be dismissed from the program. The accumulation of three U grades in research courses can also lead to dismissal.

Graduate School rules require that students finish all requirements for their PhD by the end of the fourth year following their qualifying exam. Students that do not finish their requirements (i.e., submission of final post-defense dissertation to the Graduate School) by the end of their fourth year following their qualifying exam will be dismissed by the Graduate School.

Additional information about the Graduate School policies and rules can be found in the Graduate School Catalog. <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/kuali/graduate-25-26.php#/home>

RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense Requirements

Candidates for the Ph.D. degree in anthropology must present an acceptable dissertation based on original research that makes a substantive contribution to the field. According to rules set forth by the Graduate School, the dissertation must be completed within four years after a student has been admitted to Ph.D. candidacy (i.e., passed "quals"). Extensions can be requested for extenuating circumstances.

With approval of the student's Dissertation Committee (usually after a complete dissertation has been written and reviewed by the Dissertation Committee), the student will petition the DGS to schedule a dissertation defense. The form to schedule the dissertation defense should note the title of the dissertation and the date, time, and place of the defense. The student, the adviser, the DGS, and the department Administrative Assistant will coordinate to schedule the defense and submit the paperwork. The candidate will submit copies of the completed dissertation to the Ph.D. committee at least one month prior to the defense. The committee reviews the dissertation and conducts the final examination.

The final oral examination and dissertation defense is administered by the student's Ph.D. committee and is on the dissertation and significant related material. The student is expected to demonstrate a mastery of the topic of research as well as an understanding of the larger context in which the dissertation lies. The public is invited to attend the defense, which will be announced in advance in the Vanderbilt Register and publicized within the department. The defense will begin with a presentation by the candidate followed by questions from the public and members of the committee. After the open question period, the defense will continue in closed session with the candidate and members of the committee.

The Dissertation

A candidate for the Ph.D. degree must submit to the Graduate School a dissertation that gives evidence of original research and thinking. The dissertation demonstrates that the candidate has conceptual and technical competence in the field and has done research of an independent character. It must add to or modify what was previously known or present a significant interpretation of the subject based upon original investigation. The subject of the dissertation must be approved by the student's faculty adviser and dissertation committee.

According to the Graduate School regulations, the dissertation must be completed within four years after a student has been admitted to Ph.D. candidacy. Upon petition to the Dean of the Graduate School, a one-year extension of candidacy may be granted. A student may be readmitted to candidacy after such period has expired only upon application to the Dean of the Graduate School and with approval of the program faculty. In such cases the student may be required, by the Dean or by the Ph.D. committee, to demonstrate competence for readmission by taking a Qualifying exam or additional course work.

The candidate submits copies of the completed dissertation to the Ph.D. committee at least one month prior to the dissertation defense. Check with each committee member to ascertain whether they prefer a paper or digital copy of the dissertation (or both). The committee reviews the dissertation and conducts the final examination.

Two copies of the approved dissertation, with the original signatures of the Ph.D. committee members, and two copies of an abstract of not more than three hundred fifty words, signed by the student's adviser, must be turned in to the Graduate School approximately 6 weeks before the end of the semester for a May graduation (check with the Graduate School for changing due dates).

The student must submit a "Notification of Intent to Graduate" form at least seven weeks prior to the end of the semester. Please attend to the deadlines, and coordinate with the department Administrative Assistant in submitting the paperwork.

Research Grants & Fellowships

Writing grant proposals and successfully obtaining research funding are critical to the profession of anthropology. These are important components of a student's graduate education at Vanderbilt. We expect students to learn to compose effective proposals and to seek their own research funding throughout their graduate education. A student is expected to apply for multiple grants for graduate support or research.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply for external funding (e.g., a National Science Foundation 3-year Graduate Fellowship [NSF-GRFP]) for their graduate studies before or during their first or second year at Vanderbilt. A student can apply for this fellowship one time only. The content and form of the proposal will be discussed with the student's primary adviser and the Graduate Advisory Committee.

Summer research

As part of their graduate training and in preparation for their dissertation projects, students are expected to regularly conduct summer research projects. It is the student's responsibility to seek funding for these summer projects. Vanderbilt University offers several competitive awards for summer research, and there are also external sources of support (see below).

Dissertation

It is the student's responsibility to obtain funding for their dissertation research. Students may work on faculty-sponsored research projects if so decided by the faculty member. However, working on a faculty-sponsored project involves certain obligations and conditions, which are to be discussed by the student and faculty member prior to the field research.

Vanderbilt grants & fellowships

Check the Graduate School website frequently to check on due dates for various internal grants.

Vanderbilt Conference Travel Grants: Graduate students are encouraged to present their research at major regional, national, and international conferences. Second-year+ graduate students can apply for one award of up to \$500 per budget year (July 1-June 30) for domestic travel or international travel. Students are allowed a total of three travel grants for their entire tenure at Vanderbilt.

The College of A&S offers a summer field research grant. Check their website for details and deadlines.

The Center for Latin American Studies offers summer research grants (Tinker and the Simon Collier grants) and FLAS (Foreign Language Area Studies) grants. Check their website for details and deadlines.

External Grants for Anthropological Research

Our anthropology graduate students are extremely successful at securing external research grants and fellowships to support their pre-dissertation and dissertation fieldwork and lab work. Over 95% of our students have received external grants, and it is expected that all graduate students will apply to multiple granting agencies to support their independent dissertation research. This is an essential component of a student's training in anthropology, and the faculty and students work together closely as the students develop their original grant proposals. Many of the faculty serve on grant review panels and volunteer as ad hoc grant reviewers, so be sure to seek out their input and advice. Many of the external granting agencies that have supported our students are listed below. (Grant list compiled by T.A. Tung and M. Pratt in Fall 2017. This list will need to be updated each year.)

Dissertation research grants & fellowships (all stages)

- American Association of Physical Anthropology William Pollitzer Travel Grant. To help defray costs of attending AAPA meetings. Deadline: early January
- Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC). Variety of opportunities in countries with an American Overseas Research Center. Many deadlines early September
- Dumbarton Oaks Junior Fellowship. Byzantine, Garden and Landscape, and Pre-Columbian scholars. For degree candidates. Deadline: early November
- Dumbarton Oaks Summer Fellowship. For Byzantine or Pre-Columbian scholars at any level beyond first year of grad studies. Deadline: early November.
- Explorers Club Student Grants. Small-scale awards. Deadline: mid-November
- Fulbright-Hayes Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship. Modern foreign language and area studies. Deadline: mid-March
- Fulbright IIE U.S. Student Program (for doctoral dissertation research). Country-specific programs. Deadline: early October.

- Gerda Henkel Foundation Ph.D. Scholarships. For the historical humanities, including archaeology, and prehistory and early history. Not for dissertation completion. Deadline: applications are considered throughout the year
- Humanity Without Walls Career Diversity Pre-Doctoral Workshops. Three-week workshops to help prepare doctoral students for careers within and outside the academy. Deadline: early November
- Lewis and Clark Fund for Exploration and Field Research. Exploratory field studies for the collection of specimens and data. Deadline: early February; letters of support due earlier
- National Geographic Early Career Grant. Must have a local collaborator. Deadline: accepted on a rolling basis
- National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant. Cultural Anthropology Program/Doctoral Dissertation
- Research Improvement Grants. Archaeology and Archaeometry. Deadlines: Cultural: mid-January and mid-August; Archaeology: full proposals accepted anytime.
- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (3 years of support)
- First- or second-year grad students; can apply only once. Focus on women and underrepresented groups. Deadline: Social Sciences: late October
- Rust Family Foundation Archaeology Grants Program. For exploration of basic questions of human development or protect and conserve archaeological sites and artifacts. Proposals reviewed from September to March, first-come, first-served.
- Ruth Landes Memorial Research Fund. research and related field expenses for doctoral candidates. must relate to Dr. Landes's own research interests
- Sigma Xi Grants-in-Aid of Research. Offers mentorship and hands-on learning. Deadline: mid-March and early October.
- Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship. Not for dissertation write-up or topics that focus exclusively on the U.S. Deadline: early November
- Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research Dissertation Fieldwork Grants. Can be used to fund distinct research phases. Deadline: early May and early November
- Grants & fellowships specifically for women and underrepresented minorities
- American Anthropological Association Minority Dissertation Fellowship, For dissertation completion
- Research topics in all areas welcome; awards are needs-based. Deadline: mid-March
- American Association of University Women American Fellowships Dissertation Fellowships. For dissertation completion. Deadline: mid-November.
- Chavez/Eastman/Marshall Dissertation Fellowship (Dartmouth College). For dissertation completion; residency at Dartmouth. For U.S. citizens who plan careers in college or university teaching. Refer to website for deadline information.
- Ford Foundation (3 years of pre-dissertation support). Individuals from underrepresented groups favored
- Applicants should show a history of engagement with underrepresented communities and a clear focus on diversity as a teaching resource. Must demonstrate that applicant can fully utilize a three-year fellowship award. Deadline: mid-December
- Ford Foundation (1 year for dissertation write-up fellowship). For dissertation completion. Individuals from underrepresented groups favored. Applicants should show a history of engagement with underrepresented communities and a clear focus on diversity as a teaching resource. Deadline: early December
- Graduate Women in Science National Fellowship Program. Supports hypothesis-driven research. Deadline: mid-January
- PEO Scholar Award for Women. For women in the U.S. or Canada. Refer to website for additional information (nomination process, deadlines, etc.).
- Society for American Archaeology Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarship. Support for participation in a summer field school or archaeological training. Deadline: late January
- Society for American Archaeology Native American Scholarship. Several categories of funding for archaeological training or research support. Deadline: mid-December
- Dissertation write-up/completion grants & fellowships
- American Council of Learned Societies/Mellon Foundation Dissertation Completion Fellowships. Includes a seminar on preparing for the academic job market. Deadline: late October
- Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship. Study of ethical or religious values. Deadline: mid-November
- Henry Frank Guggenheim Dissertation Fellowship in Violence Studies. Must be relevant to understanding human violence and aggression. Deadline: early February
- Jennings Randolph Peace Scholar Dissertation Scholarship. Non-residential. For topics related to international conflict management and peacebuilding

- Applications from under-represented populations welcomed. Deadline: late November/early December.
- Louisville Institute Dissertation Fellowship. Research topics must relate to North American Christianity. Deadline: early February
- School for Advanced Research Resident Scholar Fellowship. Topics important to the understanding of humankind
- Deadline: early November.
- Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship. Research relevant to the improvement of education. Deadline: early October
- Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowships in Women's Studies. Women's Studies topics that cross disciplinary, regional, or cultural boundaries. Deadline: mid-October
- Certificate in Latin American Studies

TRAINING FOR THE PROFESSION

Training for Teaching in Anthropology

To improve graduate student training as it relates to teaching in anthropology and to improve prospects on the job market, it is expected that graduate students TA or RA while enrolled in the graduate program. Exceptions to this norm include when a student has sufficient external funding to support research efforts or upon petition when facing extraordinary life circumstances that make TA/RA obligations unusually difficult. In certain situations, students may be supported by a blend of external funding and stipend support for a defined period, and in those instances, students may request service free semester. Petitions may be submitted to the DGS and will be evaluated by the student's primary advisor, DGS and Chair. After passing the Qualifying Exam, students may apply for a Service Free Semester (SFS), which is a competitive award and may be granted based on student progress and award availability. In addition, advanced students will have the option to teach their own course at least one time (one semester).

To teach your own course, you will submit a request to use one semester of your stipend to be the Instructor of Record (i.e., teach your own course).

Grad students can teach courses at the undergraduate level (1000, 2000, 3000, and 4000 levels), excluding the First-year Writing Seminars.

Requirements for a graduate student to teach their own course

- Identify an existing course that you would like to teach. Please note that experience in teaching a general anthropology course will be more positively received on the academic job market. Teaching a course already on the books is likely to get better enrollment than a Special Topics course.
- Obtain The Institute for the Advancement of Higher Education (AdvancED) certificate (start this process early)
- Obtain your advisory committee's approval and include that email in your request
- Write a draft of the course syllabus and reading list
- Must be a Ph.D. candidate
- Submit the request to the DGS, so the GPC can review the applications

Other notes

- Enrollment will be capped at 20 students because you will not have a TA (you cannot be in a supervisory position over another graduate student).
- The GPC and Department Chair must confirm that TA needs for other courses are met before a graduate student can teach their own course.

Deadlines

The Vanderbilt Registrar requires our course offerings several months in advance, so you need to plan ahead. For example, course offerings for the Spring semester are submitted in September and finalized in October. Courses for Fall semester are submitted in January and finalized in February. The GPC and Chair need time to review applications several months in advance, so plan ahead.

Teaching your own course is a privilege, not a right.

Teaching/Research Assistant Requirements

All Anthropology graduate students receive six years of funding, conditional on very satisfactory performance in their coursework and teaching/research assistant (TA/RA) duties, a High Pass on the comprehensive exams, and a successful

defense of the dissertation proposal (Qualifying Exams). TA/RA activities are typically 12 hours a week but can be no more than 19 hours a week. Some weeks may require fewer than 12 hours, while other weeks may require up to 19 hours, for example, when grading exams and assignments or preparing a guest lecture. The TA/RA-ship is part of the student's academic and professional preparation; responsibilities may include assisting in preparing the course syllabus, exams, and other assignments, grading, managing class rolls and online content, meeting with students, background research, data entry, statistical calculations, preparing lecture materials for the professor, giving guest lectures, and leading discussions/labs, among other responsibilities. In some cases, a graduate student will assist with outreach (managing content on the department website and coordinating and publicizing events), assist in the Spatial Analysis Research Lab (SARL) or other labs, or provide direct research assistance to a professor.

Each semester, faculty will provide written statements to the DGS and the student evaluating the performance of the teaching/research assistant. Continued funding and successful promotion in the graduate program will depend on evidence of very effective performance as a teaching/research assistant.

Every attempt will be made to ensure that graduate students have the opportunity to TA for at least two of the introductory (1000-level) courses. However, because of scheduling constraints, this cannot be guaranteed, and some students may have to TA for the same course more than once.

The Institute for the Advancement of Higher Education (AdvancED)

The Certificate in College Teaching (CiCT), co-sponsored by the Institute for the Advancement of Higher Education (AdvancED) and the Graduate School, prepares Vanderbilt graduate students and postdoctoral scholars for successful careers in higher education teaching. This program aims to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience necessary to excel in their teaching roles within colleges and universities.

The CiCT certificate is required for students who want to teach their own courses. See [here](#) for more information on requests to teach your own course.

ADVISING AND MENTORING

Graduate Advisory Committee (3 anthropology faculty members)

Upon entry, a new graduate student meets with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and is expected to construct an initial Graduate Advisory Committee of three faculty members based on their primary interests. This advisory committee should include faculty from at least two of the anthropology subdisciplines. In accordance with changes in the direction of the student's research, the student may request a change in committee members at any time, if approved by the DGS and the faculty being sought for committee membership. The student should remain in close contact with their advisers. Faculty can accept or decline student requests to serve on an advisory committee.

The committee will advise students on coursework, preparation for the comprehensive exam, obtaining research opportunities in the field and lab, the development of the dissertation proposal essay (DPE), and writing grant proposals. The student must meet with the advisory committee every spring. Following that meeting, a summary report of the meeting must be written by the student, approved by the advisory committee, and submitted to the DGS before the end of the academic year. It is the student's responsibility to initiate these meetings in consultation with their committee. In addition to this mandatory meeting, students are expected to regularly consult with all members of the advisory committee throughout the academic year.

Ph.D. Committee (at least 4 faculty members, including one from outside the department)

At the beginning of the third year, a committee of four faculty members (including one from outside the department) must be formed to serve as the student's Ph.D. committee. The Ph.D. committee will oversee the Dissertation Proposal Essay (DPE) and the oral dissertation proposal defense. The Ph.D. committee will evaluate these two items to evaluate whether the student advances to doctoral candidacy (i.e., passes quals). The student must complete the Graduate School paperwork for the Qualifying Exam at least two weeks before the dissertation proposal defense. (Coordinate with the department AA on submitting this paperwork.)

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

The Director of Graduate Studies directs graduate studies for the department, maintains students' permanent files, organizes examinations, and acts as an arbiter of the graduate program requirements. A description of DGS responsibilities is further detailed in the Graduate School's [Director of Graduate Studies Handbook](#). The DGS will work closely with the graduate faculty advisers and the AA to keep track of student progress. The DGS will meet with all

students in the Fall. All other duties will be conducted by the student's advisory / Ph.D. committee or the Graduate Program Committee.

Graduate Program Committee (GPC)

Admissions decisions, departmental awards and recommendations, and general program guidance are provided by the Graduate Program Committee, composed of the DGS and at least two other departmental faculty members. Issues that cannot be solved by a student's advisory committee or the DGS will be referred to the Graduate Program Committee and/or Department Chair.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE DEGREE

Year 1

- Complete 8 courses (24 credits) and apply for summer research grants (internal and external).
- Apply for the NSF-GRFP in either Year 1 or 2.
- Some students may want to pass the foreign language exam in the first year (the student has until the fourth semester to do this). See the section on language requirements below.
- An advisory committee of three Anthropology faculty members must be constructed by the student by the end of the first year. (See below for a description of the advisory committee.)
- Summer: Conduct preliminary dissertation field research (this might also include exploring major research project opportunities) and/or third language training for those who need it.

Year 2

- Complete 6 courses (18 credits) and apply for summer research grants (internal and external).
- Apply for the NSF-GRFP in either Year 1 or 2.
- If the student has not already done so, pass the foreign language exam by the fourth semester. See section on language requirements, below.
- Pass the Comprehensive Exams, described below.

Completing 42 credits of coursework and the Comprehensive Exams qualifies the student to earn the M.A. in Anthropology. If the two comps essays and coursework are not completed by the last day of the 4th semester of enrollment, the student will be placed on academic probation. The student has the 5th semester (i.e., the semester of probation) to complete comps and continue with other required coursework. If comps are not completed during that time, the student will be dismissed from the program. Medical leave, parental leave, or other extenuating circumstances may alter this timeline. It is up to the student to coordinate with their advisory committee and the DGS on any exceptions regarding the timing of these requirements.

- Summer: Conduct preliminary dissertation field research (this might also include exploring major research project opportunities) and/or third language requirements for those who require it.

Year 3

After passing comps in Year 2, the student must pass the Qualifying Exams ("quals") in Year 3. The third year is dedicated to finishing nine credits of formal coursework for the Ph.D., passing Qualifying Exams, and writing external dissertation research grant proposals.

- Semester 5: Complete three formal courses (9 credits) of final coursework. These can be Independent Study courses or graduate seminars as advised by the student's committee. Anth 9000 can be taken this semester if it was not taken in the third semester. The student will also apply for external grants to support their dissertation research.
- Semester 6: Enroll in Anth 8999, Non-candidate Research (9 credits). The student will also apply for external grants to support their dissertation research.
- Complete the Qualifying Exam, which has two parts, described below.
- When the Graduate School receives notice that the student passed the 2-part Qualifying Exam, the student will advance to doctoral candidacy (i.e., the student becomes a Ph.D. candidate, or what is colloquially referred to as "ABD": All But Dissertation. ABD is not a degree nor title).
- If the student does not pass the Qualifying Exams by the last day of the 6th semester of enrollment, the student will be placed on academic probation. The student has the 7th semester (i.e., the semester of probation) to complete quals and continue with other requirements. If quals are not completed during that time, the student will be dismissed from the program. Medical leave, parental leave, or other extenuating circumstances may alter this

timeline. It is up to the student to coordinate with their advisory committee and the DGS on any exceptions regarding the timing of these requirements.

- Summer: Conduct preliminary dissertation field research. Or, if an external grant has been secured, the student may start their field or lab-work for their dissertation research.

Years 4 and beyond

By the fourth year, the student will have completed all formal coursework and advanced to Ph.D. candidacy (i.e., passed “quals”). For those students who secure an external grant to support them in their fourth year, they will be working full time in the field or lab conducting their original dissertation research. For others, the student will continue to write external research grant proposals and continue exploring other major research project opportunities.

Students may apply for a semester of Service Free Stipend (SFS) after passing the Qualifying Exam. This is a competitive award and the student, in consultation with their committee, will decide when it is most appropriate to use the SFS. Awarding of the SFS will depend on satisfactory TA/ RA performance, progress through the graduate program, and award availability.

Language Requirement

To obtain the M.A. and advance in the program, the language requirement must be completed by the fourth semester. This may include one foreign language passed at a high level of proficiency in a test that involves a) an oral interview and b) a written translation test. The oral interview will be conducted by either an anthropology or CLACX faculty member (or a faculty member with the requisite language experience to evaluate the student). The written test consists of translating three to four pages of written work from the non-English language to English.

Alternatively, a student may pass one of certain 2000-level Spanish, Portuguese, French, or other relevant language courses with a grade of B+ or better. The DGS and adviser will determine which courses qualify. For students who are native speakers of a language relevant to their research, that is persons who have spoken the language in question from childhood, the student’s adviser or when available, a native speaker of that language, will certify their language ability and report the findings to the DGS. The student’s advisory committee will determine whether any other further language requirements are appropriate.

Dual Ph.D.s

For students who are pursuing a second Ph.D. in a joint program and are receiving an additional year (or more) of funding from that other program, the advisory committee and DGS may make exceptions regarding the timing of completion for the Comprehensive Exam and Qualifying Exam. It is the student’s responsibility to coordinate with their advisor, advisory committee, and the DGS to seek approval for extensions.

Comprehensive Exam (“comps”)

This assesses Masters-level knowledge of anthropology. After passing comps, a student can earn the MA degree, provided that all other courses and language requirements have been met. All these requirements must be met by the end of the fourth semester. At this point, the student either continues in the program or departs the program with a Terminal MA or no MA. See below for details on comps requirements.

Qualifying Exam (“quals”)

Successful completion of the quals means that the student advances to Ph.D. candidacy (i.e., the student becomes a doctoral candidate and is colloquially classified as “ABD”. ABD is not a degree; it stands for “All But Dissertation”). Quals must be completed by the sixth semester. From this point, according to the Graduate School requirements, the student has four years to submit an approved final dissertation to the Graduate School. Extensions can be requested for extenuating circumstances. See below for details on requirements for the Qualifying Exam.

Comprehensive Exam Requirements

The student must complete the comprehensive exam (“comps”) by the end of the fourth semester. The purpose of comps is to establish the student’s knowledge of anthropology in general and of their specific fields of specialization. To pass comps, the student must write two substantive essays. These are synthetic literature review essays in specialized domains of scholarship. Each essay is a summary and critical analysis of that particular theme and associated debates. It should reflect the current state of the field, based on a comprehensive understanding of the literature. Students must work closely with their faculty adviser and committee to develop the topics and bibliographies. These essays should build on coursework that was aimed at developing each manuscript (students may take Independent Study courses in semesters 3 and/or 4 to develop the essays). Students should start planning for these essays in their first semester of enrollment. The

two essay themes should not be identical to the dissertation topic. The comps essays will be graded by the student's advisory committee.

Comps essays examples

Anthropology of the Body; Anthropology of Food; Anthropology of Violence; Social Bioarchaeology; Historical Archaeology; Political Economy, etc. This list is not exhaustive, and we expect that students will think creatively and critically as they develop their two major essay topics.

The grade options for comps essays are:

- High Pass and continue in the program (both essays must receive a High Pass if the student is to continue in the program)*
- Pass, which qualifies the student to receive a terminal M.A. and depart the program;
- Fail and depart the program with no M.A.

*Even with a score of "High Pass," the committee may decide that the student demonstrated a need for improvement in a particular study area. In this case, the committee can require that the student rewrite sections of the comps essays.

Qualifying Exam Requirements

The Qualifying Exam occurs in the third year and entails two parts: 1) the Dissertation Proposal Essay (DPE) and 2) the oral defense of the proposal.

1. Dissertation Proposal Essay (DPE).

This is a comprehensive bibliographic review of the literature relevant to the dissertation topic. The student (in close consultation with their adviser and dissertation committee) will prepare and submit a DPE. The DPE should include a summary and critical analysis of that particular theme and associated debates. It should also present the proposed dissertation research to be conducted by the student. Parts of this document may follow an expanded version of the NSF-DDRIG (National Science Foundation-Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant). Please consult the relevant NSF-DDRIG program webpage for more details (e.g., Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology, or Linguistics). The faculty recommends that the proposal should clearly state the theoretical issues to be addressed, the theoretical framing of the study, the context of the research, the methodologies to be employed, relevant preliminary findings, the types of data to be collected, and the expected results and how those will address the central questions of the study. Throughout the proposal, the student should clearly demonstrate their command of the relevant literature. These guidelines are not comprehensive, and an advisory committee may require additional content. It is the student's responsibility to consult with their advisor and advisory committee on the format and expectations for this document.

Other items to append to the dissertation proposal essay:

- An outline of the dissertation thesis, including preliminary chapter titles and brief summaries
- A realistic schedule for research and writing

2. Oral defense of the Dissertation Proposal Essay.

The public proposal presentation will start with a 20-minute presentation by the student followed by questions from the general audience. The closed examination by the Ph.D. committee members will commence immediately afterward. The student should be prepared to answer questions regarding all aspects of their proposed research. The Ph.D. committee will vote on the proposal and will inform the student of their decision within 24 hours.

The Ph.D. committee will vote on the qualifying exam (the Dissertation Proposal Essay and the oral defense of it) and select one of the following options:

- Pass and advance to doctoral candidacy;
- Fail. If a student fails the Qualifying Exam, there are two possible outcomes:
 - A. The student will have the opportunity to do substantial revisions and schedule a re-take of the Qualifying Exam within one semester.
 - B. The student will be dismissed from the program.

The student will advance to Ph.D. candidacy as soon as the Graduate School receives the paperwork communicating a positive evaluation.

The student should work closely with their Ph.D. committee in developing the DPE and the dissertation proposal. A final version of the dissertation proposal must be accepted by a student's full Ph.D. committee before the oral defense can be scheduled. Any date set before the proposal is accepted by the full committee is simply a target date.

Paperwork: The student must submit the "Request to Schedule the Qualifying Exam" form at least two weeks before the proposal defense date. This is an online form submission and students can initiate the workflow on Quali [here](#). After the oral exam, additional paperwork must be filed indicating whether the student passed or failed the Qualifying Exam. (Results of Qualifying Exams form)

Please coordinate with the department Program Coordinator on submitting both of those forms.

After a student successfully defends the dissertation proposal, the student advances to Ph.D. candidacy. From this point, according to the Graduate School requirements, the student has four years to submit an approved final dissertation to the Graduate School. Extensions can be requested for extenuating circumstances.

Stopping the Clock

The clock can be stopped for a whole semester or whole year for parental leave or time off to care for an ill family member, but the student will not receive stipend support during that time. Students can also stop the clock during field research. Research-related stopping of the clock is limited to two semesters (without funding) and four semesters if external funding is secured. The student cannot receive Vanderbilt Student Health Insurance when the clock is stopped. To stop the clock for the purpose of field research, students need the permission of their committee. The student must ensure that they are on track to obtain 72 credits, which is required to obtain the Ph.D.

To stop the clock, the student must apply (and be approved) for a Leave of Absence from the Graduate School.

WELL-BEING and COMMUNITY STATEMENT

Respect and affirmation of human variation are core to the discipline of anthropology. Our department strives to promote an environment that is affirming and welcoming to all people in order to foster a sense of community in our department, at Vanderbilt, and beyond, with the goal of advancing human potential and growth.

We affirm our university's vision of well-being and community. To move our mission forward, we endeavor to:

- Dismantle systemic barriers for marginalized and underserved populations to thrive
- Champion well-being and community in academic and scholarly activities by cultivating opportunities for collaboration and community across the University
- Provide educational resources, programming, outreach, and learning opportunities that promote broad access
- Foster living, learning, and working conditions that empower physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being
- Align our mission and actions through meaningful accountability measures and data to ensure progress on goals related to well-being and community

We commit ourselves to:

- Holding ourselves and each other accountable
- Promoting a growth mindset
- Forging partnerships and strengthening community
- Embracing our individual and collective diversity
- Advocating a human-centered approach

Vanderbilt Anti-harassment Policies

The Department of Anthropology endorses and upholds the University's commitment to equal opportunity and to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all members of the University community (including students, faculty, staff, postdocs, and trainees), guests, and visitors. The University's policies, programs, and activities are designed to foster courtesy and respect. The University prohibits and seeks to eliminate all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. Under federal law, Vanderbilt has a duty to take steps to prevent and redress sexual misconduct. Such conduct is contrary to Vanderbilt's values and is not tolerated. Please see the Vanderbilt University Sexual Misconduct Policy. <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/>.

Questions and concerns about harassment can be addressed to the Equal Opportunity and Access Office (EOA).
<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/eoa/>

Title IX information and other details about creating a safe work and study environment can be found here:
<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/policies.php>

OTHER RESOURCES

Parental Leave

Paid parental time off is 6 weeks, per University Regulations posted [here](#).

The Graduate School

Vanderbilt University offers a wide array of student support resources for health, wellness, student life and identity, academic support, funding, professional development, and administrative assistance. Please visit Vanderbilt's Graduate School website at <https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/> where you can find resources for support units such as the Graduate & Postdoc Academic Success (GPAS) team), International Student & Scholar Support (ISSS), Campus Student Services, Career Center, and many others.

Graduate Student Funding

Students accepted to the program will be generously funded with a Graduate fellowship inclusive of a Graduate Teaching or Research Assistantship, a University Tuition Scholarship, and health insurance for six years (12 semesters). The Teaching Assistantships (TA) and Research Assistantships (RA) provide our anthropology graduate students with essential training in pedagogy, research, and the ethical practices of our discipline. The support provided by Vanderbilt University is among the best available in anthropology programs in North America.

Transfer credits may reduce the number of semesters of funding. Continued funding is conditional on very satisfactory performance in course work, TA/RA duties, a passing grade on the comprehensive exams, and successful defense of the dissertation proposal (this is the Qualifying Exam). Students designate a Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) by the end of the second semester; the GAC is comprised of the adviser and two other faculty members. To maintain funding, the student must also secure a Ph.D. committee at least three months before defending the dissertation proposal (i.e., before taking the Qualifying Exam). The Ph.D. committee consists of a minimum of four faculty members (including one from outside of the department). The Qualifying Exam (dissertation proposal defense) should be completed by the end of the third year.

Many of our graduate students also earn competitive University Fellowships, University research and travel grants, and University conference travel grants. All graduate students are also required to apply for external funding to support their research endeavors. Vanderbilt Anthropology graduate students have been very successful in securing external grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Wenner-Gren, Fulbright, Fulbright-Hayes, Social Science Research Council (SSRC), Ford Foundation, PEO, American Association of University Women, Sigma Xi, and Lewis and Clark, among many others. See below for a listing of possible external grants and fellowships.

Certificate in Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies

[The Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies \(CLACX\)](#) fosters research and public engagement that center on populations that cross and re-cross borders constructed by geography, linguistics, class, race, and gender. As an interdisciplinary field of study, CLACX provides students the tools that allow them to succeed in a global marketplace: the ability to think comparatively and critically, in several languages, and to engage with the largest demographic populations in the Western Hemisphere. Given the department's focus on Latin America, nearly all of our graduate students obtain a Certificate in Latin American Studies (CLAS). Here is the info about the certificate, taken from the CLACX web page.

CLACX offers graduate students enrolled in different departments and schools at Vanderbilt the opportunity to complete a Certificate in Latin American, Latin American, and Latinx Studies. The Certificate allows students to document their specialization in the region and proficiency in a relevant language(s). The CLACX Certificate also encourages graduate students to study outside of their disciplinary specialization. Students wishing to enroll must complete the online forms through the Graduate School portal.

Students completing the certificate must fulfill the following requirements:

Complete 12 credit hours of related graduate-level coursework on Latin America, Caribbean, and/or Latinx Studies with at least 6 credit hours coming from outside the primary field of focus.

Demonstrate conversational or reading proficiency at the intermediate-mid level in either Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian or an indigenous Latin American language.

Participate in five extracurricular activities sponsored by CLACX and submit a reflection paper for each event.