

History, PhD

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in history requires at least 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a cumulative University of Iowa grade-point average of at least 3.33. Those who have earned MA degrees can apply up to 30 s.h. of credit toward the PhD.

Students must complete at least seven graduate-level history or related field courses numbered 6000 or above, earning 3 or 4 s.h. of credit for each course. Courses taken at the MA level may be counted toward this requirement.

Students must complete a required course sequence in their first year: HIST:6002 Introduction to Graduate Studies in History: Historiography and Methods and HIST:6003 History Theory and Interpretation. These courses develop an understanding of the philosophy of history, historiography, and methods of historical research. Students also must complete the comprehensive exam sequence in the second or third year depending on their degree at admission: HIST:6004 Comprehensive Exams Seminar I (the semester before the comprehensive exam) and HIST:6005 Comprehensive Exams Seminar II (the semester of the comprehensive exam).

Students who enter the program without an MA must write two research papers that are the length of a standard journal article (7,000–9,000 words) before taking comprehensive exams. One of these research papers is the qualifying research paper. For students who enter the program with an MA, only the qualifying research essay must be completed before taking comprehensive exams. The essay must be based on original research and should be of sufficient quality to submit for publication in learned journals, just as the PhD dissertation takes the form of a full-length scholarly monograph. The qualifying essay must be approved by the faculty advisor and a second faculty member in order for a student to continue in the program.

The department has a basic world language requirement for the PhD; however, the supervising faculty member may require a student to demonstrate reading proficiency in one or more languages and proficiency in the use of other study tools. Students may not complete the comprehensive exam until these requirements have been met.

The comprehensive written and oral exams cover three distinct fields. The primary field is defined thematically and geographically in consultation with the advisor. The secondary field is defined with a field supervisor; it must have a different thematic and/or geographic focus than the primary field. Both of these fields are based on core sets of readings created together with advisors. There are two options for the third field: a teaching option and a non-teaching option. In either case, the parameters are set by the student's advisor, and the required work must be completed prior to the written examinations. The written portion of the comprehensive exams consists of two questions for each field, each answered over two days during the comprehensive exam period. The oral portion of the comprehensive examination focuses on the submitted written examination.

In most cases, the candidate submits a written prospectus for the dissertation to the faculty advisor before the comprehensive exams, and the student defends the prospectus within two weeks of passing the oral portion of the examination. The examination committee considers

the prospectus and may approve it, reject it, or require its revision. At this point, all that remains is researching and writing the dissertation, in regular consultation with the faculty advisor. When the dissertation is completed, a dissertation committee composed of at least four faculty members administers the final examination. A formal oral defense of the dissertation typically lasts two hours.