Standards and Policies Governing

The Graduate Programs in History and Area Studies

Approved by the Graduate Committee: February 17, 2004

The policies in this manual are intended to govern the graduate educational experience of all History and Area Studies students entering the History Department graduate programs after August 15, 2003.

Questions about these policies should be addressed to:
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The Graduate Programs in History and Area Studies
Standards and Policies

The Department of History's graduate programs are governed by the policies stated in the *Graduate Policies and Procedures and Course Catalog of Virginia Tech* as well as those outlined in this document. The information in this document is intended only to supplement and not to replace general requirements established by the Graduate School. Copies of *Graduate Policies and Procedure and Course Catalog of Virginia Tech* can be obtained from the Graduate School in Sandy Hall or from the Graduate Studies website at [http://www.vt.edu/academics/gradstudiesindex.html](http://www.vt.edu/academics/gradstudiesindex.html). Students are encouraged to become familiar with the rules and procedures in both documents.

I. Statement of Non-Discrimination

The Department of History Graduate Programs do not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, or political affiliation.

The University is subject to titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Vietnam Era Veteran Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, Federal Executive Order 112146, Governor Allen's State Executive Order Number Two, and all other rules and regulations that are applicable. Anyone having questions concerning any of those regulations should contact the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office ([http://www.eoaa.vt.edu/](http://www.eoaa.vt.edu/)).

II. Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

The Graduate Programs in History are administered by the Director of Graduate Studies, the Area Studies Coordinator, the History Department Graduate Committee (HDGC), and the Administrative Assistant to the graduate programs.

The Director of Graduate Studies reports to the History Department chair, who in turn reports to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The Director of Graduate Studies serves as coordinator of the history department graduate programs and as chair of the HDGC. He/she acts as the academic adviser for first-year students in the history MA program. Additional duties are outlined in the History Department Faculty Handbook.

The Area Studies Coordinator chairs the Area Studies Committee, serves as the
academic adviser for first-year students in the Area Studies track, and, in
collaboration with the Director of Graduate Studies, administers the Area Studies
Program.

The Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Programs maintains student records
and advises students about department and graduate school procedures, course
offerings, and requirements for graduation.

All faculty members in the History and Foreign Languages and Literatures (FLL)
Departments who hold PhD degrees are eligible to serve as directors and members
of thesis committees.

III. Admissions Procedures and Requirements
Applicants for admission to the Master’s programs in History must hold a BA or
BS from an accredited college or university and be accepted by the Graduate
School and the History Department Graduate Committee or the Area Studies
Committee.

Admission to the program requires applicants to have at least a 3.0 undergraduate
QCA and to have taken the GRE exams. Foreign applicants should have a TOEFL
score of 550 (standard version) or 250 (computerized version). The graduate
committee may make exceptions to these rules.

The History Department requires that all applicants supply the following
materials:

- Application for Graduate Study (may be completed online at
http://www.grads.vt.edu/homeapply.html).
- Official academic transcripts from all undergraduate institutions that the
student has attended.
- A statement of purpose (500 words), identifying scholarly background and
interests and academic objectives.
- Three letters of recommendation (use form provided by the Graduate
School).
- GRE scores (Graduate Record Examinations) The GRE should be taken prior
to December 15 to ensure that the scores reach the Graduate School by the
application deadline. For more information, see: http://www.gre.org/
- One writing sample in English, normally a research paper or analytical essay.
- A $45 application fee – payable by credit card, check, or money order. Make
check or money order payable to: Treasurer, Virginia Tech.

Applicants for the interdisciplinary Area Studies track should consult list of

The deadline for applications for fall semester is February 15, particularly for those applying for financial aid. Applications received after that date will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Students are strongly encouraged to begin their studies in the fall semester. Every effort will be made to notify all applicants of their status by March 15. Decisions on admissions and funding for assistantships are made by the Director of Graduate Studies, the Area Studies Coordinator, and the HDGC.

IV. Assistantships and Other Financial Aid

The most common form of financial aid is the graduate assistantship, but other forms may be available through federal work-study programs, university loans, and budget tuition plans. For more information on financial aid at Virginia Tech, please see: http://www.finaid.es.vt.edu/. 

The initial decision to grant financial aid to an incoming student is based on a competitive, academic ranking of applicants. For continued funding, students are required to maintain a 3.0 QCA, make satisfactory progress toward finishing the MA, and receive satisfactory evaluations for the first-year assistantship assignments.

V. Assistantship Duties

Assistantships are not fellowships, but rather reimbursement for work done for the program. Duties are specific to the department (History or Foreign Languages and Literatures) to which the student is assigned.

Students are expected to work closely with the faculty member(s) to whom they are assigned and to be responsible in carrying out their duties. Faculty who request graduate assistants for their classes are expected to provide guidance in the performance of duties assigned to the student.

A full assistantship requires a student to work for 20 hours per week on average. The hours required of the GA in the history programs may be (and usually are) lowered to 15 per week. Students should expect that some weeks will require fewer hours and other weeks more hours. The faculty member with whom the student is assigned to work is expected to provide a schedule of assignments and
deadlines. The student is expected to keep a log of the hours worked during each week of the semester.

Students with assistantships must be available through the final exam period of each semester.

VI. Orientation

At the beginning of the fall semester the HDGC holds an orientation meeting for all new graduate students. At this meeting, students are provided general information about the following: requirements and procedures; plans of study; office procedures and privileges; advising; thesis preparation; and timetables for meeting course requirements and completion of the thesis. The orientation meeting is generally followed by a reception where new students are introduced to the faculty and to continuing graduate students.

Before classes begin, each student must meet individually with the Director of Graduate Studies or the Area Studies Coordinator to discuss the student's particular needs and plans.

VII. Coursework

The Master of Arts in History degree requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit including the following:

- 3 hours in Historical Methods
- 15 hours in history – 3 hours of which must be a research seminar
- 6 hours in related fields
- 6 hours of thesis/research

The non-thesis option for a Master of Arts in History (Area Studies students must take the thesis option) also requires 30 semester hours:

- 3 hours in Historical Methods
- 18 hours in History – 6 hours of which must be in research seminars
- 9 hours of electives

The Master of Arts in History with an Area Studies concentration requires a thesis and a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit including the following:

- 3 hours in Area Studies Methods
- 9 hours in history – 3 hours of which must involve an independent research project; 3 hours of which may be Historical Methods
9 hours in foreign languages and literatures
6 hours in geography or approved courses in related fields
3 hours of thesis/research

Graduate assistants must be enrolled each semester in 12 credit hours to maintain their assistantships.

Students are normally expected to complete the degree requirements for the MA in four semesters. Each semester the Graduate School publishes a calendar of deadlines for filing the paperwork required for graduation. These deadlines are posted in the History Department. Students expecting to graduate in a given semester must adhere to the deadlines set by the Graduate School.

**VIII. Progress Toward Degree**

Unless otherwise advised, students pursuing the Master's degree in History should write a final thesis, guided by a thesis director and a committee of at least two additional readers. The thesis represents a piece of independent research based on primary sources and guided by the existing literature in the field. (A detailed discussion of the thesis process and the thesis proposal can be found at: [http://www.history/vt.edu/GradThesisProcess.HTM](http://www.history/vt.edu/GradThesisProcess.HTM).)

During the first year of graduate work, each student will identify a thesis topic and request a faculty member to serve as the thesis adviser.

On April 1 of the first year, each student will submit to the HDGC a statement of intent to write a thesis with a one-page description of the topic. This statement must be signed by the student's thesis adviser. At this time the student may also recommend committee members, however, the HDGC retains the right to nominate alternative or additional members to a student's thesis committee.

At the beginning of the second year, each student will meet with the Director of Graduate Studies (history concentrators) or the Area Studies Coordinator (area studies concentrators) to discuss his/her Program of Study, which must be submitted to the Graduate School and which lists the classes the student has taken and the classes that still need to be taken prior to graduation, and also lists the student's thesis committee. Any subsequent changes in classes or research hours need to be reported to the Director of Graduate Studies, the Area Studies Coordinator, and the staff in the History Department. A change in the thesis committee requires a formal request which must be processed through the Graduate School. All committee changes must also be approved by the HDGC.

**IX. Annual Evaluation**
The HDGC will evaluate each student's progress during the second semester of the first year. Comments will be solicited from faculty members with whom the student has taken courses and for whom the student has worked as a graduate assistant. Student evaluations of graduate assistants may also be considered. Continuation of funding is contingent on a satisfactory evaluation. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Area Studies Coordinator will convey any concerns to the student.

X. The Thesis

The student must keep the thesis committee informed regarding progress on the thesis. Most students submit the thesis to their readers chapter by chapter. Committee members can then provide feedback on the work as it progresses. At the time of the thesis proposal defense, the student and advisor should establish a series of due dates for the chapters and set a final due date for the project.

The Thesis Proposal

No later than September 15 of the second year, the student will submit a formal thesis proposal to the members of the thesis committee. The purpose of this proposal is to justify the selected topic and submit a plan for researching and writing the thesis, and to receive suggestions and criticism from faculty members and graduate student peers. The proposal should be approximately 10–12 pages of narrative and should also include a representative bibliography of primary and secondary sources and a schedule for completion of research and writing. For more information, see "The Thesis Process" website on the History Department Graduate Programs website:  http://www.history.vt.edu/GradThesisProcess.HTM

On September 30 the student will submit a revised proposal to the Director of Graduate Studies. At this time the student will be assigned a date for defending the thesis proposal. Proposal defenses take place during the fall semester of the student's second year, in conjunction with the History 5104: Historical Methods course.

It is expected that all students will adhere to this schedule. In the unlikely event that a student does not defend a thesis proposal during the fall semester and in conjunction with the History 5104 course, the student must: (1) petition the HDGC for an exemption from the formal schedule; and (2) schedule a public proposal defense at least one full semester before planning to graduate.

At the beginning of the spring semester, the second year students intending to graduate in May must fill out an Application for Degree card, available in the History Department or in the Graduate School in Sandy Hall.
XI. Thesis Defense

After completing the thesis, the student will have a formal defense, which usually lasts about one hour. The student will defend the thesis only after the thesis director has approved the thesis and the other committee members believe that the student is ready to defend. The committee must be given at least two weeks to evaluate the final draft of the thesis. Late submissions to committee members could jeopardize the thesis defense and graduation.

Two weeks prior to the defense, the student must submit a form to the Graduate School stating the title of the thesis, the composition of the thesis committee, and the date, place, and time of the defense. To graduate as scheduled, the thesis must be approved and signed by the committee by the date specified by the Graduate School.

A student typically begins the defense by briefly discussing what the thesis argues, emphasizing the main points of the thesis, and indicating its contributions to current research in the field. During the remainder of the session, the committee members have the opportunity to ask questions. At the end of the defense, the committee members sign a card stating whether they approve the thesis. The student then promptly returns the card to the Graduate School.

XII. Electronic Submission of the Thesis

Virginia Tech requires all graduate students to submit their thesis electronically so that the work is available via the internet. Within two weeks of the defense, the student must submit a final copy of the thesis, properly formatted on a computer disk, to the Graduate School. For preparation and submission instruction, see the web site at: http://www.etd.vt.edu/edu.

XVI. Avenues of Redress

Students with questions or concerns about any of the policies covered in this statement have several avenues of redress. Many procedural issues can be clarified by the Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Programs. Concerns about the thesis process should be taken up first with the student's thesis adviser. Students with issues related to GA assignments should first discuss the question or problem with the faculty member with whom the student is working.

If the problem cannot be resolved or the policy clarified at this level, students should follow up their concerns with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Coordinator of Area Studies.