

# University of Rochester, Department of History

## MA PROGRAM HANDBOOK OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(LAST MODIFIED: Tuesday, November 4, 2025)

### **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook is designed to acquaint graduate students with the program requirements of the Department of History. It is expected that students will read this handbook in its entirety at the start of their studies at the University of Rochester. Ordinarily, students remain subject to the handbook in use at the time they enter the program. Some matters, such as residency requirements, the mechanics of registration, and the formatting of the dissertation have been omitted or only briefly mentioned. These subjects are treated in the [OFFICIAL BULLETIN: REGULATIONS CONCERNING GRADUATE STUDY](#).

For further questions regarding the program or the contents of this handbook, please contact one of the following:

#### **DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES (DGS)**

The director of graduate studies is responsible for the overall management of the graduate program. The director of graduate studies, in consultation with the graduate studies committee, is also the final arbiter of the regulations of the program and has the authority to make exceptions. Although the director of graduate studies does not have the authority to override the rules of the graduate studies office and associated deans, the director of graduate studies can petition on behalf of students for reasonable exceptions when the situation warrants such action. Exceptions such as time to degree extensions and petitions for non-standard committee members are the prerogative of the dean(s) of the graduate school and the graduate studies office.

#### **GRADUATE PLACEMENT OFFICER**

The graduate placement officer is responsible for assisting students in identifying and obtaining post-graduation employment. Such assistance may include annual discussions with each cohort of students regarding job market preparation and long-term strategizing, consultations with students currently on the market (e.g. reviewing application materials, organizing mock conference/skype/campus interviews, etc.), responding to individual student questions about job searches, and connecting students to relevant resources to help them with non-academic opportunities.

#### **GRADUATE COORDINATOR (GC)**

The day-to-day administration of the program is the responsibility of the graduate coordinator. Because the Coordinator is the communications center for the department, make sure they have your current mailing address and telephone number(s). Per university regulations, the University email address will be used for all official correspondence. Questions about registration, rules,

deadlines, admissions, and any other program-related issues should be directed to this person. If an issue or problem requires faculty advice or approval, the coordinator will advise the student to speak with the advisor or the director of graduate studies.

#### **DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATOR**

The department administrator is responsible for the human resources and financial aspects of the graduate program. Questions regarding appointments, stipends, reimbursements, and any other financial matters should be directed to this person.

### **PROGRAM FORMULATION**

The MA program of the Department of History offers individually tailored programs with opportunities for transnational and comparative study. Students design their own programs of study in consultation with their advisors in accord with their own intellectual and research interests. Through a mix of directed readings, independent study, and research seminars, students aim to balance understanding of particulars with an enriched sense of contexts.

Together the student and their advisor will use the Advising Worksheet (pp. 3-4) to formulate the student's academic plans. This worksheet will then be used to complete the Program of Study Form (p. 5) which is submitted to the Graduate coordinator to obtain approval from the Graduate studies office.

### **CREDITS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The MA degree requires 30 hours of graduate credit beyond the bachelor's degree. Courses in the Department of History normally carry 4 credit hours. Full-time MA students earn 15 credits each semester for one year, for a total of 30 credit hours.

The Department of History offers two tracks to a MA degree, known as Plan A and Plan B. Below are the specific expectations for coursework under each plan:

#### **PLAN A:**

Students who wish to write a master's thesis may complete Plan A. Students will take 15 credit hours in the fall semester and 15 credit hours in the spring semester, of which 10 are HIS 491 or other HIS 49x courses (independent reading and research courses). A Plan A degree requires that students take at least 6 and no more than 12 credit hours of independent reading and research at the master's level.

By the beginning of the spring semester (the first day of classes), students must submit an acceptable thesis prospectus to a faculty member willing to supervise the student's work. For further information, please contact the director of graduate studies.

If the student does not submit an acceptable thesis prospectus by the beginning of the spring semester, they will be on a Plan B track.

#### **PLAN B:**

Most students choose to complete Plan B. Students will take 15 credit hours in the fall semester and 15 credit hours in the spring semester and write a master's essay. For a terminal MA degree, students are permitted to take **no more than 6 credit hours of HIS 491 or other HIS 49x** (independent reading and research courses).

The master's essay typically emerges from a paper written in a research seminar or other course. After the completion of the course, students will revise and/or expand that paper under the guidance of the course instructor and a second faculty reader. Both faculty readers must approve the final version of the essay, but no formal defense is required.

Plan B students must be aware that the deadline for submitting the revised, approved master's essay is typically early April for those intending to graduate in May, and early August for those intending to graduate in October. A student who desires a May graduation should therefore begin the master's essay in a fall semester course. In planning the master's essay, however, all students should keep in mind that the objective is to produce the best possible paper, not to ensure the earliest graduation date.

## **GRADING SYSTEM AND EVALUATION**

The department accepts all grades of A, A-, B+, B, and S for credit toward the MA. Students whose performance falls outside the satisfactory range cannot expect to be continued in the program.

At the end of each semester, instructors will provide the graduate coordinator with a written evaluation of the work done in that semester by each graduate student in their courses. This evaluation, which includes a written assessment of the student's work as well as a grade, is designed to inform students of their progress and the instructor's judgment as to the student's ability to complete doctoral work in their program successfully. These evaluations are used by the department in determining which students shall or shall not continue in the program. The evaluations are kept in students' portfolios and are accessible to students, who can use them as a starting point for discussing their work with their instructors. The evaluations are not in any way to be confused with letters of recommendation.

At the beginning of the second semester each year, the graduate studies committee will review the progress of all of the MA students in the program. In consultation with course instructors and dissertation advisors, the director of graduate studies will notify those students whose work requires improvement.

The department faculty will review the work of all student portfolios as part of the end-of-year evaluation process. At the conclusion of the program, students will turn in to the graduate coordinator their master's essay or thesis, which will be placed in their portfolios. The portfolio consists of student papers and faculty evaluations for coursework. Subsequently, the director of graduate studies will send to each student a letter specifying the student's standing in the program and indicating, if necessary, areas requiring improvement.

## **TIMELY COMPLETION OF WORK**

Students are expected to complete all required course work by the end of each term.

Students receiving a grade of incomplete (I) for the fall semester must complete their work by the following **March 15<sup>th</sup>**. Students receiving a grade of incomplete (I) for the spring term must complete their work by the following **August 15<sup>th</sup>**. Failure to complete work by these deadlines, or an accumulation of four incomplete

grades, puts the student's funding at risk and may constitute grounds for termination from the graduate program.

## **EXTENSIONS**

University regulations stipulate that all requirements for the MA must be completed within five years of initial matriculation. Should the student not be able to meet this deadline, they must petition for an extension using a Petition for Time to Degree Extension Form obtained from the graduate coordinator. The petition must be approved by the faculty advisor, the director of graduate studies, and the associate dean of graduate studies. **By no means should the dean's consent be taken for granted.**

## **UNIVERSITY EMERGENCY**

### **EMERGENCY or TEMPORARY CLOSINGS and OTHER CHANGES in CLASS SCHEDULES and UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS**

The University plans to commence and conclude classes on the dates indicated in the academic calendars. But unforeseen circumstances or events may occur that require the University to temporarily close or otherwise make adjustments to its student life, residential housing, class schedules and format, method and location of instruction, educational activities, and operations because of reasons beyond the University's control. For example, such circumstances or events may include but are not limited to inclement weather, the onset of public health crises, being subject to government order(s), significant safety or security concerns, faculty illness, strikes, labor disturbances, sabotage, terrorism, war, riot, civil unrest, fire, flood, earthquake, acts of God, malfunction of University equipment (including computers), cyberattacks, unavailability of particular University facilities occasioned by damage to the premises, repairs or other causes, as well as disruption/unavailability of utilities, labor, energy, materials, transportation, electricity, security, or the internet. If any of these or other unforeseen circumstances or events outside of the University's control occur, the University will respond as necessary and appropriate, and it assumes no liability for any interruption or adjustments made to student life, residential housing, class schedules and format, method and location of instruction, educational activities, and operations caused by these or other unforeseen circumstances or events. And the University shall not be responsible for the refund of any tuition or fees in the event of any such unforeseen circumstances or events, except as may otherwise be expressly provided in the University's Leave of Absence and Withdrawal Policy or its published tuition refund schedule ([Payments and Refunds - Office of the Bursar \(rochester.edu\)](https://www.rochester.edu/bursar/payments-refunds)).

# Department of History

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

## MA Advising Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Entering Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: It is the student's responsibility to update this form each semester in consultation with their advisor. The graduate studies committee will review the students' forms before each semester's evaluation meeting.

First Year Courses - Fall (p. 6):

1.

2.

3.

Audit:

First Year Courses – Spring (p. 6):

1.

2.

3.

Audit:

Thesis (Plan A students only) (p. 6):

Title:

Prospectus Approval Date (*due beginning of the first-year Spring semester*):

Advisor:

Second Reader:

Outside Reader:

Defense Date:

\*A copy of the prospectus and the thesis need to be submitted to the graduate coordinator for the student's portfolio\*

Research Essay (Plan B students only) (p. 6):

Title:

First Reader

Second Reader:

Date Completed (*due early April for a May conferral or early August for an October conferral*):

\*A copy of the research essay needs to be submitted to the graduate coordinator for the student's portfolio \*

Advisor Review: Please have your faculty advisor initial and date after each end-semester review

Semester  
one: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester two: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Notes:



