

Department of History

Graduate Handbook

2026-27

Updated
8-17-2026

Important Dates 2026-27

(See also School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) [Important Dates](#))

Beginning Aug	Fall term course registration
Mid Aug	GTA assignments are made for 2026-27
1 Sep 2026	Beginning of Fall term
Aug 30-Sep 3	Public History MA Field Orientation meeting
9 Sep	Fall Term classes begin
18 Sep	SSHRC Doctoral application due
30 Sep	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (no classes)
Late Sep/Early Oct	PhD annual meetings (for year 3 and 18 above)
12-16 Oct	Fall Reading Week
1 Dec	SSHRC Master's applications due
1 Dec	OGS Application portal opens
Early Dec	Registration for Winter term courses
5 Dec	Fall Term classes end
15 Dec	Minor comprehensive exam field and supervisor selection form due (1st year PhDs)
31 Dec	End of Fall Term
1 Jan 2027	Beginning of Winter term
5 Jan	Winter Term classes begin
7 Jan	MA cognate proposal due. Approval decided by the Graduate Chair.
17-21 Feb	Reading Week
1 Mar	PhD annual reports due on Pathfinder (all PhD students)
15 Mar	Internal award applications due to the department
31 Mar	Dissertation Proposals due (2nd year PhDs)
3 Apr	Good Friday (no classes)
9 Apr	Winter term classes end
Mid-April	Dissertation Proposal defenses (2nd year PhDs)
Mid-April	MA Cognate Symposium
30 Apr	End of Winter Term
1 May 2027	Beginning of Summer Term
15 June	MA Cognate rough drafts due
20 July	Final date to submit PhD thesis to SGPS for Summer term defense
1 Aug	MA Cognates due to supervisor and second reader
Early Aug	Registration for Fall term courses
30 Aug	End of Summer Term

Program Regulations

The following guidelines and regulations govern the graduate program in History. They complement and do not supersede SGPS general regulations.

Admission Requirements

Applicants to MA programs at Western must possess a four-year degree from an accredited university. Applicants to the MA in History or Public History field typically have an undergraduate major or specialization in History; however, other applicants who can show evidence of interest in, and aptitude for, historical study may be considered. The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires at least a 70 average across courses taken in the last two full-time years of the undergraduate degree. The Department of History normally requires an average of 78 or higher for admission to the MA program, though such an average does not in itself guarantee admission.

Applicants who are completing another Master's degree must complete that degree before they begin an MA in History or Public History at Western or take a leave of absence from the other program. We do not allow students to work on two degrees at the same time. In addition, we do not recommend attempting to complete any graduate program in History while working *full time* as this often inhibits student success and prevents degree completion. Part-time employment is suitable and appropriate.

Applicants to PhD programs at Western must possess a Master's degree or equivalent from an accredited university and provide evidence of research potential. Applicants for the PhD in History must generally have an MA in History or have completed all requirements of an MA degree. Applicants from adjacent disciplines who can show evidence of aptitude for and success in, historical study may also be considered. The department may conditionally accept applicants still completing MA theses. In such cases, the applicant must defend the thesis successfully before admission to the program. The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires at least a 70 average in all applicants' advanced academic work. The Department of History normally requires an average of 80 or higher for admission to the PhD program, though such an average does not in itself guarantee admission.

Course Work

MA students in History and Public History take six one-term courses (or the equivalent in two-term courses), normally three during the Fall Term and three during the Winter Term of their first year.

Directed Readings Courses and Undergraduate Courses for Graduate Credit

Directed readings courses are not normally available to MA students. However, in cases where no regular graduate course is available in an MA student's primary research field, the student may register in an enhanced senior-level undergraduate course. In this case, the instructor is required to provide the student and the Graduate Chair with an enhanced syllabus outlining additional assignments and standards for evaluation.

Auditing a Graduate Course

Auditing a graduate course in History is an option open to students already enrolled in another graduate program at Western. Students must declare an intention to audit a graduate course by the enrolment deadline for the term, using the Graduate Course Audit Form (https://grad.uwo.ca/doc/academic_services/course/course_audit_form.pdf). The student must have the instructor's signed approval to audit the course, as well as approval from their Supervisor and Graduate Chair. An Audit requires regular attendance and any other obligations as stated by the course instructor in the Comments/Expectations section of the Graduate Course Audit Form. If these requirements are not met, the audit will be removed from the student's record at the instructor's request. After the enrolment deadline, a student may not make a change from auditing a course to taking it for credit, or vice versa, within a given term. A student may, in a subsequent term, enroll in each course for credit that has previously been audited. Graduate courses delivered online may not be audited without special permission from the program.

Courses in Other Departments

A student may receive credit for a maximum one-term graduate course (0.5) from outside the Department of History, with the approval of both departments concerned. [Request Form](#)

Plagiarism and Request for Relief from an Academic Decision

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Graduate students must understand and recognize plagiarism to grade undergraduate work as teaching assistants or markers. More than this, plagiarism is unacceptable in work produced by graduate students. Graduate students should be fully aware of university expectations regarding academic integrity and can expect that all scholastic offences will be dealt with through the university process. Students are urged to read thoroughly this official information on graduate scholastic offenses:

- **Requests for Relief from an Academic Decision policy:**
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/requests_for_relief_from_academic_decisions.pdf
- **Procedure for Graduate Student Requests for Relief:**
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/graduate_requests_for_relief_procedure.pdf
- **Scholastic Offences policy:**
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf
- **Procedure for Graduate Scholastic Offences:**
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/graduate_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf

Statement on the use/non-use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

This section must include a high-level overview of the use or non-use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in written work, such as a course paper, cognate or thesis. Non-use of AI should be stated explicitly to the instructor/supervisor. The use of GenAI must not undermine the integrity of the research and the thesis including the originality of the student's work. In addition to this high-level overview, any use of GenAI in the generation, interpretation, or presentation of research content or knowledge must be appropriately documented or acknowledged throughout the cognate or thesis in accordance with disciplinary standards.

Satisfactory Progress

Students must always make satisfactory progress towards their degree. Deadlines for completion of course work and other academic milestones are firm. In general, no extensions will be granted. In exceptional cases, an 'INC' (incomplete) can be awarded if course work or other requirements are not completed when due. When this occurs, the defaulting student may be granted no more than one term to complete all outstanding work. Note that this may require a student to register for a subsequent term (and therefore to pay fees) while work is outstanding. If outstanding work is not submitted before the end of that term, or if that work receives a failing grade, the incomplete notation will automatically become an 'F'. No subsequent extension will be considered for any reason other than medical accommodation. Graduate regulations are emphatic on this point. The History Graduate program uses the standard SGPS grading scale in its courses, cognates, and comprehensive exams:

Letter Grade Scale	Numerical Scale
A+	90-100%
A	85-89%
A-	80-84%
B+	77-79%
B	73-76%
B-	70-72%
C+	67-69%
C	63-66%
C-	60-62%
F	00-59%

Students who fail a course (less than 60%) must pass a subsequent course to fulfill program requirements. Students must maintain a cumulative average of at least 70% calculated each term over all courses taken for credit (including comprehensive exams); those who do not meet this standard may be asked or required to withdraw.

Students who do not complete their course work, or who do not meet milestones set by the program (including the MA cognate or thesis; Public History internship; PhD comprehensive exams; PhD thesis proposal; PhD annual reports; PhD dissertation and defense), or who fail to make satisfactory progress in their research may be asked to withdraw.

Graduate students must maintain continuous registration in the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Interruptions in registration (e.g., leaves of absence) or changes in status must be approved by the Graduate Chair and the [School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#).

The MA program should normally be completed in three, four, or six terms, depending on the program stream (see details below). [SGPS regulations](#) state that the maximum registration period for completing an MA degree is three calendar years. The PhD program should ideally be completed within twelve terms (four years) since that is the length of the funding period. [SGPS regulations](#) state that the maximum registration period for completing a PhD degree is six calendar years.

Graduate Course Deadlines Statement:

The syllabus of a graduate History course needs to supply all deadlines for assignments and must be clear on the consequences if material is not submitted according to that schedule. This includes the specific late penalty and/or the date after which material will not be accepted. The syllabus also needs to specify the process students should follow when they cannot submit an assignment on time (or give an oral presentation). If a student has not followed this process or has not communicated with the course professor about missing work, then at the end of term when grades are submitted, the grade submitted for that student will be whatever the student has earned in the course up to that point, even if this is a low or failing grade.

The History Department's process for responding to the need for extensions of due dates for assigned work on medical or non-medical grounds is as follows. Faculty should deal with routine requests from students for extensions during the term. Requests for accommodation on non-routine grounds, including medical grounds, when the medical issues are short-term (e.g., the flu), and non-medical or compassionate grounds, typically go to the Graduate Chair, who will consult with the faculty. Additionally, faculty and students should consult with the graduate chair about any case in which work is not submitted before grades are due. If the graduate chair is also the course instructor, then a request for accommodation can be taken to the department chair.

Graduate students who have other ongoing, chronic, or potentially recurring conditions/illnesses, including but not limited to attention deficit disorders, learning disabilities, and mental health conditions (for example, anxiety, depression), are urged to contact Accessible Education as soon as possible after accepting an offer of admission, to discuss relevant graduate program accommodations. If accommodation needs arise during your course of study, contact Accessible Education for a confidential appointment with a Counsellor. Accessible Education provides a range of services to students. For more information, please visit

https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

The deadlines for all assignments are set at the course professor's discretion, with all deadlines within that term. This means fall term deadlines should be before the university closes for the December holiday break, and winter term deadlines should be set before the end of April. This is to ensure that work from one term does not carry over into a subsequent term and to facilitate the timely submission of final course grades. An "Incomplete" is a rare option of last resort that requires a significant reason for accommodation and requires the approval of both the course professor and the Graduate Chair.

MA in History

Students in the MA in History program may apply to complete the **3-term (1 year) cognate option** or the **6-term (2-year) thesis option**. This proposal is submitted by the Wednesday of the first week of classes in the winter term. The MA cognate essay is a research paper of approximately 12,500 words (about 50 pages). The MA thesis is a longer work of original scholarship of approximately 25,000 words (or 100 pages), accompanied by a thesis defense.

Students in both streams take six one-term graduate courses during their first two terms of study (usually three per semester). Whichever option is approved by the Graduate Chair, students need to be aware that the MA degree is a year-round program—until all degree requirements are completed, they remain full-time students during the Summer and any subsequent terms. Both streams lead to the same degree.

MA in History Timeline

Year One (all students)

September-October: On their arrival in the program, all MA in History students, with the help of the Graduate Chair, will identify a topic and appropriate supervisor for their research.

Wednesday of the first week of classes in the winter term: Students apply to the MA Cognate Essay stream or MA Thesis stream. Students submit a Cognate/Thesis Proposal Form (see page 11) including a title, a short proposal (approximately 500 words), and a supervisor's signature. Approval is decided by the Graduate Chair based on consultation with the supervisor, Fall term grades and overall potential of the proposal.

MA Cognate (3 Terms)

mid-November: 1-Year MA Cognate students who intend to perform research that requires ethics approval should submit their Research Ethics Board (REB) application by now.

1 March: Cognate students who intend to perform research that requires ethics approval have REB approval in place by 1 March so that they can begin their research.

Mid-April: The graduate program holds a symposium where students present and discuss their cognate essays in progress. Second readers are confirmed.

June 15: Students submit rough drafts of cognate essays to their supervisor for review and feedback.

July 1: Supervisors must provide feedback on the cognate rough drafts to students by this date.

August 1: Final drafts of cognate essays are due to the supervisor and second reader via email and the Graduate Program Coordinator should be cc'd on the message too.

August 15: Grades and feedback due to Graduate Program Coordinator from supervisor and second reader.

August 31: End of program.

Year One MA Thesis (6 terms) (paused for 2026-27)

March: Students who intend to perform research that requires ethics approval should *submit* their REB application by March.

Mid-April: The graduate program holds a symposium where students present and discuss their proposed thesis research. Second readers are confirmed.

June 15: Students submit detailed thesis proposals (approx. 2500 words, not including bibliography) to their supervisor and second reader.

July 1: Supervisors and second readers must provide feedback on thesis proposals by this date, either approving proposal or requiring revisions. Revisions to the proposal will be completed by August 1 under normal circumstances.

August 31: Progression to second year requires approval of the thesis proposal.

Year Two (6 Term Thesis option only)

November 1: students who intend to perform research that requires ethics approval must have Research Ethics Board approval in place by 1 November (or before) so that they can begin their research.

January 15: Student and supervisor submit MA Thesis Progress Report. The students' report (1-2 pages) should describe the project and its central research questions/problem, what has been accomplished so far, and what work is yet to be done, including a detailed plan of work and timeline for winter and summer terms.

Students should submit rough drafts of individual chapters as they are completed to supervisors for feedback; there is no need to wait until April 15 to submit a complete package. If outlines and 1-2 chapters can be submitted to supervisors in the fall, that would be desirable. Students should not wait until January 15 to start writing. Please discuss with your supervisor exactly what written work (e.g. outline of whole thesis or chapters, draft chapter(s), etc.) they expect to be submitted in the fall and winter terms of the second year.

April 15: Students submit rough drafts of thesis to supervisor for review and feedback. What is meant by a rough draft is a draft that includes at least a rough version of all the chapters, with most footnotes. There need not be an introduction and conclusion.

May 15: Full and complete drafts of MA theses are due to the supervisor and Graduate Program Coordinator (if this deadline is not met then a summer defense will not be scheduled). What is meant by "full and complete" is that the draft must include an introduction and conclusion for the thesis, all footnotes, and a bibliography.

June 1: By this date the supervisor should judge if the thesis as submitted "meets the recognized scholarly standards for the discipline and department, and advise the candidate if revisions are recommended or required." The second reader should also provide feedback to the student, with a copy to the supervisor, in the same timeframe, but cannot require revisions, only make recommendations. Note that second reader, as an examiner, will have a vote at the Thesis Examination. The supervisor will not. The second reader's recommendations should be very seriously considered. If the supervisor or second reader have recommended revisions, the

student should use the time between the receipt of these recommendations and the date when the thesis should be submitted to SGPS (July 4) to make changes based on these recommendations.

July 4: Submission of the completed thesis to SGPS at:

http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/thesis/preliminary.html

The July 4th deadline is firm, since the examiners must have three weeks to read the thesis before the oral examination is scheduled.

July and August: MA Thesis Defenses are held. August 23rd is last possible date for MA Thesis examinations according to SGPS regulations, but the History Department strongly prefers to schedule all the examinations by August 10th, to permit students to make revisions if these are required by the examiners, as is usually the case. We will do our best to avoid scheduling any thesis defenses after August 10th. Sometimes, however, this may be necessary due to conflicts in examiners' schedules.

August 30: Final date for submission of the revised thesis to SGPS to permit fall graduation.

Supervision:

All graduate students who plan to research and write a cognate, thesis, or dissertation do so under the supervision of a faculty member who holds membership in the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Students with questions or concerns about finding or working with a faculty supervisor should contact the Graduate Chair in History. SGPS offers information about the rules and responsibilities of supervision on its website:

<https://grad.uwo.ca/administration/regulations/11.html>;

<https://grad.uwo.ca/administration/supervision.html>.

Sometimes, conflict arises between a graduate student and their supervisor. When that happens, resolution should be achieved as soon as possible. When the process breaks down, students have the right to request a change of supervisor by contacting their Graduate Chair. Supervisors cannot unilaterally terminate the thesis supervisory relationship. If a supervisor initiates this change, then the appropriate processes must be followed. Questions about the process should be directed to the Graduate Chair or the Associate Dean (Graduate) of the faculty. If the supervisor and student agree that a change to the supervisory relationship is needed, normally the Graduate Chair will work with the student and supervisor to find a solution. The new supervisor, normally from the student's program, will assume the roles and responsibilities specified by SGPS and the program. Normally, the normal duration of the degree program for the student will not be increased.

Research Involving Human Subjects:

Research involving humans must be approved by a UWO Research Ethics Board (REB) prior to the start of the project. This includes oral interviews, among other methods used by historians who are interviewing (live) human subjects. Students who are consulting oral histories or who are conducting oral history interviews as part of their course work, their MA cognate/thesis, or their PhD dissertation must have their research project approved in advance by REB. The student's faculty supervisor (the course instructor, the MA supervisor, or the PhD supervisor) is responsible for submitting the application to the REB, must sign as principal investigator, and will oversee the project undertaken by the student. Students and faculty are urged to consult with the Office of Research Ethics about their project as soon as possible. We strongly

recommend that you begin the application at least 6 months in advance of the date when you hope to begin your research, as it is a lengthy process to complete the application and receive all necessary approvals. Further information about the ethics review process can be obtained from the Research at Western - Western Research - Western University

If uncertain, contact the Office of Human Research Ethics (OHRE) at ethics@uwo.ca before any project begins.

Cognate Guideline

The cognate essay should be a high-quality research paper that could provide the foundation for an article published in a scholarly journal that makes an original historical argument. It must be:

- approximately 12,500 words (about 50 typed, double-spaced pages) in length characterized by polished presentation (well organized, clearly, concisely, and elegantly expressed, free of grammar and syntax errors etc.)
- based on primary source material, and
- set in the context of the critical published work (historiography)

While the cognate essay may be based on work previously submitted for a course grade, it should show considerable revision and improvement, representing at least one term's consistent endeavor. In cases where the cognate essay is based on previous work, the foundation essay must be submitted with the cognate for comparison.

Cognate essays are normally read and graded by two readers: the cognate supervisor and a second reader, selected by the Graduate Chair. Both readers should provide a percentage grade and written comments. The final grade for a cognate paper will be the average of the grades assigned by the two markers. If there is a disparity of 10% or more, or if one reader has failed the paper and the other has not, then the paper will also be graded by a third reader. The final grade will be the average of all three grades.

The SGPS grading scale applies: A grade of 85% or higher is excellent, indicating that a student has considerable talent for academic work and might well consider progression to a PhD program. A grade of 80% or higher could be taken to indicate that potential for further graduate education exists. A failing grade (less than 60%) will result in failure of the MA program. In exceptional cases, students may be given one chance to revise and resubmit a failing cognate; they will be required to register for a subsequent term (and therefore to pay fees) while work is outstanding. No extensions of greater than one term will be considered for any reason other than medical accommodation. Graduate regulations are emphatic on this point.

Thesis Guidelines (Year Two Only)

The MA thesis should be a substantial piece of original historical research, that could provide the foundation for an article published in a scholarly journal that contributes to historical knowledge. It must be:

- approximately 25,000 words (about 100 typed, double-spaced pages) in length characterized by polished presentation (well organized, clearly, concisely, and elegantly expressed, free of grammar and syntax errors etc.)
- based on primary source material, and
- set in the context of the critical published work.

While the thesis may draw on work previously submitted for a course grade, it should show considerable revision, improvement, and expansion. In cases where the thesis is based on previous work, the foundation essay must be submitted with the thesis for comparison. MA Thesis Progress reports (only for Year 2 MA thesis students) are due January 15 from student and supervisor. The student's report (1-2 pages) should describe the project and its central research questions/problem, what has been accomplished so far, and what work is yet to be done, including a detailed plan of work and timeline for winter and summer terms, culminating in the April 15th submission of the rough draft and May 15 submission of the final draft. The supervisor's report should comment on the students' report and assess the quality of the work so far and the feasibility of the work plan.

MA Thesis Defense (Year Two Only)

Thesis examinations are organized and overseen by SGPS; see its [detailed regulations](#) on thesis format, submission, and examination procedures. Please refer and read carefully to Regulation 8.5.1 to 8.5.6 – Completion of the Thesis Degree Requirements.

In preparation for thesis submission, students must submit a penultimate draft by May 15 to their supervisor, who will judge if it meets the recognized scholarly standards for the discipline and department, and advise the candidate if revisions are recommended or required. It is the student's responsibility to allow sufficient time for the supervisor to examine and return the thesis draft, while allowing the three weeks reading time required for examiners, and (particularly in the Summer Term) to account for faculty and staff vacation periods and other leaves. A full and complete draft (including an Introduction and conclusion, all notes, and a bibliography) must be submitted to the Supervisor and Second Reader by May 15 in the student's sixth term. If this deadline is not met, then a summer thesis defense will not be possible to schedule, and the student will be required to register (full time or Thesis Defense Only) for the fall term.

When a student's MA thesis is judged ready for examination, the Graduate Chair arranges a thesis examination by organizing a thesis examination board and setting a proposed date. The examination board consists of two program examiners (Department of History faculty members) and one university examiner (a Western faculty member from outside the Department of History). The Master's Thesis Examination Request must be completed 4 weeks prior to the submission of the thesis. A final, polished version of the thesis must be uploaded to the [Scholarship @ Western ETD Repository](#) 3 weeks prior to the defense date, after the supervisor has approved the version of the thesis the student proposes to upload. (For further information on this process, see sections 8.5.3 and 8.5.3.1 of the SGPS Regulations). The student's supervisor attends the oral defense but is not part of the examination board. The MA thesis

defense is normally a closed event. Students typically deliver a public lecture about their thesis before the defense is held.

MA Public History Field

Students in the MA Public History field may apply for the **regular 3-term (1 year) option** or a **4-term cognate essay option**. This application is due on the first Wednesday in the winter term. Both streams lead to the same degree. Public history MA students **may not** be enrolled in more than one graduate program at a time. If you are still completing another Master's degree elsewhere, you must complete that degree before you begin the MA in History or Public History at Western or take a leave of absence from the other program. We do not allow students to work on two degrees at the same time. In addition, we do not recommend attempting to complete the MA in Public History field while working *full time* as this nearly always inhibits student success and prevents degree completion. Part-time employment is suitable and appropriate.

The regular 3-term MA Public History field consists of three elements:

Three mandatory one-term courses in Public History, which are: History 9800A: Public History: Theory, History and Practice; History 9801B: Public History Group Project; and History 9808A/B: Digital Public History, completed in the first two terms of study.

Three additional one-term graduate courses (or equivalent to two-term courses), completed in the first two terms of study.

History 9802: Public History Internship, consisting of 12 weeks of full-time paid or unpaid work under a Public History professional, completed during the Summer Term. This is a full-credit course, graded on a pass/fail basis.

The 4-term cognate essay stream adds one additional element: The cognate essay, a research paper of approximately 12,500 words (about 50 page).

For more details on Public History, see the [MA Public History field website](#).

MA Public History Field Timeline

Year One (All Public History Students):

November 15: Students choosing to take the 4-term cognate essay option must submit a Cognate Proposal Form including a title, a short proposal (approximately 500 words), and a supervisor's signature. Students and supervisors are expected to meet regularly thereafter to discuss their progress.

January: Cognate students who intend to perform research that requires ethics approval should submit their REB application by the end of January.

Mid-April: The graduate program holds a symposium where students introduce and discuss their cognates/theses in process. Second readers are confirmed.

June 1: Cognate students doing research that requires ethics approval must have that approval in place by this date to proceed with summer and fall research plans. If they do not, they must either change their research plans or prepare to pay for another semester of tuition.

May-August: Public History Internship and submission of report.

Year Two (4-term Cognate Students Only): (paused for 2026-27)

November 15: Rough drafts of cognate essays are due to supervisors for review and feedback.

December 1: Supervisors should provide feedback on the cognate rough drafts to students by this date.

December 20: Final drafts are due to the supervisor, second reader and Graduate Program Coordinator in electronic form.

January 7: Grades and feedback due to Graduate Program Coordinator from supervisor and second reader.

PhD in History

The History Department is introducing a newly revised PhD program, starting September 2026. The new program is curated to each student's specific research project and focuses on comprehensive exams and the thesis.

PhD Orientation Workshops (Collective Milestone):

There will be four orientation workshops held in September and October of Year 1 to introduce students to doctoral studies in History. The Graduate Chair will evaluate students' participation in the workshops on the basis of a Pass/Fail evaluation.

In 2026-2027, the Orientation workshops are:

September 11th - Applying for Internal and External Awards

September 25th - How to Write a Thesis (joint with Professional Development Seminar)

October 9th - Choosing and Preparing for Comprehensive Fields

October 23rd - Research Methods

HIS9891: Directed Readings, Doctoral Studies in History (0.5 course):

This course is for incoming PhD students and their supervisor. It takes place in the first semester of the first year of their program. The course prepares students for the work they must do to complete a thesis on their individual research topics. Preparing for their major comprehensive field is another key component of the course.

Comprehensive Fields and Examinations:

Every student will complete one major comprehensive field and two minor comprehensive fields. Students begin work on their major comprehensive field in September of Year 1 as part of the Directed Reading course with their supervisor. Students will select the topics for their two minor fields and find a supervisor for each field before the end of the first semester. Students must submit forms listing their fields and supervisors and obtain signatures from all three supervisors, by 15 October for the major field and by 15 December of Year 1 for the two minor fields.

Reading lists:

Major field: 60-80 books

Minor fields: 50 books

Comprehensive Exams take place between 15 April-15 May of Year 1.

For the major field, students write a historiographical essay of 7,500 to 10,000 words which surveys the literature of that field in a broad, synoptic way. For each minor field, students complete a seven-day take-home exam of 5,000 to 7,500 words based on questions provided by the supervisor. With the permission of the supervisor, students may substitute the preparation of a teaching dossier for one of the minor field examinations. The syllabus that is part of this dossier should be prepared for a thirteen-week upper level one semester undergraduate class on a subject agreed upon between the student and the field supervisor. The syllabus must include the required weekly readings. The teaching dossier should also contain five brief lectures of 1500 to 2000 words in length each, that analyze the assigned readings for each of five weeks of the course, place them in historical context and explain their significance. Students who elect to prepare a teaching dossier may elect to take the comprehensive examination in the format required with respect to the other minor field at any point before the week of the examinations.

At the oral examination students who select the syllabus option may be questioned about any aspect of the assigned readings; the questions need not focus entirely or primarily on the syllabus and lectures.

Late exams will not be accepted.

The historiographical essay and minor field exams must be submitted electronically as an email attachment to the faculty supervisor of each field AND to the Graduate Program Coordinator by the end of the day (i.e., midnight) on the day they are due. The Graduate Chair and Graduate Affairs Assistant will schedule all exams, including determining the order of minor fields. The format of the take-home exams will be left largely in the hands of the examiners.

Thesis Proposal

After completing the Comprehensive Exams, students work on their thesis proposal (approximately 7,500 words in length, not counting the bibliography). Students must submit their thesis proposal by 31 October of Year 2. The thesis proposal defence will take place in November. Two faculty members (not your supervisor) examine the thesis proposal.

Students will have roughly five months to prepare their thesis proposal and are expected to produce a polished proposal in which they have already done some of the work related to the thesis (e.g. sources, readings, theory etc.). Students will have time to visit archives or collect other primary materials before submitting their proposal.

Thesis proposals should contain both a description of the intended dissertation project and a plan of work. Proposals should tell a general audience (experts and non-experts) what the topic is, how it relates to (and is different from) previous work by historians and other scholars. It should include:

- major research question(s) that open your topic and indicate your approach to the project.
- a statement about why this project matters, or why it is significant (i.e. Why do this? Who cares about it? How will this dissertation change historical understanding of a subject? What academic/non-academic subfields will be interested in it, and why?)
- an explanation of the major historiography(ies) related to the dissertation in a way that engages with these secondary sources by elaborating on how the topic/research questions are framed relative to the work of other major historians
- a description of the intended methodology, research strategy, and plan of work
- a discussion of theory if explicit/central
- an inventory and discussion of major primary sources including archival sources
- a justification of the periodization (i.e. why the dissertation will start and stop when it does)
- a description of any expected challenges
- a schedule outlining how you will complete your thesis over the next 2 to 3 years.

PhD Colloquium (Annual Milestone):

The PhD colloquium brings together graduate students and faculty in October to learn about the research projects of doctoral students. Participation in the colloquium is mandatory for PhD students in Years 2-4. For students in Year 5 and beyond, participation is voluntary. Students can present on any aspect of their thesis, such as a chapter, their research methodology, or situate their project in relation to larger historiography. The point is for students to present their project to the department, receive feedback, and demonstrate how their thesis is advancing. Supervisors will submit a brief report on the student's presentation to the Graduate Chair, including a summary of feedback, the way the student answered questions, and will give a final evaluation of Pass or Fail.

Language Aptitude:

To meet the standards of the discipline, historical research often requires the use of primary and secondary sources written in languages other than English. PhD students are expected either to possess a working knowledge of languages relevant to their research project before admission to the program or to be in the process of acquiring the required language skills. Acquiring deep aptitude in a language is an on-going and life-long process. As PhD students, our trainees should continue to develop relevant language skills by auditing undergraduate language courses offered at the university and participating in additional language training outside the university. Supervisors and students will discuss language training at the start of the program and in the Directed Readings course lay out a plan to acquire the necessary language competencies.

Skills Development:

Completing a doctoral thesis requires a wide range of skills specific to each project. These skills can include developing reading/writing/spoken proficiency in languages, as well as training of various kinds, including paleography, oral history, statistics, the analysis of images or artifacts, and the collection, storage, retrieval and analysis of large amounts of data. The university supports development of some of these skills; for example, SGPS has developed a Virtual Qualitative Research Module series, <https://grad.uwo.ca/academics/qualitativemodule.html>.

Development of these skills is often self-taught. You should put together a skills development plan with your supervisor at the start of your doctoral program.

Annual Meetings:

Every academic year following their dissertation proposal defense, PhD students will have an annual meeting in late September/first week of October, the purpose of which is to provide ongoing support for the student, and to set mutually agreed upon research and writing goals for the academic year. This is also an opportunity to discuss challenges or strategies that arise when writing a dissertation (e.g. how to enhance the dissertation's emerging arguments or its significance). In attendance at this meeting will be the student, their PhD supervisor, and the second reader (or the Graduate Chair can substitute). This meeting does not preclude other important and regular meetings between the student and supervisor. Ideally the goals set should be ambitious but attainable, to provide a feasible plan of work. Students should be proactive in writing this plan and setting goals. Within one week of the meeting, the PhD supervisor will provide a brief written summary of the discussion and the goals to the Graduate Program Advisor and Graduate Chair. The PhD annual report the following March should comment on the progress made according to this plan of work, what work remains to be done, as well as identify new goals and achievements (e.g. a conference presentation or publication).

PhD Comprehensives Oral Exam -- process

The student may bring a copy of their written exams and reading lists into the oral exam.

The chair convenes the meeting. The three examiners are informed that each may question the student for up to 30 minutes in the first round of questions and up to 15 in a second. The order of examiners is set in advance.

The student is invited to make a brief statement to correct or modify statements made on the written examinations.

The first round of questions begins. When both rounds have been completed, the chair asks if any examiner has any further questions.

When all questioning is complete, the student is invited to make a concluding statement.

The student is then asked to withdraw.

Each examiner submits to the chair a numerical grade marked out of 100 for their portion of the student's examination. Each examiner's grade may be derived in any way the examiner sees fit, so long as it is based on both the written and oral portions of the examination. The standard SGPS grading scale applies:

Letter Grade Scale	Numerical Scale
A+	90-100%
A	85-89%
A-	80-84%
B+	77-79%
B	73-76%
B-	70-72%
C+	67-69%
C	63-66%
C-	60-62%
F	00-59%

The chair announces the grades to the examiners, and discussion may follow. If one exam fails (less than 60%), the examining committee sets the terms and timetable for revision of that exam. If two or more exams are failed, the student has failed the comprehensive examination process and will be asked to withdraw from the graduate program.

The student is invited to return. The chair reports the results orally to the student and subsequently reports them to the Graduate Chair. Within a day, each examiner provides the student, in written form, with a more detailed assessment of their performance in the written and oral portions of the comprehensive field.

Dissertation Proposal and Defense

Having completed their comprehensive exams, students now rewrite and focus their broad historiographical essay to create a dissertation proposal (approximately 7,500 words in length, not counting the bibliography). The dissertation proposal must be submitted no later than March 31 of the student's second year in the program.

Dissertation proposals should contain both a description of the intended dissertation project and a plan of work. Proposals should tell a general audience (experts and non-experts) what the topic is, how it relates to (and is different from) previous work by historians and other scholars. It should include:

- major research question(s) that open your topic and indicate your approach to the project.
- a statement about why this project matters, or why it is significant (i.e. Why do this? Who cares about it? How will this dissertation change historical understanding of a subject? What academic/non-academic subfields will be interested in it, and why?)
- an explanation of the major historiography(ies) related to the dissertation in a way that engages with these secondary sources by elaborating on how the topic/research questions are framed relative to the work of other major historians
- a description of the intended methodology, research strategy, and plan of work
- a discussion of theory if explicit/central
- an inventory and discussion of major primary sources including archival sources
- a justification of the periodization (i.e. why the dissertation will start and stop when it does)
- a description of any expected challenges
- a schedule outlining how you will complete your thesis over the next 2 to 3 years.

Supervisors may provide students with additional advice and commentary about the content of their proposal. The supervisor will work closely with the student to ensure that the dissertation proposal is as strong as possible. The student defends their proposal before two examiners who are selected by the Graduate Chair after consultation with the student's supervisor.

PhD Dissertation Proposal Defense -- process

The student defends their proposal before two examiners. The student's supervisor also attends and serves as chair.

The chair convenes the meeting. The examiners are informed that each student may question the student for up to 30 minutes in the first round of questions and up to 15 in the second. Because the defense serves as an important opportunity for the student to benefit from feedback and advice before proceeding with their dissertation, the chair may permit a third round of questions. The order of examiners is set in advance.

When all questioning is complete, the student is asked to withdraw.

Each examiner grades the proposal on a pass/fail basis. If a student receives a failing grade from one or both readers, the committee sets the terms and timetable for revision of the proposal and another defense. (If the defense under discussion is that subsequent defense, and the student receives a failing grade from one or both readers in that subsequent defense, they are withdrawn from the graduate program.)

The student is invited to return. The chair reports the results orally to the student and subsequently reports them to the Graduate Chair.

Doctoral Progression

Upon the student's successful completion of the dissertation proposal, a Thesis Supervisory Committee (see SGPS [Thesis Regulation](#)) is formed, consisting of the student's supervisor and one other faculty member (typically, one of the two readers of the proposal), chosen by the Graduate Chair in consultation with the supervisor. This Committee will oversee the student's progress through the remainder of the dissertation.

Annual Progress Report:

Doctoral students and their supervisors must complete and file via Pathfinder an annual progress report by 1 March each year. The student, the supervisor, the second member of the Thesis Supervisory Committee, or the Graduate Chair may request a meeting to discuss the student's progress at this time.

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress towards their degree may be asked or required to withdraw from the program.

Annual PhD Meetings

Every academic year following their dissertation proposal defense, PhD students will have an annual meeting in late September/first week of October, the purpose of which is to provide on-going support for the student, and to set mutually agreed upon research and writing goals for the academic year. This is also an opportunity to discuss challenges or strategies that arise when

writing a dissertation (e.g. how to enhance the dissertation's emerging arguments or its significance). In attendance at this meeting will be the student, their PhD supervisor, and the second reader (or the Graduate Chair can substitute). This meeting does not preclude other important and regular meetings between the student and supervisor.

Ideally the goals set should be ambitious but attainable, to provide a feasible plan of work. Students should be proactive in writing this plan and setting goals. Within one week of the meeting, the PhD supervisor will provide a brief written summary of the discussion and the goals to the Graduate Affairs Assistant and Graduate Chair. The PhD annual report the following March should comment on the progress made according to this plan of work, what work remains to be done, as well as identify new goals and achievements (e.g. a conference presentation or publication).

PhD Dissertation

Students and supervisors must follow SGPS's detailed regulations regarding thesis format and submission, and timelines. All non-thesis degree requirements must be completed before a PhD thesis, or dissertation can be submitted for examination. Students must also be in good standing with the University regarding fees and any other dues.

The dissertation should be a substantial piece of original historical research that could provide the foundation for a scholarly monograph that makes an original contribution to historical knowledge.

In preparation for thesis submission, students must first submit a penultimate draft to their Thesis Supervisory Committee, who will judge if it meets the recognized scholarly standards for the discipline and department, and advise the candidate if revisions are recommended or required. It is ultimately at the discretion of the supervisor when the thesis is ready for examination, at which point they will inform the Graduate Chair.

A student may choose to submit their thesis for examination without the approval of their supervisor. In such cases, the supervisor must state in writing why their approval is withheld. The Graduate Chair signs off through the VERITAS Thesis Examination Portal and provides the candidate with a copy of the supervisor's stated reasons for withholding approval.

It is the student's responsibility to allow sufficient time for the Thesis Supervisory Committee to examine the dissertation draft, to allow for the six weeks of reading time required for examiners, and (particularly in the Summer Term) to account for faculty and staff vacation periods and other leaves.

When a student submits their dissertation to the Western University Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository (ETD) before the end of a term, they may apply for [Thesis Defense Only \(TDO\)](#) status.

The Graduate Chair arranges a thesis examination by setting a proposed date and organizing a thesis examination board. The examination board consists of two program examiners (Department of History faculty members), one university examiner (a Western faculty member

from outside the Department of History), and one external examiner (a faculty member from outside Western). The student's supervisor attends the oral defense but is not part of the examination board.

Once a PhD thesis has been officially submitted for examination, it cannot be withdrawn except by the permission of the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

Public Lecture and Thesis Examination

Thesis examinations are organized and overseen by SGPS; see its detailed regulations on examination procedures.

Students are required to present a public lecture on their dissertation research, normally within twenty- four hours before their oral defense. The lecture is open to all members of the community. The examiners should ideally attend the public lecture, but it is not formally part of the dissertation defense. The dissertation defense is normally a closed event. Successful candidates have up to six weeks to complete revisions to the dissertation required by the examiners and submit to the ETD within the term of the defense to avoid paying tuition/fees.