



KU Department of History Graduate Mentorship Manual

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Recruitment

On being contacted by a prospective student, faculty members should cc. the DGS and the Graduate Coordinator on the response, to facilitate the gathering of information on applying students and centralize communications throughout the application cycle.

As appropriate, contacted faculty should also connect prospective students with other relevant faculty to gauge wider interest and capacity for group advising and eventual committee formation.

Admissions

As part of the admissions process, advisors should rank those graduate students who have applied to work with them.

These rankings should be submitted to the Graduate Committee along with a paragraph-long justification for each student’s ranking in advance of the admissions meeting. These paragraphs are crucial to the deliberations of the Graduate Committee, and should indicate both the strengths of the student and the advisor’s enthusiasm about admitting and mentoring them. These can also be a place for advisors to alert the Graduate Committee to any information that has been communicated in their conversations with the applicant that does not appear in the application materials. Without at least one paragraph endorsing the candidate--and evaluating the candidate’s specific strengths and weaknesses as a potential member of our graduate cohort--from the prospective adviser, the candidate will not be considered for admission by the Graduate

Committee.

Coursework

Before the end of the first semester of the first year, the graduate student and the advisor should complete the **Program of Study Declaration**. Faculty advisors should help students to identify a course of study that will allow them to explore the geographic, thematic, and chronological range of issues that interest them and that will help them as they conceptualize their dissertation project. Students will also need to identify *three* additional faculty members who will be on their portfolio committee. Students must obtain the signatures of all four faculty on their Program of Study Declaration.

Unless the advisor is on leave, it is presumed that the advisor will advise the graduate student's two 802 papers. Because of this organization of the research seminars, graduate students will rely particularly on their advisors for guidance with the content of their research.

Mentorship

Each student will have different needs in terms of mentorship, just as each faculty advisor will have a different mentoring philosophy and style of engagement. As a baseline, students and their faculty advisor(s) should meet shortly after their matriculation to the program to clarify expectations for contact, both via email and in-person meetings, throughout their tenure in the program. Advisors and students are encouraged to revisit these arrangements regularly, as different stages of the program (coursework, exams, dissertation research and writing) will require different patterns of communication.

To guide the mentoring relationship, both students and advisors should be familiar with the contents of the History Graduate Student Handbook, which describes program expectations and timelines.

Feedback on Written Work

An adviser's feedback on written work is essential to a student's development of their ideas. It is vitally important that an adviser's comments on written work be delivered to students in a timely manner. During the academic year, notwithstanding exceptional circumstances, advisors should return comments on written work (including but not limited to drafts of 802 papers, the professional essay, the prospectus, and dissertation chapters) within three weeks.

Communication between the adviser and advisee is key to avoiding circumstances in which it is difficult to return comments in a timely way. Committee members who are not the primary adviser should, in consultation with the primary adviser, communicate with the students about their expectations for reviewing draft work in progress.

Portfolio and Prospectus Exams and the Dissertation Defense

In exams and defenses, the advisor is both the student's primary advisor and the chair of a multi-member faculty committee. Most faculty find it is valuable to open and maintain channels of

communication with other committee members before and after exams and defenses to help ensure the student's success.

Once the advisor has determined that a portfolio, prospectus, or dissertation is ready to defend, the student is responsible for scheduling all of their exams and defenses with the assistance of the Graduate Program Coordinator. Keep in mind that there are differing timelines for COGA pre-approval for different types of exams.

Advisors should be fluent in the History Graduate Student Handbook's guidelines for exams and defenses and help the student meet the requirements.

In advance of any exam or defense, it is customary and advisable for advisors to communicate via email to the rest of the committee members to assess their thoughts on the student's readiness as well as on the format of the exam. Advisors are also wise to encourage students to meet in person with other committee members individually before the exam or defense to discuss the student's work.

An advisor should not allow a student to defend a dissertation prospectus or dissertation that the advisor thinks cannot win the support of the committee. Regular communication and clear deadlines for drafts will help avoid this eventuality.

Mentorship Agreement

Within a week of completing the dissertation prospectus exam, the now-doctoral candidate and the graduate advisor should together complete the CLAS Mentorship Agreement. The Mentorship Agreement should be revisited annually and revised if necessary.

Professionalization

In addition to providing intellectual guidance, advisors should also provide invaluable mentorship around professionalization, which will enhance a student's competitiveness in the academic job market.

Among the professionalization issues that advisors should consider:

- attendance at local and national conferences
- presenting at conferences
- applying for external fellowships and research grants
- publishing in a peer-reviewed journal (if appropriate)

Students should be strongly encouraged to attend every job talk, practice job talk, and visiting lecture in the department, especially on a topic outside their field, in order to learn how others present their work publicly.