

Guidelines for the Graduate Program in the History of Art and Visual Studies

These guidelines supplement, but do not supplant,
The Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty
<http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/pubs_and_forms/pubs/codeoflegislation.pdf>.

Prerequisites for Admission

Select applicants are admitted to the Ph.D program. No terminal masters degrees are awarded except under exceptional circumstances.

The Baccalaureate or Masters degree in the History of Art or Visual Studies is desirable but not required for admission to this program. We encourage applications from other disciplines as long as the applicant demonstrates a sustained interest in visual culture and the ability to engage in scholarly research and writing.

The application form must be requested from the Graduate School
<http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions>. In addition, an application requires the submission of a writing sample (about 20 pages), a personal statement, an official transcript, GRE, and for international students, TOEFL scores as required by the Graduate School. The writing sample must be in English. No exceptions.

Since students must demonstrate knowledge of two languages (other than English) germane to their research by the beginning of their third year, it is highly recommended that they begin to acquire the necessary language skills before beginning the graduate program, at the very latest in the summer before they enter.

Program of Study

The program usually takes five years to complete and should take no more than seven years. Students are fully funded for the first five years, if they meet all deadlines and requirements. A typical package of support includes the first year of fellowship, followed by three years of teaching assistantships, and concluding with a second year of fellowship. In addition there are four years of summer support. After the fifth year students must secure outside funding and are required by the Graduate School to apply for at least one outside fellowship (and ideally more) within their first four years.

The program is flexible, with only minimal requirements for specific credits or coursework. All students are initially assigned to the DGS (Director of Graduate Studies) as advisees. During the first year, each student selects a chair relevant to the principal field of study and by the end of the third semester two (occasionally three) additional faculty members to constitute the Special Committee. The chair must be a member of the graduate field of History of Art and Visual Studies, and it is recommended that at least one additional member be drawn from the department faculty. Students work closely with the committee, especially the chair, to design their program of study. Interdisciplinary

work is highly encouraged and is generally one of the hallmarks of the study of the humanities at Cornell University.

The student must request a change of advisor by filling out the Special Committee Selection and Change form, which is available at the Graduate School web site <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/forms>.

Requirements

The minimum requirement of the Graduate School for the Ph.D. is six semesters of full-time study. Two of a total of these semesters must be between the Admission to Candidacy Examination (A exam) and the Final Examination (B exam).

The Field of History of Art and Visual Studies requires a minimum of 12 courses for a letter grade, including the graduate methods seminar in the first year. Additional requirements include demonstrated proficiency in two foreign languages, participation while in residence in the Visual Culture Colloquium, and teaching experience. The program has no core curriculum and no distribution requirements. Incompletes are highly discouraged and should be made up in the break following that semester, or during the subsequent semester. The Graduate School stipulates that an Incomplete can be removed from the transcript only within one year from the date of the end of the course. Incompletes may jeopardize funding for the following year and students may not advance to the A-exam with Incompletes on their record.

Coursework

Students must take at least 12 courses for a letter grade plus four semesters of TAships, or 14 courses for a grade for those with a FLAS or other fellowship in addition to the Sage.

1st year – Each semester four courses: three for a letter grade, including two seminars, in addition to the Graduate Methods seminar in the fall semester; the fourth course may be at any level or a language, and may be taken S/U or Audit. Students needing the background may audit the undergraduate proseminar for their fourth course.

2nd year – Each semester three courses plus a TAship: two for a letter grade, including at least one seminar; the third course may be at any level and may be taken S/U or Audit. Those with a fellowship instead of a TAship must take an additional course for a grade.

3rd year — At least two courses for a grade distributed over the year, as students choose; and a TAship or another course for a grade.

The first to third summers should be spent filling in any necessary language training, background reading for A-exams, and conducting preliminary research toward a dissertation topic.

Languages

By the beginning of the third year, students must give evidence of being able to read two languages (other than English) essential to their area of research. Students will either pass a language exam in the appropriate department, with the result submitted to the DGS, or demonstrate proficiency through coursework above the introductory level. It is recommended that the student take one language exam or advanced coursework in each of the first two years of residence. For languages that involve learning a new writing system, if reading fluency has not been fully attained, the student's advisor will submit to the DGS a status report and a detailed plan for the student to attain fluency before beginning fieldwork. A student will not be permitted to advance to candidacy without completion of the language requirement.

Teaching Assistantships

The program requires students to acquire experience in teaching. After the first year, most work as teaching assistants in undergraduate lecture courses or teach First Year Writing Seminars in their areas of expertise. These provide support for students, but are also essential aspects of their professional development and the training that our graduate program provides.

International graduate students who have not taken the TOEFL or have received a speaking score below a 28 are required to participate in an ITA Language Assessment (ILA) before beginning any teaching assistantship. Students with scores above 28 will be exempt from the course at the discretion of the department. For information about International Teaching Assistant Program (ITAP) Courses:
<http://cte.cornell.edu/itap/courses.html>

A-Exam

The A-exam has a written and an oral component, both designed by the student's committee to determine the student's admission to Ph.D. candidacy. No later than the fourth semester, the student must request a meeting with the Special Committee to declare the major and minor fields and to discuss the format and content of the examination. It is recommended that A-exam essays be distributed to the Special Committee at least two weeks before the oral examination. The oral exam consists of questions and discussion based on the written section. A brief dissertation proposal can be part of the A-exam. To be eligible for the third summer funding from the Graduate School, students must have attempted the A-exam before the end of their third year, or have scheduled the exam for the third summer. Before scheduling the A-exam, it is required that students complete all previous course work and demonstrate proficiency in two languages.

Dissertation Proposal

After admission to candidacy, each student must write a brief 5-10 page dissertation proposal defining the goals, methodology, and scope of the project, together with a bibliography. The student will circulate the written text to the Special Committee for feedback and then schedule a formal presentation of the dissertation project.

As soon as students have a coherent dissertation project, and within the first four years, they must begin applying for travel grants and dissertation research fellowships outside Cornell.

Department Participation

Attendance at the VCC (Visual Culture Colloquium) is required. This is a forum for outside speakers as well as faculty and graduate student presentations. Third year graduate students will be involved in the planning and organizing, along with faculty. Students are expected to participate in discussion and should notify the DGS if they cannot attend. Attendance is also expected at any other department sponsored events, including professional development workshops and occasional meetings of graduate students called by the DGS.

Conference Travel Funding

Conference participation and presentation of a paper is highly desirable and students may apply to the Graduate School and the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies for funds to help support this activity. Department funds are limited to one time per year for each student. Student presentations at conferences are representations of both the student's work and Cornell University. Presenting initially at a graduate student conference is good for experience and feedback, so that later in the more important national and international conferences students can give a polished presentation of dissertation research. Papers at such major conferences should be presented only after the second year or later, closely related to the student's dissertation research, and discussed in advance with the student's committee chair.

Graduate School Requirements for Summer Funds and Sage Dissertation Fellowships

For 1st summer funding: academic plan for summer academic activities and outcomes submitted by May 1.

For 2nd summer funding: full committee assembled by the end of the third semester and academic plan for summer academic activities submitted by May 1.

For 3rd summer funding: the A-exam attempted before the start of the 7th semester, or scheduled for the 3rd summer, and an academic plan for the summer submitted.

For 4th summer: the A-exam passed and an application submitted describing the scholarly work completed in the 3rd summer and the academic objectives for the 4th semester.

Dissertation year fellowship: the A-exam attempted before the 7th semester, the exam passed, and applications for an external fellowship submitted within the first four years.

The dissertation year fellowship may not be used later than the 12th semester, unless external funding has been secured in a prior year.

(The Graduate School permits students to petition for extensions of deadlines with valid reasons.)

The Dissertation

The dissertation is an original and substantial contribution to knowledge and to the History of Art and Visual Studies. Students are required to submit the final manuscript in finished form and formatted according to the requisites of the Graduate School. Formatting Guidelines and the Thesis and Dissertation Handbook can be downloaded from the Graduate School web site <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/thesis-and-dissertation>. The student must allow the committee at least one month to read the dissertation. After the dissertation has been thoroughly reviewed and approved by the Special Committee, the chair of the committee will schedule a defense, the B exam.

B-Exam

The B exam is an oral defense of the dissertation conducted by all members of the students' Special Committee. A Ph.D. candidate must consult with the Special Committee throughout the writing process. Under no circumstances should a student submit an entire dissertation to a Special Committee without having been advised on individual chapters by the same committee. Students are expected to make all the corrections recommended by the Special Committee before the B exam. Additional corrections will be required after the defense.

After final revisions to the dissertation, it must be submitted to Graduation Manager (see <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/thesis-and-dissertation>) within 60 days of the Final Examination.

All graduate students must be aware that all the work done in preparation for the Ph.D “shall be freely available for evaluation and inspection by any interested member of the Graduate Faculty” (Code of Legislation, p. 19.)