

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements  
Medieval and Byzantine Studies Program**

**Master's Program in Medieval and Byzantine Studies  
Doctoral Program in Medieval and Byzantine Studies  
Certificate Program in Medieval Studies**

**AY 2011-2012**

**Key Assessment Findings**

Both M.A. and Ph.D. students in the Medieval and Byzantine Studies Program are required to take comprehensive exams. Due to revisions and changes in curricular requirements in both the master's and the doctoral program, the faculty of Medieval and Byzantine Studies have updated the requirements and structure of the comprehensive exams to better reflect the goals of the revised graduate programs. Changes to the comprehensive exams have been implemented starting AY 2010-11, with the exception of M.A. students who entered under the old curriculum.

According to the old system, M.A. candidates were given a list of broad questions (in advance) which aimed to stimulate them to integrate the knowledge gained over the course of their studies. The comprehensive exam was drawn from that larger list of questions, answered over the course of two days. The exams were read and assessed by two faculty members. According to the new system, candidates have to generate reading lists in one major field (area of specialization) and two minor areas under the guidance of faculty experts and advisors. On day one they are examined in their major fields, on day two in their two minor fields, based on the reading lists. The exam is evaluated by three faculty members. In addition, in order to graduate, M.A. students are also required to complete a master's thesis or two interdisciplinary research papers assessed by two faculty members, chosen in accordance with their knowledge and expertise in the matters considered in the papers.

Similarly to the new M.A. comps, PhD comprehensive exams are created as part of a dynamic process in which the student and his major and minor concentration advisors devise and agree to a list of readings. Questions for the PhD comprehensives are then formulated to assess the student's critical engagement with and mastery of the material presented in those content areas and texts. On days one and two the student is examined in the major field, on day three in the minor field. The exam is evaluated by three readers.

Students in the certificate program are not required to sit for comprehensive exams or to submit research papers. The (non-degree) certificate is based entirely on successful completion of required course work.

In AY 2011-2012 the Center administered one M.A. comprehensive exam (in Fall 2011). The candidate passed the exam, however, the size of the data precludes detailed numerical presentation here. Rubrics for assessing comprehensive exams have been developed and applied. The results of the rubrics will be aggregated over time and discussed in future years to preserve confidentiality of students.

### **Curricular Improvements**

The 2008-09 and 2009-10 academic years saw a vibrant discussion among MBS faculty about the structure of academic programs at all levels, which resulted in the revision of our graduate programs (M.A., Ph.D. and Certificate) effective Fall 2010. The revisions introduced greater flexibility into the curriculum and require more independence of the students in designing and managing their academic development and research. In accordance with the revised graduate programs, the faculty of MBS, with the approval of the Steering Committee, have also redesigned the comprehensive exams (see above). The new system was implemented in AY 2010-11 and we are in the process of assessing the outcomes of the changes.

The Center continues to put great emphasis on the professional development of graduate students beyond the academic curriculum. Therefore, we have organized annual regional graduate conferences since 2007 where students have been given the opportunity to present their research findings, solicit feedback, and network with other academics. We also offer a series of academic lectures, seminars, and workshops as well as meetings and workshops about professional development. By the former we hope to promote advanced research, by the latter better placement records of our graduates.

Submitted by Dr. Lilla Kopár, Director of the Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies