

Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements

Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies

Graduate Programs

Certificate in Medieval or Byzantine Studies

M.A. Degree in Medieval or Byzantine Studies

Ph.D. Degree in Medieval or Byzantine Studies

Assessment Measures

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies uses the following measures to assess student learning outcomes:

- Grades, course evaluations and enrollment totals in Introduction to Medieval Studies (MDST 601)
- Comprehensive Examinations
- Course and Program Completion

Assessment Findings

Both student retention and graduation data and comprehensive examinations data have been gathered for the cohort years 2000-2007 for the M.A. and Ph.D. levels.

Graduate retention and summary data

Certificate Program. No students entered the Certificate Program during eight cohort years 2000-2007.

Master's Program. Nineteen students entered the Master's Program during the eight cohort years 2000-2007, between 1 and 4 students each year. During this period 7 of the 19 passed the Comprehensive Examination; 7 graduated with the M.A. degree after spending between one and five years in the program; 8 of those who did not graduate did not maintain continuous enrolment; and 2 of those who did graduate went on to enroll in the Ph.D. program.

Ph.D. Program. Fifteen students entered the Ph.D. program during the same years, between 0 and 4 students each year. During this period 5 of the 15 passed the Comprehensive Examination; 4 graduated with the M.A. degree and then left the program; none of the 15 had yet graduated with the Ph.D. degree; and 5 of those who did not graduate did not maintain continuous enrolment.

Graduate Comprehensive Examinations Data

Master's Program. Of the 19 students entering the M.A. program during the cohort years 2000-2007, seven passed the Master's Comprehensive Examination, 1 of the 7 in the student's first year in the program, 3 in their second year, 2 in their third year, and 1 in the student's fifth year.

Ph.D. Program. Of the 15 students entering the Ph.D. program during the cohort years 2000-2007, five passed the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination, 1 of the 5 in the student's first year in the program, 2 in their second year, and 2 in their third year.

Analysis: The faculty of MBS is concerned about the number of students who complete the M.A. and Ph.D. programs. At a recent MBS faculty forum, initiated by the Acting Director and sponsored by the Dean of Arts and Sciences, a curriculum committee was formed which will address curricular matters during the calendar year 2009. (See below). Because MBS is not an autonomous Department (all faculty have appointments in Schools and departments of the University), graduate students do not have a built-in academic community and support system. Therefore, the MBS faculty forum also resolved to begin reinvigorating the Center of Medieval and Byzantine Studies as an intellectual locus and community for medievalists on campus. In 2009 the Center will begin sponsoring social events and monthly scholarly events in which faculty and graduate students share their research in informal settings. Graduate student conferences will also be implemented on an annual basis. Creation of the position of Associate Director has also been discussed. Although we envision that such initiatives will help attract students and address the issue of completion rates and retention, ultimately we are hindered in our ability to attract and retain students because of the uncompetitive financial packages offered by the University. Most peer programs offer a five year package of fellowship and stipend support while CUA offers only three years at best. Course work alone takes three years. At the

crucial moment when a student has completed his/her MA/Ph.D. course work and comprehensive exams University funding runs out.

Curricular Improvements

The graduate program on the Certificate, M.A., and Ph.D. levels are now all under review by the curriculum committee. The program was last revised in 1998 and it was the conclusion of the recently convened Medieval and Byzantine Studies Faculty Forum that the programs are in need of revision. Curricular revision will take place during the calendar year 2009. Among other changes envisioned, MDST 601 (Introduction to Medieval Studies), the gate-way course, will be revamped to better meet the needs of the students in the program. The prescriptive nature of the program will also be addressed. The committee will also look at developing sub-concentrations that focus on the Islamic and Mediterranean worlds in Medieval and Byzantine Society.