

FAQ – Before you apply

Can I apply for admission to begin my studies in the spring semester?

No, we only accept new students to begin in the fall.

What are the minimum GPA and GRE scores UGA requires for admission?

Admission to graduate studies in History at UGA is judged on a case-by-case basis, looking at a variety of things, including GPAs, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, student statements of purpose, and the appropriateness of our current faculty and other resources to students' interests.

There's no particular minimum GPA or GRE score required for admission, but for comparative and general information purposes: Our entering students last year averaged a 1246 GRE score (with an average of 632 on the verbal portion), and a 3.4 undergraduate GPA (3.7 in history courses). Students entering the PhD program with a master's degree already in hand averaged a 3.8 graduate GPA.

Is the GRE required? Yes. GRE scores are valid for 5 years

When should I take GRE?

As early as possible in the late summer or fall before you apply for admission. Remember that it takes time for your scores to be reported to us. Taking the exam early also allows you time to retake it, should you not do as well as you would have liked to.

Should I retake the GRE?

This decision requires you to weigh time and money against your scores and the likelihood of improving them. One factor to consider here is that GRE scores are used by the graduate school and the History department for a variety of things, including decisions about some kinds of assistantships and financial aid, not just admissions. Many assistantships and fellowships have stipulated minimum GRE scores. Studies show, moreover, that GRE scores can be raised significantly by study and preparation, and that, frequently, retaking the exam yields substantial improvement. Thus retaking the exam after a mediocre result, or taking it again when applying to PhD programs after completing an MA program, may very well be advisable.

Should I send additional application materials, other than those specified in the graduate school and History department requirements?

Please do not send extra materials to the department as part of your formal application package. Additional materials are burdensome on the staff who process the application, and can't—in fairness to other applicants—be weighed into the deliberations about admission. Individual faculty members that you're considering as potential major professors may, however, be interested in looking at additional papers or other relevant materials. Feel free to ask any professor with whom you are corresponding whether he or she would like to see anything else from you. Please do not send any materials (other than initial letters or emails) to faculty members without first inquiring whether they are interested in receiving them. Also, please do not send required application materials to prospective advisors in lieu of sending them directly to the department or the graduate school. ***Please label each document with your name, and do not place them in any kind of folder or binding.***

Should I apply for the MA program or the PhD program?

This decision is best discussed at length with your advisors at your current institution, and possibly with any UGA faculty with whom you're corresponding, as well. There is a wide variety of opinion concerning the pros and cons of first doing an MA before working on a PhD in History. You will want to consider all of these viewpoints carefully. In general, however, the following points should be borne in mind:

If you want to get an MA in route to your PhD, you would do best to apply to the MA program. Admission standards and considerations are somewhat more liberal for the MA program than for the PhD program, which means that applying to the MA program may increase your chances for admission. Similar considerations apply if you are uncertain whether you want to complete an MA or not, or whether or not you will want to continue on to PhD studies. If you're admitted to the MA program, you will have the option of transferring to the PhD program during your second year of study. If you're certain that you want to obtain a PhD, and do not wish to pick up an MA along the way, you might be best advised to apply to the PhD program. Applicants to the PhD program who do not already have an MA are automatically considered for admission to the MA program as well—you don't need to apply to both programs.

What's the purpose of the “proposed study” form? How do I choose the professors to list on this form?

Although faculty advisors often play only a minor role in students' undergraduate education, they are central to graduate study programs. In fact, many professors argue that selecting the right graduate school is secondary to choosing the right major professor to work under. After all, while undergraduate programs center on classes and coursework, the heart and core of graduate education is an apprenticeship. Your major professor acts as a mentor, shepherding you through the process of mastering your field and learning to conduct original research.

The proposed study form therefore represents a key part of your application. The History department uses the information on this form to help us select students appropriate to our programs—to help identify the students most likely to thrive and benefit from what we have to offer. It's in your best interests—for the success of your graduate and career aspirations as well as for the purposes of the application—to put some careful thought and research into completing this form. In fact, the information this form asks for should play a major role in your decisions about which schools and programs to apply to.

The place to start is the faculty page on our website www.uga.edu/history. Identify professors whose interests, fields and approach to their work seem to mesh well with yours. Look at their CVs and publication lists online. Locate and read some of their published work. Keep in mind that it's not necessary for your major professor to be doing (or have done) work on the specific topics that interest you, so long as he or she is doing the kind of work you would like to do, and that his or her areas of expertise are compatible with helping you work toward your goals. At the same time, remember that graduate study, being more advanced, is more focused and greater in depth than undergraduate work, and that professors are therefore unlikely to be comfortable—or even qualified—to supervise students in fields or periods radically different from those in which they work themselves. Remember too that experienced professors can often provide help at levels that very juniors ones are not yet equipped to offer—and often have more time, as well.

It's a very good idea to discuss what you find with your current professors and advisors. They can often add input and perspectives you might not otherwise consider.

I'm still torn between a couple of fields that interest me. What if I'm not yet sure what I want to specialize in?

Not to worry! It's not at all unusual, particularly for students just beginning an MA program, to be undecided between multiple fields. Neither the department's program nor its application process require you to commit absolutely to any field or major professor coming in the door. You can always make up your mind—or change it—later.

On the other hand, you should be sure that our faculty and other resources are appropriate to any of the fields you're considering. And you should be prepared to make a decision fairly early in your studies.

You will be expected to complete your coursework and to acquire the necessary language and other research skills, within a year or two in an MA program and within three years or so in a PhD program, so you'll have far less time to experiment than you did as an undergraduate deciding on a major.

Is it a good idea to write to professors with whom I'm interested in working?

This is definitely a good idea and is strongly encouraged. The more the professors you hope to work under know about you, the better they can assess their suitability to your needs and your suitability to our program.

Email is a very good way to start this process. Introduce yourself and explain your interests. Explain why you would be interested in working with them. Be thorough, but also be brief; the goal of this first contact is to open the door for further communication, not to tell your life story! Offer to send copies of your CV, papers you have written, or other materials they might like to see, but do not send any such materials unless they ask you to.