First and Second Years

1.29 Qualifying Paper: During autumn and winter quarters of second year, students will research and write a qualifying paper under the guidance of a principal advisor, who must be a faculty member in the Art History Department. Students will arrange for a second advisor at the University, who need not be in Art History, no later than the beginning of winter quarter. Students will typically enroll in an independent research course with the primary advisor, or with the primary and secondary advisors, in both autumn and winter quarters, to accommodate the research and writing within the course load. These two courses count toward the 18 required for the degree. The complete draft is due to both readers by Friday of the seventh week of winter quarter. The form approving the final version must be filled out by the student, signed by both readers, and submitted to the Department by Friday of exam week in winter quarter. The approval form is available for download on the department website. Students should submit a copy of the approved paper to the Department.

1.30 Summer Stipend Holders: Summer stipends are intended to enable students to continue their training and research through the summer by supporting their expenses.

First priority for summer work is to take care of language skills, whether acquiring or improving them. The University offers the equivalent of one-year introductory and more advanced courses in many languages in a condensed format during summer quarter, without tuition charge to continuing graduate students. The Department requires students to take these courses for a letter grade and to enroll in regular three-quarter courses, not the research-for-reading courses. The goal here is to get solid language training that will stay with you.

First- and second-year students are expected to develop a summer reading list with the help of your faculty advisor (see 1.31). In the third summer, students may continue language study, develop dissertation proposals, and/or take a pre-dissertation research trip. See section 1.47 describing pre-dissertation grants.

All students receiving summer stipends should include, in the work plan you file early each spring for the upcoming year of study, a description of their plans for the upcoming summer (language study, research/travel plans, summer reading plans).

1.31 Summer Reading Lists for First and Second Summers: First- and second-year students are expected to develop a summer reading list of several books and/or substantial articles, with the help of your faculty advisor. You should make an appointment to discuss your list by the middle of spring quarter and should have agreed on the list by the end of exam week. The first summer list should be directed toward identifying the qualifying paper topic. The second summer list may be directed toward the preliminary exam fields or the dissertation topic. You should make an appointment with your advisor to discuss the reading list at the start of autumn quarter.

1.32 Grades, Incomplete Coursework, and Completion Deadline: The official grading scale used by the Department is A, B, C, D, and F, including pluses and minuses. In general, however, graduate student grades range from A to B-, and grades of B or B- indicate seriously inadequate work. A+ is not an official grade in the University, but may be used within the Department.

By the second year, it is expected that grades for art history courses should be mostly, if not entirely, in the A range. Graduate research courses may be graded Pass/Fail. The Qualifying Paper courses, ARTH 49808 and 49809 (first and second quarter) will be graded after the final paper is submitted to the faculty advisor. Both courses will receive the same letter grade, which will be the same as the grade for the paper.

A blank grade indicates that the student has completed the coursework but for some reason the instructor has not yet filed the grade. (For example, the grade for the first quarter of the Qualifying Paper course will remain blank until the paper is completed later in the year.) A grade of I (Incomplete) indicates that the student hasn’t yet completed requirements for the course but will do so in the future. When requirements for the course are completed, the student should ask the faculty member to send in a grade. The final grade is entered next to the I. Accordingly, the Department strongly discourages students from taking I’s. It is important to understand that a grade of I remains on the transcript forever.

1.33 Exceptions and Petitions: If you wish to have the Department consider other options for completing requirements, you may petition the faculty by addressing a letter to the Director of Graduate Studies describing, explaining and justifying the changes you request. It will be presented to the faculty and voted upon by them.
1.34 Department Policy on Working during Full Fellowship Years: Graduate students are expected to devote their time primarily to their studies. University policy prohibits students from working more than 20-hours per week in an academic quarter, including teaching and research appointments. Contact the Department Coordinator or Dean of Students if you need to discuss an exception to this rule. Students will teach at the University to meet the teaching obligations associated with their fellowship starting in their third year, but they should not undertake teaching at other institutions or other major employment that could delay the completion of their studies. They may, however, take jobs entailing ten hours of work per week or less without consulting the department. Any job involving more than ten hours per week requires the approval of the student’s faculty advisor, who will communicate approval in a brief email to the Director of Graduate Studies for the student’s file. Non-compliance could have consequences for a student’s annual spring progress review, on which basis fellowships are renewed.

1.35 Joint Degrees: Select students may pursue joint PhD degrees with art history and another department or program. Joint PhD programs at the University of Chicago are of two types: “standing” and “ad hoc.”

A standing joint degree program has been established between the Department of Art History and the Committee on Theater and Performance Studies (TAPS). It allows students to complement their doctoral studies in art history with a program of study in TAPS that reflects their particular training and interests, encompassing both academic and artistic work. Students apply to this standing program at the time of their application to the University, which is submitted to the Art History Department. Subsequently, art history is these students’ “home” department for financial and administrative purposes. Students meet all of the regular program requirements for art history, summarized on the PhD program page. In addition, they meet all of the program requirements for TAPS, summarized on their website.

Students may petition for an ad-hoc joint PhD program with another department or program according to guidelines set by the Humanities Division. Generally, admitted students must separately meet the requirements of both programs, but any overlapping requirement need only be met once if each department would otherwise consider it met were that student not in the joint degree program. Recent art history students have completed joint PhDs with Cinema and Media Studies and with Social Thought. In recent experience, successful applications for a joint degree program with Art History have come specifically from students who have taken several classes that were cross-listed between art history and the other program. In practical terms, the number of courses that are cross-listed between two different programs can often be important in determining whether or not charting out a dual PhD program is logistically viable.

Under a new initiative, some students may simultaneously pursue PhD studies at the University of Chicago and at a degree-granting institution of higher learning in France, leading to two PhD degrees – one from each of the two institutions. Students approved for this initiative pursue a specific course of study depending on their research and professional interests, must satisfy all requirements of both doctoral programs, and must write and defend a single dissertation that meets the requirements for each degree.

1.36 MA Degree: The objective of the program is the PhD degree. However, students may apply for the MA degree along the way to achieving the PhD, or in the rare event that they choose or are advised to leave the PhD program after the first- or second-year review. Any student is eligible for the MA degree after completing the following requirements: one foreign language required for the student’s field, nine one-quarter courses at the University of Chicago (including the Art History Proseminar and COSI Objects & Materials Seminar), and approval of the qualifying paper by both readers.

1.37 Students Entering with an MA from Another Art History Program: Students entering the program with an MA in art history in a field other than the one in which they anticipate writing a dissertation, or with an MA in another discipline, or with an MA from an art history program based outside North America or Britain will follow the regular program, taking 18 courses.

Special provisions apply to students entering the program with an MA from an art history program in North America or Britain in the field in which they anticipate writing a dissertation:

1) In the spring of their first year, these students have the option of petitioning the Department to grant course credit toward the departmental requirements for courses taken in their previous program. The Department considers petitions on a case-by-case basis, and may approve anywhere from one to five credits. If the courses in question were taken at the University of Chicago, however, it may consider a larger number. The student should give the Director of Graduate Studies a brief cover letter requesting the credits, including the course titles, descriptions, and instructors, accompanied by: a transcript, the course syllabi, and a copy of the paper or other major written assignment for each course. The Director of Graduate Studies will present the petition at a faculty meeting for discussion and vote, and will report the decision to the student.

2) These students write the qualifying paper on the same schedule as other students. If, however, they and their faculty advisor feel they have written a course paper during the first year that is suitable for the qualifying paper, they have the option of expanding that paper over the summer and completing it in autumn quarter of the second year.