Ph.D. Program in History Professional Development Assessment

1) Statement of the learning goals for the assessment that you are reviewing:

Students completing the Ph.D. in History are expected to have acquired the following foundations for professional development:

I. Ability to successfully participate in academic conferences at all levels, from attending through participation to development
II. Knowledge of professional academic organizations (particularly the American Historical Association)
III. Introduction to grant application skills
IV. Preparation for the job market
V. Exposure to the challenges and rewards of undergraduate pedagogy

2) A description of what data or other information you are drawing on:

We did a thorough review of our Professional Development events for the last two years:

2015 – 16

March 18 Ph.D. Program in History Graduate Student Conference
March 11 Ph.D. Program In History Teaching Conversations: “How to Foster Discussion in Class”
February 19 Teaching Conversations: Teaching Sensitive Topics
January 9th AHA Breakfast
December 29th Mock Interviews
November 18 Peer Mentors Teaching Workshop
November 10 “What Editors Wish Historians Knew” With Nancy Toff from Oxford University Press
October 7 Alumni Publications Evening
October 14 The First Year Mentor Meeting

September 11 Digital Tools to Control the Chaos

September 1 Archival Workflows Panel

2014 – 15

May 8 CUNY Early American Republic Seminar conference

May 1 Lunchtime Seminar on College Teaching! (Cindy Lobel)

April 20 Peer Mentors First-year Teaching Workshop

March 13 Student Conference – “Identities, Ideologies, and Interactions: Conceptualizing New Histories”

March 27 Grant Writing Workshop led by Karen Kelsky

March 25 Peer Mentoring Workshop

Feb 25 Brown Bag Seminar Series: Worried about getting a job after graduate school?

Dec 11 How to Get Published in a Journal with Dr. Dagmar Herzog and Dr. Martin Burke

November 21 Workshop on Undergraduate Teaching

October 18 Brown Bag Seminar Series presents “How To Have A Successful Conference Experience”

After this internal review (conducted by the APO, EO, and DEO), the History students were surveyed about our professional development events via open-ended questions. I solved the data collection problem by requesting that the History students reply to the survey in order to receive their registration PINs. 82 out of 114 students replied.

3) Your findings. Is the assessment (and preparation for it) effective?

Our students, especially those at Level 3, are definitely putting this professional development preparation into practice as they approach the job market. – Even when students do not get the job, they report feeling confident and prepared in many ways. Students present at conferences throughout
their time in the program, as we can measure through their participation in the funding sources – Student Affairs, DSRG, and the program’s reimbursement fund. We believe that each of the learning goals was targeted by our events. The students reported a high level of satisfaction:

I. “I think you and the department have done a really good job with the workshops as well as job listings on the commons.”

II. “I think the History department is doing a great job as it is in terms of offering more professional development events and promoting those events.”

III. “I actually have been impressed with the number of events that have been added.”

IV. “I really appreciate the work that Jenny Furlong is doing to promote viable non-academic career paths for GC students, and so my vote would be for more of these kinds of events.”

V. “A big thanks as well to the Digital Fellows. The department does not have tech savvy faculty!”

4) Proposed changes, if any, to the assessment, the learning goals for it, the curriculum/preparation leading up to it.

The proposed changes came in the form of student requests:

I. “A workshop on cover letter construction”

II. “Professional development workshops for graduate students working as adjuncts”

III. “Methodology and pedagogy incorporated into coursework or faculty-led events”

IV. “Teaching workshops led by people who specialize in teaching outside CUNY”

V. “Serious 'alt-ac' or plan "B" programs. More focus on non-academic career paths!”

VI. “I would a "navigating the archives" workshop where historians share their experiences in archives
VII. “using digital research applications/technology, navigating online collections and databases, generating/tracking citations and property citing archival materials”

VIII. “More events on digital tools for managing archival work, increasing connections between the History department and the Digital Initiatives.”

5) **The next steps that will be taken. (There should be a follow-up on these in the report for the next cycle.)**

The survey revealed that the students’ top priority is an increased focus on preparation for teaching. Additional events will be added next year. We will reach on the campus chairs for guidance and assistance. We also will build stronger ties within the Graduate Center. A report will be forthcoming in early 2017.
Ph.D. Program in History
Final Exam (Dissertation Development and Defense) Assessment Review

1) Statement of the learning goals for the assessment that you are reviewing.

There are two primary benchmarks for the Final Exam in the PhD Program in History. The Dissertation Proposal asks the student to clarify the scope of their research. The Dissertation Defense ensures that the dissertation submitted is acceptable to a committee of three to five scholars, at least three of whom are current PhD Program in History faculty members.

The path to the Dissertation Proposal begins while the student is immersed in coursework, before the Second Exam. Students are expected to produce three major research papers in the course of the required Research Seminars and Independent Studies. The third research paper is expected to result in an extended dissertation proposal that is based on some primary research.

Within one semester after passing the Oral/ Second Examination, every student must submit a dissertation proposal to a proposal committee. The student will select, with the approval of the dissertation advisor, two faculty members to serve as on the committee. All three members must be active (non-retired) members of the doctoral faculty in History. Under their supervision the student should prepare a Dissertation Proposal which must include the following:

1. A statement of the problem.
2. An examination of the present state of scholarship on this problem.
3. A strategy for dealing with the problem.
4. The possible significance of the findings.
5. A critical bibliography with special attention to new or seldom used materials.

The Dissertation Proposal defense assesses whether the student has fulfilled these requirements, and therefore has developed a solid foundation for writing the Dissertation. The committee may ask the student to revise and re-submit the proposal for a second meeting or it may authorize the sponsor to approve the requisite changes. The second meeting must be scheduled within two months or no later than the first week of following semester. If the committee does not approve the revised proposal at its second meeting, the student will be dropped from the program. He or she may appeal to the entire Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee rejects the appeal the student will be dropped from the program.

Also at the proposal defense, the committee will decide if it wants to have the student report on progress in one year or two years. The report on progress shall take the form of a substantial piece of writing. The committee does not have to meet but can reach a conclusion by e-mail on whether or not the student’s progress is sufficient; all members of the committee shall supply

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1 The number of committee members has recently been adjusted. See question 4.
written comments to the student. If the members of the original proposal defense committee are not available to review the progress report other committee members may be substituted.

The Dissertation Defense Committee includes the advisor, a second reader who has been providing the student with feedback, and one member who has not participated in the supervision of the dissertation. The two other optional members may come from other programs or from outside The Graduate Center.

At the time of the defense, the Committee may choose to approve the dissertation as presented, may ask for major or minor revisions, or may fail the student. The student can then request a new defense. All students who successfully defend meet the Program’s ultimate stated learning goal: Develop and present an original argument to the scholarly community that is based on research in primary sources and that makes a significant contribution to the field.

2) A description of what data or other information you are drawing on to conduct your review (e.g. students’ exam results, students’ job placements).

We’re using both continuously tracked empirical data (exam dates and results, alumni outcomes) and current student surveys for this assessment. The program has recently expanded our monitoring of alumni careers and publications.

3) Your findings. Is the assessment (and preparation for it) effective?

In 2014-15, 16 students successfully defended their proposals, 18 students successfully defended their dissertations. Our recent study of graduates from 2003 - 2013 indicates that 66% hold full-time academic positions. We are therefore convinced that our procedures are sound, but we continue to periodically elicit student and faculty feedback.

4) Proposed changes, if any, to the assessment, the learning goals for it, the curriculum/preparation leading up to it.

A December 2015 student survey revealed that a significant minority wanted some flexibility in the composition of the Defense Committee2. The Curriculum and Executive Committees  

2 The following suggestions were made:
“it might be helpful to allow students to have only two of their five members be GC doctoral faculty on a case-by-case basis. This would allow some students to craft stronger committees while at the same time ensuring appropriate GC supervision”
promptly voted to change the requirements from a required committee of five members to the more flexible arrangement of three, four or five members. In accordance with Graduate Center requirements, three must be active (non-retired) members of the PhD Program in History; the others may come from other programs or from outside The Graduate Center.

5) The next steps that will be taken. (There should be a follow-up on these in the report for the next cycle.)

We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our requirements. If further changes are made, we will provide a follow-up.

“I think students should have a bit more leeway in choosing members of their committee--it should be possible to have 3-5 members on your committee, rather than requiring 5, and a bit more flexibility about the GC doctoral faculty vs. CUNY vs. external faculty.”

“I would be in favor of reducing the number of required faculty members on the dissertation committee from five to four.”

“I'd be in favor of reducing the committee size (similar to how the oral committee was reduced). “