

Art and Architectural History
Ph.D. Prospectus Guidelines
Prepared March 2012

There will be variation based on the topic and your approach, but a thesis prospectus should contain the following components:

1. A statement of the primary research question or thesis should be clearly stated in the first paragraph. If you know what you will argue, you can state that, and otherwise your central question can be stated as such.
2. Your approach and method should be clearly articulated. How will you approach your topic? What models, either theoretical, drawn from other fields, or within your own field, will guide you? What are the primary research materials upon which your research will be built (archival/archaeological/visual etc...)? What kinds of visual evidence will you be drawing upon [drawings/paintings/sculpture/building/other] and what is the relation between divergent media and/or genres? Have these materials been examined by others, and if so how will your approach be different or add something new?
3. Related to the previous point, you should establish the relation of your work to your field and to existing literature. Does your thesis build on the work of other scholars, contributing to a developing field of interest/research? Does it depart from a long tradition of interpretations of a certain kind? You are not writing a 'state of the field' essay in which you summarize the general direction of medieval studies or Renaissance architecture, but rather a 'state of the problem' in which you engage with relevant sources within and perhaps beyond your field which are directly related to your thesis statement. References to the work of prior scholars should be respectful, but clearly differentiate your own position.
4. Program of work. Where will you conduct your research, how much time will you need for "on site research" (if your work entails this), and what will be the primary institutions (libraries/archives/museums) on which your work will depend?
5. Timetable for completion. Broadly, how much time do you envision for primary research and for writing?
6. Bibliography. This should include both new work in your field, foundational work, and theoretical work from other fields that may help guide you.
7. Finally, the hardest point but also the most important: In what ways will your contribution be original? Why does it matter? Hopefully this will be apparent throughout your proposal, but if not you need to make sure it comes across somewhere.

General Guidelines:

A good benchmark for length is ten pages double-spaced, 12-point type including timetable and bibliography.

A few well-chosen images can be included in either the body of the prospectus or at the end.

A title page with the following: Title of the dissertation, your name, submission date, your advisor's name and his or her signature formally approving the submission of your prospectus, the names (but not signatures) of your thesis committee (GSAS requires two additional ARAH faculty members and one faculty member from the College of Arts and Sciences at UVa. This non-departmental member can be decided later and does not have to be included on the prospectus title page.).