

Eight-Year Program Review IBHE Report Summary: see attached Resources page and the EIU report archive: <https://www.eiu.edu/assess/archivepr.php>

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

1. Reporting Institution: Eastern Illinois University

2. Program Reviewed MA in History, Teacher Option

3. Date 17 February 2026

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5. OVERVIEW

Our online MA for Teachers is a content-area program and not one that leads to teacher licensure, unlike other programs listed in the IBHE program inventory (DePaul University, Loyola University of Chicago, and University of Illinois Chicago). It retains the rigor of a traditional MA program but is designed to accommodate the schedules of K-12 teachers. The program was designed to meet the demand for dual credit credentialing as well as demand for accessible, quality, advanced study in history. The program can be completed in three years, with one course per fall and spring semester each and two in the summer. Total required credits is 32. Students take courses in all three of our concentrations— US, Modern World, and Premodern World— for broader coverage. All courses are asynchronous except for our 1-credit orientation course. The program ends with a 1-credit capstone course. Besides Historiography, the remaining required courses are our three proseminars, which provide introductions to the broad historiographical issues in each of the three fields of concentration. Completing the program, the students be proficient in our five learning goals, briefly stated as the abilities to identify and describe the major historical events and significant interpretations; to describe, compare, and evaluate historical interpretations (historiography); to present their ideas clearly and effectively using the accepted conventions of historical writing; to produce an original research project; and (as of 2022) to demonstrate ethical responsibility in the exercise of scholarship as a member of the field of History.

Since its inception in 2017, we have not only seen the program grow but have worked to improve it, in response to feedback from students, alumni, faculty, and administration; assessment data; and also such CGS initiatives as the revision of graduate learning goals, as discussed in more detail in section 6. In exit interviews with all graduates of the program (conducted over Zoom), the students conveyed an overwhelmingly positive experience with the program, noting that it successfully helped them improve their knowledge base and skill sets, and felt that their teaching will benefit as a result. Many of them also felt that we had successfully cultivated a sense of community among our students, despite the asynchronous online environment. Among our efforts to this effect was our first annual History Graduate Symposium in Fall 2025, conducted by Zoom over two nights, which featured presentations by students and highlighted their high-quality scholarship.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program:

When the previous report was submitted in 2021, academic institutions were still grappling with the effects of the COVID pandemic. This exacerbated the already problematic trends of lowering enrollments at EIU. Additionally, the field of History has seen enrollment declines in programs across the country and beyond for various reasons. Despite all of these factors, our program continued to grow in 2021 and has held steady in recent years at around 30 students. One reason is that our teacher-option MA was always online, and having established it in 2017, we were already well equipped to handle the storms that followed. Moreover, we occupy a niche that answers a specific need among K-12 teachers (in Illinois and elsewhere). That said, our primary challenge has been to keep our curricular structure and assessment regime viable amidst staffing reductions. We are currently working on remedies, as detailed below. Here are our enrollment and graduation numbers:

Enrollment in History MA Program (teacher option):

AY 2021: 25

AY 2022: 30

AY 2023: 27

AY 2024: 27

AY 2025: 29

AY 2026: 31

Degree completions (teacher option):

AY 2021: 5

AY 2022: 7

AY 2023: 9

AY 2024: 6

AY 2025: 4

AY 2026: 1 (Dec 2025)

6b. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement:

The MA in History assesses the same learning goals (enumerated above) in both options (traditional and teacher). Carefully designed rubrics are applied to specific assignments (a research paper or thesis, oral examination, and comprehensive essay.) Students also undergo an exit interview and are asked standardized questions to reflect on their experience in the program. The assessment data is shared with the department's graduate committee and reported biannually to the EIU administration. With the 2021 report, we began to see the results of our newly-enhanced assessment regime, with new rubrics to assess the effectiveness of HIS 5000: Historiography, the proseminars, and the capstone essays. We also began assessing our new learning goal regarding ethical and professional responsibility in 2022, using a rubric applied to the modern and premodern proseminars, at least one of which every graduate student will have been taken.

Overall we have been pleased with the assessment outcomes that we have seen. While HIS 5000: Historiography does present the biggest challenge, most students have earned A's and B's in the course. We usually see A's in the proseminars. Of "Not Competent," "Competent," "Highly Competent," and "Exceptional," our Historiography and capstone rubrics have shown that the vast majority of students in both tracks have fallen in the middle two categories in the areas of factual knowledge, methodology, analytical skill, and clarity of expression. Regarding our ethics learning goal, the majority of students were rated as "Competent" and several as "Exceptional" in these areas.

In general we feel that our assessment methods were efficacious in the curricular structure we had established, but in the new environment described below we are implementing changes to our assessment regime.

6c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

1) In the exit interviews, graduates sometimes suggested clearer communication between the Coordinator and students before their final semester about expectations in the capstone. For several years, as a result, the Coordinator has been sending reminders every semester to teacher-option students about maintaining their annotated bibliographies as they progress through coursework, which will be submitted in the capstone course. These reminders also include information about verifying mailing addresses for Textbook Rental and other operational particulars. 2) Following the CGS's revision of the Graduate School's Learning Goals, which saw the addition of an ethical responsibility goal, the History MA program followed suit in 2022 and now assesses this goal through two proseminars and the Coordinator's exit interview with graduates in both tracks (*supra*). 3) In the teacher-option an independent study was initially required to give students the opportunity to design a focused and specialized course in close consultation with a faculty mentor. Unfortunately, with staff cuts over the years concurrent with an increase in student enrollment in both MA tracks (traditional and teacher), maintaining this requirement proved unfeasible. Now the independent study is an option available to students but not required. An elective now replaces it to keep the total credit hours at 32.

6d. Description of actions to be taken because of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

The aforementioned difficulty—more students but fewer staff—has compelled a significant restructuring to both our teacher-option and our traditional MA programs. As of this writing, that restructuring is still in the process of being worked out and implemented. The two main revisions to be carried out are 1) a reduction of our historical concentrations from three (US, Modern World, Premodern World) to two (US and World) and 2) a complete overhaul of the capstone experience for both tracks—to wit, we will begin phasing in a portfolio-based system either in Fall 2026 or Spring 2027. The former will also result in revisions to our proseminars, again going from three to two. The entire department is currently discussing the proseminar revisions that will soon be submitted to the various curriculum committees. The portfolios will replace both HIS 5999 in the teacher-option and the MA Exams of the traditional program. Overall, these changes will allow faculty to be more effective in helping students in both programs achieve the department's and the Graduate School's learning goals. Moreover, the portfolio will result in more efficiency and efficacy where assessment of learning goals is concerned.

Changing the curriculum so fundamentally has also spurred a need to reconsider the efficacy of our learning goals. With revisions still to be submitted to the various curriculum meetings, we have increased our learning goals from five to six, with the following reformulations: 1) identify and describe the major historical events and significant interpretations, 2) describe, compare, and evaluate historical interpretations (historiography), 3) design and execute an original research project, 4) present ideas clearly and effectively to diverse audiences, 5) source evidence responsibly, avoid plagiarism, maintain respectful and honest engagement with other scholars, demonstrate self-awareness of biases, 6) develop a professional identity as a historian by engaging with other scholars or practitioners in the field.

Comments from the College Dean:

Debuting in 2017, this relatively young program has since manifested as a very strong option for K-12 teachers who wish to get a content-area advanced credential that works well around their instructional schedules. Its appeal has stretched beyond the region and has reached a robust and sustained level of students (average around 30) and degree completions per year (average around 6) since 2021. Exit interview data reveals great satisfaction among the alumni of the program, and assessment outcomes are consistently at or above targets. While the reduction in history faculty sometimes presents a challenge, the program has responded nimbly with curricular restructures that better suit the staffing level while maintaining rigor. Program faculty members have also responded to student feedback with improvement in communication loops and have better aligned with the revised student learning goals of the Graduate School. We project continued strength in this program and value to teachers far and wide.

We recommend a decision of **Program in Good Standing**.

VPAA Decision:

- ☒ Program in good standing
- ☐ Program flagged for priority review
- ☐ Program enrollment suspended

VPAA Explanation:

History Online Option for Teachers MA (540101)

The summary above describes a well-defined and innovative History for Teachers M.A. program that has, since its 2017 launch in a fully online iteration, attracted and sustained the steady yearly enrollment of thirty students who are K-12 teachers. The main movements have been toward tightening the historical concentrations to U.S. and World, emphasizing professional ethical training, and fostering community building. The program regularly responds to feedback from students in Zoom exit interviews. For instance, the program noted that their organization of a History Graduate Symposium helped build a cohesive community of students, the program coordinator can signal very early what lies ahead for each new graduate student, and that the capstone experience can be enhanced by a portfolio experience.

Resources for Completing the Eight-Year IBHE Program Review Report

Section 5. Overview

This section will focus the review for your reader.

In **no more than half a page**, please explain your program's mission and its relationship to Eastern's mission (and, if applicable, to the mission of graduate education). Identify similar programs in the state; distinguish your program from others. You also should identify your program's student learning objectives and career/further education objectives, and summarize significant changes, achievements (by faculty and students and the program itself), and plans.

Section 6. Major Findings and Recommendations

These are the standard IBHE questions.

a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program:

- changes in the overall discipline or field
- student demand
- societal needs
- institutional context for offering the degree
- other elements appropriate to the discipline in question

What, if any, internal or external events have affected your program since the last review? Have enrollments, degree production, costs, student satisfaction, job placement, etc. changed significantly? Has the discipline's governing body approved a new name for the programs it represents; updated or revised curricular requirements; identified new markets; developed new emphases? Have nationwide demographic changes or social policies affected enrollments or requirements for good or for ill?

The resources listed below may help you respond to item 6.a:

1. **EIU Institutional Research** houses all EIU common data sets, program enrollment and graduation data; see the "Facts & Figures" tab; staff members in IR are also available to help you assemble and analyze different program data: <https://www.eiu.edu/ir/>
2. **IBHE Data Points** track public university enrollment data across Illinois: <https://www.ibhe.org/datapoints.html>
3. **IBHE Enrollment and Degrees Conferred Data Tool**: <https://enrollmentsdegrees.ibhe.org>
4. **CIP Code** (classification of instructional programs) for each academic program, something you need for using the IBHE tool above: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/Default.aspx?y=56>
5. **EIU Career Services Annual Report**: <https://www.eiu.edu/careers/annualreport.php>

6. **Occupational projections** are available from many professional journals and organizations, including:
- a. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://stats.bls.gov/>
 - b. BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
 - c. ISBE's Educator Supply and Demand Report: <https://www.isbe.net/edsupplydemand>
 - d. Illinois Workforce Information Center:
http://www.ides.illinois.gov/Pages/Workforce_Information_Center.aspx
 - e. O*Net Online: <https://www.onetonline.org>

a. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement

While 6.b also asks you to discuss other significant findings, it is basically the assessment section of the program review. As such, the responses here are crucial to your review's success. Departments unable to demonstrate that their assessment programs meet the established guidelines will be expected to revise those programs within six months of the final review deadline. The IBHE's assessment guidelines are appended to this document.

Since your overview already identifies your student learning objectives, focus here on the assessment program and its results. What measures are you using to assess learning? How well are students achieving the objectives identified for them? What are their specific strengths and weaknesses? What changes have you made and will you be making because of your findings from assessment? Emphasize direct assessment but mention the indirect measures you are using as well. Support your generalizations with specific data/evidence. And be sure to include feedback from key stakeholders—students, alums, employers, peer reviewers, etc.—since the IBHE requires it.

b. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

c. Description of actions to be taken because of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

6.c and 6.d are straightforward. However, by this point, you already may have mentioned the most significant actions your department has taken/is planning to take. **Do not repeat yourself.** Merely refer the reader to a previous section or sections.

Section 7. Outcome

After consultation with the College Dean, the Provost's Office will indicate whether the program will be deemed "in good standing" or "flagged for priority review." The latter category is used to identify programs experiencing serious concerns—significantly low enrollments, high costs, negative accreditation findings, below-average pass rates on statewide exams, below-average employment placement rates, a continuing lack of satisfaction among students or employers, etc. Departments will be asked to examine and address the identified concern(s) and report the results in an interim review, due in 1-3 years. Typically, however, the IBHE program review results in a positive decision, and the next review is due in eight years.