



REIMAGINING THE HUMANITIES PHD

*A Guide for PhD Programs
and Faculty*

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Introduction

What does “reimagining the PhD” mean and why should programs engage in such a process?

“The PhD degree has not essentially been altered since its institution in the late nineteenth century, while everything surrounding the PhD—the landscape of higher education, and the challenges and opportunities inside and outside of it—has altered mightily.” ([Weisbuch and Cassuto, 2016](#))

National conversations about rethinking the humanities PhD date back more than a quarter century. For a summary of major foundation-funded reports and initiatives on this topic, see the introduction of [“Reforming Doctoral Education, 1990-2015: Recent Initiatives and Future Prospects.”](#) commissioned by the Mellon Foundation (2016).

Across three decades and approximately a dozen high-profile reports, findings and recommendations have remained consistent. Calls to rethink doctoral training reflect overlapping concerns about the structure of PhD programs, the forms of knowledge they train students to produce, and the increasing diversity of career outcomes for PhD program graduates. More specific critiques include:

- Limited diversity in PhD program cohorts
- Advising and mentoring of notably uneven quality
- A growing [mental health crisis](#) among doctoral students
- Long time to degree (8 years on average for the humanities)
- Hyper-specialized research outcomes that often do not translate well across disciplines or beyond the academy
- Insufficient engagement with the post-2008 contraction of the academic job market
- PhD training that insufficiently prepares students for academic jobs beyond R1 institutions
- PhD training that insufficiently equips students for research in digital humanities or other work in collaborative teams

Despite the regular appearance of inquiries that lead to similar conclusions, until recently the pace of change has proved slow, with most movement occurring around issues of demographic diversity and attention to pedagogical training. Partly as a result of initiatives by the National Endowment for Humanities, the Mellon Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Historical Association, and the Modern Languages Association, a growing number of universities and departments are reexamining their missions, curricula, strategy for building a more inclusive climate, and approaches to advising and mentoring.

Our hope is that programs undertaking this sort of reexamination will reap a variety of benefits – deeper applicant pools; stronger intellectual community; more creative scholarship from doctoral students; reduced incidence of mental health issues among doctoral students; and smoother transitions to post-degree careers.

As all reports indicate, and as more recent experimentation makes clear, **no significant change in doctoral education is possible without the engagement, commitment, and creativity of a critical mass of PhD program leaders and other graduate faculty.**

So how can we most efficiently learn about the emerging ideas that would make most sense for our department?

There are already plenty of good ideas and models on the table. To date, reforms in humanities PhD training have fallen into two major channels: co-curricular or **extra-curricular initiatives** (resources and innovations that sit outside of PhD programs) and **curricular changes within PhD programs** (everything from admissions processes to coursework to mechanisms through which students move on to dissertation research to the structure of the dissertation). So far, most experimentation has focused on developing extra-curricular professional development resources for doctoral students and providing curricular opportunities outside degree programs; that has been the case at Duke. For an overview of the major endeavors that have occurred under Duke's NEH Next Generation Implementation Grant (2016-19), "Doctoral Training for the Versatile Humanist," see our [final report to NEH](#). Those interested in learning about a broader overview of doctoral program innovations and resources at Duke may consult Appendix B.

The remainder of this document features creative curricular modifications and enhancements to humanities PhD programs across North America.¹ We lack a concise inventory of the swiftly-growing number of innovations in doctoral training that have emerged across a complex and too-often siloed higher education landscape. Consider this overview as a starting-point for faculty, students, and administrators thinking about how to improve doctoral training in the humanities.

If we decide, as a faculty, to implement some structural changes in our PhD program, what resources can help us get started?

One place to begin is with **PhD program-specific recommendations from relevant disciplinary associations**. Many societies have done a great deal of careful research and analysis, both of the issues at hand and undertakings among specific departments, though the scope of work to date does vary. For example, colleagues in English, Literature, and Modern Languages may wish to review the [Report of the MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature](#) (2014). Resources from other disciplinary societies tend to emphasize skills training for nonfaculty roles rather than curricular experimentation. You can find relevant links in the "Career Diversity Resources" appendix at the end of this document. (Such endeavors often engage with questions about how to improve training for academic paths as well as careers beyond the academy.)

We've digested disciplinary recommendations/resources. Now what?

Below we outline resources and models related to different components of a PhD program: recruitment of diverse PhD program cohorts; coursework/grad seminars; comprehensive exams; the dissertation; and leveraging alumni relationships.

¹ Our initial goal in compiling a version of this overview was to support Duke PhD programs in undertaking reappraisals of their curricula, structure, climate, and other features. But we thought it might prove useful to programs elsewhere as well.

Individual Components of PhD Programs

Admissions and Recruitment

Several recent studies indicate that frequently used criteria for graduate school admissions do not reliably predict program completion or other positive outcomes, and tend to place women as well as racially and socioeconomically diverse applicants at a disadvantage. A growing literature examines issues around admissions and demographic diversity, with key examples offered below. (There has been less attention given to the question of how to build doctoral cohorts that incorporate a diversity of complementary intellectual interests and analytical skills.)

Resources and context

[Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity and Faculty Gatekeeping](#) (Harvard UP, 2016)

[Holistic Review in Graduate Admissions: A Report from the Council of Graduate Schools](#) (2016)

Initiatives at specific universities

CUNY Graduate Center: [“How to Increase Graduate-School Diversity the Right Way”](#) (2019); a spotlight on CUNY’s undergraduate and graduate Pipeline Fellows Programs

Harvard: [“A Broken Pipeline: Minority Students and the Path to the PhD”](#) (2016); includes mention of admissions practices/perspectives across several humanities programs

Michigan: [Michigan Humanities Emerging Research Scholars Program](#); a summer research experience “designed to encourage rising seniors, recent B.A.s and terminal master’s students from diverse cultural, economic, geographic and ethnic backgrounds to consider pursuing a doctoral degree in the humanities at the University of Michigan”

Duke: [“Director of UNCF/Mellon Program Shares Insights on Recruiting from HBCUS;”](#) write-up of inspiring 2019 conversation with Duke faculty and staff

Also Duke: [Sloan Scholarships](#); although focused on STEM disciplines, this Duke undertaking to diversify doctoral cohorts may suggest programmatic innovations relevant for humanities programs

PhD Program Coursework, the Grad Seminar, and the Humanities Lab

A significant fraction of graduate courses are driven by the research interests of faculty members, a model that can work well when doctoral students have overlapping intellectual interests. Recent critiques of this approach, however, raise questions about how well it serves many graduate students. (For an encapsulation of this critical view, see Leonard Cassuto’s essay in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, [“Student-Centered Graduate Teaching.”](#)) Some PhD programs have taken up the challenge of “backwards-engineering” course design, starting with the needs of students. Faculty in these programs have sought to identify the skills and competencies that foster excellence in research and communication, whether within or outside academia, and to build seminars around the cultivation of those skills and competencies.

The American Historical Association has sought to facilitate such revision of graduate courses by specifying [“The Career Diversity Five Skills,”](#) based on focus groups with History PhDs working within and beyond the academy. These skills are: 1) communication; 2) collaboration; 3) quantitative literacy; 4) intellectual self-confidence; and 5) digital literacy. The AHA has also convened a cohort of more than 30 doctoral programs to share ideas and best practices around doctoral education, including the reconfiguring of seminar offerings. You can find an extensive set of resources [here](#).

Two other key facilitators of curricular experimentation have been the National Endowment for the Humanities, through the Next Generation institutional grant program that supported over thirty universities between 2016 and 2019, and the Mellon Foundation, which has embarked on a series of large-scale grants to universities that wish to experiment with humanities doctoral training. Recipients of Mellon grants include Brandeis, the University of Iowa, Washington University in St. Louis, New York University, the University of Washington, and Emory. To this point, most Mellon grantees have publicly provided only sketches of their initiatives.

Key curricular ideas that have emerged from both the NEH Next Generation program and Mellon grants include:

- Coordination of related seminar offerings across departments
- New courses in digital humanities and public humanities
- New humanities courses developed in collaboration with professional schools
- Seminars built around internship experiences or collaborative research projects
- Development of humanities labs premised on collaborative research opportunities and community engagement.

If faculty members don't have the time or resources to rethink an entire course or develop a humanities lab, more modest adjustments may still be worth considering. After investigating humanities initiatives for a research project at the University of Michigan, postdoctoral fellow Matthew Woodbury highlighted the power of rethinking assignments. In [“Preparing for Humanities Careers: Suggestions for Doctoral Students and Departments,”](#) he suggests that professors embrace a modular approach to ensure “a diversity of assessments and experiences.” The report recommends incorporating nontraditional assignments such as op-eds, book reviews, or digital exhibits; modifying existing course assignments to be more collaborative; and/or building in a component that involves partnership with a group or organization beyond the university.

Still other possibilities might be suggested by rethinking the near total reliance on the semester-long seminar with shared reading and individual writing assignments. Among the options: more flexible tutorials, lab-type and group-driven research experiences, and modules that take up half or even one-third of a semester.

Below we offer several additional models for rethinking curricular offerings, beginning with examples of innovative graduate courses and then moving on to more ambitious curricular frameworks, such as collaborative projects and certificates.

Individual courses

[HistoryLabs: Collaborative Research Seminar](#) (U Michigan): In partnership with the United States Holocaust Museum, this seminar challenged students to develop online primary source modules for the museum; all research, analysis, and writing was carried out by student teams, with ongoing engagement from museum staff.

[Mellon Summer Fellows for New Graduate Seminars in the Humanities](#) (U Washington): An annotated list of a dozen public-facing graduate courses designed by Mellon faculty fellows from 2017 through 2019; spans a wide range of humanistic disciplines

[Modular Courses](#) (co-taught with nonacademics, community practitioners) (Rice): Consisting of multiple modules, “each taught by either Rice faculty members, external curators, and/or members of the Texas Medical Center... [These courses] mak[e] it possible for leaders in the arts, culture, and medicine to connect their respective practices with current scholarship and have a hand in shaping future generations of practitioners and/or scholars.”

[“A Faculty/Librarian Collaboration to Restructure a Graduate Research Methods Class for French Literature Students”](#) (U Michigan): Incorporates various elements of professionalization not commonly included in methods courses, such as technology training, creating web-based professional portfolios, and the etiquette of presenting a conference paper. See course syllabus [here](#).

[The Many Professions of History](#) (UCLA): This course was developed to facilitate History PhD student exploration of various career paths and to provide students with hands-on project-based learning.

Three graduate course syllabi from the University of Washington, all incorporating public scholarship:

- [Cinema & Media Studies 597: Public Spheres, Public Media](#)
- [English 556A: Collaboration Across Walls: Public Scholarship as Means or Ends](#)
- [Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies 590: Feminist New Media Studies](#)

Integrated, public-facing and/or collaborative projects, degrees, and certificates

[Mellon Summer \(Grad\) Fellows for Public Projects in the Humanities](#) (U Washington): Graduate students or teams of students undertake summer-long, public-facing projects related to their research. Over a dozen projects since 2016 are listed here.

[African American Public Humanities Initiative](#) (U Delaware): AAPHI provides stipend support for PhD students in History, English, and Art History in a five-year, cohort-based program. Training emphasizes public scholarship, community outreach, archival research, and digital humanities. Supported by an NEH Next Generation Implementation Grant, this project has linked graduate students to a host of connected undergraduate research projects, as well as extensive partnerships with external groups. It suggests how a department might reconfigure doctoral training around an ambitious multiyear “lab”-type endeavor.

[American Studies PhD](#) (IUPUI): includes yearlong paid internships. “[T]he AMST PhD program at IUPUI does not tweak the traditional doctoral model, but rather builds an infrastructure for a collaborative and applied graduate school experience in order to close the distance between academia and the world that surrounds it.”

[Certificate in Public Scholarship](#) (U Washington): portfolio and project-based curriculum

[Certificate in the Engaged and Public Humanities](#) (Georgetown): earned through participation in three-day program offering exposure to “the theories and methods of the engaged and public humanities through collaborative workshops with humanities faculty and practitioners.” Non-credit bearing.

[Dual PhD in Comparative Media Analysis and Practice](#) (Vanderbilt): an “add-on” PhD, advancing “the critical investigation of modern media culture and the innovative making of digital objects.” Students graduate with a PhD from their core program (English, Anthropology, etc.) and a PhD in CMAP.

Humanities labs

[“Labs Are for the Humanities, Too:”](#) this *Inside Higher Ed* article provides a big-picture view of emerging humanities labs (as of 2016), noting their benefits for doctoral training. Labs discussed include:

- [The Price Lab for Digital Humanities](#) (Penn)
- [Matrix: The Center for Digital Humanities and Social Sciences](#) (Michigan State)
- [Michigan Humanities Collaboratory](#) (Michigan)
- [Humanities Lab](#) (Arizona State)

Duke has been at the forefront of developing humanities labs. For further information and links, see Appendix B.

Comprehensive Exams (CEs)

The great majority of doctoral programs in the humanities continue to require general examinations in a set of fields before students begin dissertation research in earnest, usually administered in the third year. Most often exams take a written form; less frequently they involve oral exams; in some programs, there are both written and oral components. Departments that explain the rationale for CEs depict them as a way to ensure that doctoral students obtain a sufficient depth of knowledge about scholarship in their defined fields.

The value of “comps,” however, has come under increasingly scrutiny over the past two decades. As the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) recently noted in a [report](#) on the past, present, and future of this core feature of doctoral training, the CE became commonplace among North American universities in the 1930s, when departments introduced them as a method of standardizing assessment of increasingly large cohorts of doctoral students. Since then, little has changed in how faculty administer or evaluate comps, and a growing number of doctoral programs have come to view this mode of certifying the transition to doctoral candidacy as an ineffective mechanism of achieving their core training objectives. Common criticisms include the judgments that:

- The stakes associated with CEs create significant anxiety for many doctoral students without clear intellectual pay-offs
- Very few of even the best students produce high-quality work, given the disconnect between examination formats and the nature of humanistic analysis, writing, and other modes of conveying interpretations and arguments

- Many departments retain CEs less because of a clear intellectual rationale and more because of inertia, concern about seeming out of sync with other leading programs, and even commitment to a type of hazing—if current faculty survived the process, so too can the current cohort of doctoral students.

Over the past 15 years, a number of North American doctoral programs have found these critiques sufficiently compelling to discard CEs or reduce their scope. The major alternative has been some version of a portfolio of scholarly work in each of the fields identified by candidates, often linked to an oral examination on or formal discussion about portfolio contents. So far, this shift has been most evident in the discipline of history; departments making the switch include [Kansas](#), [Colorado](#), [Emory](#), [Tulane](#), and [New Mexico](#), as well as [Duke](#), an early adopter in 2005. But versions of the portfolio approach have also been adopted across the humanities and interpretive social sciences. At Duke, [Cultural Anthropology](#), [Romance Studies](#), and the program in [Computational Media, Arts, & Cultures](#) all have versions of a portfolio system.

For examples of portfolio requirements outside the discipline of history and beyond Duke, see the English departments at [Emory](#), [Iowa](#), and the [University of California-Riverside](#); Anthropology at the [University of Virginia](#) and [Carleton University](#); American Studies at [UNC-Chapel Hill](#) (for one of three fields); Philosophy at the [University of California-Irvine](#), the [University of Pittsburgh](#) and the [University of Tennessee](#); French at [Johns Hopkins](#); and Science and Technology Studies at [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#). Any other Duke PhD programs intrigued by the portfolio model may also wish to consider the following more extended discussions of the rationale for moving to portfolios and overviews of how they operate:

[“Portfolios Are Replacing Qualifying Exams as a Step on the Road to Dissertations”](#) (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2008): highlighting the History PhD program at Kansas

[“Connecting the Curriculum: A Collaborative Reinvention for Humanities PhDs”](#) (*MLA Profession*, 2017): highlighting the implementation of digital portfolios at Arizona State

Whether departments continue to rely on more traditional qualifying exams or move to something like a portfolio model, the transition to candidacy beckons as an opportune moment for reflection by doctoral students and mentors alike. Departments might consider how best to foster student thinking about career goals and ambitions at this juncture, as well as conversation with faculty mentors about those topics.

Expanding Options for the Dissertation

Humanities dissertations typically reflect highly specialized scholarship with a very narrow intended audience, and take the form of a proto book-length monograph. Over the past few decades, there have been growing calls to expand the possible formats for the dissertation, especially in light of new forms of digital scholarship.

For a full discussion of the debates and new thinking that have been percolating around the issue of thesis format, see the [Report of the CAGS Task Force on the Dissertation](#). See also [“Imagining the Dissertation’s Many Futures,”](#) by the Council of Graduate Schools.

For illustrations of nontraditional dissertations, see:

“Menu” of dissertation format options ([PhD in Gender Studies](#), Queen’s U):

- Monograph dissertation
- Manuscript dissertation (minimum of three publishable, independent essays set within a larger document)
- Portfolio dissertation (multiple components of scholarship based alongside introductory and concluding writing)

Community-engaged dissertation: David Hopes, [“Being Objective: Communities of Practice and the Use of Cultural Artifacts in Digital Learning Environments.”](#) (On the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust) (2014)

Graphic novel/comics dissertations: Nick Sousanis, [Unflattening](#); Nicholas Alexander Brown, [“The Rousing of Ogma: Developing Functional Methodologies for the Production of Multimodal Scholarship”](#)

Digital dissertation: Amanda Visconti, [“How Can You Love a Work If You Don’t Know It?”](#)

Podcast dissertation: Anna Williams, [“My Gothic Dissertation”](#)

Support for Dissertation-Writing

Many PhD programs implicitly operate on the premise that graduate students (who may never have written anything longer than a seminar paper), will “figure out” how to write a proto-monograph on a relatively short timeline.

Although programs can and should consider innovations to support dissertation writers, *there remains no substitute for the individual mentoring and timely feedback of a student’s primary dissertation director*. Through firsthand observations in a pilot summer group coaching program for Duke humanities doctoral students in 2019, we observed that doctoral students encounter three distinct types of roadblocks: 1) setting goals and schedules, and demonstrating accountability (i.e., project management); 2) understanding their unique processes as writers; and 3) receiving timely, regular, and constructive feedback from dissertation advisors.

Because the first two issues are not specific to a discipline, students can often get help in these areas from programs offered beyond PhD programs, or even beyond the university. The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, for example, offers a [“Dissertation Success Curriculum,”](#) offered virtually and free of charge to students at member institutions.

Far more difficult are situations where a students’ progress can be delayed for weeks, even months (often over the summer) while they await feedback and direction from advisors. In such cases, we’ve observed that students rely heavily on others in their networks, including fellow graduate students and what have come to be known as [“ghost advisors.”](#)

For a few extra-programmatic, university-wide undertakings to support dissertators, see:

University of Pennsylvania: [Dissertation Boot Camp](#) (offered biannually, two weeks long; includes “before dawn” and “after dark” scheduling options)

Stanford University: [Dissertation Boot Camp](#) (ten full writing days)

Alumni Engagement

For departments seeking to help students make informed decisions about teaching intensive faculty positions or nonacademic career options, there are few resources more valuable than its network of program alumni who work in these domains. Most PhD programs have alumni in both teaching intensive universities and in noteworthy non-academic positions. You might find them through search engines maintained by your alumni affairs office, LinkedIn, and even Google. For example, [this article](#) by Kevin Boettcher discusses how Binghamton University identified and engaged with nonfaculty humanities PhD alumni through its NextGen PhD NEH grant.

PhD program faculty build the strongest bonds with students during their time on campus, and remain the most likely points of contact for students past graduation. For this reason, PhD programs and their faculty have a critical role to play in cultivating alumni networks and in providing current students with access to alumni mentoring and expertise.

Although alumni engagement typically involves informal [extra-curricular](#) interactions, some PhD programs elsewhere have found creative ways to embed alumni outreach within their culture and activities. The [University of New Mexico's History PhD program](#), for example, relies on paid student labor to keep track of its alumni. It also has initiated a sequence of “alumni retreats” (bringing in clusters of alumni for conversations with students and faculty) and week-long alumni-in-residences (sustained engagements between a single alumni working beyond the academy and students/faculty).

Total PhD Program Overhaul

Many PhD programs in the humanities are far more likely to consider adjustments to specific features than root and branch revision. Some faculty may nonetheless find it instructive to learn about some doctoral programs that have undergone more dramatic reinvention.

Lehigh University (English PhD): [“Outcomes-Based Graduate School: the Humanities Edition;”](#) this program “used data-centered, outcomes-based planning to assess and overhaul its doctoral curriculum in line with what made sense for its graduate students.”

Drew University (History PhD): [“Rethinking Graduate Education in History;”](#) Jonathan Rose reflects on the process the History PhD program undertook when it faced the prospect of imminent closure:

With our minds concentrated wonderfully, my department deconstructed and reconstructed the entire business of doctoral education. We took apart our existing program, closely examined every component, and (with a fine disrespect for tradition) asked how we could do things better. We surveyed our current and past students to find out what worked and what didn't work for them.

Appendix A: Career Diversity Resources for PhD Programs and Faculty

We've compiled this inventory to help PhD programs plan and implement appropriate curricular change, regardless of where students will eventually land. Our intent has been to help PhD programs prepare students for rapidly changing roles both within the academy and elsewhere.

The resources in this section of the Appendix, however, are all noncurricular, and of the “just in time” variety. They are geared specifically towards helping faculty provide timely support for students and program alumni who—for one reason or another—will not be tenure-track professors.

Resources curated by and for specific disciplines

American Historical Association: [Career Diversity Faculty Resources](#) (lots of institution-specific examples of innovations in History PhD program courses, and a description of “the 5 transferable skills” that History PhD programs can help students cultivate to broaden career preparation)

Modern Language Association: [“Doctoral Student Career Planning: A Guide for PhD Programs and Faculty Members in English and Other Modern Languages”](#)

American Academy of Religion: [curated list of resources](#) for job-seekers in the field (including nonacademic employment)

American Anthropological Association: [Working Group on Non Tenure-Track Employment in Anthropology](#) (online community)

American Musicological Society: [“AMA Best Practices in Digital Scholarship”](#)

American Philosophical Association: [Beyond Academia: Professional Opportunities for Philosophers](#) (see an entirely online version [here](#))

Padeia Institute for Humanistic Study (Classics): website on [“Careers for Classicists”](#)

[Phil Skills](#) (Philosophy): an independent, online collection of stories and resources related to Philosophy PhDs and work beyond the academy

Society for Classical Studies: [“Career Advice for Graduate Students \(and Others\)”](#) and website on [“Related Careers”](#)

Online resources (for PhD students, but faculty may find it helpful to be familiar with these)

[Imagine PhD](#): an online resource created specifically for humanities PhD students, which includes self-assessments, information on different employment sectors, and an IDP form to facilitate the integration of various professional development activities into the PhD program trajectory

[The Versatile PhD](#): “an online resource to help humanities, social science, and STEM graduate students and Ph.D.s in all fields identify, prepare for, and succeed in non-academic careers”

Appendix B: A Sampling of Resources and Opportunities to Enrich Humanities Doctoral Training at Duke

At Duke, support for doctoral education spans many different programs, units, and schools. In the brief sampling of efforts across the university, we group opportunities and resources by funder or host.

Within PhD Programs²

Embedded Humanities Labs

Duke's Mellon [Humanities Unbounded](#) initiative embeds "active laboratory learning models in...humanities and social sciences departments by weaving collaborative research and project-based learning into new curricular frameworks. Vertically-integrated teams provide a range of funded opportunities for doctoral students, from engaging in team-based research, to mentoring undergraduates, to managing large-scale projects and programs. As the projects are interdisciplinary in nature, they also create spaces for PhD students to build intellectual community across disparate programs." Labs to this point – English's "[Representing Migration;](#)" History's "[Microworlds;](#)" Asian and Middle Eastern Studies' "[Games and Culture;](#)" Cultural Anthropology's "[Ethnography Workshop;](#)" Literature's "[BrainCultures.](#)"

Through the Provost's Office

Interdisciplinary, Vertically Integrated Collaborative Research

Humanities doctoral students have the opportunity to participate in [Bass Connections, a university-wide program that annually supports over 60 interdisciplinary year-long research teams](#) involving faculty and students at all levels. Doctoral students typically serve as project managers and mentors. Although some teams focus specifically on humanistic research, the program spans the entire university, and so also allows humanities PhD students to collaborate with researchers in STEM, business, policy, and other domains.

Funding for Off-Campus Internships

Starting in 2020, Duke's [Graduate Student Training Enhancement Grants \(GSTEG\)](#) will support doctoral students who arrange approved off-campus internships with community organizations that pursue projects that directly relate to their core academic research. A humanities-focused, NEH-funded pilot version of this initiative ran from 2017 through 2019. (Read about the 2019 VH@Duke interns [here.](#))

Complementary Advising and Coaching for Humanities Doctoral Students

The Office of Interdisciplinary Studies curates a biweekly newsletter of academic and professional development opportunities ([Versatile Humanists at Duke](#)) to help doctoral students identify and leverage appropriate resources beyond their individual departments. Because the range of options is

² Note: This section highlights features of Duke PhD programs not especially common elsewhere, and so excludes teacher training programs, mentoring initiatives, research and writing proseminars, modes of dissertation support, and mechanisms of academic job search preparation.

potentially overwhelming, humanities doctoral students are encouraged to reach out to the Director of Graduate Advising and Engagement (Maria Wisdom) for [1:1 advising or group coaching](#).

Through The Graduate School

Pedagogy

[Bass Digital Education Fellows Program](#) (with Duke Learning Innovation): A year-long program that exposes students to methods and trends in digital pedagogy, and puts them in collaboration with Duke faculty on the creation of digital modules for undergraduate courses.

[Preparing Future Faculty Program](#): The PFF “provides a yearlong experience for PhD students and postdocs to prepare them for the multiple roles they may be asked to assume as future faculty members in a variety of academic institutions.” Participants are paired with faculty from a range of nearby institutions, including HBCUs and SLACs, and a community college.

Professional Development

[Emerging Leaders Institute](#): This leadership program for doctoral students and postdocs is run by “a team of experienced leadership facilitators and coaches to develop their communication, self-awareness, professional adaptability, interdisciplinary teamwork, and leadership skills.”

Though Interdisciplinary Centers and Institutes

Interdisciplinary Humanities Labs

The Franklin Humanities Institute has sponsored [11 humanities labs](#) since 2010. Like the embedded departmental labs, they offer a range of academic and professional development opportunities for doctoral students. They also include the [PhD Lab in Digital Knowledge](#), which helps doctoral students learn more about trends in the digital humanities and apply them in appropriate ways to their dissertation research.

Interdisciplinary PhD Student Cohorts

The Kenan Institute for Ethics (KIE) funds [graduate student working groups](#) in Environmental Ethics and Policy, Global Migration, Human Rights, Moral Attitudes and Decision-Making, Rethinking Regulation, and Religions and Public Life.

KIE also offers a [cohort-based fellowship program](#) for PhD students whose “dissertation research engages in interesting ways with significant normative issues.”

Collaborative Research Opportunities

The Franklin Humanities Institute administers [Story+](#), part of Bass Connections. In this six-week summer program, mini-teams of three undergraduates apply humanistic research methods to complex research problems, often in collaboration with community partners. Graduate students play critical roles on these teams as project managers and mentors for undergraduate researchers.

Through Duke Libraries

Pedagogy Programs

Rubenstein Library administers [Archival Expeditions](#), a semester-long, cohort-based experience to introduce Duke PhD students “to teaching with digital and physical primary sources. Each student partners with a Duke faculty sponsor to design an undergraduate course module that incorporates primary source material tailored to a class taught by that specific faculty member.”