

Program in Medieval Studies

Graduate Advising Guidelines

2023

Yale's Medieval Studies Program is a thoroughly interdisciplinary enterprise. Our community comprises about ten to fifteen graduate students pursuing MA or PhD degrees, together with thirty to forty faculty members from a dozen different departments, as well as the Divinity School, Institute for Sacred Music, and the Beinecke Library. The Program is directed by a committee of Core Faculty, with day-to-day supervision undertaken by the Chair/Director of Graduate Studies with the assistance of Program officers.

The diversity of faculty and the diffuse structure of the Medieval Studies Program are its greatest strength but also pose challenges. Our breadth of expertise and relatively open structure allow us to foster cutting-edge research in entirely new configurations. At the same time, we must work to come together, to speak across disciplines and to ensure that all of us have the support we need to find our paths at Yale and beyond. These Guidelines, the result of extended conversations with graduate students and faculty between 2021 and 2023, are intended to help align expectations within a crucially important area of our Program: graduate advising. They should be understood as a work in progress, which will need to be revised and re-evaluated as our Program continues to grow and change.

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I. Overview

2022–23 Medieval Studies Program

Current students: David Baldi, Maia Béar, Maia de Bourcier, Estelle Guéville, Kristen Herdman, Carson Koepke, Kimberly Lifton, Camila Marcone, Alexander Peña Bethencourt, Megan Perry, Chihiro Larissa Tsukamoto, Angus Warren, Rachel Wilson.

Current core faculty: Lucas Bender (EALL), Howard Bloch (French), Jessica Brantley (English), Ardis Butterfield (English/French/Music), Raymond Clemens (Beinecke), Orgu Dalgic (ISM), Stephen Davis (Religious Studies), Maria Doerfler (Religious Studies), Adam Eitel (Divinity), Marcel Elias (English), Hussein Fancy (History; on leave fall), Paul Freedman (History), Frank Griffel (Religious Studies), Valerie Hansen (History), Felicity Harley-McGowan (Divinity), Samuel Hodgkin (Comparative Literature; on leave), Jacqueline Jung (History of Art), Volker Leppin (Divinity), Ivan Marcus (History), Vasileios Marinis (ISM), Christiana Purdy-Moudarres (Italian), Emily Thornbury (English), Shawkat Toorawa (NELC), Kevin van Bladel (NELC), Jesús Velasco (Spanish & Portuguese), Mimi Yiengpruksawan (History of Art), Travis Zadeh (Religious Studies), Anna Zayaruznaya (Music).

MA convener: Felicity Harley-McGowan

Career Development Officer: Maria Doerfler

Diversity and Inclusion Officer: Stephen Davis

Interim Chair/Director of Graduate Studies: Maria Doerfler

Registrar: Julia DiVincenzo

Events coordinator: Janice Zocher

Operations manager: Christina Wethington

Universal responsibilities

All members of the Medieval Studies Program must treat each other with professional respect and courtesy. Everyone has the right to expect a working environment free of discrimination, harassment, and abuse, and all have the responsibility to do their utmost to create and maintain such an environment for those around them.

Those who experience or witness unprofessional behavior or discrimination are encouraged to report it immediately to a Program officer, core faculty member, or university official. All Yale faculty are mandated reporters. This means that they have a legal obligation to report sexual abuse and misconduct to the [Title IX office](#). In addition, faculty are strongly urged to report other forms of abuse, discrimination, or harassment to the relevant offices. While faculty should bear in mind the wishes of those affected, they must not remain silent about acts of discrimination or abuse. Graduate students who currently serve as Teaching Fellows or Part-time Acting Instructors are also mandated reporters.

Resources for equity concerns and for wellbeing

The umbrella office for all equity issues is the [Office of Institutional Equity and Accessibility](#), whose remit includes disability as well as all other protected statuses. Instances of discrimination may be reported through their website.

Yale has multiple resources for those with concerns about sex- and gender-based discrimination, including harassment and sexual assault. In addition to the [Title IX office](#) (through the OIEA), there is a [University-Wide Committee on Sexual Misconduct](#) to which complaints may be brought. For those who have suffered or witnessed sexual misconduct, support is available through the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Education team ([SHARE](#)). SHARE offers confidential counseling for those who are undecided or reluctant about bringing a formal complaint.

There are also several student-specific support offices: you may reach them through the general site on [Resources to Address Discrimination and Harassment Concerns](#), which includes information on mental health and crisis counseling. Counseling and other forms of support for mental health are available through [Yale Health](#), while the [Yale Well](#) initiative offers many programs to support students' physical and mental well-being. Yale Health has a daytime phone line for acute mental health needs: (203) 432-0290; outside business hours, you should call Acute Care: (203) 432-0123.

GSAS offers a number of [resources for family support](#), including policies on parental relief. You may learn more about these resources at the central GSAS site. The McDougal Center sponsors many events, programs, and resources related to graduate welfare, including social events and interest communities. Support for graduate students with disabilities may be found through [Student Accessibility Services](#).

The **Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)** has broad responsibility for the conduct of members of Medieval Studies' graduate program, and typically serves as an advocate for students in all areas of concern. If a student has a dispute with the DGS that cannot be resolved directly, however, they should bring their concern to another Core Faculty member, or to a relevant member of the University administration, including the [Dean of Arts and Sciences or a member of her team](#).

II. MA Advising

The Master of Arts in Medieval Studies began as a freestanding degree program in 2021–22. Students are admitted directly to this one-year degree, which is intended to help them hone core skills in the study of the Middle Ages, broadly construed. The basic requirements for the MA are seven term courses, or six courses plus a special project. [Additional requirements for the study of languages and primary materials are specified on the Medieval Studies website.](#)

The aim of the MA program is to provide students with a firm basis for pursuing their interest in Medieval Studies in various spheres, including but not limited to academic work. Students emerging from Yale with an MA often proceed into excellent, funded PhD programs in specific departments (English, History, Religious Studies, etc) at other institutions. As a rule, neither students nor faculty should consider the Yale MA to be a fast-track into the PhD program at Yale, but a means to build a solid basis for academic or other work elsewhere.

Faculty advising

For administrative purposes, the **DGS** acts as official adviser to all MA students. The DGS should meet with each student around the beginning of the course selection period in each semester, to learn more about their particular goals and advise them in planning their coursework. The DGS will also be available for further individual consultation in office hours, via email, or by appointment throughout the year. While the **Registrar** is a key resource for technical questions and problems, the DGS is the point person for all issues to do with degree requirements and academic success.

The **MA Convener** provides additional support and guidance to the MA cohort, meeting with students individually or as a group to discuss strategies for thriving in graduate school and beyond. The MA Convener should meet with the cohort approximately monthly throughout the year. This role is supportive, not evaluative, and the Convener may provide confidential advice within the boundaries of their duty as a mandated reporter, although they are encouraged to consult the DGS if concerns arise about students' welfare, academic or personal.

Faculty advisers will work with MA students pursuing the semester-long individual research project, and may also be unofficially designated for students taking the coursework-only option. Such advisers are expected to meet regularly with students on an agreed-upon schedule, and to provide timely written feedback to students on their work. They are also requested to provide the Core Faculty with a concise written evaluation of all special projects they advised in time for the spring approval of degrees. If a special project is advised by more than one faculty member, the advisers may submit either individual or joint evaluations.

Student responsibilities

MA students should familiarize themselves with the requirements of the degree, including GSAS deadlines, and meet with the DGS and MA Convener to discuss their plans, interests, and progress. If they are interested in pursuing a special project, they are strongly encouraged to seek out one or more faculty members who would be able to serve as advisers; they should consult with the DGS and MA Convener for advice if they are having difficulty identifying a suitable project adviser. Those who are not pursuing a special project are also encouraged to talk regularly with faculty members in their fields of interest.

MA students should check their email regularly, and respond promptly to questions or meeting requests from faculty advisers, the DGS, and MA Convener. If they are likely to need letters of recommendation, they should make such requests in a timely fashion, ideally no later than two weeks before the deadline. Requests for academic accommodations, leaves, or any other need that might call for GSAS approval should be brought to the DGS as soon as possible. Serious personal concerns may be brought to whomever seems most appropriate: the DGS, MA Convener, faculty adviser, McDougal support staff, or relevant University officers.

III. PhD Advising

Advising relationships and structures will naturally change and evolve across the course of the PhD. This section lays out a general road map, but individual needs may require significant variations in the standard course.

Coursework

The PhD in Medieval Studies requires 14 term courses, typically taken during the first two years. Up to three courses may be waived at the discretion of the DGS and Program Chair for students who have completed a prior M.A. in an apposite discipline. These courses must span at least three different disciplines (typically indicated by their originating department). Students are also expected to take a course, or its equivalent, on the interpretation and use of primary documents. They must demonstrate proficiency in at least one medieval language of scholarship—currently specified as medieval Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Chinese—and two modern languages besides English which are most relevant to their research.

Faculty responsibilities

All PhD students are initially assigned to the **DGS** for advising during the first three years of the program. The DGS will meet regularly with students in coursework—normally, at least once per semester—and will be available for consultation via email, in office hours, or by appointment. In consultation with the **Registrar**, the DGS will keep track of students' academic progress, including their language requirements, and discuss plans for developing a course of study relevant to their research goals. The DGS will also discuss students' eventual career goals, and help think through plans to make those goals achievable. This may involve providing feedback on conference abstracts and potential publications, or directing students to faculty better able to provide field-specific advice.

The DGS also serves as an advocate for students with the GSAS administration, and assists with requests for accommodation and leaves, including parental relief.

Other **faculty in the Medieval Studies Program** do not have official advising responsibilities at this point. However, besides providing timely and helpful feedback on coursework, they are encouraged to meet with incoming students in their fields of interest, and to offer guidance on early-stage professionalization, including strategies for acquiring necessary skills such as advanced language proficiency and the mastery of primary documents. Medieval Studies faculty are also encouraged to undertake Directed Reading courses for students in areas where regular coursework is not offered. If concerned by the performance of Medieval Studies students in their courses, they should consult with the DGS as soon as is practicable.

Student responsibilities

Medieval Studies students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the degree requirements described on the [website](#), and to regularly consider their own research goals and interests—which are likely to change significantly during their first years in the program. They should also regularly assess their own level of skills for research—especially, in languages and the use of primary documents—and work diligently to attain mastery. This process might include seeking out summer study opportunities, which the DGS can help to arrange, frequently by directing Graduate Students to the resources available through [the MacMillan Center](#).

Students should also consider the range of possible careers that might interest them, including different vocations within the academy or in related disciplines. and begin exploring strategies for realizing their career goals. A list of recent graduates and their career choices appears on the [Medieval Studies website](#). They should familiarize themselves with the CVs of successful recent graduates, and begin thinking about how to develop their own CVs over their years in the Program. They should consult with the DGS and Career Development Officer (CDO) in the first instance, but are encouraged to begin building wider networks in their fields of interest.

Students in coursework are expected to check their email regularly, and to respond in a timely manner to queries and meeting requests from the GSAS, Program Registrar, and DGS. They are also encouraged to consult widely with faculty in, or adjacent to, their fields of interest, as they begin thinking about how best to build their own team of research advisers. Those in Year 2 should consider which fields (see below) they plan to be examined in for their Qualifying Exams, and which faculty would be best positioned to

direct their studies. While students will typically involve four faculty members as part of their qualifying exams and will typically choose no more than two co-advisors (and a total of three official readers) for their dissertations, the circle of scholars who will be speaking into students' academic and pedagogical experience is aspirationally much wider. It is the program's earnest hope that many of us will offer meaningful guidance or serve as productive interlocutors at some point throughout (and beyond!) your years in program; students should not feel limited by the "official" advisors or readers listed.

PhD students are encouraged to bring issues of personal or academic concern to their course instructors and to the DGS, who can mediate and/or help arrange for accommodation when necessary. In cases where personal or medical leave is necessary, the DGS will help make arrangements with the GSAS. For the Graduate School's leave policy, see [the GSAS Bulletin](#).

Advancement to candidacy

In typical circumstances, Medieval Studies doctoral students are expected to pass their Qualifying Exams and successfully propose a dissertation prospectus by the end of their third year in the Program. Ordinarily they also begin teaching in their third year (discussed separately below). The **DGS** remains the adviser of record for students who have not yet advanced to candidacy, and in consultation with the **Registrar** will assist with making arrangements for examinations and ensuring students meet all requirements on time.

Qualifying Examinations

Qualifying Examinations in Medieval Studies generally encompass three fields in at least two different disciplines. Each field is typically examined by a different faculty member; at least one of the three faculty should be affiliated with the Medieval Studies Program. Where a student's interests are insufficiently supported by program or Yale university faculty, a student, in conversation with the DGS, may choose an examiner from another institution. Examinations are typically based on a reading list of approximately 50-100 primary and secondary works, depending on the field. Students whose research needs require a different exam configuration should consult with the DGS: although three fields represent an absolute minimum, it is possible to (for example) split one field into two separate lists, or to add more fields. The Qualifying Exam should normally take place by the end of the fall semester in the student's third year. Generally, it lasts about 100 minutes of oral conversation (30 minutes/field, with extra time for examiners to confer in

private), drawing on the lists the student has composed and the labor undertaken in the context of preparing the associated readings.

Faculty responsibilities

When approached by a Medieval Studies student to serve as a **field adviser**, faculty should meet with the student to ensure that they are a good fit for the student's research needs; if necessary, they should direct the student to a more suitable field adviser. Once they have agreed to act as a field adviser, faculty members should generally meet with students at least twice in advance of finalizing their field list. They should ensure that the list serves the student's planned research needs, and equips them to work responsibly within their particular field. Once the field list has been agreed on and approved, faculty are encouraged to meet with students again in advance of the Qualifying Exam, to discuss their particular expectations for exam performance. Field advisers are not obliged to conduct mock examinations, but they should give students some general guidelines on what kinds of questions to expect, and the length and detail expected in good responses.

Because Medieval Studies students work across disciplines, Qualifying Exams are important moments for students to learn the conventions of their various fields. Field advisers thus play a critical role in acculturating students; they are encouraged to be explicit about discipline-specific requirements as they hold students to the standards of their particular fields. Pre-examination meetings are thus crucial for establishing shared expectations. Field examiners should also meet individually with students following a Qualifying Examination to discuss their performance. Although field examiners often go on to serve on students' dissertation committees, serving on a Qualifying Examination does not commit faculty to advising the student beyond a follow-up to the exam itself.

The **DGS** serves as a facilitator at all Medieval Studies Qualifying Exams. In addition to keeping notes in the exam itself, the DGS will keep copies of all field lists. The DGS will assist with examination scheduling with the help of the **Registrar**, and will meet with students to discuss the results of the examination and the transition to prospectus writing.

Student responsibilities

In their second year, students should begin thinking about the broad fields of knowledge that underlie their planned dissertation project, and which Yale faculty would be best able to help them master those fields. They should consult widely with faculty and with the DGS, and talk with more senior students in both Medieval Studies and allied fields to gain a sense of how best to configure their own field lists and plan for their program of reading. An incipient collection of exam lists and prospectuses exists and can be shared by the

DGS with all interested students. If they believe a structure other than the standard three thirty-minute fields would best suit their needs, they should discuss this with the DGS and develop a plan.

Generally, students should secure commitments from their field examiners by the beginning of the summer after their second year; field lists should be finalized, or close to finalized, by the end of the first semester of a student's third year. If any remaining pre-candidacy requirements remain, they should have a plan to complete them by the beginning of their third year, and keep the DGS and Registrar informed of their progress.

Once each adviser has approved their particular field list, the student should forward copies to the DGS and Registrar. They should also establish a schedule for meeting with their field advisers, and a structure for their reading in the months leading up to the Qualifying Exam itself. Students should consider their own working methods, and how best to hold themselves accountable for their reading. They may, for instance, wish to establish regular check-ins with faculty advisers; form reading groups with other students (including medievalists in other departments); or request check-ins from the DGS. The third year is a point of transition from the external structures of coursework to the self-directed dissertation phase, and it is worthwhile to experiment with working methods before settling on the set that feels most effective.

Students should plan to take their Qualifying Exam by the end of the fall semester of their third year. They should reach out to their examiners regarding timing, but the DGS and Registrar will assist in scheduling the exam and finding a suitable venue. In normal circumstances, the exam is expected to take place in person, but virtual or hybrid exams are also acceptable when necessary. Following the exam, students should plan to meet with each of their examiners for feedback on their performance, including suggestions for areas where further reading is necessary.

The Dissertation Prospectus

The Prospectus is a document describing the proposed dissertation and its significance, and laying out a road-map toward completion. The length is variable and depends on the conventions of the lead adviser's department; it will range between 15 and 30 pages. Once approved by the lead field adviser, the proposal will be discussed in a formal meeting (Prospectus Colloquium or Conference) with the student, main adviser, and at least two other readers. This team will likely compose the Dissertation Committee, who will all read the final dissertation, but the group members may change in the course of the writing process.

The Prospectus is a provisional document, not a contract, and it is expected that it will change as the student researches and writes the dissertation itself. The purpose of the Prospectus and

Prospectus Conference is to ensure that the student has a viable plan to produce a strong, significant work of original research. The Conference should typically take place by the end of the spring semester of the student's third year. Students desirous of taking and prepared to take this step at an earlier point in time should consult with the DGS. Approval of the prospectus is generally the last step for advancement to candidacy for the PhD.

Faculty responsibilities

Once a student has successfully completed the Qualifying Exam and decided to continue on to completion of the PhD, they will consult with several potential **faculty advisers** about directing their research. In Medieval Studies, prospectus and dissertation committees must comprise at least three members from at least two different departments, including, if the student so desires, one member from outside the university. These committees do not need to be composed of the same faculty members, but continuity between them is generally desirable. One member should agree to the role of **lead adviser** for administrative purposes, but the roles of each adviser on the student's committee will vary depending on the student's particular project and interdisciplinary commitments. All faculty advisers should meet with the student at least once prior to the prospectus conference, and should read and discuss (either in person or via written feedback) at least one prospectus draft prior to the conference.

The prospectus conference itself is a conversation of 60 to 90 minutes, with the whole committee and (typically) the DGS in attendance. A copy of the final prospectus should be circulated to the full committee at least a week prior to the conference. The goal of the conference is to ensure that the student and committee share a sense of the dissertation project's purpose, interventions, and potential pitfalls, and that the student has a clear path forward into the research phase of the dissertation. The committee may approve the prospectus at the conference, or may request revisions; if substantial revisions are required, it will be up to the committee as a whole as to whether a second conference will be necessary prior to approval of the prospectus and advancement to candidacy.

The **DGS**, along with the **Registrar**, will assist the student in scheduling the conference and in ensuring that all requirements for advancement to candidacy have been met.

Student responsibilities

Once the student has decided to continue on to the PhD, they should draw upon their Qualifying Examinations readings to begin designing a project that represents a

substantial, original contribution to knowledge. Generally, students spend the first couple of months of the spring semester of their third year drafting their prospectus. They are encouraged to reach out to colleagues in Medieval Studies and allied fields for sample documents; the DGS also keeps a file of examples for consultation. Upon completion of the prospectus conference, if the committee requests revisions, it is essential that the student consults with their advisers to ensure that they understand the nature of the revisions. These should be completed in a timely way, with the goal of advancing to candidacy by the end of the spring semester.

Students should reach out to faculty about serving as advisers, with the understanding that usually, some or all of the Qualifying Examiners go on to serve as dissertation advisers, although students may choose to make changes at this point as well. Students should consult with prospective committee members and confirm a commitment to serve on the dissertation committee early on in the spring of their third year. Once they have settled on a dissertation committee, students should discuss their career plans and ideas for the shape of the dissertation with each committee member, ensuring that their dissertation plans align with the expectations of the field(s) in which they hope to seek employment.

Teaching

Faculty responsibilities

The Medieval Studies Program is unusual in that it is fully interdisciplinary and has no associated undergraduate major. **Faculty advisers** should be aware of the career goals of students they supervise, and counsel them on seeking teaching assignments that will help them gain the experience they need. If they teach a lecture class in their home department, they may wish to reach out to Medieval Studies students in their teaching years in order to secure their services as a Teaching Fellow (TF). Faculty may also wish to discuss co-teaching opportunities with Medieval Studies students, including the Associates in Teaching Program and Part-time Acting Instructor (PTAI) positions in relevant courses. Faculty who supervise TFs should observe them at least once and provide feedback on their performance; advisers should also try to accommodate students' requests for observations, especially when a letter of recommendation will be needed. If a student seems to be struggling, either with the teaching itself or with balancing teaching with other responsibilities, faculty advisers should be ready to provide guidance, and to direct students toward necessary support, including the Poorvu Center's resources.

The **DGS** should also consult with students on their teaching plans and goals, help them reach out to relevant departments to secure teaching positions, and be ready to provide advice on building a teaching portfolio.

Student responsibilities

Students should reflect on their career goals, and the place of teaching within them. All PhD students are required to teach for at least four and (usually) six semesters as part of their funding package. In the first year of teaching—normally, the third year, but this can vary depending on the culture of particular fields and departments—students generally serve as TFs for sections in lecture courses. Toward the end of the semester before they begin teaching, then, students should reach out to the Registrar in the department(s) where they hope to have a teaching appointment with a request to be considered as a TF. The DGS and faculty advisers can assist with this process.

Yale requires training for all new TFs, and students should familiarize themselves in advance with the dates of all training sessions. GSAS resources to this effect can be found [here](#). They should also explore the resources of the Poorvu Center, which offers a wide range of workshops and support structures, including classroom observations. Students who are interested in teaching-intensive careers may especially wish to pursue the [Certificate of College Teaching Preparation](#), a flexible program offering guidance on developing a reflective pedagogy. They may also wish to explore teaching opportunities outside of Yale, at other local colleges and universities: faculty and more senior graduate students can provide guidance on how to find such positions.

Balancing teaching with research is difficult, especially when first starting out. Students who are struggling with this balance should reach out to their advisers and/or the DGS, who will be able to offer guidance and help students find the necessary resources for support.

Researching and writing the dissertation

The basic contours of a PhD project in Medieval Studies have been discussed in the section on the prospectus above. A dissertation in Medieval Studies may take a number of different forms, but it should be an original, interdisciplinary contribution to knowledge of the medieval period, drawing substantively on medieval primary material.

Faculty responsibilities

Faculty advisers to a Medieval Studies dissertation should plan to meet regularly with their advisees, and should offer timely feedback on their progress and work. The schedule and configuration of meetings should be agreed on between the adviser and student. Some faculty prefer to meet individually; others have working groups for all their advisees. The important point is that expectations be clearly established. Advisers should keep students informed of upcoming leaves and periods of absence, and make arrangements for the student's continued support. If concerns arise about the student's welfare or progress, the adviser should speak first to the student, and then speak with other advisers and the DGS. Timely action is critically important for helping struggling students. The **lead adviser** is responsible for reading and approving annual Dissertation Progress Reports; the intellectual relationship between different advisers on a Medieval Studies dissertation committee, however, is not set by the Program and will vary from project to project.

At least once per semester, advisers should meet individually with each student to discuss that student's career goals, prior year's progress, and plans for the year ahead. Early on in the dissertation-writing process, advisers should help the student form a long-term plan. Depending on the student's goals, this may include travel for fieldwork or additional training; presentation at important conferences; publication in appropriate venues; grant applications; different modes of teaching experience; and/or internships. While no adviser can be expected to be familiar with current hiring standards in every field in which a student might wish to pursue a career, they should be able to speak to current standards in their own field, and be able to direct the student to appropriate resources in other areas.

As the dissertation nears completion, the adviser should establish a set of deadlines with the student, so as to ensure that the full draft can be read in a timely manner and submitted by the GSAS deadline. On each committee, one adviser will normally be called upon to provide the Program and university with a written report on the dissertation prior to the degree's approval. **Other Core Faculty** in relevant fields will also be asked to read completed dissertations and submit a report for the Program.

The **DGS** should be available at all times to meet with dissertating students. They should be available for additional guidance, including direction to Medieval Studies grants and resources inside and outside Yale. The DGS should take expressions of concern from faculty or students seriously, and assist, if necessary, in arranging leaves. The DGS may also act as mediator if disputes arise between the student and one or more advisers, and may if necessary assist in reconfiguring the student's committee.

Student responsibilities

The dissertation represents the culmination of a student's graduate studies, and will be a significant, original contribution to knowledge. While advisers are important in strengthening a project and helping it take shape, ultimately the dissertation belongs to the student who creates it.

Planning ahead is critically important, especially when the project will require travel for research, or the acquisition of additional skills or materials. At the prospectus stage, students should meet with their advisers to map out the work to be done over the next three or so years. This discussion should include logistics like travel grants, but also larger-scale issues: especially, the student's overall career goals and the point at which they will begin seeking employment. While plans will inevitably shift, it is essential to form a clear idea of the endpoint, and map out the stages leading up to graduation. Students should also meet yearly with their advisers to discuss any changes to their career goals, assess their progress, and make plans for the year to come.

Students should meet regularly with their advisers to discuss their research, on a schedule they both agree to. Different faculty will have different practices in this regard, but students should plan for at least one meeting per semester with their advisers; most will meet more frequently. It is also important to establish expectations for when and how much work will be submitted to advisers, and when feedback can be reasonably expected. A student who has not heard back after a reasonable period of time should reach out again, and (if necessary) enlist the aid of the DGS. Students in turn are responsible for keeping their advisers updated on their progress. They should reach out if they encounter difficulties, and should take all feedback seriously, rejecting it only with substantive reasons. Students should also respond promptly to requests for meetings, and submit their Dissertation Progress Reports in a timely manner. Serious conflicts with advisers—such as irreconcilable disagreements over the direction of the project—should be referred to the DGS, who can help mediate, and assist in reconfiguring committees if necessary.

Establishing a consistent work schedule is often as challenging as it is essential. Both GSAS and the Poorvu Center have several programs to assist dissertators, including informal writing groups, occasional writing retreats, and workshops during the summer as well as during breaks. Students are also encouraged to reach out to colleagues to organize working and writing groups. They may also wish to reserve workspace in one of the university [libraries](#).

As the dissertation draws to a close, students should familiarize themselves with [GSAS deadlines](#), and submit drafts of their work to advisers for approval a reasonable time in advance. The DGS and Registrar can advise on technical questions of submission, but academic questions should be referred to the committee of advisers, who will approve the draft that is submitted for the PhD.

IV. Career development

Developing a career profile, whether in or out of academia, is not the work of one semester or year, but rather a process of continual reflection and reassessment. Medieval Studies encourages all its students to explore a range of possibilities for using their skills after earning a degree, and is committed to supporting that process of exploration throughout.

Faculty responsibilities

Medieval Studies' **Career Development Officer** is appointed by the Program to work with students through individual consultations and in groups as part of organized workshops. The CDO confers with the **Chair** about student needs and assists in arranging support structures for all phases of the degree process, but with a special emphasis on the needs of students in years 3–5, who are seriously exploring options both in and out of academia. The CDO also supplements the work of advisers by offering general guidance on the preparation of application materials and CV development.

Faculty advisers are the most important guides and sounding-boards for students as they consider steps beyond their degree. Advisers are expected to discuss students' career plans yearly, and to help students reflect on the work they have done to prepare for their intended careers, as well as plan for the time ahead. This work should begin early—in year 3 at latest—and continue throughout the student's degree path. Advisers should be aware of current trends in hiring in their particular fields and subfields, and should assist students who plan to apply for academic positions with discipline-specific advice. They should also expect to write letters of recommendation and read students' application materials where relevant. While advisers may have less concrete career advice to give those of their students who choose not to pursue an academic job, they should be informed about Yale career resources, and help students toward their goals to the best of their abilities.

Student responsibilities

Students should begin thinking early about what they might choose to do following completion of their Yale degree. If an academic career is Plan A, students should also begin developing a concrete Plan B that they can work toward alongside their primary goal. They should have yearly conversations with their advisers, reflecting on their plans and their progress, and seek out advice about the particular requirements for strong candidates in their chosen field(s). PhD students are encouraged to begin working with the Career Development Officer in years 3 or 4, and to take advantage of Yale's Office of Career Services early in their program as well. Depending on their particular plans, students may wish to seek out internships, or travel abroad to make connections in a country where they may hope to work.

As the time for applications draws near, students should leave ample time for preparation and revision—ideally, beginning to gather materials several months in advance. They should consult their advisers for field-specific guidance and the CDO for general advice on preparing applications, and request any needed letters of reference at least a month in advance of coming deadlines. Students are also strongly encouraged to workshop their job materials, either formally or informally, and should inform themselves about the highest standards in their chosen field by reading successful candidates' published work and CVs, and attending job talks whenever possible.