

English studies PhD comprehensive examinations

The comprehensive examinations, consisting of 2 written field exams, a thesis prospectus and sample chapter, and an oral exam must be completed by the end of the student's 6th term in the program (2 full years, whether the student is full-time or half-time).

Procedures for examinations

Students, in consultation with their thesis supervisor, write a letter to the Graduate Studies Committee proposing the reading lists for each field exam at the same time as they submit their research proposal. Exams in fields other than those listed below are possible with the permission of the Graduate Studies Committee.

Reading lists of works by about 25-30 entries are to be prepared by the students, with the assistance of their supervisor. The graduate committee will approve the lists and may suggest some changes. Reading lists can fall under one of these headings:

- Renaissance literature
- Literature from 1660 to 1800
- British Romantic literature
- Victorian Literature
- 19th-century American literature
- Early 20th-century British literature
- Late 20th-century British literature
- Early 20th-century American literature
- Late 20th-century American literature
- African-American literature
- Canadian literature
- Quebec literature
- Postcolonial literature and theory
- Criticism and theory
- Gender and sexuality studies

Two field exams are written half way through the student's second year in the program. One of these field exams takes the form of an in-class examination, for which the student has to answer 3 out of 5 questions in 6 hours. The second field exam takes the form of a take-home examination, for which the student has to answer 2 out of 3 questions. The questions are sent to the student on a Friday by noon and the two 12-15 page essays are handed in by the following Friday by 4 p.m. The students choose which field exam is written at home and which one is written in class. This choice should be indicated in the letter to the Graduate Studies Committee.

Students must submit their dissertation prospectus and sample chapter at the end of their second year (see schedule below). In preparing the thesis prospectus, students should consult the [Graduate Student's Guide](#). Students are strongly encouraged to submit one or several drafts of their prospectus to their supervisor at least 1 month in advance of the exam period in order to get feedback. Students should also anticipate having to make some revisions following the oral examination.

Scheduling of examinations

Examinations are given in May and November. Students starting in the fall term will take their exams in May, and those starting in the winter term will take their exams in November. The overall process takes 4 to 6 weeks.

The dates for the different parts of the examination are established by the chair of graduate studies according to the following guidelines:

End of year 1:

2-page proposal (with 5-8 page bibliography) and 2 reading lists of 25-30 entries each.

Half-way through year 2:

Part 1 of the exam takes place over a 2-week period:

- In-class exam [day 1] at 9 am (scheduled to end at 3 pm)
- Take-home exam: questions received by student at noon a week later [day 8], with the two exams due a week later [day 15 of the process]

End of year 2:

Part 2 of the exam takes place over a 2-3 week period:

- Prospectus and one chapter are due on day 1 of the process
- Oral exam on the prospectus and chapter scheduled by the committee 2-3 weeks later

Students who begin the PhD program in September (fall term) must submit their proposal and reading lists the following May.

- On December 1st of their second year in the program, part 1 of the exam begins: in-class exam on December 1st ; questions emailed to student for the take-home exam on December 8th; essays submitted by student via email on December 15th. (These dates are adjusted if they fall on a weekend.)
- On May 1st of the following year, part 2 of the exam begins: prospectus and one chapter submitted; the oral exam takes place 2-3 weeks later. (This date is adjusted if it falls on a weekend.)

If a student does not pass part 1 in December, s/he will resit the exam the following February. If a student does not pass part 2 in May, s/he will resit the exam in August of the same year (to be done within 2 years of their entry in the program).

Students who begin the PhD program in January (Winter term) must submit their proposal and reading lists in December of that year.

- On June 1st of their second year in the program, part 1 of the exam begins: in-class exam on June 1st; questions emailed to student for the take-home exam on June 8th; essays submitted by student via email on June 15th. (These dates are adjusted if they fall on a weekend.)
- On November 1st of the same year, part 2 of the exam begins: prospectus and one chapter submitted; the oral exam takes place 2-3 weeks later. (This date is adjusted if it falls on a weekend.)

If a student does not pass part 1 in June, s/he will resit the exam in August of the same year. If a student does not pass part 2 in November, s/he will resit the exam in January of the following year (to be done within 2 years of their entry in the program).