

Field Exam Guidelines
October 2018

PhD in English with a Creative Dissertation

Field Exams in PhD in English with a Creative Dissertation:

Because of the accelerated time-line of 4 years, we suggest that students start taking their field exams after completing two semesters of course-work. We strongly recommend that students complete their Field Exams by the end of the fifth semester.

Students will take Three Field Exams, which will be the foundation for their creative dissertations. This will also lay the groundwork for the student's teaching specializations. The Field Exam I will focus on the historical dimension or a chronological understanding of their subject matter. Field Exam II must focus on genre. Field Exam III must focus on a conceptual or theoretical topic.

Students may coordinate their fields of study so that the time spent preparing for their examinations will provide a foundation for subsequent work on their dissertations. It will also provide the framework for their professional identity.

Field Examiners and Second Readers:

1. Each exam has a Field Examiner and a Second Reader. All must be members of the university's graduate faculty. The second reader is assigned by the Graduate director, not chosen by the student.
2. Field Examiners and Readers may read more than one exam for a particular student (up to a maximum of two), but each of the three examining "teams" must be unique.
3. Only one of the three Field Examiners may be from a faculty outside the English Department.
4. Second Readers are assigned solely by the Director of Graduate Studies, who may seek advice from the Field Examiner or from other members of the department faculty.
5. The Second Reader must be provided with a copy of the student's reading list and a copy of the question. [Field Examiners may seek out a Second Reader in advance of the examination in order to consult on reading lists and/or examination questions.]
6. Copies of reading lists and examination questions are placed in the student's files.

Examination

1. The Examiner defines the nature of the examination. However, there are some general guidelines.
2. Exams are usually set up in such a way that the student has 72 hours to write the exam paper.
3. All exams should be given with sufficient directions for the student. The English

Graduate Office cannot and will not answer student questions about the exam after it has been given to the student.

4. Normally, the Examiner will submit the examination question to the English Graduate Office to distribute to the student (giving the office at least forty-eight hours to distribute it to the student). The exam will be returned to the English Graduate Office within 72 hours. The English Graduate Office will then pass the exam back to the Field Examiner.

5. Field Examiners will normally read the examination and return it to the Director of Graduate Studies within two weeks. The Director of Graduate Studies will then pass it along to the Second Reader.

6. Second Readers are asked to return the exam within a week.

7. Students are graded "pass" or "fail" for each field exam.

8. If the Field Examiner grades the exam as a "fail," it will not go to a Second Reader. The Field Examiner may request that the student write a new exam. If the Field Examiner grades the exam as a "pass," and the Second Reader grades the exam as a "fail," the exam will be given over to a Third Reader (chosen by the Graduate Director) to break the tie. If the Third Reader gives the exam a "fail," the student may request to write a new exam, and the process will begin anew. In no case may a student be examined in the same area more than twice. After a second failure in the same area, a student must make a proposal to the Graduate Admissions Committee in order to continue in the program.

The student becomes ABD after completing all three field exams.

PhD in English with a Research Dissertation

A. Field Exams in PhD in English with a Research Dissertation

Because of the accelerated time-line, we recommend that students start taking their written field exams (2) after completing three semesters of course-work. We strongly recommend that students complete all components of the Field Exam by the end of the fifth semester. The Oral Exam must be completed the same semester as the second written field exam.

There will be two written examinations and an oral examination. The written exams will follow a Major and Minor delineation, depending on the student's preference. The student should put together a committee of three faculty members for the Oral Exam. The committee comprises the two faculty members who have supervised/examined the two written field exams and along with a third faculty member who will be present at the Oral Exam. The student should choose one of the three faculty members as a dissertation adviser.

I. Written Field Exams

Field Exam I (Major field) may address a conceptual framework, genre, or a period. It does not necessarily need to speak to a specific periodization, but whatever the field chosen, it must look at the historical, critical, and literary shifts up to the present moment: for instance, 20th century British Literature, 20th American Studies, Transatlantic 18th Century Literature and Culture, Victorian Poetry, The Global Novel, The Slave/Captivity Narrative etc.

Field Exam II (Minor field) must have a conceptual and or theoretical rubric. For instance, Queer Theory, Marxism, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Prison Studies and so on.

Students may coordinate their fields of study so that the time spent preparing for their examinations will provide a foundation for subsequent work on their dissertations, as well as preparation for their professional identity.

Each written exam will have one Examiner who will also read the exam. The reading list of 35-40 titles (both primary and secondary) for the written examination should be developed through close collaboration with the specific Field Examiner and must meet his/her approval. The approved reading lists must be handed in to the Graduate Director no later than three weeks before the proposed written field exam.

Field Examiners and Second Readers:

1. Each exam has a Field Examiner and a Second Reader. All must be members of the university's graduate faculty. The second reader is assigned by the Graduate director, not chosen by the student.
2. Field Examiners and Readers may read more than one exam for a particular student (up to a maximum of two), but each of the three examining "teams" must be unique.
3. Only one of the three Field Examiners may be from a faculty outside the English Department.
4. Second Readers are assigned solely by the Director of Graduate Studies, who may seek advice from the Field Examiner or from other members of the department faculty.
5. The Second Reader must be provided with a copy of the student's reading list and a copy of the question. [Field Examiners may seek out a Second Reader in advance of the examination in order to consult on reading lists and/or examination questions.]
6. Copies of reading lists and examination questions are placed in the student's files.

Written Examination

1. The Examiner defines the nature of the examination. However, there are some general guidelines.
2. Exams are usually set up in such a way that the student has 72 hours to write the exam paper.
3. All exams should be given with sufficient directions for the student. The English Graduate Office cannot and will not answer student questions about the exam after

it has been given to the student.

4. Normally, the Examiner will submit the examination question to the English Graduate Office to distribute to the student (giving the office at least forty-eight hours to distribute it to the student). The exam will be returned to the English Graduate Office within 72 hours. The English Graduate Office will then pass the exam back to the Field Examiner.

5. Field Examiners will normally read the examination and return it to the Director of Graduate Studies within two weeks. The Graduate Office will inform the student of the result for the written exam. The Director of Graduate Studies will then pass it along to the Second Reader.

6. Second Readers are also asked to return the exam within a week.

7. Students are graded "pass" or "fail" for each field exam.

8. If the Field Examiner grades the exam as a "fail," it will not go to a Second Reader. The Field Examiner may request that the student write a new exam. If the Field Examiner grades the exam as a "pass," and the Second Reader grades the exam as a "fail," the exam will be given over to a Third Reader (chosen by the Graduate Director) to break the tie. If the Third Reader gives the exam a "fail," the student may request to write a new exam, and the process will begin anew. In no case may a student be examined in the same area more than twice. After a second failure in the same area, a student must make a proposal to the Graduate Admissions Committee in order to continue in the program.

All three committee members will read the written exams for the Oral Exam, where the student will be examined on the written exams, among other things (See below).

II. Oral Exam

The Oral Exam should be scheduled in the same semester as the second written exam and should happen during the semester. The reading list for the oral exam is the aggregate of the two field exams. The reading list should be submitted to all three faculty members on the committee. Students should also start to think about their dissertations in the time between the second exam and the oral exam. They should submit a 5-page dissertation proposal to their oral exam committee two weeks before the date of the Oral Exam. The dissertation proposal should address the central problem/ question of the proposed dissertation and offer a brief review of the primary and secondary sources. The dissertation proposal should be drafted in consultation with the three committee members.

The oral exam serves three purposes: 1) during the oral examination student will be examined on their fields as well as the exams they wrote, giving them an opportunity to demonstrate expertise in their chosen fields and speak about specific exam essays to their committee; the student may work with the committee to craft some of the questions for the oral exam. 2) the oral exam will also be a testing and discussion ground for the paradigms of their dissertation and short dissertation

proposal 3) it serves as an opportunity to speak about their work in a formal institutional setting before the defense.

The student only becomes ABD on passing Field Exam I, Field Exam II, and the Oral Exam.

B. Dissertation Prospectus

Within 5 weeks of the Oral Examination, the student will write and submit a more substantial 25-30 page dissertation prospectus (with a bibliography) to the dissertation advisor. The prospectus is a substantive revision of the dissertation proposal. It should be revised according to the discussions of the dissertation proposal during oral exam. Once the advisor has approved it, it should be submitted to the graduate director.

As indicated above, the prospectus is a preliminary description of the proposed dissertation. It must set out the central question/topic and area that the dissertation intends to explore. It must situate the dissertation's topic and intervention within the current academic scholarship on the subject. In other words, it must offer a review of the work that has already been done on the area and answer the significant question of how the dissertation will add to and/or shift existing scholarship.

The prospectus should include a provisional chapter outline. The chapter outline should be succinct as possible, while demonstrating a structural, theoretical, and thematic development of the central argument of the dissertation.

While the prospectus is by nature a fluid and provisional document, its primary purpose is to stake out the central question, delineate argument and structure, while elaborating on the scholarly significance of the proposed dissertation. In doing so, the prospectus allows the student to clarify and focus their dissertation writing process.