

# English studies PhD comprehensive examinations

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

## Procedures for examinations

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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 40 authors 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
- 19<sup>th</sup>-century American literature
- Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century British literature
- Late 20<sup>th</sup>-century British literature
- Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century American literature
- Late 20<sup>th</sup>-century American literature
- African-American literature
- Canadian literature
- Quebec literature
- Postcolonial literature and theory
- Criticism and theory
- Gender and sexuality studies

One 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 picked up on Monday at 9 a.m. and the two 12-15 page essays are handed in by Friday at 3 p.m. The 2<sup>nd</sup> field exam takes the form of an in-class examination, for which the student has to answer 3 out of 5 questions in 6 hours. 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.

In preparing the thesis prospectus, students should consult [the Graduate Student's Guide](#). The thesis prospectus is submitted during Week 1 of the examination period (see schedule below). Students are strongly encouraged to submit a draft of their prospectus to the members of their jury 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.

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# Scheduling of examinations

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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:

## **Week 1**

Prospectus submitted to the graduate secretary, usually at the end of that week.

## **Week 2**

Take-home exam picked up Monday, submitted Friday. The take-home exam consists of 2 essays, each of them no longer than 4000 to 5000 words (including a bibliography). Not unlike graduate seminar papers, the essays must include critical secondary material, develop a logical argument, and demonstrate the candidate's command over his or her chosen field of examination. The essays should be double-spaced and written in Times 12.

## **Week 3**

In-class exam, usually at the end of that week.

## **Week 4 (to 6)**

The oral will take place by the end of the exam period (depending on jurors' availability).

## **Oral examination**

The oral focuses primarily on the thesis prospectus but the students should also expect to be asked questions on the 2 field exams. Students should prepare a 5 to 10 minute introductory statement about their prospectus to be delivered orally (not read) at the outset.