

Guidelines for Ph.D. students taking field examinations, for Field Examiners, and for Second Readers of examinations:

Ph.D. Field Examination Policy

Examination Areas:

1. Beginning in the third semester (or in fourth semester for Ph.D. students who started their program after Spring, 2002) of coursework each student, in consultation with the Graduate Director, works with chosen professors to define three field exams, draw up reading lists, and pursue the topics chosen. These professors will be the Field Examiners for the student's field exams. With poetry an obvious exception, reading lists normally have some 35-45 titles, and include primary and secondary material.
2. All three exams are normally administered in the second and third years of study.
3. While areas acceptable as fields of study are not predefined, they must be approved by the Graduate Director, who will ensure that the fields have critical, historical, and generic breadth.
4. A field of study may be defined in various ways: e.g., by nationality, chronology, genre, topic, or critical theory.
5. Students may coordinate their three 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.
6. The student must turn in a signed (by the Field Examiner) copy of the reading list, at least one month prior to the examination.

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 Field 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 seventy-two hours to write the exam paper. A single exam is usually taken over a weekend and requires six or more hours of writing.
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 Field 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 forty-eight hours. The English Graduate Office will then pass the exam back to the Field Examiner. [NOTE: Field Examiners may choose to distribute exams on their own--by hand, mail, or email--but with a copy to the English Graduate Office.]
5. Field Examiners will normally read the examination and return it to the Director of Graduate Studies within one week. 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.