

**The Pennsylvania State University**  
**Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese**  
**Graduate Student Handbook**  
**Program in Spanish & Latin American Literature (M.A., Ph.D.)**

## **Introduction**

This Graduate Student Handbook provides information on the policies and requirements of the graduate program in Spanish and Latin American literature in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese (SIP) at Penn State. While most of the policies detailed in this handbook are established at the departmental level, others are policies set by the Graduate School and the University. For further details on Graduate School and University-level policies, please consult the most recent Penn State Graduate Bulletin at the following URL: <http://www.psu.edu/bulletins/whitebook/>.

Whether you are a new or continuing graduate student, it is always important to be familiar with the handbook. Our goal is to design a handbook that will be a useful reference for you as you progress through your program, and we hope that with your feedback, we can continually refine the handbook to best serve your needs. With this in mind, please be aware that *the policies in this handbook are subject to change*. We believe that a strong program requires feedback, evaluation, and revision. Accordingly, from time to time, the policies in this handbook will be updated. The Director of Graduate Studies will notify you of any such changes and their date of implementation.

The faculty understands that as graduate students you make crucial contributions to the mission of the department. We hope that you will participate fully in the intellectual life of the department, that you will be active participants in helping to improve our graduate programs, that you will be active learners, and that you become independent scholars over the course of your graduate studies. We also hope that you will stay in touch with us after you graduate, and that you will let us know of your progress in your career.

The Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese extends to you its best wishes for a productive and rewarding stay as a graduate student in Spanish at Penn State.

## **Overview of the Literature Program**

The literature division of the Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese offers tracks in Peninsular and Spanish American literature. The main objective of our M.A. and Ph.D. programs is to train students diachronically in their fields, providing them with an exceptional theoretical background and thoroughly preparing them for future academic and scholarly careers.

With a view towards interdisciplinarity, our faculty work in areas that challenge and extend the notion of “canonical literature” through expansion to other media, other art forms, and other disciplinary methods. Specific areas of strength include: Latin

American theater, performance and media; the framework of Queer and Affect Studies to conceptualize the contemporary intellectual figure in Latin America and the Caribbean; material culture in the Golden Age, specifically the intersections of poetry, drama, and visual arts; film and popular culture in 20th century and contemporary Spain and Mexico; Afro-Caribbean literature, a trans-Atlantic field; Inter-American studies; and transnational modernisms and avant-garde movements especially in light of their intersections with contemporary philosophy. Moving forward, our work will be driven by thematic, methodological, and globalized concerns. Our students are also encouraged, particularly at the doctoral level, to take courses in the Departments of Comparative Literature, English, and/or French, especially when course offerings in these and other programs complement their developing research interests.

Our department is committed to maintaining a low student-to-faculty ratio. Our graduate students typically teach three basic Spanish courses per academic year, though qualified students often have the opportunity to teach culture, literature, or linguistics courses not only in Spanish, but also in Latino Studies, Comparative Literature, Italian, and Portuguese. The intellectual environment of the department is regularly enriched with guest lectures, colloquia, conferences, and institutes. In the last several years, prominent authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Antonio Benítez Rojo, Mempo Giardinelli, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Luis Rafael Sánchez, Rosa Montero, Antonio Muñoz Molina, and Ana Lydia Vega have visited the department to share their work in public readings and lectures.

### **University SARI (Scholarship and Research Integrity) Requirement for All Entering Graduate Students**

All entering graduate students at Penn State are required to complete comprehensive, multi-level education concerning the responsible conduct of research, training tailored to address varied issues faced by individual disciplines. For graduate students in our department, this training will be structured in accordance with the two-step process outlined below:

*PART 1: Completion of the CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) Online RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research) Training Program*

<http://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari/program>

All entering students will be expected to complete this online training module by no later than October 1 of their first semester in residence. Students will be responsible for providing the Graduate Program Assistant with a copy of the certificate of completion received upon completing the training. The Director of Graduate Studies will be responsible for verifying that all students are in compliance as of the stipulated date of completion.

*PART 2: Completion of an additional five hours of discussion-based RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research) Education*

This portion of the required training involves two separate components:

A) Participation, as early as possible during the first year in residence, in *two* centrally-sponsored RCR workshops organized by the Office of Research Protections (ORP) at Penn State. These workshops will provide students with opportunities to engage in cross-disciplinary conversations about research ethics.

<http://www.research.psu.edu/training/research-protections-workshops>

B) Participation, by the end of the first year in residence, in one three-hour discipline-specific RCR workshop organized by the Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese, another department within the School of Languages & Literatures, or (with approval from the Director of Graduate Studies) another department of relevance to the student's intended program of study.

Workshops will be generally focused on case studies, and will seek to generate dialogue related to issues surrounding ethical decision-making skills. Specific topics to be addressed may include: morality in the search for truth, the defensibility of knowledge claims, appropriate sharing of credit in collaborative research, the ethical mentoring of research assistants, conflicts of interest in research, the possible consequences of the irresponsible conduct of research to the researcher, ethical responsibilities of those involved in peer review of research, proper citation, self-citation, interviewing ethics, intellectual property rights, untruthful reporting of research results, and proper C.V. preparation.

### **The M.A. in Spanish and Latin American Literature**

The purpose of this section of the handbook is to explain the requirements and procedures for the completion of the M.A. degree in Spanish within the literature division of our graduate program. This section provides information on credit requirements, specific course requirements, residency requirements, credit transfer, and the design of the M.A. Exam.

#### **Credit Requirements**

The Graduate School requires the completion of a minimum of 30 credits for the successful completion of an M.A. degree. The Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese requires that of these 30 credits, a minimum of 27 graduate credits must be taken at the 500-level. Under special circumstances, the Director of Graduate Studies may authorize a student to take a 400-level course and have it count towards the 500-level requirement if, for instance, a relevant course in a particular area is not regularly offered.

## **Course Requirements**

All M.A. students in Spanish who serve as Teaching Assistants are required to take Spanish 502, a course on teaching methodology, during their first semester in the program.

In addition, M.A. students in literature follow a structured curriculum, the purpose of which is to provide the necessary breadth and depth in literary studies needed to prepare for work at the doctoral level. The literature seminars that students take during their M.A. program are designed to provide exposure to the diverse areas of study within our department, and to give students the opportunity to study with as many members of the literature faculty as possible.

The particular courses that comprise the curriculum of an incoming class will vary by year, depending on the selection of graduate seminars offered in past academic cycles, in addition to other factors including faculty-leave schedules. M.A. students should select their courses only after consulting with either the Director of Graduate Studies or a designated advisor from the literature faculty. Generally speaking, students will be enrolled in three graduate literature seminars per semester.

## **Residency Requirements**

The University requires that at least 20 credits must be earned in residence at the University Park campus.

## **Credit Transfer**

A maximum of 10 credits may be transferred towards the credit requirement for the M.A. As a rule, the department believes that success in our program requires the completion of the training that students receive at Penn State, both in terms of course content and contact with the professors who will serve as advisors and committee members for exams. With this in mind, we do not readily approve transfer credits. However, some courses taken at another institution of high caliber may, with the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies, be granted transfer credit towards the M.A. degree on a case-by-case basis.

## **The M.A. Exam in Literature**

The M.A. Exam consists of three parts: 1) a paper submitted by March 1 of the student's fourth semester; 2) a written exam; and 3) an oral exam administered by the M.A. exam committee in literature. Each of these elements is explained in this section of the handbook.

## **M.A. Exam: Paper Requirement**

The Graduate School at Penn State requires that each M.A. program at the university culminate in a significant capstone experience that demonstrates evidence of the student's analytical skills, and which shows an ability on the part of the student to synthesize material. To satisfy this requirement, as part of M.A. exam, all degree candidates must turn in an original paper written for one of their classes in our program. The deadline for submission of this paper, as stipulated by the Graduate School, is March 1 in the student's fourth semester. Papers should be submitted by noon on that day to the Graduate Program Staff Assistant.

Students are encouraged to revise this paper beyond its form as originally turned in for the course. We strongly recommend, moreover, that students consult with faculty members for whom they have written papers if they have any doubts about whether a given essay would be suitable for this particular requirement. Students are advised to select what they believe to be the best paper that they have written in the program.

### **M.A. Written Exam**

The M.A. written examination in literature is based on the M.A. reading list and not on any systematic series of courses. The reading list is available online or from the Graduate Program Staff Assistant. All M.A. students will be examined on the list in effect at the beginning of the academic year in which they began the program. Portions of the M.A. written exam in literature may be devoted to material which candidates may not have covered in graduate courses in the department.

The written portion of the exam will be taken over the course of two days. Though the exam may be taken at home, or at any location of the student's choosing, no outside materials may be consulted during the examination period. The specific format of the examination varies slightly from year to year, and explicit instructions will be provided on the exam itself. However, the general format of the exam requires that students answer four essay questions on each of the two exam days (eight total questions over the entirety of the two-day examination).

Students are allowed 3½ hours each day to complete the corresponding portion of the exam. These hours must be contiguous (i.e., no break may be taken between questions). However, to allow for ease of scheduling, any period of 3½ hours during the course of the normal work day (8:30AM-5:00PM) may be chosen by the student.

On day 1, students will be given questions pertaining to Peninsular Spanish literature; on day 2, students will answer questions on Latin American literature. Questions will be e-mailed to the student by 8:30AM on the morning of each exam; completed answers are to be e-mailed to the Graduate Program Assistant each day immediately at the end of the student's chosen examination hours. Failure to comply with this schedule will be taken into consideration by the M.A. exam committee.

Original exam questions are prepared each year by the literature faculty. Yet, in preparing for the exam, students are encouraged to view questions posed in previous

years, all of which are on file with the Graduate Program Staff Assistant. Preparation in this regard will facilitate a clearer sense of the types of questions one may expect to find on this portion of the exam. Students may retain a copy of their exam answers in order to aid in their preparation for the oral exam, which is described in the next section.

### **M.A. Oral Exam**

Completion of the M.A. degree requires that the student take an oral exam as part of the overall M.A. examination process. Lasting up to two hours, the oral exam is administered by the M.A. exam committee in literature. Questions will focus primarily on issues arising from the written exam, but may also be derived from coursework students have carried out at Penn State, and/or from the course paper submitted as a requirement for the M.A.

The oral exam should be seen as an opportunity to display flexibility and breadth while fielding a variety of questions relevant to a mastery of the discipline. In this sense, though certainly an occasion for the student to highlight his or her knowledge of central areas, trends, and themes in Latin American and Peninsular literature, the oral exam should also be seen as a moment to connect to broader issues in literary scholarship. Demonstrating this latter skill is essential, especially for those students who wish to move on to the Ph.D. program. As a means of facilitating strong preparation for this portion of the exam process, we encourage students to consult with peers in our literature program who have advanced successfully beyond the M.A. to the Ph.D. level.

### **M.A. Exam Dates**

As noted above, the due date for the paper component of the exam is by noon on March 1 of the student's fourth semester in the program. The specific dates of the M.A. written exam vary by year, but generally it will be scheduled for immediately after Spring Break. The written exam will generally be administered on two consecutive days during the third or fourth week of March. In any given year, all M.A. students in their fourth semester will take the M.A. written examination on the same days. The oral portion of the exam process will be scheduled on a student-by-student basis, but will be administered, as a rule, within two weeks after completion of the written examination.

### **M.A. Exam Committee**

The M.A. exam committee is generally comprised of all the literature graduate faculty members. On some occasions, especially if there is a large number of M.A. candidates or if faculty members are unavailable due to travel or sabbaticals, smaller committees will be assigned by the Director of Graduate Studies. All M.A. exam committees will have a minimum of three faculty members.

### **M.A. Exam: Grading**

Answers on the written M.A. exam are graded by the members of the M.A. exam committee in literature with input, if necessary, from other members of the department. The exam as a whole—in sum, the written and oral portions along with the submitted paper—will be assigned an overall grade of pass or fail. In general, the student will be informed of this grade immediately after the oral exam. In extraordinary cases, however, the committee may not be able to reach an immediate decision. In these cases, the committee may delay its decision for a period of up to one week.

It is important to note that a passing grade on the M.A. exam does not automatically qualify a student for admission to the Ph.D. program in literature. This grade refers strictly to the exam committee's decision regarding the student's performance on the M.A. examination. A passing grade, assuming all other departmental and university requirements have been met, qualifies a student to earn the M.A. degree. For information pertaining to the Ph.D. program in literature, please consult the corresponding section of this handbook.

### **M.A. Exam: Failing Grades**

Students who fail the M.A. examination will not be considered for admission to the Ph.D. program in literature, nor will they be eligible for further funding from the department in any subsequent semester.

If a student fails the M.A. exam in the first instance, one retake may be scheduled, though this determination will be left to the discretion of the committee. The retake, should it be granted, represents the final opportunity to satisfy the requirements for the M.A. degree. However, M.A. degree-recipients who have required a retake will not be considered for admission to the Ph.D. program in literature.

The retake must take place within one month from the oral exam. Under this scenario, the student may be asked to retake all or only certain portions of the exam—a decision which will be left to the discretion of the exam committee. Depending on faculty availability, the composition of the exam committee for the retake may not be the same as for the initial exam.

A second failure on the M.A. exam will result in termination of graduate-student status in the department. Students who fail the M.A. exam on the second try will not be afforded further opportunities to complete the M.A. degree in the department.

### **M.A. Annual Letters of Evaluation**

Students will receive a letter of evaluation at the end of each academic year which addresses their overall performance in the program, in addition to their development, in the broadest sense, as potential future members of the profession. The letter will reflect input from all available faculty members in the literature division. Students are advised

to address any concerns and suggestions which arise in the annual evaluation as actively as possible, and to do so in a timely fashion. They are also encouraged to discuss the letter's contents at any time with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or any other faculty advisors in the department.

### **M.A. Program: Summary Check List**

#### Credit and Course Requirements

- Spanish 502 taken in the first semester; completion of SARI requirements
- Minimum of 30 credits
- Minimum of 27 credits at 500-level
- Core curriculum coursework (arranged in consultation with advisor)

#### M.A. Exam:

- Paper submitted to the Graduate Program Staff Assistant by March 1 in student's fourth semester
- Written examination during second half of March of fourth semester
- Oral Examination within two weeks of written Examination

## **The Ph.D. in Spanish and Latin American Literature**

### **Credit Requirements**

The Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese requires that a minimum of 30 credits of coursework at Penn State be completed in courses offered by the department in order to earn the Ph.D. in literature. Of these, a minimum of 27 graduate credits must be taken at the 500-level. Under special circumstances, the Director of Graduate Studies may authorize a student to take a 400-level course and have it count towards the 500-level requirement, if, for instance, a course in a particular area is not regularly offered.

### **Course Requirements**

All graduate students in Spanish who serve as Teaching Assistants are required to take Spanish 502, a course on teaching methodology, during their first semester.

In addition, Ph.D. students in the literature division follow a curriculum offering rigor and depth in literary studies, the goal of which is to prepare them for scholarly work of a professional caliber. The literature seminars that students take during their Ph.D. program are designed to provide exposure to the diverse areas of study within our department, and to give students the opportunity to study with as many members of the literature faculty as possible.

The particular courses that comprise the curriculum of an incoming class will vary by year, depending on the selection of graduate seminars offered in past academic cycles, as well as other factors including faculty-leave schedules. Ph.D. students should select their courses only after consulting with either the Director of Graduate Studies and/or their designated advisor. Generally speaking, students will be enrolled in three graduate literature seminars per semester.

### **Additional Language Requirement for the Ph.D.**

For the Ph.D. degree, students must demonstrate reading proficiency in a language other than English or Spanish. This requirement must be satisfied prior to the student taking the oral portion of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam. This requirement may be satisfied in one of several ways:

1. By passing an appropriate graduate-level reading course, while in residence at Penn State, in a language other than English or Spanish.
2. By passing a reading proficiency examination offered by a language department at Penn State in a language other than English or Spanish.
3. Demonstrating native or near-native fluency, or long-term formal education in, a language other than Spanish or English.

If an individual case does not fall neatly within any of these categories, please consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.

*Note: Depending on the student's area of specialization, his or her advisor may require additional proficiency in more than one language above and beyond Spanish and English. The student's advisor, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, will determine how any relevant courses taken in this regard will count towards the total credits required for completion of the Ph.D.*

### **Residency Requirements**

The university requires that at least 20 credits be earned in residence at Penn State's University Park campus.

### **Credit Transfer**

A maximum of 10 credits may be transferred towards the credit requirement for the Ph.D. Generally speaking, we believe that success in our program requires the completion of the training that students receive at Penn State, both in terms of course content and contact with the professors who will serve as advisors and committee members for exams. With this in mind, we do not readily approve transfer credits. However, some courses taken at another institution of high caliber may, with the permission of the

Director of Graduate Studies, be granted transfer credit towards the Ph.D. degree on a case-by-case basis.

### **Credit Transfer from the M.A. at Penn State**

Ph.D. students continuing from the M.A. program in literature at Penn State often earn more than the 30-credit minimum required for the M.A. Up to 9 discipline-relevant credits above the minimum 30 credits earned in the M.A. program may be counted towards the satisfaction of the additional 30 credits required for the Ph.D. Technically, these are not “transfer” credits, but if a student earns 39 credits at the M.A. level, for example, 9 of these may be used towards satisfying the credit requirements of the Ph.D. If a student has doubts regarding whether a particular course is “discipline-relevant,” he or she should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **Ph.D. Peer-Review Essay Requirement**

All Ph.D. students in literature are required to submit at least one single-authored essay of outstanding quality to a peer-reviewed journal in their field by at least one month *prior to taking the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams*. The paper and journal should be chosen in close consultation with faculty mentors, ideally at a point well before the weeks and months leading up to the comprehensive exam. This requirement seeks to encourage scholarly engagement and eventual competitiveness on the job market, as well as to foster students’ greater understanding of the rigor and benefits of the peer-review system. Failure to comply with this requirement will be taken into consideration at the level of yearly funding, teaching assignments, and conference-travel support. In order to document compliance with this requirement, students should present the Director of Graduate Studies with a copy of any correspondence with the journal which confirms the essay’s submission.

### **The Ph.D. Candidacy Exam**

All students entering the Ph.D. program are required by the university to pass a candidacy examination within the first three semesters of their Ph.D. studies. Upon successful completion of the M.A. comprehensive exam in literature, students may apply to continue on to the Ph.D. program. Admission to the Ph.D. program is not automatically granted upon completion of the M.A. Rather, admission is contingent on two factors: 1) the student expressing interest in continuing by means of a formal statement of purpose (described below), and 2) the recommendation of the literature faculty that the student be allowed to continue. This re-admission process is internal to the department, and will be administered by the entire literature faculty.

Students who would like to continue on to the Ph.D. program must submit a two-page statement of purpose describing: 1) their reasons for wishing to continue with the program, 2) their proposed research interests during proposed doctoral training (including names of literature faculty with whom they are interested in working), and 3) their post-degree academic and professional goals. It is recommended that potential doctoral

students consult with faculty prior to submitting the statement of purpose; please note, however, that a faculty member's tentative agreement to work with a particular student does not imply that the student is guaranteed admission to the Ph.D. program.

If a student is accepted from our M.A. in literature into the Ph.D. program, then *successful completion of the M.A. exam itself satisfies the university's Ph.D. candidacy examination requirement.*

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: Dates**

In order to have ample time for dissertation research and writing, as well as for proper career planning, it is strongly recommended that the Ph.D. comprehensive exam be taken during the first month of the fifth semester in the program (in most cases, during the fall semester of the third year). When extraordinary circumstances beyond a student's control require that the exams be taken during the spring semester, these will be offered in January. (See "Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: The Written Exams" for details regarding exam timetables).

*Note: It is the student's responsibility to inform the Graduate Program Staff Assistant of his or her intention to schedule the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams. This should be done early in the semester prior to taking the exam.*

### **Ph.D. Annual Letters of Evaluation**

Students will receive a letter of evaluation at the end of each academic year which addresses their overall performance in the program, in addition to their development, in the broadest sense, as potential future members of the profession. The letter reflects input from all available faculty members in the literature section. Students are advised to address any concerns and suggestions which arise in the annual evaluation as actively as possible, and to do so in a timely fashion. They are also invited to discuss any matters broached in the letter with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or any other faculty advisors in the department.

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: The Doctoral Committee**

During the early weeks of the student's first post-candidacy semester in the Ph.D. program, arrangements should be made for the formation of a Ph.D. doctoral committee. This committee is charged with advising the student vis-à-vis the creation of a Ph.D. reading list and administering the Ph.D. comprehensive exam. Students pursuing a Ph.D. in the literature division of the department will meet with their faculty advisor to discuss the creation of the doctoral committee and the reading list. Ideally, even for those students yet to pass the Ph.D. candidacy exam, discussions in this regard should begin to take place prior to the end of the first year in the Ph.D. program.

The doctoral committee usually has five members, but shall have no fewer than four. Students may suggest members for their committee in consultation with their advisor.

Generally speaking, the chair of this committee will be the eventual dissertation advisor. Members of the committee should reflect the student's research interests, while still maintaining a balanced representation of the entire literature faculty. Members of the doctoral committee must be formally approved by the Director of Graduate Studies during the semester prior to taking the Ph.D. comprehensive exam.

It is the student's responsibility to contact potential committee members after consultation with the doctoral committee chair. Specific university policies regarding committee formation, including rules and definitions involving the required Outside Field Member and Outside Unit Member, can be found at the following website:

<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/degree requirements/degreeReq1>

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: Ph.D. Reading List**

Beginning in the first post-candidacy semester in the Ph.D. program, students will meet regularly with the members of their doctoral committee to discuss their research interests, and to carry out the process of giving meaningful shape to the Ph.D. reading list. It is recommended that this list reflect the well-defined research interests of the individual student while still maintaining a reasonable balance between the main field of research and material that lies outside the student's area of specialization. Final adjustments to the reading list must be approved by the doctoral committee during the semester prior to taking the Ph.D. comprehensive exam.

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations**

Ph.D. candidates must satisfy all course requirements and pass regular departmental evaluations in order to schedule the Ph.D. comprehensive examination. Any deferred or incomplete grades must be resolved before scheduling the exam. The exam is made up of three written exams and one oral exam, each of which will be administered and evaluated by the student's doctoral committee. Though the exam may be taken at home or another location of the student's choosing, no outside materials may be consulted during the examination period.

*Note: If a period of more than eight years has elapsed since passing the Ph.D. candidacy exam (or more than six years since passing the Ph.D. comprehensive examination), students wishing to defend the dissertation must first take a new Ph.D. comprehensive exam.*

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams: The Written Exams**

The written Ph.D. comprehensive examination process consists of three parts. In the fall semester, the first portion of the exam is to be taken on the first Tuesday of the semester; the second and third portions are to be taken on the following Thursday and Tuesday, respectively. When special circumstances call for an exam in the spring semester, the first

written portion is to be taken on the last Thursday of January; the second and third portions are to be taken on the following Tuesday and Thursday, respectively.

The first two written exams (to be taken during two three-hour periods on each of the first two scheduled exam days) will focus on the reading lists covering the student's primary areas of interest. The third written exam—to be taken during two hours on the third exam day—will concentrate on the reading list which falls outside of the two primary areas of interest.

On each of the three examination days, students may choose to take the corresponding portion of the exam during any period of three—or, on the final day, two—contiguous hours that fall during normal work hours (8:30-5:00). Questions will be e-mailed by the exam committee chair to the student by 8:30AM on the morning of each exam. Completed answers should be e-mailed to the Graduate Program Assistant on each exam day immediately at the end of the examination hours chosen by the student. Failure to comply with this policy will be taken into consideration by the exam committee.

*Note: Students may retain a copy of their exam answers in order to prepare for the Oral Exam.*

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams: The Oral Exam**

The oral comprehensive examination should be scheduled for no later than two weeks after the final day of the written exams, and will generally last for one hour. The primary purpose of the oral exam is to continue the evaluation of the student's work on the written exam, as well as to probe the student's preparation with respect to areas of the reading list left uncovered on the written exams.

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: Grading**

At the end of the oral examination, the doctoral committee will come to a determination regarding whether the student has passed or failed the overall Ph.D. comprehensive exam. In general, the committee will inform the student shortly after the oral exam of its decision. Determination of the passing or failing grade will be based on the committee's assessment of the *combined quality of the written exams, and the student's performance on the oral portion of the exam*. In certain cases, the committee may not be able to reach an immediate decision. Under this scenario, the committee may delay its decision for a period of up to one week, after which point the committee will inform the student of its final decision.

### **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: Failing Grades**

A failing grade in more than one of the three research/reading areas covered by the exam will result in termination from the Ph.D. program. A student who fails just one area of

exam may, however, retake that particular area of the exam within no more than one month of failing the first exam. The design of the retake (whether written and oral, or exclusively oral) will be left to the discretion of the committee. A failing grade on the retake will result in termination from the program.

### **Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal**

Upon successful completion of the Ph.D. comprehensive exam, the student will schedule an oral defense of his or her dissertation proposal. The defense should take place before the end of the same semester or the following semester in which the student passes the comprehensive exam.

In consultation with the dissertation director, the student will prepare a dissertation proposal or prospectus of approximately 15-20 pages, in addition to a working bibliography of 5-7 pages. This document is then to be circulated among the members of the doctoral committee at least two weeks prior to the proposal defense.

During the proposal defense, the student will initiate discussion by presenting his or her project in detail to the committee, whose members will then offer questions and advice concerning central research questions, methodology, dissertation design, and the viability of the overall project. At the end of the session, the committee will either 1) approve the proposal (while still reserving the right to call for revisions to be addressed during the writing of the actual dissertation), or 2) formally call for a revised proposal and/or second proposal defense to be completed before granting permission to proceed.

### **Ph.D. Dissertation Research and Writing**

After the comprehensive examinations and during the writing of the dissertation, the chair of the doctoral committee normally serves as the dissertation director. This appointment is formally made by the Head of the Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese. Two or three additional faculty members from the Dept. of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese will also serve on the committee, though one of these, known as the “Outside Field Member,” must represent an area of expertise outside the Ph.D. candidate’s major field of study.

The dissertation director is normally the chair of the doctoral committee, but not always. He or she is, however, always a member of the doctoral committee. Both the director and the chair of the committee must normally be members of the Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese. Each Ph.D. doctoral committee must additionally include a faculty member from another department at Penn State. Note, however, that this “Outside Unit Member” must have a primary appointment outside of the administrative home of dissertation director.

It is possible, in exceptional cases, for faculty from outside Penn State to direct a dissertation, but the committee chair must still be from within the department. This must be requested and justified via a letter and curriculum vitae of the scholar, which are to be

submitted to the Head of the Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese, as well as to the Graduate School. In the case of a former Penn State faculty member who agrees to continue as the director of a dissertation begun while they were still employed by the university, a similar arrangement is possible, as is a co-chairing arrangement. Again, this must be justified in writing by means of a letter to the Head and to the Graduate School. In both cases, the department and Graduate School must approve the request before the arrangement is put into effect, particularly because there are funding considerations involved (e.g., travel of the dissertation director to the defense).

For further information regarding the composition of the dissertation committee, please consult the University Bulletin at the following website:

<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/degreeReq1>

The dissertation must be written in English or Spanish. For norms concerning its physical presentation, please consult the latest copy of the Graduate School Thesis Information Bulletin, which contains complete information on the dissertation format, preparation, content constraints, etc. Thesis formatting templates are also available for standard word-processing software. Students should consult the Thesis Office of the Graduate School for further information concerning any issues in this regard.

When, after taking into account committee suggestions, the dissertation director and committee members are satisfied with the dissertation draft, the complete, revised thesis will be sent to each committee member. Committee members will then make any and all suggestions for revision within two weeks of receiving the completed draft. The director (or the doctoral committee chairman, if they are not the same) will then move toward setting a date for the final defense. No dissertation defense will be scheduled, however, until the entire committee has read the complete, revised thesis and agrees that it is in a final state (with only minor stylistic or editorial changes pending).

Both the dissertation director and the student are responsible for assuring the completion of the final draft, and for ensuring adequate consultation with all members of the thesis committee well in advance of the oral examination. The Graduate School formally requires three weeks' advance notice to schedule a doctoral defense, which is customarily advertised and open to the public. The defense is typically related in large measure to the specific contents of dissertation, but may also cover the candidate's whole program of study without regard to specific courses taken at Penn State or elsewhere.

A favorable vote from at least two-thirds of the committee is required to pass the dissertation defense. Should a candidate fail, it is the responsibility of the doctoral committee to determine what steps must be taken by the student before a second defense is to be scheduled. After being properly submitted to the Graduate School, the dissertation will also be made available to the public at Pattee Library.

# Graduate Program Flow Chart

