

Introduction

This Graduate Student Handbook provides information on the policies and requirements of the graduate program in Spanish 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 Graduate Degree Programs 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, and as a consequence, from time to time the policies in this handbook will be updated. The Graduate Officer will notify you of any such changes and of their date of implementation. For changes affecting your programs of study, such as course requirements or exam structure and/or format, students will be given the option of completing their programs under the structure in place when they began their studies or the option of adhering to the new policies.

The Graduate Faculty understands that as graduate students you make crucial contributions to the mission of the Department. We very much 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 throughout the course of your graduate studies. We also hope that you will stay in touch with us after you graduate and let us know of your progress in your career.

The Department 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 Department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese Literature Division offers two tracks: Spanish and Spanish American literature. The main objective of this division is to train students diachronically in their fields, providing them with an exceptional theoretical background and thoroughly preparing them for their future academic and scholarly careers.

With a view towards interdisciplinarity, our course offerings include various disciplines and time-periods and cover philosophy, literary theory, Golden Age prose and theatre, the Enlightenment, Romanticism/Symbolism/Decadentism, Realism, Generation of 1898/1927, contemporary Spanish poetry and novel, colonial literature, Afro-Caribbean literature, Modernismo, contemporary Latin American prose, poetry, and theatre, as well as contemporary film and art. Our students are also encouraged to take classes in the Comparative Literature, English, or French departments to further enhance their academic preparation.

With twenty-two professional faculty and more than fifty graduate students (about half at the doctoral level), our department is committed to maintaining a low student-to-faculty ratio. Our graduate students teach three basic Spanish courses per academic year, and selected and qualified students are frequently offered to teach culture, literature, or linguistics courses not only in Spanish, but also in Italian and Portuguese. The intellectual environment of the Department is regularly enhanced with guest lectures, colloquia, conferences, and institutes. In the last few years, authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Antonio Benítez Rojo, Mempo Giardinelli, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Rosa Montero, Antonio Muñoz Molina, and Ana Lydia Vega, read their work and presented lectures in our department.

The M.A. in Spanish: Literature Division

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 M.A. Exam protocol.

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, and Portuguese requires that of these 30 credits, a minimum of 27 graduate credits must be taken at the 500-level. Under special circumstances, the Graduate Officer can authorize a student to take a 400-level course and have it count towards the 500-level requirement, such as, for example, in the event that a relevant course in a particular area is not regularly offered.

Course Requirements

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

In addition, M.A. students in Literature follow a structured curriculum, the purpose of which is to provide students with the necessary breadth and depth in literary studies to prepare them for work at the doctoral level. The literature seminars that students will take during their M.A. program are designed to provide students with an opportunity to be exposed to the diverse areas of study within our Department and to give students the opportunity to study with a wide range of the Literature faculty.

The particular courses that will comprise the curriculum of an incoming class will vary by year, depending on the graduate seminars being offered in any given academic cycle, faculty leave schedules, and so forth.

M.A. students enroll in courses after consultation with either the Graduate Officer or with 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. 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 our students. 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 Graduate Officer, 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 4th 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.

M.A. Exam: Paper requirement in Literature

The Graduate School at Penn State requires that each M.A. program at the University culminate in a significant or "capstone" experience that demonstrates evidence of the student's analytical skills and shows an ability on the part of the student to synthesize material. ([http://www.psu.edu/bulletins/whitebook/\\$gradreqs.htm](http://www.psu.edu/bulletins/whitebook/$gradreqs.htm)) For academic programs such as our M.A., this capstone experience can take the form of a suitable paper or essay.

To satisfy this requirement, M.A. candidates must turn in an original paper, written for one of their classes in our program. The deadline for submission of this paper is March 1, of the student's 4th semester in the program, as established by the Graduate School. (Should the date change, this information will be updated.) Papers should be submitted to the Graduate Program Staff Assistant in the main office in 231 Burrowes no later than 12:00 noon.

Students are free to revise this paper if they wish, though revision is not required. We strongly recommend, however, that students consult with faculty members for whom they have written papers if they have any doubts about whether a given paper would be suitable for submission as part of the M.A. Exam. Students are advised to select what they believe to be the best paper that they have written in the program.

M.A. Exam: The Written Exam in Literature

The M.A. Written Examination in Literature is based on the Department's M.A. reading list and not on any systematic series of courses. The reading list is available with the Graduate Program Staff Assistant in 231 Burrowes. All M.A. students will be examined on the list that is in effect for the academic year in which the exam is taken. Portions of the M.A. Written Examination in Literature may be devoted to material which candidates

may not have covered in graduate courses in the Department. The candidate has full responsibility for preparing for these exams.

The written portion of the exam will be taken over the course of two days, and no outside materials may be brought to or consulted during the examination period. A computer will be made available by the Department for each student writing her or his exam.

The specific format of the examination varies slightly from year to year, and explicit instructions are provided on the exam itself. However, the general format of the exam is that students will answer four essay questions each day, for a total of eight essay questions on the entirety of the two-day examination.

Students are required to write at least one of the essays in her or his non-dominant language.

Students are provided with 3 ½ hours each day to complete that day's part of the exam. On day 1, students will be given questions pertaining to Peninsular Spanish literature, and on day 2, students will be provided with questions on Latin American literature.

The questions on the written part of the examination are prepared each year by the Literature faculty in the Department. Students are encouraged to view the previous year's exam questions, which are on file with the Graduate Program Staff Assistant in 231 Burrowes, in order to gain a clearer sense of the kinds of questions that are asked on the examination.

M.A. Exam: The Oral Exam

The Department administers an oral examination as part of the M.A. examination process. The M.A. Oral Exam consists of an oral examination administered by the M.A. Exam Committee in Literature lasting up to two hours. Questions on the examination will focus primarily on issues arising from the M.A. Written Examination. Questions may also be derived from coursework that the students have carried out and from the paper submitted in satisfaction of the University's capstone requirement.

It is important to note that the oral exam serves as an opportunity for the student to show her or his ability to field questions, exhibit mastery of central areas in Spanish and Latin American literature, and display flexibility in the ability to extend answers by connecting the questions to broader issues in literary scholarship. This is an essential skill, especially for those students wishing to continue on to Ph.D. studies. This process is an important one, and we strongly suggest that students consult with their peers who have completed their M.A. at Penn State and who have continued into the Ph.D. program. Such peer mentoring will allow candidates to gain a clearer sense of the nature of the Oral Examination from the perspective of students who have successfully passed it.

M.A. Exam: 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 4th semester in the program.

The specific dates of the M.A. Written Exam vary by year. The Written Exam will generally be administered on two consecutive days (or, in some cases, over a period of three days) during third or fourth week of March. All M.A. students in their 4th semester will take the M.A. written examination at the same time.

The Oral Exam portion of the process is scheduled on a student-by-student basis and will be administered within two weeks after completion of the Written Examination.

M.A. Exam: The Exam Committee

The M.A. Exam committee is appointed by the Graduate Officer each year. This committee will change annually, but will regularly consist of five faculty members representing a cross-section of time periods, as well as a balance of Peninsular and Latin American specializations.

M.A. Exam: Grading

The questions for the Written Examination are graded by the members of the M.A. Exam Committee in Literature with input from other members of the department if necessary. Each of the questions, the submitted paper, and the exam as a whole will be evaluated as Pass or Fail. At the end of the oral examination, the Exam Committee will come to a global determination regarding whether the student has passed or failed the M.A. Exam.

In general, the committee will inform the student shortly after the exam of its decision. Determination of the pass or fail grade will be made on the committee's assessment of the quality of the paper submitted by the student and on the quality of the student's performance on the written and oral portions of the exam. In extraordinary cases, 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, after which point the committee will provide a final decision, either passing or failing the student on the exam. In addition, each student will receive later written feedback from either the Graduate Officer or the Exam Committee Chair regarding her or his performance on the exam.

It is important to note that a grade of "Pass" on the M.A. Examination does not automatically qualify students to continue on to the Ph.D. program in Literature. The Pass/Fail grade refers strictly to the committee's decision regarding the student's performance on the M.A. Examination. A passing grade, assuming that all other departmental and university requirements have been met, qualifies a student to earn the M.A. degree. For information pertaining to continuing into the Ph.D. program in Literature, please consult that section of the handbook.

M.A. Exam: Failing grades

If a student fails the M.A. Examination, she or he may retake the examination once within the following six calendar months. If a student does receive a failing grade on the Examination, she or he may be asked to retake all of or only a part or parts of the Examination, at the discretion of the M.A. Examination Committee. Note, however, that if the student has been receiving support as a Teaching Assistant, she or he is not guaranteed continued support in subsequent semesters.

Students will make arrangements on an individual basis with the Graduate Officer should a retake be necessary. The primary responsibility to arrange for the scheduling of the exam resides with the individual student, who will work with the Graduate Officer and the departmental staff. The composition of the Examination Committee may not be the same as on the first taking of the exam, depending on faculty availability and the timing of the retake. A second failure on the examination will result in termination of graduate student status in the Department.

M. A. Program: Summary Check List

Credit and course Requirements

- Spanish 502 taken in the 1st semester
- Minimum of 30 credits
- Minimum of 27 credits at 500-level
- Core curriculum coursework (arranged in consultation with appointed advisor)

M.A. Exam:

- Paper submitted to the Graduate Program Staff Assistant by March 1 in student's 4th semester
- Written Examination during second half of March of 4th semester
- Oral Examination within two weeks of Written Examination

Ph.D. in Spanish Literature

Credit Requirements

The Department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese requires that a minimum of 30 credits of coursework at Penn State must 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 Graduate Officer can authorize a student to take a 400-level course and have it count towards the 500-level requirement, such as, for example, in the event that a relevant course in a particular area is not regularly offered.

Course Requirements

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

In addition, Ph.D. students in Literature follow a structured curriculum, the purpose of which is to provide students with the necessary breadth and depth in literary studies to prepare them for work at the doctoral level. The literature seminars that students will take during their Ph.D. program are designed to provide students with an opportunity to be exposed to the diverse areas of study within our Department and to give students the opportunity to study with a wide range of the Literature faculty.

The particular courses that will comprise the curriculum of an incoming class will vary by year, depending on the graduate seminars being offered in any given academic cycle, faculty leave schedules, and so forth.

Ph.D. students enroll in courses after consultation with either the Graduate Officer or with a designated advisor from the Literature faculty. Generally speaking, students will be enrolled in three graduate literature seminars per semester.

Additional Language Requirement

For the Ph.D. degree, students must demonstrate reading proficiency in a language other than English or Spanish. The requirement may be satisfied in one of several ways:

1. Passing an appropriate graduate-level reading course offered by a language department at Penn State, in a language other than English or Spanish.
2. Passing a Reading Proficiency Examination offered by a language department at Penn State, in a language other than English or Spanish.
3. A student who can demonstrate that he or she is a native or near-native speaker of, or has been educated in, a language other than Spanish or English, may use this language as a means of satisfying the requirement.

If an individual case does not fall neatly within any of these scenarios, please consult with the Graduate Officer.

Note: Depending on the student's area of specialization, her or his adviser may require additional proficiency in other languages. The student's adviser, in consultation with the Graduate Officer, will determine how such courses will count towards the credits required for completion of the Ph.D. program.

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 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 our students. 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 Graduate Officer, 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", she or he should consult with her or his advisor and with the Graduate Officer.

The Ph.D. Candidacy Exam

All students entering the Ph.D. program (whether continuing from an M.A. earned within the Department or coming from another institution) are required by the university to pass a Candidacy Examination within the first three semesters of their Ph.D. studies.

The nature of the Candidacy Examination process can vary depending on whether a student applies to continue beyond the M.A. at Penn State or whether the student is admitted to the program from another institution. This section of the handbook will discuss each of these scenarios.

The Candidacy Exam: Continuing Students

Upon successful completion of the M.A. Comprehensive Exam in Literature, students may apply to continue on to the Ph.D. program. *Admission to continue on to the Ph.D. program is not automatically granted upon completion of the M.A.. Rather, admission is contingent upon two factors: 1) the student expressing an interest in continuing and 2) the recommendation of the Literature faculty that the student be allowed to continue.* This application is internal to the Department and simply requires that the student submit a request in writing (upon successfully completing the M.A. Comprehensive Exam) to the Graduate Officer. In this letter, the student will request admission to the Ph.D. in Literature and should specify the general area of interest in which she or he plans to pursue her or his Ph.D. studies.

Depending on the quality of the student's work in the M.A. program and on her or his performance on the M.A. Comprehensive Examination, a student may be admitted into the Ph.D. in one of two ways. If a continuing student's performance in coursework and on the M.A. Examination is considered to be of sufficiently high quality by the Literature faculty, then the student will be admitted to the Ph.D. program, and the M.A. Examination will satisfy the university Ph.D. Candidacy Examination requirement.

Alternatively, the faculty may also determine that a continuing student can be allowed to begin the Ph.D. program, but that final acceptance into the program is contingent upon the student passing a separate Candidacy Examination. *Under these circumstances, the Candidacy Examination will be structured in the same fashion as detailed below for students who come to the program with an M.A. from another institution.*

If a continuing student is required to take a separate Candidacy Examination, she or he will complete this exam by the end of the third semester in the Ph.D. program.

The Candidacy Exam: Students entering the Ph.D. program from another institution

As noted above, all students admitted to the Ph.D. program are required by the University to pass a Candidacy Examination within the first three semesters of their Ph.D. program. In the Literature program, the Candidacy Examination will be given in the third semester of the program. The Candidacy Exam consists of two parts:

- 1) two papers submitted by September 15 of the student's 3rd semester and
- 2) an Oral Exam administered by the Ph.D Candidacy Exam committee in Literature

Each of these elements is explained in this section.

Ph.D. Candidacy Exam: Paper requirement

To satisfy the written portion of the Ph.D. Candidacy exam, students will submit two original research papers. At least one of these papers must have been written while at Penn State.

We strongly recommend that students consult with faculty members for whom they have written papers if they have any doubts about whether a given paper would be suitable for submission as part of the Candidacy Exam. Students are advised to select what they believe to be the best paper (or two papers should they to submit two papers that they have written for courses at Penn State) that they have written in the program. Note that any paper written exclusively for the Candidacy Exam may not be submitted as a paper for subsequent coursework in the program.

The Ph.D. Candidacy Exam: The Oral Exam

The Department will administer an oral examination as part of the Candidacy Examination process. The oral component of the Candidacy Oral Exam consists of an oral examination lasting up to two hours. Questions on the examination will focus in part on issues arising from the papers submitted for the written portion of the Candidacy Exam as well as on questions regarding the coursework that each student has completed at Penn State. The oral portion of the exam will also include general questions that probe the scope of knowledge that the candidate possesses in the field of literature.

It is important to note that the oral exam serves as an opportunity for the student to show her or his ability to field questions, to think flexibly, and to exhibit mastery of central areas in literature. This is an essential component, especially for those students wishing to complete their Ph.D. studies.

The Ph.D. Candidacy Exam: The Exam Committee

The Candidacy Exam committee is generally comprised of all of the Literature graduate faculty members. On some occasions, especially if there is a large number of candidates or if faculty members are unavailable due to such issues as travel schedules or sabbaticals, smaller committees will be assigned by the Graduate Officer. All Candidacy Exam committees will have a minimum of three faculty members.

The Ph.D. Candidacy Exam: Exam Dates

For students coming from another institution, the submission deadline for the papers is September 15 of the student's third semester in the program (or the following Monday if September 15 falls on a weekend). Papers should be submitted to the Graduate Program Staff Assistant in the main office in 231 Burrowes no later than 12:00 noon.

The Oral Exam will generally be administered by mid-October. (Note: as per above, *Candidacy Exam for continuing students (if required) will be structured in the same fashion as for students who come to the program with an M.A. from another institution*).

Ph.D. Candidacy Exam: Grading

At the end of the oral examination, the Candidacy Exam Committee will come to a determination regarding whether the student has passed or failed the Candidacy Exam. In general, the committee will inform the student shortly after the exam of its decision. Determination of the pass or fail grade will be made on the committee's assessment of the quality of the papers submitted by the student and on the quality of the student's performance on the oral portion of the exam. In extraordinary cases, 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, after which point the committee will provide a final decision, either passing or failing the student on the exam.

If a student receives a grade of "Pass" on the Candidacy Exam, the student will have officially completed the University's Candidacy Examination requirement and will thus be officially admitted into the Ph.D. program.

Ph.D. Candidacy Exam: Failing grades

If a student fails the Candidacy Examination, she or he may retake the entire examination once.

In the case of students coming from another program, the Exam must be retaken prior to the end of the student's third semester in the program.

If a student continuing from our M.A. program fails to pass the Candidacy Examination, he or she may retake the exam by the end of her or his third semester in the Ph.D. program, although continued financial support by the Department is not guaranteed past the semester in which the first Candidacy Examination failure occurs.

Students will make arrangements on an individual basis with the Graduate Officer should a retake be necessary. The primary responsibility to arrange for the scheduling of the exam resides with the individual student, who will work with the Graduate Officer and the departmental staff. The composition of the Examination Committee may not be the same as on the first taking of the exam, depending on faculty availability and the timing of the retake. A second failure on the examination will result in termination of graduate student status in the Department.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: Exam Dates

In order to have ample time for dissertation research and writing, as well as career planning, it is strongly recommended that the 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 circumstances require that a student take the exams during the spring semester, these will be offered in January. (See “Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: The Written Exams” for details regarding exam timetables).

It is the student’s responsibility to inform the Graduate Secretary the semester prior to taking the exam.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: The Doctoral Committee

By the time the student successfully completes the Candidacy Exam, she or he should have made arrangements for the formation of a Ph.D. Doctoral Committee. This committee is charged with creating a Ph.D. reading list and administering the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam. Each of these elements is described in this section.

Students pursuing a Ph.D. in the literature division will meet with a faculty advisor to create a Doctoral Committee. Ideally, the first informal meeting should take place prior to the end of the first year in the program.

The Doctoral Committee usually has five members (but 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. The members of the committee should reflect the student’s research interests while maintaining a balanced representation of the entire literature faculty. Note: changes to the Doctoral Committee can be made after successful completion of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam.

The members of the Doctoral Committee must be finalized and approved by the Graduate Officer during the semester prior to taking the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam. Ideally, students should take the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam during the third year in the program.

It is the student’s responsibility to contact potential committee members (in consultation with the Graduate Officer).

The Doctoral Committee is in charge of writing and evaluating the student’s Ph.D. comprehensive examination, as well as supervising the dissertation research and writing.

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

Beginning as early as the first semester after admission to the Ph.D. program, students will meet with the members of their Doctoral Committee to discuss their research interests, and begin the process of creating a Ph.D. reading list. It is recommended that the list reflect the interests of each student while maintaining a reasonable balance between the main field of research and material that lies outside the student’s area of specialization.

It is the student's responsibility to meet regularly with the members of the Doctoral Committee to review the reading list.

All adjustments to the reading list must be approved by the Doctoral Committee and the Graduate Officer during the semester prior to taking the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations

All candidates must satisfy all course requirements and pass regular departmental evaluations in order to schedule the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination. All deferred or incomplete grades must be resolved before scheduling the exam.

The exam is made up of three written exams and one oral exam. The exam will be administered and graded by the student's Doctoral Committee.

No outside materials may be brought to the exam or consulted during the examination period. A computer will be made available in the Department for those wishing to complete the exam on a word processor.

Please Note: When a period of more than eight years has elapsed since the passing of the candidacy examination, or more than six years since the passing of the comprehensive examination, the candidate is required to pass a second comprehensive examination before the final oral defense will be scheduled.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: The Written Exams

The Written Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination consists of three written exams. 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. In the spring semester, the first portion of the exam 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 (six hours over two days) will focus on the student's major area of interest, based on the student's Ph.D. reading list.

The third written exam (two hours) will concentrate on materials from the student's reading list that lie outside the student's area of specialization.

Students are required to write at least one of three written exams in her or his non-dominant language.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: The Oral Exam

Upon successful completion of the written exams, the Oral Comprehensive Examination must be scheduled no later than two weeks after passing the written exams. The oral

exam is usually one hour in length. The primary purpose of the oral exam is to continue the evaluation of the student's work on the written exam and preparation of the reading list.

A student who fails the Oral Comprehensive Examination will be allowed to retake the exam. In the event of a second failure of the oral exam, the Ph.D. committee, in consultation with the Head and appropriate faculty members, can request that the student retake the entire Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, or remove the student from the Ph.D. program.

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 Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam. In general, the committee will inform the student shortly after the oral exam of its decision. Determination of the pass or fail grade will be made 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 extraordinary cases, 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, after which point the committee will provide a final decision, either passing or failing the student on the exam.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam: Failing grades

A student who fails one area of a written exam may retake just that area within one week of failing the exam. In the event of a second failure in that area, the student, if allowed to continue, will have to retake the entire exam. Failure in more than one part of the exam will result in termination from the Ph.D. program.

Ph.D. Dissertation: Dissertation proposal.

Upon successful completion of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam, the student will schedule a date for an oral presentation of his/her dissertation proposal. The oral presentation should take place before the end of the same semester in which the student took the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination.

In consultation with the dissertation director, the student will prepare a dissertation proposal or prospectus of ten to fifteen pages (research agenda and bibliography inclusive). This proposal is then circulated among the members of the Doctoral Committee.

During the oral presentation of the dissertation proposal, which normally will last no longer than one hour, the Doctoral Committee will advise the student on how to proceed with the dissertation, make changes, or decide whether or not the student should continue with the proposed dissertation topic.

Ph.D. Dissertation: Research and Writing

After the comprehensive examinations and during the writing of the dissertation, the chair of the doctoral committee is the faculty member who will supervise the dissertation; there must be one member from another department at Penn State; and three other faculty members from this department will complete the committee. The Head of the Department will formally appoint a dissertation director.

The dissertation director is normally the chairman of the doctoral committee, but not always. He or she is, however, always a member of the doctoral committee, as is the first reader. Both the director and the chair of the committee must normally be members of the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. Each Ph.D. committee must include a faculty member from another department at Penn State.

It is possible, in exceptional cases, for faculty from outside Penn State to be directors of a dissertation committee, but the chair must still be from within the department. This must be requested and justified via a letter and curriculum vitae of the scholar to the Head and the Graduate School. In the case of former Penn State faculty members who agree to continue as directors of a dissertation that was begun while they were still at Penn State, a similar arrangement is possible, as well as 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 the Graduate School must approve the request before the arrangement is put into effect, since there are funding considerations involved (e.g., travel by the outside director to attend the dissertation defense).

The dissertation must be written in English or in Spanish.

The candidate should be sure to 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. Consult the Thesis Office of the Graduate School.

When, after taking into account committee suggestions, the director and committee members are satisfied with the thesis draft, the complete, revised thesis will be sent to each committee member.

Each member will make any suggestions he or she may have within two weeks of receiving the completed draft.

The director (or the doctoral committee chairman, if they are not the same) will then set a date for the final defense.

No dissertation defense will be scheduled until the entire committee has read the complete, revised thesis and agrees that it is in a final state, ready for defense, with only minor stylistic or editorial changes pending.

The Graduate School requires three weeks' advance notice to schedule a doctoral defense.

Both the thesis director and the student are responsible for assuring the completion of a draft of the thesis and for adequate consultation with members of the thesis committee well in advance of the oral examination.

The final dissertation defense is normally advertised and open to the public.

The examination is related in large part to the dissertation, but it may cover the candidate's whole program of study without regard to courses that have been taken here or elsewhere.

A favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the members is required for passing.

If the candidate fails, it is the responsibility of the doctoral committee to determine whether another examination may be taken.

Copies of the dissertation are available to the public and are on file in the department as well as in Pattee Library.

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