

**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: <https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/>.

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 academic career 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 Latin 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. 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.

Although students must formally reapply for funding each year, the department is committed to providing support for up to *five years* as long as students maintain satisfactory progress as a graduate student in the department, perform assistantship duties and activities, and comply with the student code of conduct.

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

All entering graduate students at Penn State are required to complete an education program on ethical principles and established professional norms in scholarship and research. 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*

<https://citi.psu.edu/>

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*

<https://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari>

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.  
<https://www.research.psu.edu/education/sari/sari-events>

B) Participation, by the end of the first year in residence in three hours of discipline-specific RCR workshops organized by the Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese, another department within the School of Global Languages, Literatures and Cultures (such as the Department of Comparative Literature Luncheon series), 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 CV preparation.

### **English language competence requirement for international students**

English language competence is assessed through the written materials included in each student's application for admission to the program and the oral interview prior to the admission offer. Students who require improvement shall take an ESL course (or equivalent) during their first year in the program and use EPPIC (English for Professional Purposes Intercultural Center) services, particularly Individual Consultations. At the time of the Qualifying examination, English competence will be assessed via the essay and the oral exam. English competence will be attested to by the Director of Graduate Studies prior to scheduling of the Comprehensive Examination.

## **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 are required to take SPAN 502 (1 credit), a course on teaching methodology, and PORT 123 (2 credits), 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.

Note: Students with a summer Bunton-Waller, graduate scholar, or any other College-administered award (included in your admission offer letter) must be registered in courses (independent study credits or other scheduled courses) for the summers during which they are receiving the scholarship.

## **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 February 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. Students are advised to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies for the deadline for submission of this paper. Typically, as stipulated by the Graduate School, the paper should be handed in no later than February 1 in the student's fourth semester. Papers should be submitted by noon on that day to the Spanish Graduate Program Staff Assistant.

Students are encouraged to select what they consider to be their strongest seminar paper, and they should revise it based on feedback from the faculty member for whose course it was originally written. Students should not seek feedback on the essay from other faculty members. This paper may be written in either Spanish or English.

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

The M.A. written examination in literature is based on the M.A. reading list and course material from the first three semesters in the program. The reading list is available online or from the Spanish Graduate Program Staff Assistant. All M.A. students will be

examined on the list that was 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 (and likely will) be devoted to material which candidates have not covered in graduate courses in the department.

The written portion of the exam will be taken over the course of ten consecutive days. Students will be given the questions on a Friday and must turn in their essay responses on a Monday, giving them two full weekends plus the intervening week to complete their responses. The exam may be taken at home, or at any location of the student's choosing. Primary texts may be consulted and cited if necessary, but no secondary sources (including course notes or online sources) 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 select two questions out of a set of four provided by the M.A. committee, and then respond to each question with an essay of approximately 5 to 7 pages in length (double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font with 1-inch margins). In other words, students will write two essays, each 5 to 7 pages in length, over the course of ten days.

Questions will be e-mailed to the student by 8:30AM on the Friday when the exam period begins; completed answers are to be e-mailed to the Spanish Graduate Program Staff Assistant by 8:30AM on the Monday at the conclusion of the exam period). 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. As a general rule, students will be asked to respond to one question that requires them to closely engage with a limited number of texts or a single movement, and another question that requires them to draw connections among texts from different time periods and/or geographical regions. In preparing for the exam, students are encouraged to view questions posed in previous years, all of which are on file with the Spanish 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 on issues arising from the written exam as well as from coursework students have carried out at Penn State during the first three semesters in the program, 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 their 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.

Each year a committee of five graduate faculty in literature will be selected to conduct the oral exams. The members of this committee will vary from year to year, but in any given year the same faculty members will conduct oral exams for all students. Each year the committee will include representation from both the Peninsular and Latin American faculty and from as many time periods as possible (i.e. Early Modern, 19<sup>th</sup>-century, contemporary). Although this committee will make the determination on whether the student passes or fails the oral portion of the exam, students should keep in mind that all graduate faculty members in literature (including those not present at the oral exam) will receive the students' written exam responses and can contribute suggestions for questions to be raised in the oral portion of the exam.

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

The Director of Graduate Studies will inform all students of their exact exam dates during fall of their second year. All three components (paper, written, and oral) will be completed prior to Spring Break. Each 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: Grading**

Answers on the written M.A. exam are graded by all members of the graduate Spanish literature faculty. All members of the graduate Spanish literature faculty also evaluate the submitted paper. 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. Letters of Evaluation**

Students will receive a letter of evaluation at the end of their first semester and 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 recommendations 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

- SPAN 502 taken in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester
- PORT 123 taken in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester
- Minimum of 30 credits
- Minimum of 27 credits at 500-level
- Core curriculum coursework (arranged in consultation with advisor)



*Last updated 2/24/2023*

M.A. Exam:

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

**The Ph.D. in Spanish and Latin American Literature/Ph.D. in Spanish  
with Dual Title in Visual Studies**

**Credit Requirements**

The Department of Spanish, Italian, & Portuguese requires that a minimum of 21 credits of coursework at Penn State be completed in courses offered by the department in order to earn the Ph.D. in literature. All 21 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**

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 their Ph.D. advisor and Ph.D. Committee. Generally speaking, students may enroll in two regular classes per semester, plus a language course one semester and an independent study the other. By transferring 3 credits from the MA (see Credit Transfer from the MA at Penn State, below) and adding 3 credits from an independent study in the summer between the second and third year, this would add up to the minimum of 21 credits.

**Course Requirements: Ph.D. in Spanish with a Dual Title in Visual Studies**

The goal of the dual-title Ph.D. in Spanish and Visual Studies is to enable graduate students from Spanish to acquire the knowledge and skills of their major area of specialization in Spanish and/or Latin American literature, while at the same time gaining the theories and methods of Visual Studies. This dual-degree program fosters an interdisciplinary approach to humanistic study, which, spurred by technological dynamics that increasingly integrate text and image, engages analysis of specific images, physical and virtual environments, and visual sign systems; histories of visual modes of communication, apprehension, and aesthetic pleasure; and conceptions of the nature of visuality itself. Students in this program analyze and assess visual media that, integrated with texts, are integral to humanistic scholarship and pedagogy today. Dual-title degree programs increase the intellectual rigor and breadth of graduate work and provide a context in which students learn to synthesize knowledge within and across disciplinary

boundaries in both scholarship and teaching. Drawing from knowledge and practices produced across the humanistic disciplines while responding to ongoing challenges to conventional disciplinary boundaries, this degree highlights existing strengths of graduate training in the humanities at Penn State, structures the continuing development of these programs, and credentials our graduates' training and work with visual forms, environments, and media.

Students meeting the admissions requirements of the Visual Studies dual-title program (see Admission Requirements section of the [Visual Studies bulletin page](#)) must formally apply for the SPAN/VSTUD dual-title before September 1 of the first year of the Ph.D. program, having previously received approval from the Director of Graduate Studies in Spanish (so that they are admitted prior to taking the qualifying examination in Spanish). Students must submit a recommendation from a member of the Spanish Graduate Faculty who is also a member of the Visual Studies Graduate Faculty.

Besides the courses for the Ph.D. degree in Spanish, students must complete the degree requirements for the dual-title in Visual Studies, listed on the Visual Studies Bulletin page. At least 9 of the 24 credits required for the Visual Studies dual-title must be from Spanish courses dealing with questions of visibility; 6 must come from the two required core courses: [VSTUD 501](#) and [VSTUD 502](#). Students will need to take whichever VSTUD 501 or 502 is offered fall or spring of the second year of the MA; with approval from the DGS, students may be permitted to enroll in VSTUD 501 or 502 in the spring of their first year of the MA. Students must also take 9 elective credits from courses approved by the Visual Studies Academic Advisory Committee, at least 3 of which must be from a college, department, or program outside the student's home department or program. Students may complete the courses contributing to the Visual Studies degree in any sequence.

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

For the Ph.D. degree, students must demonstrate advanced 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 or by passing a reading proficiency examination offered by a language department at Penn State, in a language other than English or Spanish.
2. Demonstrating native or near-native fluency, or long-term formal education in, a language other than Spanish or English. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies to determine an appropriate method to document proficiency.
3. Students electing to satisfy the language requirement with Italian may do so by successful completion of IT 801 (Fundamentals of Reading Italian for Graduate Research) or by exam. Students electing to take the exam for Italian should inform the

Director of Graduate Studies, who will put them in contact with the appropriate faculty member. The exam will be based on an article in the student's discipline (the student will not likely have previous familiarity with it) and will involve writing a summary of the main argument and/or primary points and answering comprehension questions.

4. Students electing to satisfy the language requirement with Portuguese may do so by successful completion of an upper-level language course or time abroad, in addition to PORT 123. Students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies, who will put them in contact with the appropriate faculty member, who will advise them on a suitable course or study abroad program, and who will evaluate their proficiency.

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, their 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, in two consecutive semesters (exclusive of summers), be earned in residence at Penn State's University Park campus (601 and 611 cannot be used to meet this requirement).

### **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 3 discipline-relevant credits above the minimum 30 credits earned in the M.A. program may be counted towards the satisfaction of the additional 21 credits required for the Ph.D. Technically, these are not "transfer" credits, but if a student earns 33 credits at the M.A. level, for example, 3 of these may be used towards satisfying the credit requirements of the Ph.D.

Students must consult with the Director of Graduate Studies to determine if M.A. credits may be counted in this way.

### **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*. Ideally, students will work on the paper between the summer of their second year and the spring of their third year. The paper and journal should be chosen in close consultation with faculty mentors. 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. 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. Qualifying Exam**

All students entering the Ph.D. program are required by the university to pass a qualifying examination within the first three semesters of their Ph.D. studies. For dual-title students the exam incorporates content from the dual-title program in Visual Studies. Upon successful completion of the M.A. 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. qualifying examination requirement.*

## **Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam**

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 comprehensive examination may be held fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely.

Student preference for delivery mode should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree on the mode. If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode, the Graduate Program Head will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Director of Graduate Studies.

*Note: If a period of more than eight years has elapsed since passing the Ph.D. Qualifying 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 Exam: Dates**

In order to have ample time for dissertation research and writing, as well as for proper career planning, students should take the Ph.D. comprehensive exam in the spring semester of their third year in the program prior to May 15. When extraordinary circumstances beyond a student's control require that the exams be taken at another time, students will consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Notify the Spanish Program Graduate Staff Assistant with your exam date, time, and location at least 15 business days prior to the exam date.

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

During the same semester the student passes the Qualifying Exam (or M.A. Exam) and is admitted to the doctoral program, they must choose a Ph.D. advisor in order to make arrangements for the formation of a Doctoral (Ph.D.) Committee. This committee is charged with guiding the student in scholarly work and professional development, including approval of courses and the creation of a Ph.D. reading list. It will approve a written assessment of the student's progress and professional development minimally on an annual basis (beginning in the Fall semester of the third year). It will provide recommendations, as appropriate, to improve the student's research and address any concerns. The Ph.D. committee administers the Ph.D. comprehensive exam, assesses the student's dissertation and conducts the Final Oral Examination. The student may request a meeting of the Ph.D. committee. For Ph.D. Committee responsibilities see:

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-603-phd-committee-responsibilities/>

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. Each committee must include an Outside Unit Member with a primary appointment outside of the administrative home of dissertation director. 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://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-602-phd-committee-formation/>

\*Students should work with the Spanish Program Graduate Staff Assistant to complete the required "Doctoral Committee Appointment Signature Form." Students are responsible for obtaining the signatures of their committee members. The deadline for the formation of the doctoral committee via submittal of the aforementioned form is no later than February 1 of the student's third year (that is, no more than one year after the M.A./Qualifying Exam).

For those students seeking a Dual Title in Spanish and Visual Studies, the Ph.D. committee must include at least one member of the Visual Studies Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the chair of the Ph.D. committee is not also a member of the Graduate Faculty in Visual Studies, the member of the committee representing Visual Studies must be appointed as co-chair. The Visual Studies representative on the student's Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination.

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

Beginning in the first post-qualifying semester in the Ph.D. program, students will meet regularly with the members of their Ph.D. 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. qualifying 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. 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 Spanish Program Graduate Staff Assistant to the student by 8:30AM on the morning of each exam. Completed answers should be e-mailed to the Spanish Graduate Program Staff 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 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.

**Note:** If a student is not enrolled in 500-level courses during the semester of the comprehensive exam, they should enroll in SPAN 600. All students will be enrolled in SPAN 601 in fall and spring (not summer) semesters following the comprehensive exam to maintain continuous registration.

### **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 their 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 their 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**

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 and Dissertation Guide, 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 Office of Theses and Dissertations of the Graduate School for further information concerning any issues in this regard, and for a complete list of thesis, defense, and graduation-related deadlines:

<http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/>

Working with the dissertation director, students should plan to have a complete draft to their committee no less than one month before their intended defense date. Committee members will then make any and all suggestions for revision within two weeks of receiving the completed draft. Suggestions may be made in writing or orally in a meeting with the student. If the committee agrees, the director will then move toward setting a date for the final defense.

The Graduate School formally requires advance notice to schedule a doctoral defense, which is customarily advertised and open to the public. Notify the Spanish Program Graduate Staff Assistant at least 15 business days in advance with your defense date, time, and location. 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.

Note: Starting with the Fall 2019 semester, graduate students submitting a thesis or dissertation through the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Application (<https://submit-eta.libraries.psu.edu>) will have their thesis and dissertation submissions digitally signed by their committees via the eTD application. This capability allows students to securely share their final document with committee members and allows committee members the ability to review the document and give their approval electronically.

## **Criteria for Requesting an Additional Year in the Program**

Students who wish to request an additional year in the program (beyond the five indicated in their offer letter) must apply to the Director of Graduate Studies who will consult with the Graduate Committee and make a recommendation to the Head. Applications must be submitted no later than the second Friday of September.

**Application:** Applications will include a written justification from the student that addresses the criteria below, an updated cv, a timeline for completion of work for the degree, and copies of publications and manuscripts under review or in progress. Only applications that meet the following criteria will be considered:

1. **Circumstances:** The department will only consider these cases if the student can demonstrate that the delay in completion of the degree was caused by extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control.
2. **Academic Performance:** The student must be among the top performing students in the program as reflected in grades, publications, awards and other markers of excellence as appropriate for each field.
3. **Progress in the Program:** The student must be on schedule in reaching program benchmarks other than the dissertation (such as qualifying evaluation, comprehensive exams, proposal defense, language requirement).
4. **Past Funding:** Special consideration will be given to students who have obtained funding for their stipends from sources external to the department during previous years in the program.

**Note on teaching responsibilities:**

Teaching your scheduled classes, whether at the beginning of the semester, the end of the semester, before holidays, or during the rest of the semester, is a minimum requirement for all instructors, no matter what your rank or status. If you know in advance that you must be absent from a class for reasons such as attending a conference, you are expected to notify your department head at least two weeks before the scheduled absence and, within the options approved by each department head, inform the head how the class will be handled in your absence. It is the head's role to approve or not approve the absence. It is not acceptable to reschedule classes (with the exception of independent studies or small graduate courses, if this is done in a way that does not shorten the semester or lengthen vacations).

If you are teaching online, or partly online ("blended learning"), it is your responsibility to keep up to date with the course schedule and to promptly respond to student messages and grade their assignments. If you will not be able to do so, you must inform your department head how the class will be handled in your absence; as with residence-education courses, it is the head's role to approve or not approve the absence.

Of course, unanticipated absences for reasons such as sudden illness or injury or serious family emergency are exceptions to this requirement. Obviously, it is not possible in those situations to make arrangements in advance, but you must provide notification to the head and to the course coordinator (if you are teaching Spanish basic language classes or SPAN 215) as soon as possible.

### Graduate Program Progress Chart

	FALL Semester	SPRING Semester	SUMMER
<b>YEAR 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Receive MA reading list upon arrival</li> <li>-SARI Training</li> <li>-CITI Training</li> <li>-SPAN 502</li> <li>-PORT 123 Portuguese for Romance speakers</li> <li>-Coursework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coursework</li> <li>-Complete SARI Training</li> <li>-Begin readings for MA exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with a faculty member on following up with recommendations listed in annual assessment letter (e.g., writing course or language practice)</li> <li>-Read for the MA Exam</li> </ul>
<b>YEAR 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coursework</li> <li>-Read for MA exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coursework</li> <li>-Turn in MA Paper*</li> <li>-Take MA Exam before Spring Break</li> <li>-Submit application for PhD program</li> <li>-If admitted to the PhD program, choose a PhD advisor in consultation with faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with PhD advisor on initial comprehensive reading list and on plans for article submission</li> <li>-Continue working on writing, research and language skills, as recommended in annual assessment letter</li> </ul>
<b>YEAR 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coursework**</li> <li>-Prepare comprehensive paper</li> <li>-Satisfy additional language requirement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coursework</li> <li>-Finalize doctoral committee no later than Feb 1st</li> <li>-Turn in Comp Paper***</li> <li>-Submit for publication by April 30</li> <li>-Complete Written and Oral Comprehensive exams prior to May 15</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with doctoral advisor and committee to draft dissertation proposal</li> <li>-Conduct field work or archival work if necessary</li> <li>-Turn in dissertation proposal by the first day of classes in the fall</li> </ul>
<b>YEAR 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Defend Dissertation proposal by Sept. 15</li> <li>-Work on dissertation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work on dissertation</li> <li>-Conduct field work or archival work if necessary, in consultation with dissertation advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work on dissertation</li> <li>-Conduct field work or archival work if necessary, in consultation with dissertation advisor</li> <li>-Begin preparing materials for job market</li> </ul>
<b>YEAR 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Check Penn State's Thesis, Dissertation, &amp; Oral Presentation Deadlines Calendar</li> <li>-Work on dissertation</li> <li>-Request letters of recommendation from faculty by early September</li> <li>-Participate in job search workshops</li> <li>-Apply for jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Turn dissertation to committee 3 weeks prior to defense</li> <li>-Defend dissertation by Graduate School deadline March</li> <li>-Make revisions and turn in final version of dissertation by end of semester</li> </ul>	<p>Notes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*1 sole authored MA paper.</li> <li>**21 credits beyond the MA exam (=one additional year of coursework). In their third year, students can devote coursework to complete the requirements of a graduate minor, have independent studies, and prepare for comps.</li> <li>***1 sole authored Comp Paper.</li> </ul>