Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Guidelines for PhD Students in Romance Languages and Spanish

Overview
This document outlines the process by which students will prepare for and complete a Ph.D. qualifying examination once all required coursework is complete. This document also explains the intended outcomes of this examination.

The Ph.D. Qualifying Examination evaluates students in their chosen fields of specialization and consists of two written exams followed by an oral exam. It serves to clarify both the subject matter of the dissertation and possible approaches to it. Examinations are graded PASS or NO PASS by a faculty committee (the “Exam Committee”). Upon successful completion of the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination, a student is advanced to candidacy and may present the dissertation prospectus.

The Ph.D. Qualifying Examination is a two-term process. At least one term prior to the term in which the exam will take place, the student designates an Exam Committee. The Exam Committee is comprised of three members of the RL graduate faculty, one of whom serves as the Chair. A fourth committee member may be added from RL or another department. The student consults with their exam committee members to determine their fields of interest. These fields form the basis of their Ph.D. Qualifying Examination, and typically for the dissertation. During this term, students will register for guided readings (RL 605 for 2-4 credits) with the Exam Committee chair. In consultation with the members of the Exam Committee, students:

- create a core reading list for their Primary Field of interest (15 works minimum) and a core reading list for their secondary field of interest (10 works minimum).
- compose two Annotated Bibliographies (one page per work), one of works in the Primary Field (15 works) and one of works in their Secondary Field(s) (10 works). Students are encouraged to include both theoretical/ methodological works as well as primary texts, case studies, or data sets, as appropriate, as part of the Annotated Bibliographies. These bibliographies form the basis for the Exam Reading List.
- work with their Committee Chair to compose a one-page Exam Research Statement. This statement explains their interests, presents connections among their fields of study, outlines the beginnings of their dissertation project, and offers a term-by-term plan of work.
- finalize their Exam Reading List (expanding on the Annotated Bibliographies) in consultation with all committee members. The Exam Reading list should consist of 30-50 works.

By the end of the term prior to the term when the exam will take place, students must submit the two Annotated Bibliographies to all committee members. The student must obtain the approval of the final version of the Exam Reading List from all committee members and distribute the list to them. The Exam Research Statement must be approved by the Committee.
Chair and distributed to the committee members by the first week of the term in which the exam will take place.

During the term of the Qualifying Exam, the student composes two written exams. Each written exam responds to one of two questions formulated by members of the Exam Committee. These exams should be a maximum of twenty double-spaced, typed pages. The student has two weeks to write each of the essays. Two weeks after the successful completion of both written exams, the student takes an oral exam. The oral exam will integrate the areas addressed in the written exams with other facets of the student’s declared fields of interest. During the two-hour oral exam, the candidate should be prepared to defend the written exams, respond to questions about the full reading list, and elaborate on ways in which the written essays help to define a dissertation project within the student’s fields of interest.

**Qualifying Examination Timeline and Procedures at a glance**

**Term prior to Exam:**
- Student enrolls in RL 605 for 2-4 credits
- Student completes two annotated bibliographies of Primary (15 works) and Secondary fields (10 works) and distributes them to the Committee members once approved by the Committee Chair.
- Student consults with the Exam Committee to finalize reading lists; receives approval from all Committee members and distributes exam lists.
- Student composes an Exam Research Statement and plan of work in consultation with their Committee Chair.

**Term of the Exam:**

**By the first day of the Term**, the student distributes the Exam Research Statement and plan of work as approved by their Committee Chair to all committee members.

**No later than Friday of Week 1**: The student submits signed Qualifying Exam form to Graduate Coordinator.

**One week prior to the date of Exam 1 (no later than Week 4)**: The Chair of the Exam Committee sends the questions for the two exams in two separate documents to the Graduate Coordinator.

**Date of Exam 1 (no later than Week 5), 9am**: Graduate Coordinator sends Exam 1 to the student.

**Date of Exam 2 (exactly two weeks after receiving Exam 1), 9am**: The student sends their response to Exam 1 to Graduate Coordinator and receives Exam 2 from Graduate Coordinator. Graduate Coordinator sends the student’s Exam 1 response to each member of the Exam Committee.

**Exactly two weeks after receiving Exam 2, 9am**: The student sends their response to Exam 2 to Graduate Coordinator. Graduate Coordinator sends Exam 2 response to each member of the Exam Committee.
**Exactly one week after receiving Exam 2 response:** Committee members communicate their evaluation (PASS or NO PASS) of both exams to the Exam Committee Chair.

**Two weeks after submitting Exam 2 (pending Exam Committee approval):** Oral exam takes place. Student is responsible for coordinating the time and reserving the location.

**Format of the written exams:**
The Exam Committee writes two questions for Exam 1, of which the student chooses to answer one; and two questions for Exam 2, of which the student chooses to answer one. Exam 1 typically covers topics that are methodological and/or theoretical in nature. Exam 2 will usually ask students to analyze their primary objects of study (literary and cultural texts, film, etc.) or their populations/practices under study (linguistic practices, U.S. Spanish heritage learners, error correction strategies, etc.). The exact nature of the Exam 1 and Exam 2 questions will ultimately depend on the reading list and the preparation required for a successful dissertation project. Committee members should consult the student’s reading lists as they prepare questions. Only material from the reading lists may be directly addressed in the exam questions.

The Committee Chair will coordinate writing the exam questions. The Chair may suggest one question per exam, or the Committee may decide to divide the questions up equally among all members, or all committee members may collectively develop the questions. The Chair may ask for revisions and/or make suggestions to avoid overlaps. All Exam Committee members must be consulted, and all must agree upon the four questions before they are sent to the Graduate Coordinator.

The Exam Committee Chair collects the questions and collates them into two documents that are sent to the Graduate Coordinator. Each document should contain the name of the student, the title of the exam (e.g., “Exam 1”), the date and time of exam submission, and the two questions. The student receives the written exam questions from the Graduate Coordinator and has two weeks to write each twenty-page exam.

**Format of the oral exam (2 hours):**
The Chair briefly announces the format of the oral exam and keeps track of time throughout the exam. The format of the exam is as follows:

A) **Student Presentation (10 minutes):** Student gives an overview of the two written exams and justifies their answers and choice of questions. This short presentation is intended as a self-assessment. This is an oral presentation (there is no need to make a power point presentation).

B) **Exam 1 (45 minutes):** the Chair typically asks each committee member for one question at a time and asks their question last. This round of questioning may be repeated as many times as time permits.
C) Exam 2 (45 minutes): the Chair typically asks each committee member for one question at a time and asks their question last. This round of questioning may be repeated as many times as time permits.

D) Committee deliberations (5-10 minutes): the student steps out of the room and waits outside. The Committee deliberates on the written and oral performance and determines their collective evaluation.

E) The Chair invites the student back in and informs them of the Committee’s evaluation, either PASS or NO PASS. The Committee spends 5 minutes giving their feedback to the student. The Chair communicates the results of the exam to the Graduate Coordinator. Upon successful completion of the oral and written exams, the student’s status is updated to “advanced to candidacy.”

Basis for evaluation:
Each committee member evaluates and prepares comments, corrections, and suggestions on each written exam. Evaluations are PASS or NO PASS. Committee members should communicate their evaluation of the written exams to the Chair one week before the scheduled oral exam. After the Exam Committee arrives at a consensus on the initial evaluation, the Chair will communicate to the student whether they will proceed to the oral exam.

If both written exams are passable:
If both written exams constitute a PASS, the student will advance to the oral exam. All Exam Committee members must agree to advance the student to the oral exam.

If one or more exams is not passable:
- If the committee agrees that both written exams constitute a NO PASS, the oral exam is canceled. The student has six months to retake both written exams.
- If one written exam is a PASS and one is a NO PASS, the committee may recommend that the student proceed with a partial oral exam or that they reschedule the oral exam after retaking the unsatisfactory written exam. In either case, the student has six months to retake the partial written exam.
- If both written exams are a PASS but the oral exam is a NO PASS, the committee may ask the student to repeat the oral exam no later than the term following the written exams.

Communication:
Students and Committee members do not communicate about the content of the exams during either the four weeks in which the student is taking the written exams, or the period between the written and oral exams.

Should there be a problem with the exam questions, or in the event of an emergency, the student should communicate either with the Exam Committee Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the Department Head, as appropriate.