ASSESSMENT PLANS FOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADUATE PROGRAM

The English Department has in place rigorous assessment methods through which Masters and Ph.D. graduate students are regularly evaluated. These methods themselves come under scrutiny regularly through oversight and review by the Graduate Director and Graduate Committee, who suggest any necessary changes to the Department Council and department as a whole. The Graduate Committee typically meets twice a term to review reading lists and committee members for graduate student exams as well as to assess how well the exam structures are functioning. The assessment plans for both Masters of Arts students and Doctor of Philosophy students are outlined below.

**Master of Arts Degree**

Learning Outcomes: Master of Arts students are expected to fulfill the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate broad knowledge of literary texts (which may also include film, media, folklore, and/or other objects of study covered in English Department areas of emphasis) in English as well as a general understanding of English and American literary history.
2. Demonstrate ability to write to a professional standard within the field of literary studies.
3. Demonstrate ability to analyze literary texts (which may include film, media, and/or folklore) using theoretically informed methods as well as skills in close reading.
4. Demonstrate ability to speak coherently and professionally about literature (which may also include film, media, and/or folkore), including literary form and genre, literary history, and literary scholarship.
5. Demonstrate ability to conduct original research and writing on literature, film, and media, as well as other cultural expressions related to literature, film, and media.
6. Demonstrate mastery of a specialized subject area within literary and/or film/media and/or folklore studies, including mastery of both primary sources and scholarship within that area.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes:

*Courses:* Students in the Master of Arts program take 12 seminars, 3 chosen from a list of seminars that cover literary history and theory and 9 chosen in consultation with an advisor that focus on a particular area of concentration within literary, film, media, or folklore studies. Written work within these seminars, usually in the form of a 12-16-page seminar essay, is evaluated by each seminar’s instructor. Students must maintain a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.50 in all graduate coursework.

*Thesis Option:* M.A. students may choose to substitute a thesis essay for one of the 12 courses with prior approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. When completed, the thesis is evaluated by a main faculty advisor as well as two additional faculty readers. The thesis must demonstrate #3, #4, and #5 of the learning outcomes listed above.

*Language Requirement:* M.A. students must demonstrate reading competence in one foreign language by 1)attaining an average grade of B+ or better in the first two terms of Old English; 2)attaining a grade of B or better in the last term of a second-year language course or an approved upper-division or graduate-level course with readings in the target language; 3)scoring at the specified percentile or better on the College Level Examination Program Foreign Language Test; 4)passing the Toronto Medieval Latin exam, MA level; 4)meeting the requirement in some other way approved by both the Graduate School and English Director of Graduate Studies.

**Doctor of Philosophy Degree**

Learning Outcomes: Doctor of Philosophy students are expected to fulfill the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of literary texts (which may also include film, media, folklore, and/or other objects of study covered in English Department areas of emphasis, hereafter understood as included in “literature” or “literary texts”) in English as well as a general understanding of English and American literary history.
2. Demonstrate ability to write to a professional standard within the field of literary studies.
3. Demonstrate ability to analyze literary texts using theoretically informed methods as well as skills in close reading.
4. Demonstrate ability to speak coherently and professionally about literature, including literary form and genre, literary history, and literary scholarship.
5. Demonstrate ability to conduct original research and writing on literature, film, and media, as well as other cultural expressions related to literature, film, and media.
6. Demonstrate mastery of a specialized subject area within literary and/or film/media studies, including mastery of both primary sources and scholarship within that area.
7. Demonstrate ability to write an in-depth, original work of scholarship.
8. Demonstrate ability to teach undergraduate composition and/or literature courses to a professional standard.

*Assessment of Learning Outcomes:*

*Courses:* Students in the Master of Arts program take 18 seminars, including 2 required introductory seminars, 4 chosen from a list of seminars that cover literary history and theory, 1 focused on revising an essay for publication, and 11 chosen in consultation with an advisor that focus on a particular area of expertise within literary, film, media, or folklore studies. Written work within these seminars, usually in the form of a 12-16-page seminar essay, is evaluated by each seminar’s instructor. Students must maintain a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.50 in all graduate coursework.

*Journal Article Requirement*:All Ph.D. students are required to take a course, usually in their last term of coursework, in which they revise and expand a seminar paper into a publishable article, working with either their advisor or the instructor of the seminar for which the paper was originally written. Each of these potential articles is reviewed anonymously by an in-field faculty member appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies. This reviewer assesses the essay as if it were an actual journal submission, thus holding the work and its writer to the professional standards of the field of expertise. The student then revises the essay yet again in accordance with the reviewer’s feedback. As a milestone of the graduate program, the student must show evidence that the article has been sent to an actual academic journal.

*Language Requirement:* Ph.D. candidates must demonstrate either high proficiency in one foreign language or reading competence in two foreign languages. High proficiency may be demonstrated by 1)attesting to being a native speaker of the language; 2) attaining a grade of A- or better in an approved 500- or 600-level literature course with readings in the target language; or 3)passing the Toronto Medieval Latin exam, Ph.D. level. Reading competence may be demonstrated by 1)attaining a grade of B+ or better for the first two terms of Old English; 2)attaining a grade of B or better in the last term of a second-year language course or a grade of B or better in an approved upper division or graduate-level literature course with readings in the target language; 3)scoring at the specified percentile or better on the College Level Examination Program Foreign Language Test; 4) passing the Toronto Medieval Latin exam, MA level; 5) passing a University of Wisconsin Continuing Studies online Reading and Translation course with a grade of B or better; 6)meeting the requirement in some other way approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

*Teaching Requirement:* Students in the Ph.D. program in English are required to teach for at least one year. Progress in pedagogical skills and theory is assessed by instructors of the year-long composition teacher-training courses (ENG 611, 612, 613) and by regular evaluation once the student has begun teaching in a GE position.

*Breadth Exam*: The Ph.D. breadth exam is an oral and written assessment of the student’s knowledge and abilities that is normally taken in the fall term of the student’s third year (second year if the student came into the program with an MA). The exam assesses the student’s broad knowledge of primary texts, literary history, and scholarship in two fields of literature, film, and/or folklore adjacent to (but not the same as) the student’s major field of concentration. This approach to the breadth exam allows the student to expand their job field area beyond the field of primary concentration. The exam also assesses their ability to write and speak coherently about literature, to grasp the scope of literary history, to compare the theories and methodologies of different scholars, and to apply skills of close reading and analysis (see Learning Outcomes #1, #2, #3, and #4 above). The exam, which is based on lists generated by the student and approved by both the student’s advisor and the English Department Graduate Committee, is assessed by two faculty members whose areas of expertise are represented by the reading lists. The faculty examiners compose questions based on the lists; the student writes two essays based on these questions, one 10-page essay for each list, written over a period of 48 hours. Then, at the time of the oral portion of the exam, the faculty examiners ask the student questions based on the lists as well as on the essays. The examiners assess the responses for accuracy; understanding of the field; knowledge of literary history, form, genre, and scholarship; and close reading abilities. If a student fails part of the exam, they have one chance to retake it during the next term.

*Major Field Exam:* The Ph.D. major field exam, which has both written and oral portions, tests graduate students’ expertise within their area of specialization, which is normally a standard hiring field in their discipline. It is normally taken in the beginning of the student’s fourth year (third if the student came in with an MA). Students are expected to be conversant in and able to write coherently about the primary works and secondary scholarship of their fields and to have a general grasp of major critical, scholarly, and theoretical issues in the field and the discipline as it is constituted at present (see Learning Outcomes 1-6 above). The oral portion is intended to encourage students to develop the skills necessary to present work at conferences, to interview on the job market, and to converse effectively with others in the discipline (see Learning Outcome #4 above in particular). The exam committee is chaired by a faculty member, usually the advisor, with expertise in the major field. Two other faculty members are appointed as examiners as well; they are also experts in the field or in related fields. Reading lists for the exam are developed in consultation with the advisor. The exam also features a special project area for which the student develops a focused reading list and writes a 10-page essay that will become a 20-minute presentation as part of the oral exam. The topic of the special project should be related to the student’s dissertation concept, which at this point is in the earliest stages of development. The exam is an opportunity to focus on some aspect of the dissertation (Part Two special project and reading list of 10-15 items) and to demonstrate expertise in the larger field to which that dissertation belongs (Part One reading list of 100-125 items). In the two-and-a-half-hour exam itself, the faculty examiners ask students about the longer reading list during the first half, then listen to the special project essay and ask questions about the essay and special project list during the second half. They then assess the exam for writing coherence, originality of the essay idea and approach, close reading abilities, knowledge of the primary texts, understanding of literary history and theory, understanding of and insight into literary form, and coherence and clarity of the oral presentation (see Learning Outcomes 1-7 above). If the student fails the exam, they may retake it once after working with faculty to prepare for the retake and remedy the deficiencies.

*Dissertation*: After the major field exam has been passed, the student asks an expert in the special field of study to serve as Dissertation Director. In consultation with the Dissertation Director, the student then asks at least three other faculty members (including an “institutional representative” from outside the department) to serve on the dissertation committee. These committee members are responsible for advising the student on the writing of the dissertation and for assessing the final manuscript as well as the student’s performance at the oral dissertation defense, taken once the dissertation itself has been completed.

In the English Department, the student is expected to meet milestones during the early phases of the dissertation writing process: 1)approval of the dissertation prospectus, 2)dissertation progress meeting, and 3)first chapter requirement. The 20-page prospectus (10 pages plus bibliography) states the dissertation topic and argument and explains them, giving the context for the thesis and explaining its significance for the relevant field. It should also chart out an outline for the chapters in the study. The prospectus is due in the term immediately following the term when the major field exam is taken. The Director of Graduate Studies assesses the prospectus for the fulfillment of technical formalities and either approves it or asks the student to revise and resubmit it. The prospectus is also assessed and signed by the dissertation Director and all the committee members in order to make sure it outlines a worthwhile and original project. After the prospectus has been approved, the student advances to candidacy.

In the fall term of the first full year of dissertation writing, each student meets with the Dissertation Director and one other member of the dissertation committee to assess the progress status and trajectory of the dissertation and any potential publications associated with it. The student must submit all drafted work to the committee at least one week before the meeting so that committee members have ample time for this assessment. The Dissertation Director then submits a brief description of the student’s progress (both qualitative and quantitative) to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Once the student is in the dissertation writing stage, they are expected to meet at least 3 times per term with the dissertation director. They are required to submit forms regularly to the Graduate Coordinator that give evidence of these meetings.

By the last day of classes of winter term of the first full year of dissertation writing, the student must submit a fully drafted chapter of the dissertation to the Dissertation Director and the Graduate Coordinator. The Dissertation Director assesses whether the student is making satisfactory progress in this chapter, evaluating the quality of the scholarship, the originality of the approach and argument, and the coherence and clarity of the writing (see Learning Outcomes 2,3,5,6 and 7). If these elements are not adequate at the point, the Dissertation Director discusses with the student what steps need to be taken to improve the quality and/or quantity of the work.

*Dissertation Oral Defense*: Once the dissertation is completed, an oral defense is held at which committee members ask questions about the finished manuscript. The defense begins with a brief presentation by the student of the main ideas and arguments of the dissertation, after which committee members take turns asking questions. While the dissertation must be found by the committee to meet department standards in order for the defense to be scheduled (per Graduate School rules), the defense is the penultimate step in the assessment of this important work of original scholarship. The student’s performance during the defense must convince the committee that the work is making an original contribution to the scholarship in the field (see Learning Outcomes 1-7 above) and that the student is able to present that contribution in an engaging and persuasive manner. The student has an opportunity to make minor revisions before finally submitting the completed dissertation, fully formatted, to the Graduate School. With this submission, the dissertation committee acknowledges that each member has found the work to fulfill 1-7 of the Learning Outcomes listed above and, beyond that, will make a significant contribution to literary, film, or folklore studies.