PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN FRENCH STUDIES

The goal of the preliminary examination is to evaluate the student’s knowledge of selected areas in her/his field and the student’s ability to define a feasible and appropriate dissertation topic. Preparation for the examination allows the student to advance toward thesis research and gain grounding in the intellectual areas germane to the proposed dissertation topic. Successful completion of the preliminary examination is required to begin work on the dissertation.

Director of Research and Committee
As soon as possible after admission to Stage 2 (Ph.D.), the student will choose an advisor who will in most cases serve as the Chair of their Doctoral Committee. When the Director of Research is not a member of the Department of French, another member of the Committee who is a member of the Department will serve as Chair. The Committee will consist of the Chair, who must be a member of the graduate faculty, and three other professors, one of whom may be chosen from a different program within the Department, from a different department, or from another campus. The Committee may have five members. At least three of the members must be graduate faculty; at least two, tenured; at least two of a four-member committee and at least three of a five-member committee must be in the Department of French. The Committee must be approved by the Graduate College.

Good communication between the student, Director of Research and Committee members is important throughout the examination process. Students are to discuss the process and establish a timeline for bibliography and prospectus drafts with their Directors of Research and then with all committee members in a timely fashion. Director and student may request a meeting of the committee at any point before the anticipated examination date in order to facilitate communication.

The Director of Graduate Studies should be advised of the projected date of the prelims.

Examination logistics
Prelims should be scheduled to take place approximately 2 years after beginning doctoral coursework. Before scheduling the examination, the advisor should check the student’s record to make sure that 32 hours have been taken. No outstanding Incompletes are permitted.

Students can find Request to Schedule PhD examination forms at: http://services.lang.uiuc.edu/forms/FLB/FLB-Forms/GradForms.htm Forms must be filed with the Office of Graduate Services at least three weeks before the requested exam date.

Students will take a four-hour written examination, the precise composition of which will be determined by the Director of Research in consultation with the Committee. The written exam will always have multiple sections with a choice of questions for each
section. Students may write in either French or English and may have the use of a dictionary.

Approximately 2 weeks following the essay examination, there will be a two-hour oral examination. Part of the written and/or oral exam will be in French, at the discretion of the Committee.

The SLCL Office of Graduate Student Services will reserve the room in which the written and oral parts of the examination will be administered, providing a computer for the written; will circulate a copy of the written examination (the questions and the responses) to the Committee as well as the student; and distribute evaluation forms to the Committee members.

Examination scope and parameters
In consultation with the Committee, the student will prepare (1) a bibliography relevant to the proposed dissertation topic and (2) a 20-25 page prospectus. The final copy of these documents will be provided to all the members of the Committee by no later than three weeks before the written examination.

Although the content of the prospectus and bibliography will vary depending on the topic and methodology, the following parameters will serve as guidelines for the student and the Committee.

The bibliography will be broader in scope, but shorter, than the eventual dissertation bibliography. It will include a combination of:

- texts envisioned as part of the potential dissertation corpus;
- readings that explore the area around the dissertation corpus (for example, works from earlier and later periods that deal with the same issues; canonical works from the same period that might not figure directly in the eventual thesis);
- theoretical or methodological texts relevant to the dissertation topic;
- select secondary literature.

The prospectus will propose a dissertation topic, explain the theoretical approach to be used, justify the topic in terms of existing scholarship and contributions the proposed dissertation would make to the field, and lay out a plan for the dissertation, including a suggested chapter outline.

The oral examination is a question and answer session that will consist, at the discretion of the committee, of:

- follow-up questions about the written exam;
- further questions about works on the preliminary bibliography;
- questions about/discussion of the prospectus.

At the time of the oral, or immediately thereafter, the Student, Director and Committee are encouraged to discuss logistical expectations for the dissertation work.
Recent preliminary examination questions are on file with the French Studies Advisor and/or the Director of Graduate Studies. Students and faculty are encouraged to consult these files and discuss them with the Committee.

For general policies of the UIUC Graduate College, please see: http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/gradhandbook/.
For general policies of the UIUC Department of French, please consult the Handbook for Graduate Students at: http://www.french.uiuc.edu/grad/.

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