

Guidelines for the PhD Preliminary Examinations in French Literature

By the end of February at the latest, during the second year of the doctoral program, the student should work with the committee and dissertation director to prepare for the preliminary examinations. These consist of a) a written examination; b) an oral examination; c) a prospectus defense.

It is required that the student pass the preliminary examinations before continuing in ABD (all but dissertation) status to the writing phase of the program.

Before writing the exam, the student will have read, and studied the works listed on the reading list for the PhD in French literature. The student will also have established an initial bibliography relevant to the dissertation project which will be shared in advance of the preliminary examinations with the student's committee. The reading list which relates to the student's dissertation should include: a) primary texts; b) secondary texts (eg. works of criticism); c) texts which reflect the student's analytical approach to the primary material of the dissertation.

The preliminary examinations will be based on both the general reading list, and the reading list specific to the student's research.

The Written Examination:

Over the course of three days (not necessarily consecutive) the student will write six essays. A minimum of four of these six essays must be written in French. On each of the three days, the student will have the opportunity to write for a total of eight hours. The student will write two essays on each of the three days.

The essays shall be as follows:

a) Day 1: two essay questions relating to French literature in general (see PhD reading list: <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/slc/graduate/ReadingLists.html>).

b) Day 2: two essay questions relating to French literature in general with emphasis on the student's proposed area of research. For example, if the student's dissertation will focus on twenty-first century literature, the questions in this part of the exam will focus on literature / film of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see PhD reading list).

c) Day 3: two essay questions: the first relating to the student's proposed area of research (essay questions determined by the student's reading list); the second relating to the student's analytical approach to the primary material of the dissertation.

The committee will read the essays written for the preliminary examination within a week, and report back to the dissertation director. The exam is evaluated PASS, FAIL or PARTIAL RETAKE (up to a maximum of two essay questions) by the doctoral committee. The committee director communicates the result of the exam to the student. If one (or more) of the exam areas is considered weak, the student may be asked to repeat it. The exam committee will decide whether the student will retake the failed portion of the exam or whether a new question will be given. The student must retake the exam

within one month of the first try. If the written examinations have been completed successfully, then an oral examination will be scheduled within two weeks of the date of the last written examination. Please also consult the guidelines of the School of Languages and Cultures: <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/slc/graduate/>.

The Oral Examination:

The oral exam will be two hours in length, and will proceed as follows:

- 1) The dissertation director will be responsible for overseeing the questioning.
- 2) The first questions will relate to the written examination, if necessary, so that the committee has the opportunity to query and / or clarify any part of the written essays.
- 3) The committee will ask questions relating to the reading lists prepared for the written exams. The goal is to test the student's knowledge of French literature in general, and of the domain specific to the student's planned dissertation research.

After the oral examination the committee will determine *in situ* whether the student has passed or failed the examination. The student will be asked to leave the room, and then to re-enter after the committee's deliberations to hear the results of the committee's discussion.

The Prospectus Defense:

The prospectus defense will be two hours in length, and will proceed as follows:

- 1) The prospectus will take place three to six months after the successful completion of the written and oral examinations outlined above, and no later than the end of the semester following the one in which the preliminary exams took place.
- 2) The student will submit a fifteen page written prospectus and bibliography to the members of the committee two weeks before the prospectus defense. The prospectus will describe the hypotheses and methodology of the research the student will undertake during the ABD period of the PhD.
- 3) During the prospectus defense the committee, overseen by the director, will question the student on both the prospectus and bibliography, and offer direction to the student.
- 4) After the prospectus defense the committee will determine *in situ* whether the student has passed or failed. The student will be asked to leave the room, and then to re-enter after the committee's deliberations to hear the results of the committee's discussion. In the event that a student does not pass the prospectus defense, the student will revise and resubmit the prospectus, and then repeat the defense in three months.