



Department of English – Graduate Division

Itinerary for the Ph.D. in English - Literary Studies September 2007

The following is intended to help candidates for the Ph.D. in English (Literary Studies) proceed in a timely and informed way through the sometimes complex bureaucracy of the doctoral program by charting the stages of progress, identifying the paperwork to be submitted at each stage, and answering some of the most frequently-asked questions about the process. While the timing of each stage varies to some extent for each student (and for each program – Comp./Rhet. and ELL, variations of which are noted below), the ideal timing is indicated in bold. More detailed information can be found on the departmental graduate studies website, in the university's graduate catalog, and by consulting with the graduate office.

Prior to Year 1:

By April 15 prior to beginning the first year, you should have let us know of your acceptance of our offer of admission. At this time, you are usually guaranteed four years of support for study beyond the first year, and this usually involves (in the first doctoral year) teaching or assisting in a writing or literature course.

In late spring and early summer, and in consultation with the Incoming Students Adviser, you will register for three or four courses to take during the first semester (or, if you were admitted directly into the PhD program, two or three courses). For those admitted to the M.A. program, coursework during the first year is ideally designed to cover distributive requirements. To complete the MA, students are required to take a total of eight courses, and show adequate competence in at least one foreign language. Students earning an MA must take at least seven courses during the first year of study, one of which may be a course for the Ph.D. minor. Be sure to discuss with the Incoming Students Adviser any questions you may have regarding your foreign language competency, as your choice of courses may change if you need to enroll in a language class.

Year 1:

During your first semester, you will meet with the Incoming Students Adviser. Those in the first year of the Ph.D. program (earning an M.A.) will register to take three or four courses during the second semester. Students must take at least seven courses in the year and may opt to take eight.

During your second semester in the MA program, you will meet with the Ph.D. advisor (the Director of Graduate Studies) and register for two or three courses that you will take in the third semester (which may be the first semester of the doctoral program). A two-course load is

considered full-time when a graduate student is a TA. In selecting these courses you will typically begin to specialize. At this meeting you should also consult with the Director of Graduate Studies regarding a **Minor** field of study, a University requirement for the doctorate. There are three options for a minor: an Internal Minor (in Composition/Rhetoric, Creative Writing, or English Language and Linguistics); an External Minor (a group of courses taken in another field and/or department, the requirements for which are set by that department); or a Distributed Minor (a cluster of courses from a number of different fields and/or departments that are tailored to your prospective area of concentration and dissertation). Distributed Minors are approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. (There's more on this below.) You should bear in mind, too, that in order to be awarded dissertator status (again, more on this below) not only must you complete all your Departmental and Minor coursework, but you must also demonstrate competency in a second foreign language. For this reason, be sure to discuss with the Director of Graduate Studies any questions you may have regarding your competency in this second language.

By the end of the second semester, complete seven (or eight) courses, one of which may be a minor course taken outside the English Department, and show adequate proficiency in one **foreign language**.

Year Two:

If you have completed the first year of the program in good standing, you should receive notification (by mid- to late-summer) that you've been assigned to teach in one of several undergraduate course programs: English 100 (first-year writing), English 201 (intermediate writing), introductory literature, or in some cases one of the three required literature surveys for majors. Each of these programs runs an orientation and training program in the week immediately before the fall semester begins. Please make arrangements to be on campus in order to attend these mandatory orientations. You'll teach on the regular academic calendar. Please consult with the Director of Graduate Studies, and especially graduate student colleagues who've been in the program a while, about how best to balance your work as a student and as a teacher.

During the third semester (or the first semester if you've been admitted directly into the doctoral program) you should decide what your **Minor** field of study will be. Remember that the requirements for External Minors are set by the Department granting the Minor, not by the English Department, and that Distributed Minors must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. During this term you should thus meet with the Director of Graduate Studies regarding completion of the Minor and - if you opt for a Distributed Minor - come with a brief written proposal that describes the Distributed Minor, provides a rationale for it, and lists typical courses that might fulfill it. An approved rationale should be present in your file prior to your taking the minor courses.

Late in this first semester of your second year (or the first semester of the doctoral year for those admitted directly into the PhD program), you will receive a teaching preference sheet, which will ask in what program you prefer to teach. Please fill this out and turn it in by the deadline specified. It will help determine what you teach during the spring term. Bear in mind that, throughout the course of your graduate student career here, you should teach a number of different courses in order to get as much teaching experience as possible before entering the

profession. Though you're not required to do so, you should consult with faculty, with Ron Harris and with the Associate Chair about your teaching assignments for the spring semester and the upcoming academic year.

During the second year, those who were admitted into the MA program should have completed the eighth required course and should also be well on the way to completing the required coursework for the doctoral degree. As you take courses, think about which professors - particularly those in your prospective area of study - you would like to work with on an *ad hoc* ("Three Field") doctoral Preliminary Examination committee (see below) if you choose not to be examined on a set area list and/or the dissertation. Arrange a time to meet with them and discuss your plans; you should also talk with other students about faculty members' specializations and research. The more openly and often you are able to communicate with faculty, in classes and outside of them, the more familiar they'll be with your work and the more honestly they'll be able to assess their ability to work with you.

Year Three:

During the third year (the second year for those admitted directly into the doctoral program), you should complete your coursework in English, along with the course requirements for an Internal, a Distributed, or an External Minor. Those entering the program with an MA from another institution are required to take six English Department courses to complete their degree requirements; those who took eight English courses at the UW complete the MA here must take five additional courses in English (You will, however, be allowed to complete the minor requirement after prelims, if necessary.) You should also have decided what your second language will be, and how you will be certified for competency. Consult with the Director of Graduate Studies about whether taking a "reading knowledge" course will suffice to satisfy this requirement. Keep in mind that for one of your languages your competency must be at an advanced level.

At the beginning of the fifth semester (or the third semester for those admitted directly into the doctoral program) you should decide whether you wish to sit for an Area **Preliminary Examination** (with an established list) or an *ad hoc* (also called a "Three-Field") examination. To this end, furnish yourself with the Graduate Division's Guidelines for an *ad hoc* ("Three Field") exam, and consult the existing lists for the curricular Areas that may interest you.

If you've decided on an *ad hoc* examination, you should approach a faculty member and ask him or her to serve as the chair of your examination committee. In consultation with him or her, enlist two other faculty members. Working with this three-person committee, you should devise a reading list which your committee must approve, and which you must then submit for review and approval to the Director of Graduate Studies, by the 8th week of the fall semester for August exams, and the 8th week of the spring semester for January exams. If you decide that you want to sit an exam in an existing Area, you must notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing on the same timeline. Preliminary examinations, scheduled over two successive days, are held in the middle of August.

When you pass your Preliminary Examination and complete your course requirements, your Minor and your Foreign Language requirements, you will be granted **Dissertator Status** by

the Department and the Graduate School. (Dissertator Status has substantial financial advantages.)

In the late fall you'll receive a teaching preference sheet; consult with faculty, with Ron Harris and with the Associate Chair about your teaching assignments for the spring and the next academic year. Courses are assigned to Teaching Assistants on the basis of seniority in the Department, field of study, schedule constraints, and of the preferences each student expresses.

Bear in mind that in year four, you will put together a **Dissertation Committee**. By your third year, you should therefore be consulting actively with faculty and other graduate students about prospective committee members and - ideally - should identify a chair for your Dissertation Committee by the end of your third year. You should consult with your (prospective) chair about other prospective committee members.

Year Four:

In your seventh semester (or the fifth semester for those admitted directly into the doctoral program), you will choose a **Dissertation Committee** and a **Dissertation Director**, and in consultation with them begin preparing your dissertation **proposal**. (Often this committee will include members of the *ad hoc* Preliminary Exam committee; often it will not.) Your dissertation committee consists of four faculty members, including a Director. All four are considered "internal" readers, since all four are "internal" to the dissertation study, but one member of the committee may come from outside the department. A fifth "external" committee member from a department other than English must participate in the Defense, but not in the Proposal Conference.

You must hold a dissertation **Proposal Conference** no later than the eighth week of the semester following the semester in which you completed your preliminary examinations. Request a form from the Graduate Division office. (If you passed your Preliminary Exams in August, then your proposal conference must be held no later than March 1 of the following year.)

Share drafts of your dissertation proposal with your committee members as the conference date approaches. The proposal should be at least 8-10 pages long. A substantive bibliography should be attached. The proposal conference typically lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. You can expect suggestions and a great deal of advice on all aspects of the project. At the close of the conference, your Director and the committee will authorize you to file your proposal with no changes, or they will request specific changes to the existing document to be approved by the committee chair and/or the entire committee, or they may require you to schedule another conference and submit a substantially revised proposal. (The last will require an additional form from the Grad Division office).

Once your Proposal Conference has been completed, and within the period specified for you at the conference, you must file your dissertation prospectus with the Graduate Coordinator. Begin to sketch out with your Director and committee members a schedule for carrying out research and for writing your dissertation. You should plan to begin conducting research and writing immediately after completing your prospectus conference - in October or March of your fourth year. You should also consult with your Director and other committee members about a calendar for going on the job market, which sometimes takes place as early as the fall of year

five (the fourth doctoral year). In addition, discuss with committee members opportunities for professional development, including going to academic conferences and applying for fellowships to do (and share) research.

Consult with faculty, with Ron Harris and with the Associate Chair about your teaching assignments for the next year.

Year Five:

Continue working with your dissertation director and other dissertation committee members on writing drafts of chapters, and building a calendar for when to go on the academic job market. Discuss with your Director the best way to distribute drafts of chapters: some directors prefer to read each draft and give suggestions for revision before those drafts are then distributed to other committee members; other directors ask dissertators to distribute drafts to all committee members at once; still others ask the dissertator not to distribute draft chapters to committee members at all, but prefer to work alone with the dissertator. Make sure you understand how your Director prefers to work, and discuss your preferences as well.

Talk with your dissertation director and other committee members about applying for a **University Dissertation Fellowship** (the deadline is usually late December or early January, announced by the Director of Graduate Studies).

As your dissertation takes shape, schedule a dissertation **defense**. The defense is designed to bring a nearly completed dissertation to the full committee so that the committee can advise you about putting the dissertation into its final form, and to suggest final revisions intended to make it as strong as possible. You should consult with your Director in deciding when your dissertation is ready for a defense. In most cases, completed drafts of all chapters should be submitted to your chair before a defense can be scheduled, though exceptions can be made in rare cases. The defense is attended by your five-person Dissertation Committee, one of whom must be from another Department. You should give the Graduate Degree Coordinator-- and, of course, your Director--the names of those additional readers before the defense. You must provide the faculty reading the dissertation with as complete a copy as you and your Director judge possible, and as much in advance of the defense as is possible (normally, the faculty should have access to the dissertation under review at least one month before the defense). You must contact the Graduate Coordinator at least four weeks in advance of the dissertation defense date. A dissertation warrant request will be made on your behalf at the Graduate School.

The dissertation defense typically lasts between two and two-and-a-half hours. At the conclusion of the dissertation defense, the committee will either approve the submission of the dissertation in the shape in which they judged it; or they will approve the dissertation's submission, pending specified revisions that either they or the Director in their stead will oversee; or they will not approve the submission of the dissertation, and will require you to submit a substantially different piece of work. Once the dissertation has been completed, in the judgment of the Director, you may **deposit** the manuscript with the Graduate School. (Consult the English Department Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate School Degree Coordinator for the procedure.)

Checklist:

Year 1

- ___ Early summer: Review course preference sheet and consult with the Incoming Students Advisor; register for three (or four) courses at the registrar's invitation.
- ___ Late fall semester: Meet with the Incoming Students Advisor and register to take four (or three) courses during the second semester.
- ___ During your second semester: meet with the Ph.D. advisor (the Director of Graduate Studies) and register for two or three courses that you will take in the third semester.
- ___ By the end of the second semester: complete seven or eight courses. If you are completing the MA in one year, you must show proficiency in at least one foreign language.

Year 2 (or year 1 of the Ph.D.)

- ___ August: attend the teaching seminar conducted in the week before classes begin.
- ___ Start teaching.
- ___ During the third semester: decide what your Minor field of study will be. (Remember that Distributed Minors must be approved in advance by the Director of Graduate Studies; meet with the Director of Graduate Studies, and prepare a brief proposal for the Distributed Minor.) Your course-load will usually consist of two or three classes, including courses you are taking in order to fulfill your Minor requirement.
- ___ Complete the eighth required course and the language requirement for the MA degree.
- ___ Consult with faculty, with Ron Harris and with the Associate Chair about your teaching assignments for the next year.

Year 3 (or year 2 of the Ph.D.):

- ___ Continue teaching.
- ___ Begin (and ideally complete) the course requirements for the Minor.
- ___ Complete required coursework in English
- ___ Beginning of the fifth semester: decide whether you wish to sit an Area Preliminary exam (with an established list) or an Ad-Hoc (also called a "Three-Field") exam. To this end, furnish yourself with the Graduate Division's Guidelines for an Ad-Hoc ("Three Field") exam, and consult the existing lists for the curricular Areas that may interest you.
- ___ If you are developing an ad hoc exam, approach a faculty member and ask him or her to serve as the chair of your examination committee, and choose other committee members.
- ___ By the eighth week of the fall semester (or by the eighth week of your fifth semester in the program), assure yourself that your ad hoc prelim. reading/examination lists have been approved by your committee; OR
- ___ By 15 April (for August prelims) and 15 October (for January prelims) notify Graduate Coordinator that you'll sit for a preliminary exam in an existing Area.
- ___ Mid-August: Preliminary Exam. (If you pass your Preliminary Examination, and you have completed your course requirements, your Minor, and your Foreign Language requirements, the Graduate Division will recommend to the Graduate School that you be granted Dissertator Status.)
- ___ Arrange meeting with Graduate Coordinator prior to beginning of semester immediately following prelims to finalize paperwork for dissertator status.
- ___ Consult with faculty, with Ron Harris and with the Associate Chair about your teaching assignments for the next year.

Year 4 (or year 3 of the Ph.D.):

- Continue teaching.
- In the seventh semester: choose a dissertation committee and a dissertation director, and in consultation with them begin preparing your dissertation proposal/prospectus.
- Schedule a dissertation prospectus conference with your committee (and the Graduate Coordinator) for no later than eighth week of the semester following that in which you completed the preliminary exam. (If you passed your Preliminary Exams in August, then your prospectus conference must be held no later than March 1 of the following year.)
- Share drafts of your dissertation proposal with your committee members as the conference date approaches.
- Hold the dissertation proposal conference.
- File your dissertation prospectus with the Graduate Coordinator.
- Sketch out with your Director a schedule for carrying out research and for writing your dissertation. Begin that research and writing.
- Consult with faculty, with Ron Harris and with the Associate Chair about your teaching assignments for the next year.

Year 5 (or year 4 of the Ph.D.):

- Continue teaching.
- Meet regularly with your dissertation Director and with your committee members as you continue to work on your dissertation.
- Consider applying for a University Dissertation Fellowship (deadline is usually December or January).

Year 6 (or year 5 of the Ph.D.):

- If you are on contract, continue teaching.
- Schedule an in-process dissertation defense with your committee and notify the Graduate Coordinator at least one month in advance of the defense.
- Circulate copies of the nearly complete dissertation at least one month before the scheduled defense.
- Hold the defense.
- Make revisions required by the committee.
- Once the dissertation has been completed, in the judgment of the Director, you may deposit the manuscript with the Graduate School. (Consult the English Department Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate School Degree Coordinator for the procedure.)
- Make an appointment at the Graduate School to deposit your dissertation.

Literary Studies Benchmarks