Guidelines for the Master’s Qualifying Examination in English
Revised January 2016

By the beginning of the eighth week of your final semester (or your penultimate semester if you are graduating in the summer), you must make arrangements to take your Master’s Comprehensive oral examination. This examination is an hour-long conversation between you and three members of the Graduate Faculty (with the Graduate Director also present) about the work you have done in your program. You must pass this comprehensive examination in order to complete your degree requirements.

Scheduling
By the end of the eighth week of your final semester, you must provide to the Graduate Director the names of three Graduate Faculty members you would like to serve on your committee and propose several possible dates and times for your examination, which must be completed no later than the end of the eleventh week of your final semester. Normally these faculty members are chosen from the faculty who have taught you or supervised your research, and can include the Graduate Director. A list of all current members of the Graduate Faculty may be found on the Graduate School’s website. Normally, students ask these faculty members in advance to serve on their examination committee, find out when the examiners are available, and provide that information in their request to the Graduate Director. (Students who are completing a Master’s Thesis should schedule their qualifying examination well in advance of the thesis defense, which is a separate requirement.)

Reading List
You must submit a reading list for your comprehensive exams to your committee no later than two weeks before the scheduled exam. You must discuss the reading list with the Graduate Director before finalizing it.

The contents of this list will form the basis of your examination. The requirements for the list are as follows:

- Each three-hour course taken in fulfillment of the master’s degree in English must be represented on the Reading List, including those you are enrolled in during your final semester.
- The overall list must represent at least two national literatures. The courses on the list should be categorized (American, British, world, other).
- Specific works should be listed by course number and title (lowest course number to highest); if you have received transfer credit for any course or exemption from any course requirement, this should be indicated at the beginning of the list.
- The list must include at least three major works or three groups of shorter works from each course that you have taken, including WRIT composing courses. (If you have questions about appropriate selections for WRIT composing courses, consult the Graduate Director.)
- At least three of the following types of literary genres must be represented: fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.
- One selection in the nonfiction category must represent a school of literary criticism/theory (e.g. “Post-colonialism” or “feminism”).
- Examples of suitable texts follow:
  - Fiction: *Moby Dick* would be a major work; three of Melville’s short stories would be a group of shorter works.
  - Poetry: *Paradise Lost* would be a major work; “Lycidas,” “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” and three of Milton’s sonnets would be a group of shorter works.
Comprehensive Exams in English

- Nonfiction: *Walden* would be a major work; three of T.S. Eliot’s essays would be a group of shorter works. (*The Signifying Monkey* is an example of a major work of literary criticism; three journal articles or book chapters would be a group of shorter works.)
- Drama: *Hamlet* would be a major work; three one-act plays would be a group of shorter works.
- For creative writing classes, thesis hours, and other courses, please consult the Graduate Director to determine what would be appropriate selections.

The Portfolio
At the time of the oral examination, students are expected to turn in their Assessment Portfolio; if you are taking your qualifying examinations in the spring before the summer of graduation, then you should turn the portfolio in by the midway point of the summer semester in which you will complete your coursework.

The Examination
The exam usually takes place in Bancroft 244 and lasts about an hour; the Graduate Director will let you know if another location has been selected. This is a “closed-book, closed-computer” examination; you are expected to be able to talk about the works you selected without reference to notes or other materials. You should plan to talk about the works you have chosen with some specificity; you should be able to discuss specific characters, scenes, and ideas, not just say something like “when what’s-her-name is standing there with that thing on her chest.” This is in keeping with the nature of the examination as a scholarly conversation; your job is to demonstrate that you can carry on such a conversation about your selected works with the level of specificity expected of someone who is completing a graduate degree.

During your examination, your examiners will take turns asking you questions about the works you have selected, assessing your ability to discuss them orally and to demonstrate your mastery of the goals for graduate study in English. The examiners may ask about any of the works on your list, individually or in combination, and will not necessarily only ask about the works in their area of specialization. You may also get questions about major critical or scholarly works related to the works on your list, for instance something like “If you had to consult a scholarly biography of Shakespeare, what one would you choose and why?” or “If you had to pick an influential scholar who writes on the American Renaissance, who would you select?”

Grading and Results
At the conclusion of the exam, passing students will receive a grade of “pass” or “pass with distinction” based on your three examiners’ individual assessment of your performance, which is collated by the Graduate Director and reported to the Graduate School. The ranking of “pass with distinction” must be assigned by all three examiners in order to be awarded. The Graduate Director will report these results to you in writing and to the Graduate School. Students who receive a ranking lower than “pass” will be given information about remediation and re-examination options. Ultimately, you must earn at least a grade of “pass” to complete your Master’s Degree.
## Calendar for Spring--Summer 2016

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| Monday Feb. 29        | Last Day to Submit Request for Oral Exam Date  
                      | Last Day to Submit Request for Thesis Defense Date to Graduate Director                        |
| Friday March 11       | Deadline for Submitting Reading Lists to Committee Members                                      |
| Monday March 28-      | Oral Comprehensive Exams Take Place in this Period; Portfolio Submitted at the Oral Exam      |
| Friday April 8        |                                                                                               |
| Weds. April 13        | Record of Comprehensive Exams due in Records and Registration by 5 PM  
                      | Final Copies of Thesis with all signatures due in Graduate Office by 5 PM; since the Dean of Arts & Sciences must read and sign it, plan on having it to the College (107 KIN) by Monday, April 8. |
| Mon. June 27          | Programs of Study due in Records and Registration (must be signed by student, Grad Director, Chair, and Dean first!) |
| Thurs. June 30        | Last day to meet with Dr K to schedule summer oral exams; deadline for submitting reading lists to committee members |
| Weds. July 20         | Last day for submitting oral exam results to Records & Registration                             |
### Rating Sheet for the Master’s Oral Examination

3 = Pass with distinction  
2 = Pass  
1 = Failure

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<th>GOAL</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
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| Student shows knowledge of major periods, works, and figures in **at least two national literatures.**  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Student shows **ability to identify connections** among British, American, and other national literatures.  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Student shows knowledge of **literary terminology.**  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Student shows **ability to synthesize material** among courses taken and works read, thus demonstrating mastery of the program of study.  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Student shows familiarity with a variety of **critical perspectives** and secondary scholarship, and can apply them to primary works of literature (i.e., s/he can apply theory to literature).  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Student can discuss works/practitioners of **literary/rhetorical criticism and theory** (i.e., s/he can discuss relationships between/among critics/theorists).  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Student shows **speaking ability** by responding to questions clearly, confidently, and in conformity with current standards of usage.  
Comments:                                                             |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| **Totals**  
**Tabulation:** Add the totals and divide by 7; the student’s score must be at least 2.0 for a pass and at least 2.5 on **all sheets** for a pass with distinction. All raters must agree on the rank of “distinction.” A total of 14 or higher is a pass; a total of 18 or higher is required for distinction. |         |