

Purpose of the Qualifying Examination

In order to be advanced to candidacy for the PhD degree, students in the doctoral program of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan are required to pass a Qualifying Examination and submit a case study.

The purpose of the Qualifying Examination in the Slavic Department is

- 1) to assess the student's **working knowledge** of the primary and secondary literature from the reading list(s) and
- 2) to evaluate the student's
 - **ability** to integrate and **utilize the knowledge and skills** critical for independent and creative research,
 - **ability** to synthesize **ideas and concepts** at an advanced level of proficiency in areas being examined,
 - **skills** to construct **critical arguments**, and to **present them** in a direct and comprehensive manner.

Exam Format and Administration

The Ph.D. Examination committee will consist of the three faculty members administering the written and oral examinations in the chosen subject areas. Students are tested in two subject areas of their primary interests, with equal numbers of questions devoted to each area. Upon a student's request, an examination on three subject areas may be designed, with 50 % of the questions devoted to the area of his /her primary interests and 25 % of questions devoted to the second and third areas, respectively. Regardless of whether a student chooses to be tested on two or three subject areas, the Department recommends that all students focus their graduate course work on three subject areas (for example, Slavic literature of his / her primary interest, Slavic Literature of his / her secondary interest, and, as a third area, Judaic Studies, or Comparative Literature, or History, or Gender Studies, or Film).

Students will have two take-home exams, with a 60 hour period for each (e.g. from Friday evening to Monday morning or some other equivalent time period) to submit two essays per exam. In each written exam, students will select two out of four topics for their essays. The two written exams should be scheduled, in coordination with all parties involved, during a period of no more than a month, with a maximum interval of two weeks between the written exams. An oral exam would follow the evaluation of the essays by the examining committee.

One member of the three-person examining group, presumably the graduate student's primary mentor, takes the responsibility for designing the exam from questions submitted by each member of the Qualifying Exam Committee.

Expectations for the Written Exam

A good essay

- Directly addresses the question chosen for the essay
- Acknowledges the seminal research in the field and refers to relevant secondary studies at

appropriate points in the paper

- Situates its central argument within the primary and secondary sources relevant for the issue the essay addresses
- Goes beyond a simple summary of primary or secondary sources to construct and support its central argument
- Has a clear overall structure, and is written in a readable and understandable way
- Formats the bibliography using Chicago style

Expectations for the Oral Exam

Students should demonstrate ability

- to contextualize their research interests in the subject area(s) they have chosen and to outline how the reading lists lead to their dissertation project,
- to discuss the primary and scholarly literature from the reading list(s).

The discussion will last 1-2 hours. Questions posed usually follow up on aspects of the student's written answers and also raise issues presented in the questions that the student chose not to answer. Thus, students are advised to think about all the questions on the written exam, whether or not they choose to answer them.

Evaluation system

The Ph.D. Exam Committee will assess the student's overall performance on the exam and will assign a qualifying exam grade, which may be Strong Pass, Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail. A grade of Fail means that the student will be required to retake the entire qualifying exam. A Conditional Pass means that the student may be required to retake one or more sections of the exam, enroll in additional coursework to strengthen weak areas, or complete a special project to address any deficiencies. Students who fail the exam twice will be expelled from the Ph.D. program.